



# Wing Drift

June 2025

## *Message from the 447 Wing Chair*

Greetings one and all:

Since our last issue in the spring your Wing has been busy and while on the surface things seem the same, in reality progress continues to be made in securing a bona fide operating model for our “Wing” business. Policy, procedure, codes of conduct, confidentiality and workplace harassment free policies have been put in place and staff and Board Members are adhering to the new policies. At the end of the day when a new administration takes over, a smooth-running operation will await to assist in a smooth transition to a new executive.

One of the major hurdles facing 447 Wing is the membership’s shrinking numbers and the fact that most of our members have seen more sun rise happenings than they have left. We are in a senior membership category, and each year we lose membership to those who pass away. Finding and securing new blood for membership is not easy as our younger folks are not motivated to join as they have other avenues to spend their precious free time.

The 447 Wing sponsors our entrepreneurial enterprise known as The Wing. This is no small endeavor, and the Board of directors works diligently to ensure that our end product is good and that we serve the community and strive to meet the high ideals espoused by The Royal Canadian Airforce Association.

To that end, seven board members meet on a monthly basis to plan events, meet challenges and ensure that our business model is operating in a clean, hazard free environment. Your Board of Directors, each with their own talents are dedicated to ensuring that our staff are provided for in terms of a fair employment opportunity and that our premises remain operational to maintain our public health license etc.

Without the dedication of these seven people the business would fold and The Wing footprint in the community would be severely diminished. To each of them, I as Board Chair tip my “wedge” to say a sincere thank you.

On the landlord side of the equation, there are modest steps forward only to be met with a regression to some problematic issues. The landlord is absent and has a person maintaining his business for him. This intermediary always has to ask permission before acting and this slows repairs etc. down considerably. We have another twenty months of our existing lease. He learns as we have. Interesting times ahead.

I impart to you information which was given at our last general meeting in May. Bill and Marg Grahlman who were the heart and soul of The Wing for a prolonged period of time are both quite ill in hospital. They are on the road to recovery; their journey will be long and very tedious and a return to their primary abode is probably not an option. Marg has very severe heart issues and Bill has had a small stroke. We wish them both well on their journey back to the best health possible.

Our Wing Vice-chair, Jim Hooton, has returned to decent health and mobility and is once again able to drive about town. He had a long tedious recovery from a fall last December and we are glad that he has progressed back to a healthy situation.

In May, the RCAFA 447 (Hamilton) Wing entered the Annual Caledonia Chili Cook Off. Congratulations to Bev Cuffe for winning the ‘Best Alternative’ Chili. Congratulations to Bev!

One of our servers is retiring. Lise, who has been with The Wing for many years, is leaving as this article goes to the press and we thank her for her service, and we wish her well in her retirement years. She will be missed.

## *Message from the 447 Wing Chair (Continued)*

Recently a movie production crew in early May 2025 made use of our services during a movie shoot in Mount Hope. Confidentiality limit what we know about the film other than it can be classed as horror and will release sometime in 2026. We do not know the title either. However, our services were greatly appreciated and their compensation certainly helped pay the bills.

During the shoot our premises were used during odd hours and this meant that someone from The Board had to be on site to maintain our interests during this outside use. My thanks to Mike and Bev Cuffe, Linda Daniels-Smith, Rob Wilson for volunteering to be on site 24-7. Greatly appreciated. I also did some shifts.

A health inspection during early May brought forth some issues that needed to be addressed very quickly and efficiently to maintain our license to operate. Peeling pain was removed as directed, plaster's mud was applied to clean areas up on the ceiling and walls. A hole in the wall was repaired and our screen doors were refurbished as a result; our premises passed the subsequent inspection. My thanks to Al Daniels and Rob Wilson for their efforts with myself to correct the noted deficiencies.

The fire escape at the rear of the building is not functioning and the landlord has been made aware of the problem. We await repairs.

Mike and Bev Cuffe, Gord McNulty and his wife Angie, Rob Wilson, Brenda Wilson along with Linda Daniels-Smith attended the Provincial Convention and meeting in Ottawa Ontario, the last full weekend of May. Brenda Wilson is the new chair of the provincial body, assuming office July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. Mike Cuffe is the Vice-Chair also assuming office July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. Linda Daniels-Smith volunteer position ends June 30<sup>th</sup> and as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, she will be a provincial board member and recording secretary. Bev Cuffe was elected to the provincial board as Treasurer and will assume office July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. 447 Wing has four members on the provincial board for the next two years. Congratulations to all.

