



SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

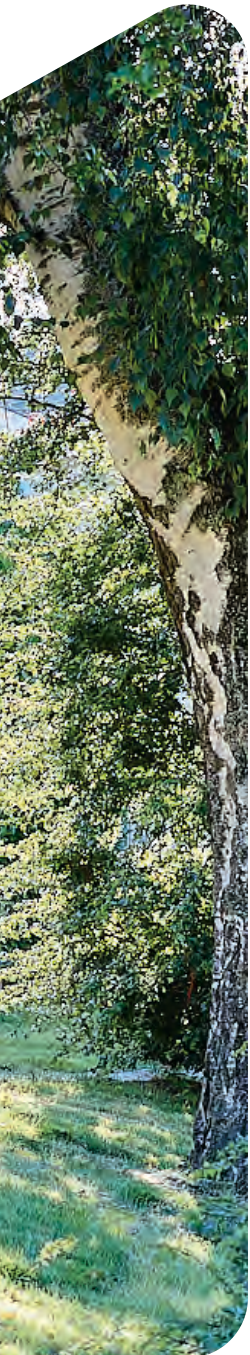
# Year in Review 2023-2024

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# Welcome



As Canadians we rely on the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to protect our collective safety and security. Domestically, extreme weather events are causing provinces and territories to call on our military much more frequently. It is important to take a moment to appreciate, and more fully understand, the role played by the Canadian military in responding to natural disasters. The support offered by the CAF, both Regular and Reserve Force members, goes beyond the simple addition of workforce to supplement civilian emergency forces that are already on the ground. Internationally, Canada must maintain a reliable, persistent military presence to uphold the global rules that underpin our prosperity and sovereignty.

At Support Our Troops, our commitment is to stand alongside military families and communities. As the official charitable cause of the CAF, we exist to help military personnel, Veterans, and their families mitigate many unique stressors that may present themselves as a result of military service. In 2023, we were extremely proud and honored to once again fulfill this role in different communities in Canada.

Over the past year, the generosity and support of our donors allowed our charitable fund to make a difference in the lives of over 6,000 individual families. This support takes many forms, including, but not limited to, emergency grants for military families living through financial hardship; subsidized tutoring and summer camp grants for children and youth experiencing unique challenges; and educational supports for military family members looking to pursue post-secondary studies. All these initiatives not only add to the health and wellness of the military community, but also indirectly contribute to the reconstitution efforts of the CAF.

In this report, you will find everyday examples of how Canadians can both get support and provide support through their generosity. As the Senior Vice President of Military Family Services, I am extremely proud of what the Support Our Troops community has achieved over the past year. I invite you to take a few minutes to learn more about our impact on military communities. Your involvement and interest are a significant asset to the military family constituency, as you are a mission critical piece of what we do.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurie Ogilvie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Laurie Ogilvie**

Senior Vice-President, Military Family Services

# Support Our Troops At a Glance

## Who we are

Support Our Troops is the official charitable cause of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).

Through our donors' generous contributions and community support, we empower our military community to face the unique challenges resulting from military life with dignity.

## Who we support

- Serving CAF Members
- Veterans
- Military families

## How we support

Our donors' generosity allows us to fund the following programs:

- Emergency Financial Assistance
- Special Needs Grants
- Ill and injured support
- National Scholarship Program and Education supports
- National Summer Camp Program
- Community Development Grants
- Region-Specific Grants



# What we achieved with your help

Our donors' ongoing support means that our military members, Veterans, and their families can receive timely assistance when they turn to Support Our Troops for help.

In fiscal year **2023-2024**, our donors generously donated **\$1.9M** making it possible for **6,869 military members** and families to benefit from Support Our Troops programs.





# 2023-2024 in Review

Support for our Canadian Armed Forces members, Veterans, and their families.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and partners, we supported **almost 7000 members and their families** with grants and programs that improved their financial wellbeing and helped them adapt to an illness or injury. Examples of the support we have provided over the last year include:



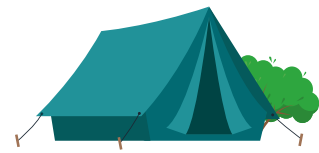
## 133 Military Families

with a child with special needs received a grant.



