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*Fellow Gunners everywhere,*

*My name is MGen Simon Hetherington and on 26 April, I was truly honoured to assume the role of your Senior Serving Gunner (SSG). I must begin my introduction to you by acknowledging the work done by my predecessor, MGen Mike Rouleau during his relatively brief, but standard-setting tenure as your SSG. General Mike is universally known and respected as a thoroughly professional, forward thinking and charismatic leader. Despite his incredibly demanding position as the Commander of Canada's Special Operations Forces, he immediately embraced his role as SSG and has, as usual, set the example for me as I follow in his footsteps. The decision to change the SSG is not complicated, nor is it a secret. MGen Rouleau is also the Senior Serving SOF officer in addition to leading the incredible men and women of CANSOFCOM as they train and operate around the world. Although he is absolutely capable of being SSG, my recent promotion to MGen, my role as the Commander of the Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Centre as well as my somewhat more traditional career path as a Gunner officer, provided an alternative to adding more rocks to MGen Rouleau's already full rucksack. Rest assured, General Mike is still fully engaged as part of our family.*

*I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had an opportunity to cross career paths with several of you. I have served on regimental duty in Petawawa, Germany and Shilo as well as an IG at the Royal Canadian Artillery School. I'm particularly proud to have served with 7 Toronto Regt, RCA as Regular Force Cadre. I've been privileged to have commanded a brigade and a division, where I've seen regular and reserve Gunners serve honourably in a wide variety of capacities here at home and on operations overseas. Recently I had the pleasure of serving on exchange with the US Army and came to know many of our "Redleg" brothers and sisters in the US Artillery. Although I know a great number of you, I am looking forward to meeting those of you I haven't yet had the opportunity to meet as I take on my duties as SSG.*

*It is important for you all to be aware of the incredible team that works together on behalf of the Royal Regiment. As the SSG, I work closely with our tireless and passionate patriarch, BGen (retired) Jim Selbie, the Colonel Commandant (Col Cmdt) of the RRCA. Our Col Cmdt is absolutely "ubiquitous" (pun intended) as he travels across the country to lead our Regiment on many fronts, promoting our Regiment and representing us in so many*

*ways. He sets the example for what being a member of the Regimental Family means. We are all fortunate to have him as our Col Comdt.*

*We are all led and supported by the Director of Artillery (DArty), Col Marc LaFortune, the RSM RCA, CWO Garth Hoegi, the Regimental Colonel, Col Tim Young (soon to be Col Stephane Boucher) as well as all the artillery general officers who form the Artillery Council and all our artillery colonels that form our Council of Colonels. Our Regimental Senate includes a diverse group of retired and serving regular and reserve officers and NCOs who guide our Regimental affairs in accordance with our Family Strategy. Of course, the Honourary Colonels of our reserve Regiments also contribute immeasurably to our family in countless ways. Many of you may not know how our Regiment is cared for by these various bodies. I encourage you to read the RCA Family Strategy and then get involved!*

*There are three key themes that I want to share with you as what I, as your SSG will be emphasizing during my tenure: RELEVANCE, COMMUNICATIONS, UNITY. These are all themes that I challenge Gunner leaders at all levels to embrace, promote and action to the best of your abilities. I'll briefly outline my intent as it relates to each of these.*

*RELEVANCE – The current and future security environments are, and will be, more complex than ever before. While there will always be a need for close support fires and fire coordination in mid to high intensity conflicts, emerging threats and operating environments demand that we keep relevant and actively seek to exploit our skills and adapt accordingly. The Targeting Enterprise is one such example. Already, we have Gunnery units that are doing remarkable work in this area. The Medium Range Radar, Small Unmanned Air Systems and various Coordination Centre capabilities that 4 Regt (GS), RCA are beginning to deliver are in high demand now and will continue to be needed in greater quantities. Our inherent skills in integration, coordination and synchronization will serve us well as the need to work with our Joint, Inter-agency, Multinational and Public (JIMP) partners increases. My message here is that we need to seek out those opportunities that showcase our skill sets and remain a valuable asset to the Joint Forces of which we continue to be a part.*

*COMMUNICATIONS – Great work is currently ongoing by DArty and other serving and retired members of the Royal Regiment to ensure that we communicate better, both internally and externally. To be honest, we have fallen short in this area over the last several years. Linked to the theme of relevance, we need to communicate what it is the RCA can deliver and how well we can deliver it. Internally, all ranks should be given the opportunity to contribute to the Regimental effort – at home or abroad on operations. The various mediums available to us today can easily facilitate this. We also need to be able to communicate our strategic objectives and the way in which we will reach them. Together we can continue to strengthen the narrative as to who we are and what we offer. I also fully acknowledge that on the personnel management side of things, we can do better at communicating and managing the expectations of our soldiers. I implore all of you to keep your communication nets open and the information flowing at all levels. As your SSG, let me be clear that each and every Gunner, regardless of rank or position is a valued member*

*of the Regimental family. I encourage you to be innovative, forward thinking and most importantly authentic. We all have our own strengths and abilities and we need each and every one of you to use your abilities for us to be successful together.*

*UNITY – LGen (retired) Stuart Beare was fond of the phrase “unity of thought, purpose and action”. I like to think that as a Gunner, he was the one to have coined this. Regardless, this is the mantra we need to adopt to truly advance on all fronts. We all share a common set of values as Gunners and we need to speak with a common voice. Naturally, we need to all understand the common vision and messaging we wish to deliver and that, of course, is inextricably linked to shared communications as I mentioned above. The Army needs to know that the Gunners are united and moving together to support Canada in whatever way we are asked to do so. I also consider this as a theme to bring Gunners together everywhere and anywhere. For me, this means seeking out Gunners as I travel the country and taking the time to speak with them as part of the Regimental Family. I implore all leaders to do the same. Introduce yourselves, get to know each other and strengthen the bonds that our hat badge and heritage provide. And be shameless about it! Be publicly proud to be a Gunner and make others feel the same.*

*This letter has been much longer than I had intended it to be, but I wanted to get these messages out as soon as possible. The senior leadership of the Royal Regiment is immensely proud of everything our Gunners are doing every day. As many of you may know, our Army Commander previously served as a Gunner in 20<sup>th</sup> Fd Regt, RCA, so in keeping with “Once a Gunner, always a Gunner,” he is one of us. He takes pride in his Gunner heritage and remains intimately interested in our family.*

*I look forward to continuing to serve the guns, and our country, with you.*

*UBIQUE!*

*Simon Hetherington  
Major-General*