



RUSI

Newsletter of the Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island

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FMUSIC: To Be or Not to Be?

Our previous RUSI VI Newsletter reported that the Federation of Military and United Services Institutes of Canada had gained a new National Chairman. Rear Admiral (Ret) Jamie Fraser of Kingston accepted the interim National Chairmanship upon the resignation of Lieutenant General (Ret) William Leech last Sept.

In his email of 15 Sept to the Regional Vice Chairmen, he acknowledged his short period of membership in RUSI Kingston but agreed to serve until the FMUSIC biennial conference and elections next fall. Despite this, he felt that FMUSIC is at a crossroad and needs to sort itself out regarding its future.

A follow-up letter went out on Nov. 01 to the Regional Vice Chairmen who constitute the Executive Committee of FMUSIC. In it, he shared his concerns and frustrations over the current status of FMUSIC and sought answers to a number of questions.

Individual Institutes are in varying states, from thriving to declining, but all are making their own way ahead. Thus, the main topic here is the Federation, the national effort. He was not surprised that the forcing factor in all this is money.

The DND grant was cut off some years ago. His predecessor called on the Minister to restore the FMUSIC grant but it was not reinstated at that time. As the new National Chairman (Interim), RAdm Fraser met recently with the Vice Chief of Defence Staff.. The VCDS was very polite but frank – he saw no output from FMUSIC that would justify government support.

Now, the National Chairman is writing to the Minister again but on a broader basis of accepting the VCDS's charge in that we are re-examining our organization (witness this email).

He anticipates that the bottom line in this is that funding for the national effort may well be a combination of Institute "dues", DND support and private/business fundraising. Regardless, the message is clear – the national level of FMUSIC must justify itself by its output.

If that output is insufficient at any point, he thought the national level should expect to be terminated. The Regional Vice Chairs and their Institutes are key to the Go-No-Go decision.

What do we want?

He suggested that we first decide WHAT it is we actually want the national organization to do. Then we would look at HOW to achieve it. For openers, he started the debate as a *straw man*:

1. He proposed changing the name FMUSIC to CDSI/ICDS (Canadian Defence and Security Institutes/Les Instituts Canadiens de Defense et de Securite).
2. Next was a need to assess our strengths and weaknesses. He saw the lack of an Ottawa presence as a weakness while our greatest strengths are our Institutes in 25 localities in Canada, probably unique. Now, we should look at cutting the weaknesses and building upon the strong points.

In terms of Ottawa, this might lead to an alliance with other organizations already

established. And, this could have FMUSIC again involved in developing research papers, making presentations to government committees and so on. (Caution: such revitalization needs the active participation of individual Institutes – not leaving it all up to the National Office.)

3. How do you assess we are doing on the three-part mandate of FMUSIC: That is: a) encouraging effective security and defence policies; and, capable armed forces? b) further the aims of individual Institutes, and c) be a link between the CF and the general public?

There are alternatives to revitalization but all are variations of terminating FMUSIC, as such. One choice might be to disband FMUSIC, disburse the remaining funds and have CDA offer each Institute full membership in their organization. CDA has a fulltime presence in Ottawa.

“Having said all this, now it is your turn. *We either revitalize or ‘pack it in’. What do you want to do?*”

Jamie Fraser,

National Chairman (Interim) ☸

OUR PRESIDENT RESPONDS

The task set before us by Jamie Fraser, Rear Admiral (Ret.), was dealt with during a RUSI VI executive luncheon meeting Monday 13 November, followed by considerable e-mail and telecon exchange.

The results of these activities are as follows:

First, a firmer linkage between FMUSIC and CDA/CDAI than now exists is seen as being positive for both entities (FMUSIC is now an associate member of CDA/CDIA).

Second, USI's within FMUSIC would gain entré to well established, and well working modes of communication, e.g., CDA/CDAI national newsletter, national website and e-mail facilities, conferences, and so on.

Third, CDA/CDAI would gain a nationwide footprint through the FMUSIC network of USI's.

Fourth, this linkage could enable engaging a much broader audience, both military and civilian than is now the case with the two entities operating separately.

Should an approach be made by FMUSIC HQ to CDA/CDAI in a move towards the forgoing posture, then much care should be taken to assure the continued high level of autonomy now enjoyed by USI's. As well, there doesn't seem to be much to gain in a name change of FMUSIC – the image of a group of tired musicians notwithstanding.

Further, it should be recognized that USI's as well as CDA/CDAI are feeling the squeeze by adverse demographics; i.e., the pool of candidates for membership in USI's is increasingly small, and this pool doesn't seem to be joiners in the sense that many of us were. As a result, the life span of both FMUSIC and CDA/CDAI would seem to be finite unless this trend is challenged.

It may well be however, that this new pool of candidates might be attracted to join and support projects that offer support to more specific causes than is now the case. In this regard, for RUSI VI, we have ongoing our Oral Military History project in partnership with the University of Victoria; as well as another project in development that embraces the notion of support for returning veterans from duty in Afghanistan. Much of the work accomplished and in progress by RUSI VI can be found at <<http://www.rusiviccda.org>>

In any event, RUSI VI will continue to offer to its members; Good Food, Good Speakers, Good Newsletter and Good Fellowship – along with our developing outreach program that is designed to support our armed forces and to “Connect with Canadians”.

Finally, it must be recognized that this synopsis has not yet been circulated and approved by our membership at large. RUSI VI will immediately get onto this by soon producing an extra newsletter, which will enlarge upon the rationale underpinning the synopsis. We will advise soonest of outcome.

The foregoing synopsis has been endorsed by all the RUSI VI Executive; listed as follows, Richard Acton, Flight Lieutenant (Ret.), Cec Berezowski, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.), Tom Body, Major (Ret.), Ted Heath, Commodore (Ret.), Gene Lake, Colonel (Ret.) Bill MacDonald, Commander (Ret.), Don Macnamara, Brigadier General (Ret.), Paula Skippon, EX 2 (Ret.), Bob Stewart, Major General (Ret.), Bill Weston, Colonel (Ret.) Murray Watkin, Lieutenant Commander (Ret).

John C Eggenberger, Colonel (Ret.)

President, RUSI VI ☸

APPROVAL FOR THE SYNOPSIS (AND COMMENT) IS SOUGHT: SO TO DO PLEASE CALL A DIRECTOR OR SEND AN EMAIL TO: membership@rusiviccda.org
