

CANADA'S #1 DEFENCE COMPANY FOR 2021

# L3HARRIS

## Technologies Canada

INNOVATION, INGENUITY AND, ABOVE ALL,  
PEOPLE, ARE KEY TO THIS COMPANY'S SUCCESS

BY TIM MAHON

Sometimes, to a journalist – especially one trying to find positive, compelling stories – the world can seem to be a little monochrome. We have built an environment for ourselves in which expectations are that universal excellence and hyperbole are the only accepted minima – that ‘spin’ is *de rigueur* – that every press release will profess to be “excited,” “proud” or “thrilled” to receive the award in question, and that companies “look forward” or “eagerly anticipate” progress with the program.

Of course, they are! Such are the reasons for being in business but if you weren't happy to receive a contract, THAT would be newsworthy. Overuse of hyperbole devalues

achievements and erodes the differences between enterprises. If everything is “outstanding,” there can be little substantive to report in the form of progress.

It is therefore an *unadulterated* joy to engage with a company that ‘walks the walk’ as well as it ‘talks the talk:’ a company that not only says what it means but, proves that it means what it says.

In the process of preparing the annual profile on Canada's Top Defence Company, CDR was given unfettered access to individuals at all levels of L3Harris Technologies Canada – from executive leadership through middle management to intern. And, we have to say that in every

interview, individuals professed excitement, enthusiasm and pride. Rather than being associated with a single program, event or contract, however, these emotions had a subtly different focus: it was the company and, by extension, the people in it, who were the object of such exhilaration. And that is a rarity worth treasuring.

### FAR HORIZONS

The ‘road to Damascus’ moment came in the very first interview. L3Harris' division based in Montreal, QC, formerly known as MAPPS, is primarily a maritime-centric organization, having installed its celebrated Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS) on over





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290 vessels in 26 navies worldwide. But that is not enough, to gild the lily, the division's nuclear power control hardware and/or nuclear power simulation systems are present in over 80 nuclear power plants, and its simulation capabilities extend to the domain of space robotics. These disciplines benefit from the same foundational capability embodied in their Orchid® total development and simulation environment, developed entirely in Canada.

The "Canadian technology – global leadership" is a continuing mantra throughout the company. And L3Harris' Canadian teams in Burlington, Mirabel and Montreal are proud – justifiably so – that over 90% of their revenues come from export. The merger of L3 Technologies and Harris Corporation in mid-2019 lends some additional strength to home-grown Canadian initiatives. "Our Integrated Communications Systems [ICS] capability is being pulled through from the US and is now being 'Canadianized' and readied for export," Rangesh Kasturi, VP and General Manager based in Montreal, QC, told CDR.

Kasturi's demeanour at first seems, understated, subdued, but I quickly came to understand that his gentle mystic-like attitude belied a powerful intellect and a philosophical approach to life, business and politics that becomes more evident with every passing minute.

It quickly became clear that he is also an effective, inspirational, informed and committed leader. He explained, "Canada, at 38 million, has only about 0.5% of the world's population, yet we have the second largest land mass and the longest coastline, now the Arctic can no longer be ignored. Dealing with all this places considerable

demands on a relatively small tax base – and that means that innovation is fundamental to [Canadian] success."

He went on to give an example central to L3Harris' success. "Our main product line was born out of a need for the RCN to 'do more with less' in the 1980s – to stretch the available resources through advanced automation on the Halifax-class Frigates program. We were in the right place at the right time, with the right expertise and innovation – and thus what is now the IPMS was born. It was, incidentally, the first such system in the world."

### CONTRACTED FOR CSC

L3Harris is a key player in the Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC) program, with his division responsible for the ICS, IPMS and other platform solutions, a situation that is much more than about being at the 'right time and place,' according to Kasturi. "We have not been this successful by being conservative and playing safe," he observed. "We have exercised every iota of the talent and capability we have to develop innovative and effective solutions for the many challenges and problems of our navy and shipyard customers without being too far ahead of our time. And this is the beginning of the long process – not the end game. By the time the CSC program matures, for example, we will have already evolved beyond our current offerings and will be looking to judiciously insert technology to serve the RCN's evolving needs." The solutions that lie at the core of the division's unique nature – systems integration, automation, simulation and cybersecurity among them – stem from "an incredibly talented team of staff," according to Kasturi, who describes himself as "a proud electrical engineer." The net result – advanced, reliable, capable, globally competitive, and – above all – International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) -free technical and business solutions.

Kasturi embodies what quickly reveals itself to be the 'secret sauce' that makes L3Harris Technologies Canada stand tall and apart: an attitude that sees its strength as being its people. "While it may take a few years to build a ship, the Navy has to live with it for 30-40 years. With the most expensive asset in the life cycle of such ships being manpower, our focus is to enable the Navy to optimize their use through automation, integration and increasing autonomy." And he is deploying their most powerful asset – talented and dedicated L3Harris experts – to achieve that for the



The organisation truly believes in diversity and inclusion, said Diane Montambault

RCN and others, thus conserving *their* most expensive assets for less mundane and more mission-oriented tasks.