## 366 Members

assisted through an Emergency Grant providing financial support during an immediate financial distress situation.



## 400 Military Children

enjoyed summer camp for the 10<sup>th</sup> annual National Summer Camps Program.



## 1,401 Military Families

assisted through the Holiday Hamper Program.



## 96 Military Dependents

received a scholarship to pursue their academic dreams through the National Scholarship Program.



## 28 CAF Members

received a bursary to expand their education.



# Our Impact

## Helping our CAF families access support for children with disabilities

### Programs that make a difference

Because of the unique nature of their lifestyles, Canadian military families can experience a great deal of stress in finding and receiving appropriate healthcare.

In fiscal year 2023-2024, Support Our Troops continued to deploy several programs that directly benefited Canada's military families who live with a child or dependent facing disabilities or illness.

Newly posted military families often find themselves on wait lists for medical care. For a military family with a child with disabilities or illness, the challenges can be truly daunting. In fact, several studies concluded that CAF families with children who have complex needs face more relocation-related stressors than others. Interrupting their interrelated social, health and education support systems during relocation may impact the child's development and well-being.

Beyond significant wait times, when relocating military families caring for a child with disabilities or illness often lose access to critical services such as occupational therapy, speech language pathology, or physiotherapy. As a result, a child can go without specialized care for extended periods. Military families in Canada often take on heavy financial burdens to support a child requiring individualized accommodations, potentially paying out of pocket for timely access to needed services.



## Special Needs Grants

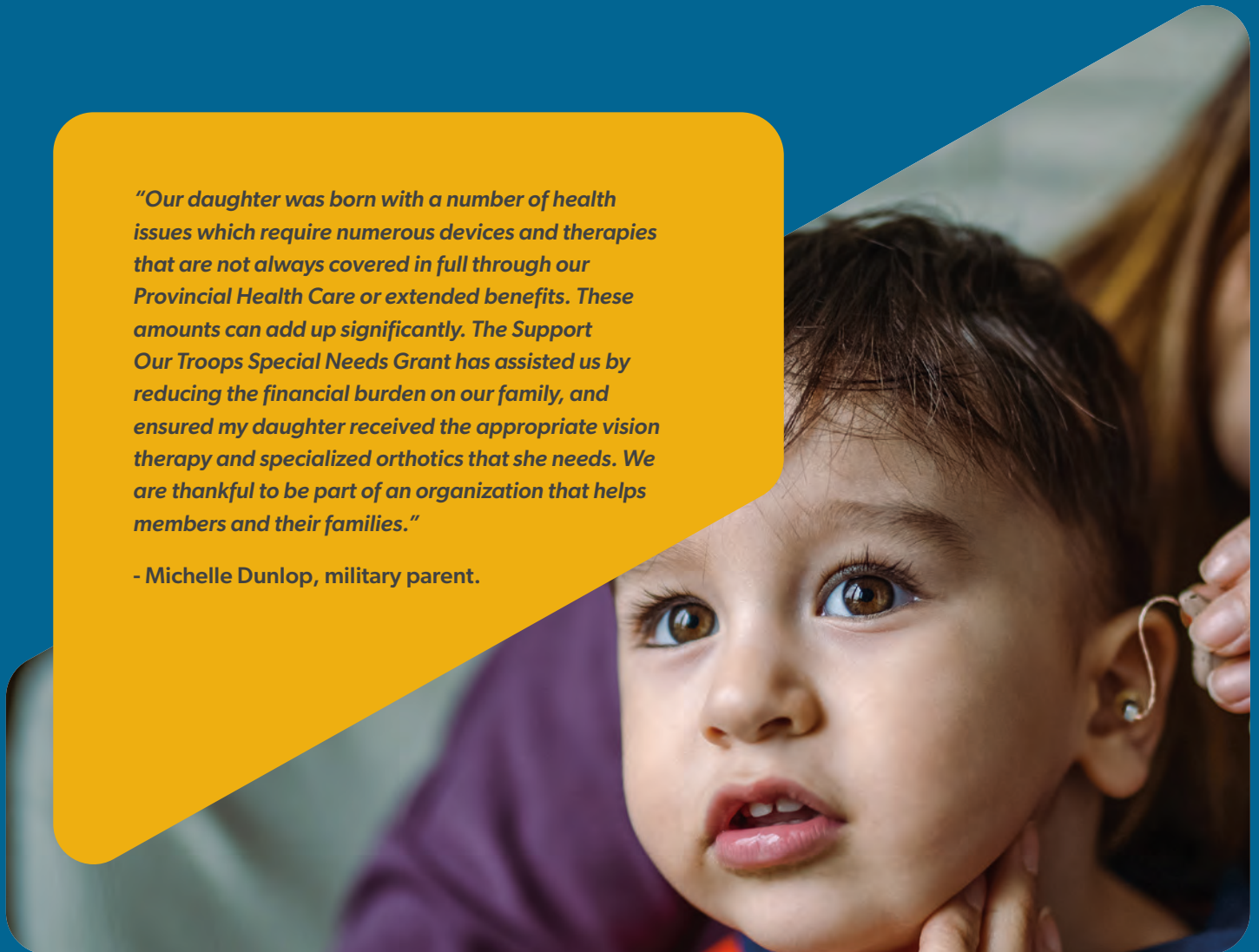
Over 130 military families with special needs dependents received a Special Needs Grant to assist with assessments and reassessments, as well as to offset some of the extraordinary costs associated with supports like specialized devices, respite care, therapy, and medical travel. The Special Needs Grants program provides two types of financial support for Regular and Reserve Force members with a dependent family member who have a diagnosed physical, intellectual, or emotional condition requiring special medical or educational services:

- A grant for assessments and reassessments not covered by federal, provincial or local resources, or personal insurance;
- A grant to offset costs associated with assistive devices, respite care, therapy, medical travel, prescriptions not covered by insurance.

The average grant for families totaled \$1,200. The grant helped to facilitate immediate access to a wide range of cognitive, physical, social, emotional or communicative services for children throughout the military family community.

*"Our daughter was born with a number of health issues which require numerous devices and therapies that are not always covered in full through our Provincial Health Care or extended benefits. These amounts can add up significantly. The Support Our Troops Special Needs Grant has assisted us by reducing the financial burden on our family, and ensured my daughter received the appropriate vision therapy and specialized orthotics that she needs. We are thankful to be part of an organization that helps members and their families."*

- Michelle Dunlop, military parent.





## National Summer Camp Program

For a tenth year in a row, the National Summer Camps Program offered children of eligible, serving military families of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Community the opportunity to receive reimbursement grants to attend an accredited summer camp of their choice (day or residential camp).

Thanks to the generous contributions from donors across Canada, Support Our Troops supported the camp attendance of 400 children of military families, including nearly 130 children with disabilities or illness. Each participating family received a reimbursement grant of up to a maximum of \$1,100 towards camp fees for day or residential camp of their choice. This valuable program saw participation from every province in Canada and facilitated participation in a wide variety of licensed summer camps from across the country.

Additionally, when children from military families elect to attend a day camp delivered by Personnel Support Programs (PSP) at a local Base or Wing, Support Our Troops helps ensure that Recreation Inclusion Facilitators for Summer Camp remain available to provide inclusive support to special needs children from military families. The support guarantees that children with disabilities or illness can enjoy the summer camp with the assistance they need.