Mike Cuffe, at our recently completed general meeting, noted that the National Committee is progressing well and that the doom and gloom atmosphere created last October 2024 has been lifted although there is much yet to do. Mike advises that people with talent have assumed positions and will move National forward for the benefit of all. Many of you should have received the inaugural digital magazine. The format is great because there is no limit to material presented and the cost is negligible to say the least.

Dues were not raised at the convention. Here at 447 Wing the single membership is \$95.00 with a dual couple membership being \$150.00. Membership Fees are due and payable by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and all members have or should have received their renewal notices from Membership Chair Linda Daniels-Smith.

Mike Cuffe was awarded a prestigious Award of Merit by Provincial Command at the convention. The picture below of Mike with Brenda Wilson shows the award and plaque presented.



Brenda Wilson and Mike Cuffe at the convention with the plaque presented to Mike.

## *Message from the 447 Wing Chair (Continued)*

Below is the commendation request submitted on Mike Cuffe's behalf

---

### Award of Merit

#### Ontario Group Annual Award of Merit Submission

Mike Cuffe, Regional Director Central & Eastern Ontario Group, is nominated the Ontario Group Annual Award of Merit in recognition and appreciation of the valuable services rendered to the RCAF Association. He has always been a strong proponent of the aims and objectives of the RCAF Association and has been instrumental in ensuring that the 447 (City of Hamilton) Wing's ability to uphold and support these ideals. Mike Cuffe should be considered for the Award of Merit.

Mike Cuffe has been involved in the civil aviation field for over 40 years, He became a member of the Air Cadets at the age of 12 and joined the 172 Squadron in Toronto. Mike was a member of the Pipes band. Mike received many awards during his time as an Air Cadet. After leaving Air Cadets Mike received his Private Pilots License.

Mike joined the RCAF Association in honour of his father Gerry Cuffe in 2016. Mike kept the 447 (City of Hamilton) Wing operating during the 3 years of COVID along with his wife Bev Cuffe. As Chair of the 447 Mike worked in the company of his Board of Directors to re-write the Constitution & Bylaws to comply with ONCA and then formulated an acceptance plan which caused the new Constitution to be ratified and adopted. Along with the constitution Mike drafted the Code of Business Conduct for the Directors and staff of the 447 Wing. Mike has been a member of the 447 (City of Hamilton) Wing since 2016. He was a Board Member from 2017 – 2019 and Chair of the 447 Wing from 2019 – 2024. Mike is volunteer Events Coordinator for the 447 Wing and on the 447 Men's Team of the Hamilton Veterans' Dart League. As Past Chair Mike presented many donations to area community charities.

Mike is a past Pipe Major for the Halton Regional Police Services Pipes & Drums from 2012 – 2024. In May 2025 Mike will receive his 20-year award for his membership in the HRP Pipes & Drums. Currently, Mike is the Pipe Major for the Royal Canadian Legion #163 Pipes & Drums. Mike was the Chair of the AGM National Committee in October 2022. He was also the Chair of the Ontario Group AGM in May 2023. Currently Mike is the Regional Director of the Central & Eastern Ontario, Ontario Group.

---

It is important to note that Mike is a very busy man with many talents being shared with many agencies, our own included. His award is well deserved, and congratulations are offered.

---

St. Paul's Anglican Church has acquired two very beautiful stained-glass windows.

For those who are not aware, St. Paul's Anglican Church, the RCAFA 447 (Hamilton) Wing and the 779 Black Knight Air Cadet Squadron have partnered for many years to commemorate nineteen Royal Air Force members who lost their lives during training at Mount Hope during World War II.

The nineteen airmen are buried at the church cemetery and each year, your wing in collaboration with St. Paul's has a war grave Decoration Day event and meeting, as close to the start of the Battle of Britain date in September.

## *Message from the 447 Wing Chair (Continued)*

This yearly collaboration is part of our community footprint and our partnership with St. Paul's has for many years made the ceremony meaningful and memorable.



Above is a picture of windows which were dedicated to the memory of a Flight Lieutenant who died in the service of King and Country in Burma during World War II.

The Flight Lieutenant's parents commissioned and donated the windows to a church. The church, in time, ceased operations before being purchased for use by those who, in their faith tradition, had no need for the ornate windows. They offered the windows to St. Paul's based upon St. Paul's care and maintenance of the nineteen war graves. The cost of installing them in the church will be steep, \$9,000.00, and donations are being accepted to help defray costs.

I would encourage all members, if at all possible, to think of a donation large or small to help St. Paul's defray the capital expense.

Any personal donations can be placed in an envelope clearly marked as a St. Paul's donation and left with bar or office staff for collection.

