

## TRADE SHOW & CONFERENCE REPORT

# BEST DEFENCE 2022

BY DANIEL KITCHEN



The Mini Outlooks is a staple of the Best Defence Conference. (left) Col David Pletz, RCAF, (center) Heather Pilot, (right) Capt (N) Blair Brown, RCN

The third time is the charm. After being forced to operate as a virtual event for the past 2-years due to the pandemic, the Best Defence Conference took place in-person in London, Ontario's RBC Place on November 16 & 17.

The event provided an excellent opportunity for Ontario's defence contractors to network and showcase their products and technology. This year's impressive list of attendees included representatives from General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada, Saab Group, IMT Defence, DEW Engineering, GM Defense, Tulmar Safety Systems, L3Harris Technologies, General Atomics Aeronautical

Systems, Raytheon Canada, Marshall Canada, Modest Tree and Stoeger – to name a few.

Both the presentations and the trade show floor were busy during the two-day event, a great indication of how much Ontario's defence industry has missed the Best Defence Conference.

Of course, one of the main points of discussion this year was the war in Ukraine. "The war in Ukraine has painted a clear picture of how vulnerable Canada is to attack from long range missiles from Russia; how vulnerable our Arctic is and how important it is as a first defence against attack and invasion," said Heather Pilot, President of

Pilot Hill, which organizes the Best Defence Conference. "Disinformation, misinformation and cyberattacks have played a big role in the war in Ukraine," she told CDR.

### CAF MINI OUTLOOKS

Returning to the event this year was the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Mini Outlooks, which has been a favourite in previous years. This segment was presented by Capt (N) Blair Brown, Director Naval Requirements for the Royal Canadian Navy; Col David Pletz, Director Air Requirements for the Royal Canadian Air Force; and Col David MacIntyre, Director Land Requirements for the Canadian

Army. They all provided great insight into the current and future needs for their respective branches of the CAF.

### NEXT-GEN COMBAT VEHICLE

Also on the agenda for Day 1 was the Next Generation Combat Vehicle panel, which was presented by Brant Dayley of GM Defense, Steve Pietrangelo of GDLS-C, Mark Patterson of SRC Canada and Niklas Alund of Saab. This segment examined the future trends of combat vehicles including digitization and the concept of an all-electric vehicle. For instance, GM Defense talked about their hydrogen fuel cell technology while GDLS-C explored Artificial Intelligence and some of their uncrewed vehicle options. For more information on GDLS-C read this issue's Cover Story on page 36.

### NORAD MODERNIZATION

One of the most interesting presentations of the event took place on Day 2 and was presented by Lieutenant-General Alain Pelletier, Deputy Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). During his presentation, LGen Pelletier spoke about the increasing threat posed by Russia and China in the newly 'globalized' Arctic region. LGen Pelletier talked about China's surveillance in the Arctic region, the importance of Over the Horizon (OTHR) radar technology, the requirement for munition storage, pan-domain connectivity, and the importance



LGen Pelletier provided an update on NORAD

of infrastructure in the far north. The Commander also talked about the war in Ukraine. "Don't let current successes of the Ukrainian army fool us," he told attendees. "Russia has

many other tricks up their sleeve, including long-range capabilities," he continued.

### CGAI

The event concluded with a presentation from David Perry, President of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute. Dr. Perry delivered a strong and succinct message – Canada is not ready. He examined the shortcomings of the Canadian government and the Canadian Armed Forces in terms of funding, personnel shortage, lack of foresight and Canada's slow procurement system – a well documented issue plaguing Canada's defence industry.

"I know Canada and Ontario have a vital and capable defence sector that would be ready and willing to equip and support Ukraine," Perry told CDR. But "the Canadian Government needs to really commit the resources to military defence spending for Canada. Canadian citizens should be demanding that government does everything it can to ensure Canadians are protected and safe and that our military has the most up-to-date equipment to defend our country."

The Best Defence Conference is scheduled for November 15 & 16, 2023. ■



Dr. David Perry of CGAI explored what the Ukraine war has revealed about Canada's defence

*Daniel Kitchen is CDR's Managing Editor*