

## POLITICS AS USUAL: Queen's York Rangers

Queen's York Rangers take on Civilians

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

This week I am going to forgo a discussion of political shenanigans. Instead, I am going to focus on the positives in our community and there is a wealth of wonderful things happening in Aurora so there's no shortage of topics to touch upon.

As I am fortunate to sit on the fundraising committee that seeks to support Aurora's very own Queen's York Rangers, I'd like to write about a recent experience

I had with the reservists that I think is worth sharing.

Last weekend, a small group of committee members, reservist family members along with the winners of the draw at the very well attended recent Queen's York Rangers fundraising breakfast, were afforded the fantastic opportunity to visit the Land Force Central Area Training Centre (LFCATC) in Meaford Ontario.

Formerly called 'Tank Range', the LFCATC is where the reservists get their training in a variety of military applications such as infantry and artillery training.

Our group toured the command centre, the officer's mess, had lunch in the main mess and had a 'field meal' with the reservists. Over the course of the day we got a small taste of what it is like to be a reservist and it was a truly eye-opening experience.

The unusual part of the trip, though, had to be the weapons training. The reservists were charged with providing basic weapons training and safety on three types of weapons the C6, C7 and C9 (varieties of machine guns). We learned to shoot them standing up, in a prone position, and then from a tank.

Our reservist instructors stressed safety first.

There was no joking around once we were anywhere near the guns being warned rather severely that we'd be removed for even a hint of shenanigans. Some of us were suitably chastened by the thought of being summarily removed from gun camp and behaved ourselves.

Carefully and thoroughly, we were taken through each part of the weapon, how to load it, how to check for obstructions, how to safely handle it. When they felt that we had a firm enough grasp on the basics, we were then allowed to move to the live fire weapons range.

For a bunch of civilians, with little if any experience with weapons (and, no, Wii doesn't count and nor does countless hours of Halo 4, despite what you may think), handling a machine gun with a grenade launcher attachment is a bit of a terrifying experience.

It's one thing to watch it being fired; it's entirely another matter to fire it yourself. Firing a weapon from a tank? Unbelievable! The noise alone knocks you off your feet. The idea that one would have to do this, while under fire is just incredible.

Our group learned a great deal about weapons safety, use and utility over the course of a few hours with the men and women of the QYR.

But more important, we gained an understanding of how hard our reservists work and the magnitude of the sacrifice they have made on our behalf.

What I came away with from the day besides a realization that I need glasses; being unable to hit the side of a bus is pretty clear

testament to that fact ? is that our reservists are a truly remarkable group of people.

They all have day jobs, or full time schooling all the while they sacrifice their personal lives ? time with friends, family and loved ones ? to be ?part time? reservists. They spend weekends and evenings in training. They spend upwards of 8 months to a year and beyond working alongside our regular forces at home and abroad.

However, as a result of the quiet dignity with which they conduct themselves, the magnitude of their sacrifice often goes unnoticed.

It isn't mere hyperbole to say that the Queen's York Rangers are an extraordinary group of men and women. Throughout the day, in all our interactions with the base staff and reservists, we were treated with the utmost respect and collegiality.

Despite being charged with teaching a rather motley group of civilians the basics of weapons use and safety, each and every reservist was unfailingly polite, extremely knowledgeable and safety conscious and above all else, infinitely patient.

It is easy to see why our men and women of the military, in all its divisions, are held in such high esteem. They are, quite simply, the best.

The Queen's York Rangers have had, and continue to have, a storied history in service and sacrifice to our country ? and for that as a community we are truly fortunate and immensely grateful.

I think I can safely say that we are very proud to call them, *our* very own, Queen's York Rangers.

Until next week, stay informed, stay involved because this is after all, Our Town.