

MESSES

Steeped in a rich military heritage and tradition, messes have been used by the Canadian Forces (CF) throughout Canada's history to **foster morale and promote military values including camaraderie and unit cohesiveness**. Messes give members a strong sense of commitment to the ideas, objectives and the basic responsibility expected of them within the CF and set the standard for military service within Canada.

To this day, CF messes retain a functional role as social and dining clubs, and are the centre of social life for units, stations bases and ships. They enhance the esprit de corps of units, lighten the load of demanding day-to-day work, give commanders an opportunity to meet socially with their troops, and enable CF members of all ranks to create bonds of friendship and better working relations through an atmosphere of good fellowship.

The CF maintains five categories of messes: the Officers Mess; Warrant Officers and Sergeants' Mess or Chief and Petty Officers Mess; the Junior Ranks Club; the Officer Cadet Mess; and, in some locations, Combined Messes. In Maritime Command, the Officers Mess is called the Wardroom. In some smaller CF Units the officers and senior non-commissioned officers share the same mess.

The Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency (CFPSA) provides support to all CF messes. Specifically, PSP Hospitality Services provides expertise on operational and management practices and assists mess managers in providing quality mess hospitality services.

MISSION AND VISION

Mission

Messes provide the environment for all CF members to promote the traditions and values of Canadian Forces duty. They promote courage, teamwork, discipline and honour. Messes serve to perpetuate the military ethos in the profession of arms and are an instrument of socialization to the members and their families. Messes foster morale in both peace and war.

Vision

Messes, universal in relevance, will be flexible and adaptive to their memberships and military communities' needs thus allowing all members to identify with the unique aspects of Canadian military life. Messes are recognized as an important and relevant part of their members' personal and professional lives. Messes are to be supported by all levels of CF leadership, and will be provided with public and non-public resources.

FACTS AND QUESTIONS

Where does the term "mess" come from?

The term mess comes from the Latin term "mensa" meaning tables. "Mesa" is Spanish for table and "mes" in old Gothic means a dish. The English word originally meant four, and at large meal gatherings diners were seated in fours.

How did messes become a military tradition?

Nearly every aspect of military life is rooted in custom or symbolism, and messes are no exception. Dating back hundreds of years to the time of the Roman Legions, the tradition began as way for victors to relish their triumphs and share the spoils of battle. This, naturally, included a large feast.

Saxon England adopted this ancient tradition during the 10th century, and by this time, messes and "dining out" had become more than a military pig-out.

Rules were established about the dining procedures, and strict protocol was observed. In addition, those in attendance were entertained by feats of strength and skill. Leaders always sat at the head of the table, while lesser guests sat in order of rank.

During the 18th century, officer's messes began to appear in the British army. Over time messes became a place where comradeship and regimental esprit de corps flourished in an informal and friendly atmosphere.