This is a very tangible way to remember those airmen who paid the supreme sacrifice during the war and at the same time allow for a piece of memorial history to be maintained for years to come.

*Don Kennedy & Hoo Jung Kennedy:* Two Wing members recently were awarded "The Coronation" medal which was issued to commemorate King Charles III coronation.

In recognition for good works over many years, Hoo Jung Kennedy and Don Kennedy received their medals from M.P. Lisa Hefner at a ceremony held at 447 Wing on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025. The event was witnessed by approximately sixty invited guests who all enjoyed a light meal after the event.

Hoo Jung and Don wore matching "walking casts" to the event as each had recently suffered injuries to their legs. Both are on the mend, and we wish them continued progress to good health.

## *Message from the 447 Wing Chair (Continued)*



The cake with Charles III cipher and Hoo Jung and Don Kennedy with M.P. Lisa Hefner

Finally, with summer just around the corner, we will be moving into a slow period of time as holidays etc. cut down on attendance at The Wing. Drop by when you can during the summer.

See you all at our June Meeting.

Have a great relaxing, safe and healthy summer. After a somewhat dismal spring we all deserve a great summer.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Welsh

Chair

447 Wing

R.C.A.F.A.

June 2025

## Fort Erie's Red Knight "T-bird" planned for refurbishment

Report and photos by Gord McNulty

There is promising news from the RCAFA 484 (Frontier Wing) in Fort Erie. Fundraising is under way to refurbish a Canadair CT-133 mounted for display in RCAF Red Knight colours 24 years ago.

The aircraft, as reported in the *Fort Erie Observer*, was officially dedicated by the Wing in May 2001, resplendent in the distinctive Red Knight paint scheme. Fleet Aerospace Corporation and Alfred Beam Excavating provided assistance. Alf is well-known as a T-28 Trojan, Harvard and Cornell pilot and has a private airstrip in the area.

Bill Greenwood, the Wing president, said the plan is to refurbish the aircraft in place and enclose it for the work, rather than risk doing damage by taking it from the pedestal and sending it out.

The Wing held a pasta supper, silent auction, and book sale fundraiser on May 31 at the Fort Erie Legion Branch 71. Angie and I went to the border town to enjoy the rewarding and successful event.

Attendees included Chuck McCrea of Niagara Falls, who served in the RCAF from 1967 to 1995 in a variety of aircraft. He had extensive experience flying the "T-bird" in multiple roles.



Chuck McCrea, Todd Hume and Bill Greenwood at the 484 (Frontier) Wing fundraiser on May 31 2025

Bill said the Wing plans to complete structural repairs to the aircraft this summer and repaint the aircraft in the summer of 2026 if funds permit.

Fort Erie's aircraft made an impressive display when I took photos of it in the summer of 2001. This Red Knight refurbishment plan, providing fresh recognition of a famous aerobatic display in RCAF history, comes at an opportune time in these politically unsettled days.

The solo demonstration Red Knight made more than 600 air show appearances in Canada, the U.S. and the Bahamas from 1958 to 1969. In 2020, Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame honored the Red Knight team with the Belt of Orion (Award of Excellence).

Kudos to 484 Wing and best wishes for a successful fundraising campaign.



Ready to roll - The CT-133 looked resplendent as the Red Knight. After 24 years on display, refurbishment plans are under way.



Canadair CT-133 trainer, brilliant in RCAF Red Knight colours, after its dedication at Fort Erie in 2001.



The CT-133 was mounted for display at Sugarbowl Park and dedicated in May 2001.

## Dedication of CWHM Spitfire Mk. XVIe A tribute to S/L Tommy DeCourcy, DFC

Report and photos by Gord McNulty

A heartwarming event was held at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum on June 7, with the dedication of the museum's Spitfire Mk. XVIe to RCAF Squadron Leader Thomas DeCourcy, DFC, (1921-1945) of Windsor, ON.

The recognition for DeCourcy, or Tommy as he was known, was fitting. In recognition of his achievements, the museum's aircraft has been impressively refinished in the 443 Squadron RCAF markings of DeCourcy's Spitfire.

Twenty-eight family relatives attended the dedication ceremony. Veterans, aviation enthusiasts and community members joined in honour of a pilot with a remarkable legacy of service.

DeCourcy survived multiple accidents during the Second World War, only to die tragically in a car accident in Germany a month after the Nazis surrendered.

Although he was one of Canada's most experienced and respected Spitfire pilots, his story was relatively little known. CWHM marketing manager Al Mickeloff described DeCourcy's life in the Spring 2025 issue of the museum's *Flightlines* magazine. Some of the highlights are outlined here.

