

Class of 65 Newsletter

Bulletin d'Information—Classe de 65

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Disclaimer: This Newsletter is produced for members of the RMC Class of 1965 and is based primarily on inputs from members of the Class of 65. It is not an official publication of the Royal Military College nor does it purport to represent the views or opinions of all members of the Class. Unfortunately, the Editorial staff lacks the linguistic skills to produce a bilingual version. Items are published in the official language in which they are received.

Editor's Corner/Coin du rédacteur

This brief, special edition contains a single item from our Class Secretary, **Hugh Spence**, on the recent, damning report on RMC by the Auditor General. It has been produced in this rather hasty fashion to ensure that the timeliness of the issue, and of Hugh's remarks are not lost by the passage of time. It is hoped that his article will engender some thought and critical comment that could be published in a future edition of this newsletter.

Auditor General Slams RMC

By 6439 Hugh Spence

On November 21, the Auditor General of Canada tabled in Parliament a less than favourable report on RMC claiming, among a host of other things, that it costs too much per student, doesn't prepare officers properly for military service, and has a number of critical management deficiencies. Cadet behaviour including cheating, misconduct and assorted hanky panky was condemned as endemic.

To read the background on the AG report as well as the initial College reactions, the simplest way is to access the website [rmclub.ca](http://www.rmclub.ca) and go to the *e-Veritas archives*. The key material is found in Issue 45, Nov. 26 (the AG Report); Issue 46, Dec. 3 (Commandant's & Principal's interpretation)*; and Issue 47, Dec. 10 (a former DND ADM ex-cadet's letter to the current Deputy Minister, a real treat to read.) * link to the full AG report site is in there, which might look like this: http://www.oag.bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201711_06_e_42671.html

In what is assuredly an RMC Club first, the RMC Commandant and Principal held an international conference call on Dec. 11/17 to give a "horse's mouth", up-front and frank appraisal of the AG report, along with a number of candid comments. The audience, styled College "ambassadors" by the Commandant, comprised the Club and Foundation executive, Club branch presidents, and Class secretaries. Yours truly, being one of the latter, spent two hours on the phone along with ex-cadets from coast to coast and even Ukraine!

The telephone briefing was informal but quite thorough. The Commandant, the no-nonsense but amiable BGen Sébastien Bouchard, OMM, MSM, and the well-spoken Principal, Dr. Harry Kowal, were frank and friendly, and provided many insights into the development of the AG's report and the College's attempts to provide facts, figures and arguments to counter what the AG was putting together in the initial draft. Some of that didn't register, in fact was rejected out of hand. The AG seemed to have a pre-determined "agenda": *we know what we're after, don't confuse us with the facts.*



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Auditor General (concluded)

A big question was the “metrics” of the audit evaluation. Quite simply, how can you possibly compare the per-student cost of small civvy universities against RMC, without taking into account such things as the necessary military members’ cost of room and board, health care, uniforms, military exercise for everyone, athletics for everyone, bilingual education for everyone, *etc.* Kind of esoteric, but in computing costs the AG evidently didn’t even credit the College for its research programs which receive corporate (and DND) funds in compensation, (*i.e.* \$ out = \$ in, net cost zero.)

General Bouchard is keen to fix what he can, and much was underway before the AG report came out. He noted, for example, that when he recently arrived at the College for his current posting, he found the standard of drill was poor. And to ensure leadership continuity and clarity of authority, he was informed by the CDS that his tenure as Commandant will be an unprecedented four years.

A very interesting observation from our College briefers was that the news media, in follow-up interviews, found the AG’s observations very much counter to what they know about RMC and its reputation, in the positive sense. The media seemed to approach the matter “for” RMC and “against” the government. This leads to the thought that the negative RMC story has had minimum media “traction”.

That’s pretty much all I have to offer, but after the conference call I had one thought that I couldn’t phrase in short enough form to ask the College officials on the phone.

The AG says RMC offers too many programs/courses (so reduce them and save \$\$.) Like we all did, I went through CMR/RMC when they had but a handful of programs on offer. Having subsequently spent some years in post secondary education admin, I suspect the large number of academic programs RMC now offers is related to recruitment, not necessarily military requirements. In other words, to attract a reasonable annual intake of boys and girls, you have to offer courses they desire. Specially when, encouraged by DND marketing, a number of them mainly view military college as a “free” education.

But the AG’s point is that there are a large number of programs on offer, and (maybe) some are irrelevant to military careers. For *e.g.*: the College brags about producing five astronauts – well, how many of those went through the RMC “space” program? And does the “space” program really meet some sort of key Canadian Forces requirement? Of course academic programs in themselves need not be directly linked to military careers, (a business grad can become a pilot,) but if not absolutely necessary career-wise, they surely must at least be relevant.

Finally, a semi-political point was made about the why and wherefore of the damning AG report. It was noted that there are three main reasons why the AG does any investigation: (1) a direct assignment by the government; (2) a self-imposed mandate due to some sort of fiscal doubt or uncertainty; and (3) a “brown envelope” case where the AG is presented with a grudge or complaint. There are apparently signs that for the recent report on RMC the latter was the case.

P.S. Note for the “Pox on the Box” group. The AG failed to criticize the pricey little hats and their currently comical manner of being worn. Perhaps the Commandant’s plans for better military department will fix that.



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Closing Notes

A big thanks to Hugh for putting pen to paper on this subject. I'm sure many of you were as shocked and surprised as I when you read the AGs Report. I will look forward to hearing from some you and learning of your reaction to the Report and Hugh's letter.