*"As a military family, we're far away from our families, and our children often lose friends to postings. In addition, the fact that they have special needs and health issues, puts an extra emotional and financial burden on us. So it was very reassuring to know that they were safe in such a reputable camp. As a parent, it gave us some respite to take care of ourselves while they were away. We knew they were in good hands, having fun, experiencing new things and making new friends. They came home with greater confidence and memories to last a lifetime. Our family is so grateful to have been given this enormous gift. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts!" - Military parent.*





## 800-hours of tutoring to support students with disabilities in CAF families

### Assisting CAF families with tailored educational support

Curriculum interruption and the requirement for military connected children to repeatedly adapt to new schools are very real challenges for CAF families. For students with disabilities, the challenges are further amplified, especially when available support programs and wait lists can vary between posting locations both inside and outside of Canada.

As we assist families with educational pathway planning, we continuously hear about the effect school transitions have on the well-being of the whole family. The impact on children is also cited as one of the topmost influential reasons for a member choosing to exit the CAF at a time when we need to retain and recruit as many qualified members as possible. Parents indicate that their children with unique learning requirements are often locked out of existing funding opportunities as they fall outside of the parameters of eligibility; the struggle to support their child's learning often takes a financial toll if families engage in costly tutoring support at their own expense. Even for parents who may be able to shoulder the costs initially, they often are unable to continue necessary levels of tutoring support; if tutoring is required for more than one of their children, the support is even more tenuous.

In response to this need, we initiated the Support Our Troops Tutoring Program. Thanks to the generosity of donors, the program opened in September of 2023, offering \$1,000 to each eligible child from kindergarten to grade 12. After its first year, we are heartened by the participation and feedback. Collective participant responses indicate that 82% of families feel better equipped to navigate a school transition because of program funding and 100% of families said that they would recommend the program to others.

Andrea Smith, Senior Manager of the Military Family Services Education Team, heard the plea directly from military families. She reflects on what she refers to as her team's 'passion project': *"If we are serious about responding to the needs of families and contributing to the recruitment and retention of CAF members, we need to keep delivering programs with tangible results that members feel matter to them and their children. They are telling us that this tutoring support to help their children with learning disabilities matters."*

Andrea looks forward to enhancing the program but acknowledges that *"it is only through the generous contributions of donors that we are able to provide support in this way."* Perhaps a participating family who reported the following, sums up the positive impact of this type of support best: *"The funding was able to help lower our anxiety, benefit our child and reduce the strain on our mental health."*

As a former military connected child, Kayla Tarnaske, Project Coordinator for the Support Our Troops Tutoring Program knows the unique educational challenges that military-connected children face. *"I take immense pride in administering the Support Our Troops Tutoring Program. This role allows me to hear firsthand from parents about how their children are thriving thanks to this program. It's an honour to support their educational journey"*.



# Thank You To Our Generous Donors

## Donor feature:

### Lockheed Martin Canada's support for our military community

#### Continuing to support children of military families

While Lockheed Martin Canada's technology and innovative solutions continue to keep our CAF members safe, the company's generosity supports our military families at home. Lockheed Martin Canada's generous gift in fiscal year 2023-2024 helped 32 children of military families experience the joy of summer camps through our National Summer Camps Program.

Additionally, Lockheed Martin Canada's supported mental health projects for children of military families across five locations, including:

- **Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program:** 249 military children in Esquimalt and Calgary could access the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program. The library is dedicated to inspiring lifelong love of reading in kids. Thanks to this program, each participating child will continue to receive a free, high-quality, age-appropriate book in the mail monthly, from birth to five.
- **Teen Totes:** The National Capital Region was able to provide a total of 105 'Teen Totes' to military youth aged 13 to 18. The totes are a resource pack focused on wellness, mental health, empowerment, personal development and the development of independence skills.
- **Weekend retreat:** Military youth went on weekend retreat to Montreal to bond and deepen social bonds with their military peers. The intent of the retreat was to raise mental health awareness, reduce stigma, and provide practical tools and coping strategies to effectively manage the stress associated with the military lifestyle.
- **Resources for children experiencing parental absence:** The Military Family Resource Centre in Halifax developed helpful resources for children and youth experiencing parental absence particularly during deployments. This initiative included workshops (Supporting Kids through Deployment and Supporting Kids through Reunion), short videos, coloring pages about deployment and an activity guide (Deployed Together).