Tommy enlisted in the RCAF in the summer of 1940, having just turned the age of 19. He arrived overseas in 1941, training on Miles Master before transitioning to the Hawker Hurricane. Near the completion of his training in February 1942, he suffered a fractured skull and leg injuries while a passenger in a serious vehicle accident involving a service transport during a blackout.

Tommy spent six weeks recovering in hospital. That initial setback was the precursor of three subsequent aircraft crashes that he survived.

F/Sgt DeCourcy flew combat operations in a Spitfire Mk. V with 118 Squadron RAF, in fighter sweeps including the Dieppe Raid on Aug. 14, 1942. He shared in downing a Dornier Do 217 during that battle.

On Nov. 19, 1942, then W/O DeCourcy was forced to perform a wheels-up landing when the engine failed on his Spitfire Mk. V. He landed in a meadow and there wasn't any fire.

The outcome wasn't as successful in his next emergency. Tommy was attempting to take off in a Miles Martinet, towing a target for gunnery practice. The aircraft failed to get airborne as the propeller was set in coarse pitch. It hit a tree and burned. Tommy sustained a concussion, cuts and burns. His passenger was killed. Tommy spent the next six weeks recovering in the hospital.

He next flew two harrowing trips as a passenger on the Short Stirling bomber. Such trips were used to give fighter pilots a better understanding of the issues faced by bomber crews. On the first trip, an engine caught fire. On the second, two engines were damaged by enemy fire setting them both ablaze!

W/O DeCourcy, assessed by June 1943 as an "exceptionally keen type and a very good fighter pilot," arrived at 421 "Red Indian" Squadron RCAF to fly the Spitfire Mk. IX in combat. He finished his first tour in February 1944 and was posted as an instructor fighter pilot in Grangemouth, Scotland.

On May 5, 1944, then F/O DeCourcy was practicing landings in a Miles Master when the engine quit on take off at only 300 feet. There wasn't any open field to put down. The aircraft had one wing sheared off by a tree as it hit the ground. Tommy's passenger sustained a head injury and a broken arm. Tommy claimed to have suffered only a scar, but nevertheless he spent 10 days in the hospital recovering.

He began his second tour in September 1944 and was excited to fly one of the squadron's new Spitfire Mk. XVI's. On Feb. 14, 1945 he "twitched" his way back to base alone after flak took two feet off his port aileron.

In March, then F/L DeCourcy was posted to 443 "Hornet" Squadron RCAF as the Squadron Commander and was also promoted to Squadron Leader. Tommy claimed a new Spitfire Mk. XVIe, one of the few featuring a bubble canopy, serial TD239, for himself and from then he flew only that Spitfire.

On May 9, 1945, Tommy was notified he would be awarded the DFC. The citation paid tribute to DeCourcy, among other attributes, as "a natural leader with a high sense of duty and courage" flying in "a very large number of sorties."

On June 7, 1945, DeCourcy flew for an hour of formation flying that proved to be his last trip. Later that evening, 23-year-old Tommy was tragically killed in a car accident near Hamburg. During a violent rain-storm, the car he was driving skidded off the road and hit a tree.

Two days later, the entire squadron respectfully attended their leader's funeral, a gesture demonstrating the high esteem that was held for Tommy.

His hometown newspaper, the *Windsor Daily Star*, then published an advertisement by Bond Clothes of Windsor prominently describing his DFC citation.

The advertisement stated in part: "Bond Clothes extends heartfelt sympathy to Tommy's parents and sisters while bowing their heads in humble salute to the memory of this 23-year-old hero of the clouds."

David Rohrer, President & CEO of the CWHM, read *High Flight*, written by John Gillespie Magee Jr. after flying a Spitfire, during the dedication. He also credited then deputy prime minister Sheila Copps for her role in securing the long-term loan of the Spitfire from the Canada Aviation and Space Museum to the CWHM in 1997.



CWHM President and CEO Dave Rohrer paid tribute to Sqdn. Leader Tommy DeCourcy, DFC, at the Dedication on June 7, 2025.



The CWHM Spitfire Mk XVI, now refinished in the markings of Sqdn. Leader Tommy DeCourcy, DFC, of 443 Sqdn. RCAF. June 7, 2025.



The story of the CWHM Spitfire Mk XVI dedicated to Sqdn. Leader Tommy<sup>m</sup> DeCourcy.

