

## A CHRISTMAS TREE THANK YOU

Every year in mid-November, a huge fir or spruce tree growing somewhere in Nova Scotia is cut down and shipped to Boston, where it becomes the city's official Christmas tree. The annual tree-lighting ceremony on December 1 in Boston Common is the opening of the city's Christmas season.

The first tree was shipped in 1918, a gesture of gratitude from Halifax to the city of Boston for its generous assistance following the disastrous 1917 explosion in Halifax Harbour of a ship loaded with wartime explosives. To help survivors, Boston immediately sent a train with supplies, food and medical staff—to a city that had suffered 2,000 deaths, 9,000 injured, and many thousands left homeless.

Though the gift in 1918 was a one-time gesture, another tree was sent in 1971 and the tradition, now sponsored by the Nova Scotia government, has continued every year since.

Last year's tree, which marked the 40th anniversary of the tradition, was cut down on November 15 in a public ceremony attended by school children and the province's poet laureate. The 14-metre white spruce was then loaded onto a flatbed truck and made its way to Boston, where it was escorted by the Boston Police Department to the installation point on Boston Common. Thousands attended the lighting ceremony, which was broadcast on television throughout New England.

Patrick Binns, Consul General in Boston, called the tree "a symbol of appreciation to the great people of Boston," adding that "every lighting of that tree brings these two great communities of Canada and New England together to renew historic ties and friendship."

## MAKING EMERGENCY PLANS TOGETHER

Following the devastating earthquakes in Japan and Haiti, Canada and the United States have been making plans to deal with any major earthquake that might hit the San Francisco Bay area. Last October, Canadian military experts on humanitarian assistance and disaster response joined a group of American experts—some from the U.S. military, and some from local and state governments—on board the aircraft carrier USS *Bonhomme Richard* to discuss how civilian and military personnel could best work together.

That event was one of many that took place during San Francisco Fleet Week (SFFW), an annual event in tribute to the American armed forces.

There were many chances during the SFFW to celebrate the friendship enjoyed by Canada and the United States and to showcase their integrated continental defence. Four Canadian ships—HMCS *Ottawa*, *Saskatoon*, *Nanaimo* and *Brandon*—took part in the Parade of Ships along the waterfront. In the SFFW airshow, onlookers witnessed the air acrobatics of the Royal Canadian Air Force Snowbirds.

Consul General Cassie Doyle had the opportunity to co-host two events with Rear-Admiral Nigel Greenwood to cultivate local contacts and showcase Canada—a private lunch right on the Bay to view the airshow, and a reception aboard the HMCS *Ottawa* for close to 300 military and civilian guests.

"Our Fleet Week program went a long way to strengthen our local community relations and to affirm our ties on so many levels with our American friends," Doyle says.

Throughout the world, there are few nations that enjoy such close and warm ties as the United States and Canada. The connection between us is so strong and constant that we can easily take it for granted. And there's no harm in reaffirming it—something DFAIT is happy to help Canadians and Americans alike do from time to time.



Above: the 2011 tree en route to Boston

Right: consulate staff with members of the Snowbirds, in San Francisco for Fleet Week  
photos: DFAIT