### FLEET MANAGEMENT EXPERTS

With just over 1,000 employees at some 13 locations across Canada, L3Harris' operation in Mirabel, QC, (formerly known as MAS) has built a solid reputation for excellence in fleet management and In-Service Support (ISS) for aircraft and is in fact one of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) principal partners in the sustainment of its major fleets. This impressive portfolio includes the CC-150 Polaris, the CP-140 Aurora, the CH-148 Cyclone, the CH-147 Chinook, the CT-114 Tutor (of Canada's Snowbirds fame) and, of course, the CF-18 Hornet, for which L3Harris has been Canada's Fighter Centre of Excellence for almost 35 years.

"We are not a platform OEM – and therein lies much of our strength," Ugo Paniconi, General Manager, L3Harris, Mirabel, told CDR. "Some of our fleet contracts are unique, others we can derive significant synergy from and that is largely because we have an exceptionally strong program management structure. We have the skills to meet the challenges our customers present us with and, for example, often cross-pollinate people across fleets in a matrix management model to offer even better performance, flexibility and value."

That cross-pollination philosophy seems to have received a massive boost since the L3Harris merger, with several executives referring to the ability they have for 'reachback' into the greater corporation, which boasts a complement of some



20,000 engineers and scientists across all its businesses.

### F/A-18 WORK FOR US NAVY

Paniconi affirms, "The foundation of L3Harris' success lies in the people – we simply have an outstanding home-grown talent base." And that might easily be dismissed as hyperbole, were it not for several important contra indications. Perhaps the biggest such indicator is one of the latest customers L3Harris has brought on board.

The company is doing major depot-level maintenance on the U.S. Navy's F/A-18 Hornet. Yes – some of the USN's Hornets are now being worked on in Canada – such is the recognized quality and efficacy of the company's solutions. "People build capabilities: we offer broad spectrum ISS, not just engineering change modifications – and that is made possible by execution excellence. We have mature, rigorous processes – we drive a culture of accountability – and we constantly ask 'how can we improve x?'" Paniconi explains.

One of the innovative approaches that led to the recent USN contract stemmed from the use of a robot to shot peen the *inside* of the centre barrel fuselage fuel tank of an F/A-18, efficiently addressing several life limited structural locations with minimal aircraft disassembly and downtime. Integrating technology such as this speeds processes, facilitates rapid decision-making, saves money and can be leveraged into so many other programs.



In the end, it comes down to the people, said Sana Zafar

In this particular case, the ability to make those differences in managing the RCAF CF-18 fleet soon segued into being able to do the same for Finland, Switzerland and – most recently – the United States. "We don't sit on the bench idle – there are definite opportunities for us to excel around every corner. The thing is – we don't consider what we do as a commodity. We deliver solutions tailored to unique operational requirements, we support deployments and we leverage experience in our people. We have developed the habit of thinking 'this is our money' and have a partnership mindset – there is no longer any 'us and them' at work," he says.

### SUPERIOR VISION

'Squaring the circle,' so to speak, before moving on to the corporate viewpoint, Eddie Myers is VP/General Manager of the L3Harris division based in Burlington, ON. An American transplant, though no less fiercely Canadian in his outlook than any of his peers, Myers is very clear on the division's position. He told CDR, "The [L3Harris] merger is a tremendous deal for all concerned. We are now the 6th largest defence contractor in the US – and the 10th largest worldwide. L3Harris therefore leverages revenues of over US\$18 billion, of which over 4% is reinvested in research and development. We are also leveraging an expanded universe of people – moving from 1,300 across the division to 48,000 across the whole corporation."

The division, which has become a 'go-to' provider of capable, compact and comprehensive surveillance systems for all types of platforms, now accesses a "larger footprint of customer domains" as the result of the merger, which is the principal cause for optimism, in Myers' view.

He explained, "We are part of a very sophisticated and capable organization, addressing a relatively consistent mix of customers – about half in North America and the balance international – showing relatively consistent demand, based on continuing and emerging requirements. There is a fundamental demand for electro-optical/infrared (EO/IR) capability, so now our concentration is on how to offer greater



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sophistication through integration – how to enable even greater reduction in the cognitive workload of operators.”

The division – whose reputation, essentially, has been built on the excellent performance and reliability of its products in airborne applications, on fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft and UAS – is now looking at the future with ambitious yet realistic eyes. “We are looking at how to service all-domain requirements: we have great exposure in the air domain and are growing in the ground environment. Our maritime customer base is also growing, and we see opportunities for customising systems for multi-domain operations (MDO). The future state is for sensor-agnostic solutions, capable of turning petabytes of data into megabytes of intelligence. And space is another – though not necessarily final – frontier,” Myers observed.