The museum plans to restore the Spitfire to flying condition when funds permit

**The 447 Wing is OPEN**

<b>Sunday &amp; Monday</b>	<b>CLOSED</b>
<b>Tuesday &amp; Wednesday</b>	<b>11:30am to 10:00pm</b>
<b>Thursday &amp; Friday</b>	<b>11:30am to 11:00pm</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>11:30am to 8:00pm</b>

**Kitchen Hours**

<b>Tuesday &amp; Wednesday</b>	<b>11:30 am to 8:00pm</b>
<b>Thursday &amp; Friday</b>	<b>11:30am to 9:00pm</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>11:30am to 7:00pm</b>

**HAVE  
A  
GREAT  
SUMMER**

**3210 Homestead Drive, Mount Hope, ON L0R 1W0**

**Telephone: 289.280.0157      Email: [447winghamilton@gmail.com](mailto:447winghamilton@gmail.com)**

**<https://www.facebook.com/The-447-Wing-140212226825200/>**

The Wing Drift is published quarterly. If you have any articles, suggestions, etc for future editions, they can be sent to the 447 Wing email address ([447winghamilton@gmail.com](mailto:447winghamilton@gmail.com)).

## **447(City of Hamilton) Board of Directors 2024— 2026**

Chairperson	Dan Welsh	(905) 679-6175
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Chairperson	Jim Hooton	(905) 383-3962
Secretary/Membership	Linda Daniels-Smith	(905) 966-2709
Treasurer	Bev Cuffe	(905) 517-6146
Directors	Thomas Hooton	(905) 807-9503
	Rob Wilson	(905) 745-2097
	Al Daniels	(905) 577-2605

## **779 Air Cadet Sponsoring Committee**

Acting Chairman:	John Mayhew	
Vice Chairman:	(Position Vacant)	
Treasurer:	John Mayhew	(905) 388-4055
Secretary:	(Position Vacant)	
Coordinator Screening & Registration:		
Member: Risk Management:	Cheryl Jackson-Checkley	
Black Knight Squadron HQ:		(905) 679-6485
Alumni:	Chantelle Wark	(905) 975-0373
Commanding Officer:	Captain Marilyn Coleman	(905) 765-2414



## **447 (City of Hamilton) Wing**

### ***Past Presidents***

<b>Aiden Finn CD</b>	<b>(1983)</b>
<b>Gord Rowland</b>	<b>(1995—1998)</b>
<b>Judy Brown</b>	<b>(2000, 2008)</b>
<b>6 Presidents served during</b>	<b>(2003 &amp; 2005)</b>
<b>Bill Grahlman CD</b>	<b>(2008-2017)</b>
<b>Jim Hooton CD</b>	<b>(2017-2019)</b>
<b>Michael Cuffe</b>	<b>(2019-2024)</b>



<b>Bill Whiteside</b>	<b>(1962)</b>
<b>Russ Newton</b>	<b>(1963,81,91)</b>
<b>Jim Robbins CD</b>	<b>(1964-65)</b>
<b>Carl Whaley CMCD</b>	<b>(1966)</b>
<b>Sterling McAllister CD</b>	<b>(1967)</b>
<b>Doug Thornevell</b>	<b>(1968)</b>
<b>Ken Lenz</b>	<b>(1969, 1975)</b>
<b>Bill Carey</b>	<b>(1970)</b>
<b>Innes Anderson</b>	<b>(1971)</b>
<b>Sid George</b>	<b>(1972)</b>
<b>Ken Read</b>	<b>(1973)</b>
<b>Bob Hayes</b>	<b>(1974)</b>
<b>Bill Thompson</b>	<b>(1976)</b>
<b>Rob Gillies</b>	<b>(1977)</b>
<b>Nels Smith CD</b>	<b>(1978, 1984)</b>
<b>Jack Lightfoot</b>	<b>(1979)</b>
<b>Scott Lumsden</b>	<b>(1980)</b>
<b>Syd Buckles</b>	<b>(1982)</b>
<b>Alex Barrett DFC</b>	<b>(1985)</b>
<b>Clare Hansen</b>	<b>(1986, 1994)</b>
<b>Harry Rasmussen</b>	<b>(1988-89)</b>
<b>Bob Hide</b>	<b>(1990)</b>
<b>Bill Ryckman</b>	<b>(1992-93)</b>
<b>Arthur Young</b>	<b>(2004,2006)</b>
<b>Harry VanZeben</b>	<b>(1997-99,2001-02)</b>
<b>Frank A. Begley</b>	<b>(2007)</b>



### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada is a national aerospace and community service organization to: commemorate the noble achievements of the men and women who have served as members of Canada's air forces since its inception; advocate for a proficient and well equipped air force; and support the Royal Canadian Air Cadet programme.