

Ontario's new Lieutenant-Governor takes position with local regiment



By Brock Weir

When Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Ontario's new Lieutenant-Governor, departed for London last month, among her 19 engagements were meetings with The Queen and the Prince of Wales.

The Queen's representative in Ontario, however, had a quieter task on her agenda, one that didn't make the headlines, but which proved last week to be a significant one. Following meetings at Buckingham Palace, Clarence House, and the newly re-opened Canada House, the Lieutenant-Governor visited the small town of Honiton in Devon, where she placed one of the Queen's York Rangers' (QYR) Challenge Coins in Wolford Chapel, the final resting place of Sir John Graves Simcoe, the first person to hold her office, and the man who formed what is now the QYR based in Toronto and Aurora.

"My predecessor [David Onley] has talked about the history, the linkage of the crown, the military and the current job as Lieutenant-Governor, and that really came home to me when I visited Wolford Chapel and saw the burial ground of the very first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada," Ms. Dowdeswell tells *The Auran*. "You can see how the military has such a strong connection, but it is all about service both for the military and the Lieutenant-Governor."

Last Wednesday, Simcoe's birthday, both Mr. Onley and Ms. Dowdeswell were on hand at the Fort York Armoury as the former passed the torch – in this case, Simcoe's very own 230-year-old sword – to the latter, formally investing her as Colonel of the Regiment.

"It is my privilege to welcome you into your new role," said Mr. Onley at the ceremony, which was also attended by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard, and several members of the local cadet corps.

Mr. Onley spoke of efforts which began five years ago when he first assumed office to formally restore links between the office of the Lieutenant-Governor and the QYR, a task which was completed, the links of which were put in place in perpetuity.

"It is fitting that the Queen's York Rangers have been reunited with the office of Lieutenant-Governor and that your service, ma'am, to the Crown and the people should be carried on together with this Regiment. I know you will honour that legacy."

Ms. Dowdeswell left no doubt she was up to the challenge.

"It is a great privilege for me to carry on as Colonel of the Regiment," she responded. "This regiment has a long and storied history with which I am so proud to be associated. In fact, I am so committed to serving you I agreed, albeit with certain coercing, to be

fitted for this very fine uniform!

?It was a brilliant idea to bring these two historic institutions together and I would like to thank all of you for your dedication to our collective stories. I must admit I am no military historian, but I do understand our province and our country owe you a debt of gratitude. From serving with Simcoe in the American Revolution to building roads, to serving in both World Wars and in recent conflicts, the Queen's York Rangers First American Regiment continues to remain swift and bold as a reserve armoured recognisance unit.?

Reflecting on the transition from one Colonel of the Regiment to another, Ms. Dowdeswell told The Auran Mr. Onley told her to enjoy herself in the role and, most importantly, be herself. Every Lieutenant-Governor is ?always a little bit different?, but what binds them together is not just a sense of ?duty to ensure the integrity of the Crown in Canada, but a real opportunity to serve Ontarians well in a variety of ways.?

?There are all kinds of possibilities,? she says. ?I said I wanted to spend a couple of months listening to Ontarians to find out what they were really concerned about and what they wanted me to focus on. I have talked to literally hundreds of Ontarians over the past few months and I am starting to understand how proud they are of this province and what they want to do to show this province to the rest of the world.

?Everything from the amazing work we do in science and technology. For some, it is their care for the environment. For others, it is [a question of] how do you build a just and sustainable community that is socially inclusive? It varies from person to person.?

