



# TOWN OF SIDNEY

## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DATE: September 9, 2010**

#### **FREEDOM OF THE TOWN OF SIDNEY BESTOWED TO THE 443 HELICOPTER SQUADRON**

The 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron, based out of the Victoria International Airport, will exercise their "Freedom of the Town" on Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The tradition of granting Freedom of the City to a military unit goes back more than three centuries and, through the years, the Freedom of the City has become a symbol of trust and friendship that develops between a military unit and the citizens of a municipality.

The official ceremony which will recognize the 443 Squadron's long and distinguished service to the community and Canada, will begin with a parade which will step off from the Mary Winspear Community Centre at 10:30 am. Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Peter Allan will lead 60 Canadian Forces members and the Squadron's Pipes and Drums Band in a parade down Beacon Avenue with "colours flying, bayonets fixed and drums beating" to Sidney Town Hall where the Chief Constable will challenge the parade's advance. Following a short ceremony, His Worship, Mayor Larry Cross will inspect the Guard of Honour and read a proclamation. The Chief Constable will then allow the parade to continue down Sidney Avenue to Beacon Avenue, between Second and Third Streets, for the unveiling of the plaque commemorating the occasion.

"Our connection to the 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron goes back to the early 1940's" said Mayor Larry Cross of Sidney. "It is a relationship that we value and one we want to foster."

The 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron has been an active participant in several operations in support of the United Nations and International Forces in recent years. The Squadron supported maritime interdiction missions to Haiti in 1994 and to the Arabian Gulf from 1995 to 2000 and the 1999 mission to East Timor. 443 Squadron has been directly involved in the Arabian Sea as part of Canada's contribution to the War on Terrorism.

To date 443 (MH) Squadron has provided West Coast Helicopter Air Detachments for Her Majesty's Canadian Ships. In addition to its current role, 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron has several secondary duties including Search and Rescue, Sovereignty Surveillance, support to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and to the RCMP. (See attached historical information on 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron.)

**For further information contact:**

**Larry Cross, Mayor  
Town of Sidney  
250-655-1139**

**Kenny Podmore, Councillor  
Town of Sidney  
250-655-4631**

## 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron

443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron traces its roots to No. 127 Fighter Squadron RCAF, one of several fighter squadrons of Canada's Eastern Air Command, formed in the early months of 1942. Equipped with Canadian-built Hawker Hurricanes, the Squadron conducted air defence operations while stationed at Gander, Newfoundland and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

With the diminished threat to North America and in preparation for the invasion of continental Europe, No. 127 (F) Squadron, along with a further 5 RCAF home-based squadrons, transferred to the United Kingdom and re-designated as 443 (F) Squadron RCAF (to fit within the Air Ministry's designation convention) in February, 1944 and equipped with the Supermarine Spitfire Mk.IX. 443 Squadron, along with her sister squadrons 441 and 442, commenced flying operations with 144 (F) Wing RCAF, W/C Johnnie Johnson commanding, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Air Force just prior to the Normandy Invasion. 144 (F) Wing RCAF was the first Allied air wing to operate from French soil. These operations continued until August 1944. The Squadron then hop-scotched across France, Belgium, and Holland with 126 and 127 (F) Wings RCAF until "VE" Day, continuing to serve with the British Occupation Forces until disbanding in March 1946.

In 1951, 443 (F) Squadron (Aux) was reformed at Sea Island, Vancouver as a Day Fighter Squadron in the RCAF Auxiliary, first flying P-51 Mustangs and eventually F-86 Sabres. In 1958, with the RCAF Auxiliary assuming the roles of Civil Defence, Search and Rescue and Light Transport, 443 (Aux) Squadron was re-equipped with the C-45 Expeditor and later the DHC-3 Otter and performed these roles until its second disbandment in March of 1964.

A decade later, in Shearwater, Nova Scotia, the Royal Canadian Navy's only ship-borne helicopter squadron HS 50 (HS is the NATO designation for a Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron) was successfully meeting the needs of the Navy; however, to better administer HS 50 Squadron, it was split into HS 423 and HS 443 in September of 1974. Each squadron was tasked with continuing to provide the Commander of Maritime Command with operational Sea King Helicopter Detachments.

In response to the ever-growing need for ship-borne helicopter assets in the Pacific, HS 443 Squadron was transferred to Victoria International Airport at Pat Bay, British Columbia in July of 1989 where it now provides the Commander of Maritime Forces Pacific with four Helicopter Air Detachments. Early in 1995, HS 443 was re-designated as 443 Maritime Helicopter (MH) Squadron to better fit the ever-changing geopolitical situations and the increasingly diverse roles of maritime helicopters and the ships they support. While 443 (MH) Squadron is part of 12 Wing on the east coast, it receives administrative support from CFB Esquimalt.

443 (MH) Squadron has been an active participant in several operations in support of the United Nations and International Forces in recent years. The Squadron supported maritime interdiction missions to Haiti in 1994 (Op FORWARD ACTION) and to the Arabian Gulf from 1995 to 2000 (Op TRANQUILITY, PREVENTION, AUGMENTATION, MERCATOR) and the 1999 mission to East Timor in support of INTERFET (Op TOUCAN). More recently, 443 Squadron has been directly involved in Operation APOLLO in the Arabian Sea as part of Canada's contribution to the War on Terrorism.

To date 443 (MH) Squadron has provided West Coast Helicopter Air Detachments for Her Majesty's Canadian Ships ANNAPOLIS, ATHABASKAN, ALGONQUIN, HURON, CALGARY, REGINA, OTTAWA, VANCOUVER, WINNIPEG, PROVIDER, and PROTECTEUR. In addition to its current operational role, 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron has several secondary duties including Search and Rescue, Sovereignty Surveillance, support to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and support to the RCMP.

The personnel of 443 (MH) Squadron are committed to providing combat ready helicopters, as well as air and ground crews to conduct embarked and shore-based air operations in direct support of Maritime Forces Pacific.