



**Andrew Morrison returned to Canada recently from serving in Afghanistan.**

Andrew has been an officer in the Canadian Military for more than five years. He currently holds the rank of Captain and last year completed and graduated from the Majors course in Kingston, before he was deployed to Afghanistan. Jennifer is also a Captain, with the 427 Tactical Helicopter Squadron.

The morning that Andrew was deployed to Afghanistan, he and his wife found out that they were expecting their first child in March 2007. His job in Afghanistan was the Operations Officer for the National Support Element (NSE), which was the unit in charge of providing all of the Combat Service Support (basically providing the beans, bullets, fuel and everything else that the troops need to do their jobs) to the whole of Joint Task Force Afghanistan (which is all of the Canadians in theatre). As the Operations Officer Andrew, was responsible for coordinating the support to all of the military's dependencies. He was tied to the NSE command post (it was called Log OPS - Logistical Operations).

Prior to Andrew's deployment he was sent to Kandahar for 10 days in April 2006 to get the lay of the land. He went out numerous times, during those 10 days, on patrols with the troops so that he could see first-hand what the troops, that he would be responsible for supporting, were dealing with. When he told us that he was out on patrols, I must admit that my heart sank and I couldn't wait for his 10 days to be over so he would be back in Canada. After his return he went to Wainwright Alberta, where they train and prepare for deployment.

Andrew has sent us numerous pictures of the terrain in Afghanistan. The weather and terrain are very harsh. Daytime temperatures when he arrived last August were in the low 50C and in December night time temperatures as low as -15C. The weather there is about extremes. Most of the rivers are dry with drought and the landscape is sun baked, but the few times that it rained they had flash flooding and the rivers turned into raging whitewater. The ground is so dry and sun baked that the water doesn't soak in and it all runs off to eventually find itself into a "waddie" or river where in the matter of a day it can go from a creek to larger than the Grand River.

After being accepted into engineering programs at some of Ontario's finest universities, Andrew did extensive research and made up his mind to attend RMC. My husband John and I have always felt that we raised our children to make good decisions and we fully supported him.

What has really impressed my husband and I is the quality of the young people entering the military. Like Andrew, they really want to make a difference in Canada and on a grander scale, the world. I applaud them and I fully support their efforts. Most Canadians do not understand the mission in Afghanistan and what our young men and women are doing over there.

Approximately 25% of our military are in a combat role in Afghanistan, but you would never know that by watching TV or reading the Canadian daily newspapers. The rest of the troops and civilians that are deployed are building roads and bridges, building schools, hospitals and finding clean drinking water for the people of this country. The 25% who are in a combat role are in that position to protect our troops that are doing the reconstruction.

Of course as a mother I have told Andrew to keep his flack vest and helmet on at all times. When he wrote and told us that he had *volunteered* for a mission and they had a few problems, but overcame them, I immediately wrote back and told him, as any mother would do, that when you are in your community where you live you should get involved and volunteer in as many things as possible. That is what makes our communities wonderful places to live, *but* when you are in the armed forces I don't think volunteering for missions is such a good idea. I know Andrew and his commitment to his job and so I knew in my heart that he would do what he felt he should do and what was right for him to do, but I had to say what I said as his mother.

"I'm off."

When I received that email it made my heart skip a beat. He was coming home and so we would finally get to see him, in person, in March after not seeing him for nine months. To say that having your child do these things throughout the world is not worrisome, I would be not telling the truth. It has been evident at some points with me. During my inaugural speech in December I was fine until I got to the end where I thanked my husband and family for all of their support and I mentioned Andrew and got very choked up and actually had some tears. I managed to compose myself, thank heavens and continue on.

Do we constantly think about what Andrew is doing? Yes and so do many other families in Caledon who have children in the military. Are we proud of our son, doing what he believes in? YES. Can he and his peers make a difference in the world? DEFINITELY YES. I thank each and every one of them for that.