



*Mainland BC*

# **Military Family Resource Centre**

## **News release**

Oct. 16, 2017

### **BCMFRC puts families first with emergency preparedness training for loved ones of military and first responders**

Vernon, BC – In times of crisis and natural disasters such as the recent spate of wildfires, we rely on the help of military members and first responders to keep us safe. But while they're looking after us, who's looking after their loved ones?

The Mainland BC Military Family Resource Centre (BCMFRC) is putting families first and mustering the first ever emergency preparedness session in Vernon designed to meet the specific needs of families of military members and first responders in emergency situations.

"During a crisis, the natural reaction for families is to gather together as quickly as possible. However, for families of military members and first responders, that instinct often must be temporarily set aside so service can be given to others. BCMFRC is presenting this session to ensure family members are equally prepared when they become the ones left behind," said Tracy Cromwell, executive director of BCMFRC.

The lives of military and first responder families are unique in light of the combination of stressors they face that may include frequent relocations, persistent short and long-term separation, and the constant risk involved in training and deployed operations. In a thesis examining how military and first responders endeavour to balance professional and personal duties, author Joseph Shorrocks concluded that personal and family disaster preparedness and planning was found to significantly reduce the professional's perceived role strain and conflict.

Lieutenant Colonel Mike McGinty, the Vernon-based commanding officer of the Canadian Armed Forces British Columbia Dragoons, has been deployed twice to Iraq and Afghanistan and once to Bosnia, and is well-acquainted with the reality of being separated from family. The first time he went to Afghanistan, his daughter was 11 months old and his wife, who was still serving full-time in the Armed Forces, was three months pregnant.

"I was a squadron commander, directly engaging the enemy in combat. The honest truth was that I simply didn't have the capacity to think much about what was going on at home and had to concentrate on the task at hand. That said, it was only possible because my wife is one tough cookie and knew there was little practical value I could offer given I had my hands full. She simply coped with everything at home on her own," said Lieutenant Colonel McGinty.

Lieutenant Colonel McGinty, who now commands the army's BC response force known as the Territorial Battalion Group, believes the emergency preparedness session will give families of military members and first responders the vital tools they need to deal with a crisis. In the event of an emergency, military members and first responders will have peace of mind, knowing their families are safe, and be able to

focus completely on helping their communities and the province as a whole.

The emergency preparedness session for families of military members and first responders takes place in Vernon on Oct. 29, 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m., at the Okanagan Regional Library – Vernon Branch at 2800 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue. To find out more and/or sign up, go to [www.bcmfrc.com](http://www.bcmfrc.com).

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