Myers strongly believes L3Harris is poised on the brink of an exciting immediate and mid-term future. Who is perceived as the thought leader in xyz domain? Who is the customer going to? – these are questions he constantly poses, and increasingly, it seems, the answer is L3Harris.

He concluded, “There is a steady shift towards what you might call ‘active partnership,’ in which solid performance of execution and an emphasis on optimization and useability, rather than gold-plating, provide the reference points. Research and



VP of L3Harris Technologies Canada, Rich Foster, believes people are the fundamental building blocks of the company

development shapes the future state – and we have earned the right to be considered – and trusted – as an architect of that state.”

### **A TRULY SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATION**

Back to Mirabel, QC, where Diane Montambault is Director of Programs, having started her career at the division in legal compliance some 14 years ago. We asked her about her journey at the company.

“It has been a long and continuous opportunity to increase responsibility and experience,” she says, unhesitatingly. “My background as a lawyer makes me analytical and encourages me to consider balance and compromise in making decisions and resolving issues. And in doing that – this organisation is truly supportive. L3Harris is an R&D and technology company – so we hire very competent people: we coach them, we train them, we develop them and we move them horizontally where appropriate to ensure maximum mutual benefit.” Asked to describe how she would respond to a friend who asked her about opportunities to work for L3Harris she had an immediate – and very reflective – answer. “Do it – you will very

soon own your own career, in the palm of your hand.”

A middle management member of what she calls “a relatively small family,” Montambault exhibits the same enthusiasm and the same collegial sense as her more senior colleagues across the various divisions. And as a woman, she has absolutely no doubt that she is in the right place. “The organisation truly believes in diversity and inclusion – and as a woman there is absolutely no barrier,” she concludes. Not an unusual attitude in 21st century Canada, it has to be said – but nonetheless it is extraordinarily good to hear this company gets it.

Sana Zafar is a 21-year-old student at Western University and an Electrical Engineering Co-Op based at L3Harris in Burlington, ON. She is also a recent recipient of the Canadian Industrial Leadership Award (CILA) program, co-founded by L3Harris Technologies, CAE and Thales to increase employment, development and advancement opportunities for Canadian women in the defence and security sectors. What has she learned from the opportunities and the mentoring that came with the award, in the ninth month of a 16-month program?

“I have learned that one person really can make a change. I have seen perceived barriers vanish as I have watched teams form and work around me and have discovered a very inclusive, fostering culture. I see that culture, that vision, in multiple teams. I have

been given absolutely the best opportunities and receive mentoring from a different person every month – thereby broadening my experience.

Zafar is an extraordinary young woman, yet not that unusual for her generation, in some ways. Engaging, articulate, “absorbing wisdom,” as she says, but not scared of putting her own well-founded proposals forward. And her conclusion? What is the single most important thing she has learned? “Do it if you want to!”

### **A TESTAMENT TO THE TEAM**

Rich Foster, VP L3Harris Technologies Canada, and the man at the top of the national pyramid, will not be surprised to read that. “I will be interested to see where she lands 15 years from now,” he says, while talking about the fundamental building blocks of the Canadian company – *people*.

“The legacies represented by the brands are important but, fundamentally – the names may change, but the people don’t,” he states. “We are a solutions-oriented company: it’s not just about the sale, it’s about the relationship. And it’s people that power and sustain relationships.”

He espouses that belief – as do his colleagues throughout Canada – to such an extent that the parent company sees its Canadian arm – roughly 5% of the corporation’s employees – punching

considerably above their weight in collective performance.

Perhaps most telling is his response to how the pandemic has affected the company. “We have been lucky. The [business unit] leaders made sure employees were safe and able to work from home where necessary – and have continuously and closely supported them throughout. Unsurprisingly, our employees have responded well – extremely well.”

Normally in a profile like this, one might expect more input and more of a ‘corporate overview’ from the executive at the top of the tree. With encouragement from the L3Harris Canadian leadership, the opportunity to let the employees themselves tell the story has been too great to resist.

Rangesh, Ugo and Eddie, Diane and Sana – all from different vantage points – have fully justified being “excited,” “thrilled” and “proud,” and can legitimately “look forward,” with genuine enthusiasm and optimism. So, to be totally honest, the rationale for L3Harris Technologies Canada being named Canada’s Top Defence Company for 2021 – now seems a simple one.

Beyond their impressive technology, innovation or contracts, as Sana Zafar eloquently states (remember – you saw her name here first), “In the end, it comes down to the people.” ■

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**Tim Mahon is CDR’s European Correspondent**



L3Harris’ MX-10MS integrated onto the MAST13 Autonomous Surface Vehicle