*"Lockheed Martin supports the Canadian Armed Forces community because we are committed to ensuring the safety and security of our allies. By providing advanced technology, training, and support, we empower the Canadian military to defend and protect the nation. Our partnership is built on a shared dedication to excellence, innovation, and the well-being of those who serve." Ilana Goldfarb, Lockheed Martin Canada.*

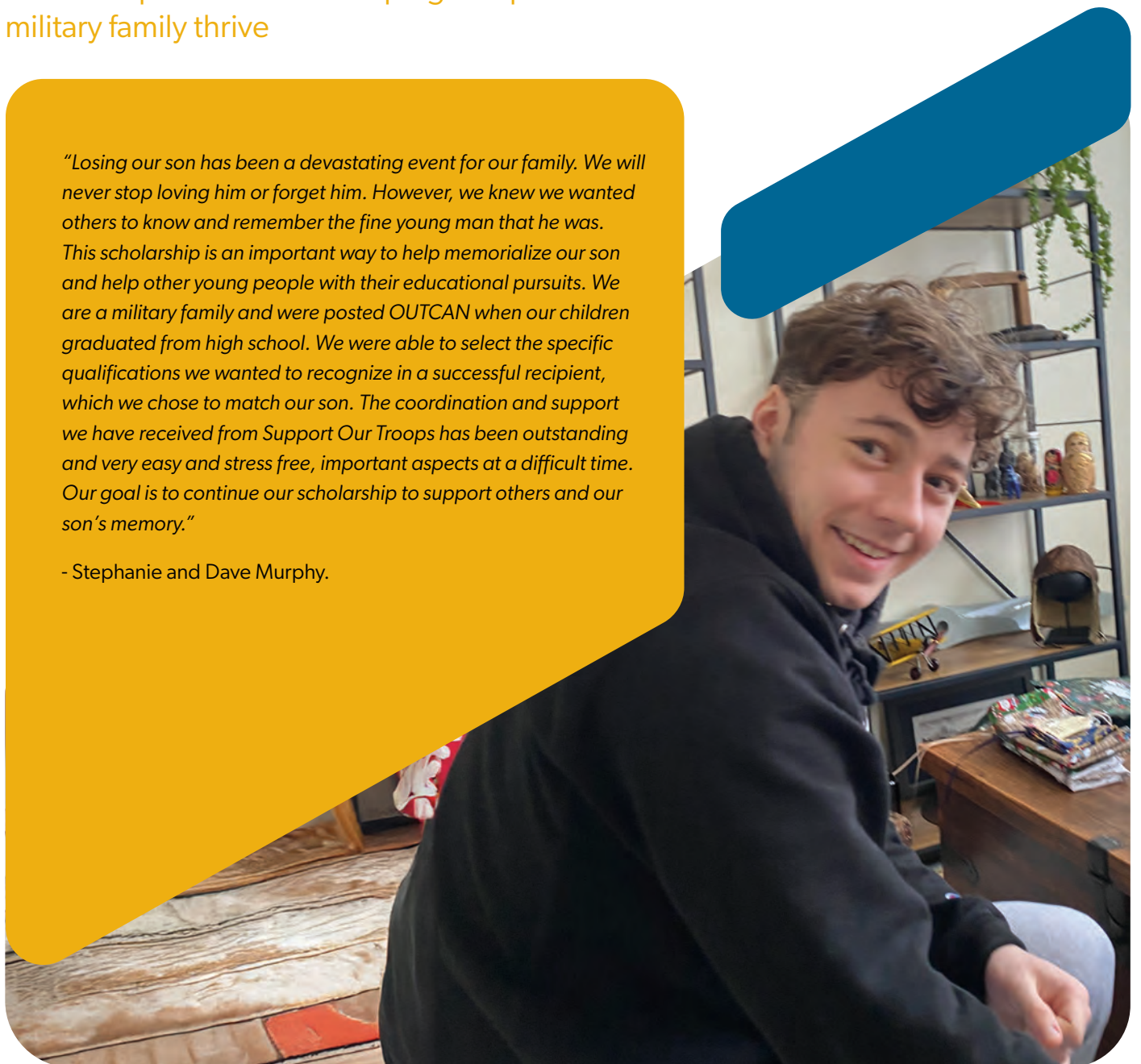
# Donor feature:

## Stephanie and Dave Murphy

In memory of their son Broden, in 2022 Stephanie and Dave Murphy started supporting the Broden Murphy Memorial Scholarship - a \$1,000 annual scholarship dedicated to helping a dependent of a military family thrive

*"Losing our son has been a devastating event for our family. We will never stop loving him or forget him. However, we knew we wanted others to know and remember the fine young man that he was. This scholarship is an important way to help memorialize our son and help other young people with their educational pursuits. We are a military family and were posted OUTCAN when our children graduated from high school. We were able to select the specific qualifications we wanted to recognize in a successful recipient, which we chose to match our son. The coordination and support we have received from Support Our Troops has been outstanding and very easy and stress free, important aspects at a difficult time. Our goal is to continue our scholarship to support others and our son's memory."*

- Stephanie and Dave Murphy.



# Get Involved

Our donors are at the heart of Support Our Troops.

With their support, each year we have a positive and tangible impact on the lives of thousands of military members and their families.

Canadians across the country are part of the Support Our Troops community of donors through several initiatives that help us to bring support to our troops.

## Signature event:

### Navy Bike Ride returned for in-person events across the country

Over **1,200** participants and over **\$36,000** raised.

The Navy Bike Ride returned to hosting in-person events in 2023 in Esquimalt, Quebec City, Ottawa and Halifax. The fundraiser event was also boosted by a virtual component held throughout June.

Over 1,200 participants joined across the country to cycle and fundraise over \$36,000 to Support Our Troops, Soldier On, and the Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund.

Alongside being a key fundraising event, the Navy Bike Ride's outreach gives Canadians the opportunity to get to know our Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and learn about the sailors serving our country.

We were thrilled to celebrate the Canadian Leaders at Sea, a group of Canadian business leaders who support our Navy, as the top fundraising team raising over \$5,500.

*"Understanding the importance and breadth of the work that Support Our Troops does within the Canadian military community helped to motivate and drive our team's fundraising efforts. We're honoured to have led the pack in fundraising for this event."*

*- Jeff Topping, Canadian Leaders at Sea Team Captain for the 2023 Navy Bike Ride.*

Signature event:

## Canada Army Run, where Canadians connect with today's modern Army

Over **13,000 participants** and **\$250,000 raised**

Canada Army Run continues to be a signature fundraising event for the Canadian Armed Forces official charitable causes, Support Our Troops and Soldier On.


This year, over 13,000 participants walked, ran, or rolled either in person or virtually to celebrate our modern Canadian Army.

Canada Army Run, known for its dog tags and CADPAT lined streets, welcomed back their in-person half marathon and their unique Commander's Challenge which includes the 5km as well as a half marathon.

The magic of Canada Army Run has always been its participants. This year was no different. Many fundraising teams, military and corporate, came together to support the CAF community. This year's top fundraising team, the 56 Field Grit Grinders led by Patrick Pitt, raised over \$12,000.

*"The 56 Field Regiment registered and continue to register a team annually as a means to promote fitness with goals for all levels of runners; build esprit-de-corps; and raise funds and awareness for noble not-for-profit organizations that care for fellow veterans. As we recruit members to our team they invite friends and family who in turn advocate for the Canada Army Run. We have had Honourary Grit Grinders from as far as Ottawa and former members of unit deployed in the Iraq. We love playing the role of the heel on social media antagonizing and challenging others to keep up with our fundraising efforts. Because whether we lead or not, Support our Troops and Soldier On Canada wins!"*

- Patrick Pitt.



The top 10 individual fundraisers were celebrated with the gift of a beautiful custom jacket from CANEX, Canada's Military Store and preferred retail provider of the CAF community, presented by the Commander of the Canadian Army, Lieutenant-General Jocelyn Paul.



## CAF Appreciation Nights: Partnering with professional sports teams across Canada to support our troops

Over **\$200,000 raised** while cheering for our professional sports teams across Canada... **Let's go!**

Through our partnerships with professional sports teams across Canada, including the NHL, CFL, MLB, NBA, we continue to raise funds and amplify our Support Our Troops yellow ribbon brand and cause while building memories for life for all who join in!

In fiscal year 2023-2024, thanks to the popularity of the CAF Appreciation Nights, \$200,000 was raised to directly benefit our military communities. Thank you to all Canadians who took part in these nights and showed their support for our troops.

*"This is a game we mark on our calendars every year. It is an honour and a privilege to be able to host members of the Canadian Armed Forces at a Calgary Flames game and in the Scotiabank Saddledome. Not only does this allow us to show our appreciation for the service and sacrifice our service people and their families make, it also provides a platform for our fans to do the same." - John Bean, President and CEO, Calgary Sports and Entertainment Corporation.*



## The Support Our Troops Licence Plate Program: **An easy and creative way for Canadians to rally support for our military**

Drivers in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan can show their support for our troops by ordering a Support Our Troops themed licence plate. The plates feature our signature Yellow Ribbon, exemplifying the story of Canadians from coast to coast coming together to show their gratitude to our military. Funds raised from the sale of the plates help Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

Highlight of impact: Alberta

In fiscal year 2023-2024, 144 military members and their families received assistance thanks to the funds raised. A few highlights include:

- 11 children received tablets to stay connected with their deployed parent.
- 56 newly posted families received funding to sign their children up for a club, activity or sports the first year of their deployment.
- 8 children received a scholarship to pursue their post-secondary education.

Thanks to proceeds from the program, over **167 military families assisted**





Over **\$125,000** raised this year through our partnership with Funding Innovation

## Art Easel Program: Keepsake art prints to support our military families

The Art Easel Program, an initiative by Funding Innovation, helps to connect Canadians to charitable organizations, including Support Our Troops.

Through this initiative, by making successful bids on high end auctioned Canadian-crafted and officially licensed art prints, Canadians are helping to raise funds for military families.

Our partnership with Funding Innovation began in 2017 and has since provided substantial support to military members and their families with over \$1.5 million raised.

A key focus of the Art Easel program has been our Airways of Heroes program, partnering with 20 airports throughout Canada. With the re-activation of the art easels at the Calgary International Airport this year, the Airways for Heroes initiative raised over \$121,000.

We continue to find new opportunities for this incredible program, which allows Canadians to bid on fine art prints (sports, music, fine arts) and bring home these great pieces of art while supporting our military community.



## CANEX Gives Back:

# Supporting our military community with a bi-annual campaign

CANEX, Canada's Military Store, runs a bi-annual fundraising campaign named "CANEX Gives Back". Customers are offered the opportunity to donate at the cash or online and CANEX matches these donations dollar for dollar to give back to the CAF community through Support Our Troops and Soldier On.


In fiscal year 2023-2024, customers across the country showed their commitment to their CAF community again!

- In June, CANEX Gives Back raised \$35,749 providing funding for 3 Inclusion Workers at the CFB Borden PSP Camp and 24 Soldier On Equipment Grants.
- In December, a record \$40,841 was raised, providing 153 Holiday Hampers to military families and 27 Soldier On Equipment Grants.

**Contributing to Holiday Hampers, inclusion workers and more**







# **THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS FOR ANOTHER REMARKABLE YEAR!**

If you would like to join our community of donors  
or explore if any of our programs could assist you,  
please visit: [supportourtroops.ca](http://supportourtroops.ca)



SUPPORT OUR TROOPS