

# Veterans offered training opportunity to serve on ‘glass battlefield’ of cyberspace

By [Jon Wells](#), Mon., Nov. 1, 2021



Jeff Musson spoke at a job fair-style tent, that was nearly blowing off its moorings in the wind, outside the Royal Canadian Legion branch on Limeridge Road.

Musson is executive director of a [training program called “Coding for Veterans.”](#)

The program is billed as an opportunity for veterans of the Canadian military to train for a new career in information technology, including cyber security — with 100 per cent of the \$15,000 tuition paid by [Veterans Affairs Canada](#).

A cross-country “caravan” is promoting the program, and stopped in Hamilton last Thursday.

Tim Fletcher, a retired Hamilton army captain, and historian of the [Royal Hamilton Light Infantry \(RHLI\)](#), said the “glass battlefield” of coding as it relates to [cyber security for nations and private commerce](#), is the way of the future.

“It’s a natural fit for military veterans; they get it,” he wrote in an email to the Spectator.

“Canada, like most western nations, is [under attack in the cyber warfare domain](#), but the fight is kinetic through the use of computers,” he added. “Those no longer in the military can still continue the fight in this way, and that can be very appealing.”



The program, run online through the University of Ottawa, is two years old, and so far about 200 former Canadian soldiers have enrolled.

Veterans qualify to apply to enter the program who were released from military service since 2006, and who put in a minimum six years service. They also must take cognitive and aptitude tests.

There are two streams in the program: software development, and cyber security, which includes achieving accreditation that most jobs in such security work require.

Musson said the program so far has a 95 per cent employment rate, and is also welcoming applications from spouses and family members of those veterans who met the criteria.

Tuition is also free for family members, he said, thanks to support from corporate sponsors.

Fletcher said a lifetime working in the military is not for everyone, and careers can be cut short by injury.

“Generally speaking, military members have a great deal of motivation, they joined up to be challenged. So veterans tend to be very loyal and committed: all very good qualities for someone in the cyber security field, where a lapse of commitment can have huge national ramifications.”

[Kiera Antaya](#), who grew up in Milton, served as a Naval Warfare Officer in the Canadian military and enrolled in the program. She now works as a cyber security analyst for an Ottawa-based consulting firm.

When she was in the military, she was based on the west coast, and served in the Pacific near Central America as part of a joint Canadian Navy-U.S. Coast Guard operation to intercept cocaine smugglers.

Antaya told the Spectator that after she left the military in 2019, while going through a personal career crisis over what to do next with her life, she was taken by the new challenge.

“It sounded really cool, and there are so many (coding) jobs available. The work I do is creative, and you get to do problem-solving, and there is an investigative aspect. And it helps others. It’s the reason people join the military, because they want to help.”

The information caravan has visited 25 cities across the country in the last two months, with more than 160 veterans applying to enrol. The tour concludes in Toronto on Remembrance Day.

On Thursday outside the legion, a former soldier and Hamilton resident approached the Coding for Veterans tent. He shook Musson's hand and called him "sir."

Tall and clean-cut, and in his 40s, the veteran didn't want to reveal much personal information to Musson, or a Spectator reporter, because he is currently employed as a police officer, he said.

He said he served with the Canadian military, just like his father and grandfather. He served just shy of eight years, in artillery, including tours in Bosnia and Afghanistan. He left the military 16 years ago.

Musson told him the largest area of the military the program has drawn from so far, is veterans of artillery and infantry, with the sophisticated weapons systems employed by soldiers.

"We have a cyberrange, just like you have gun ranges where you practise," Musson added.

The veteran took a pamphlet, and vowed that he would consider applying online.

"I've always kind of lived a life of serving, and this would be something similar, from my understanding of it, protecting people from being hacked, and from political interference," he told the Spec. "And I like the idea of upgrading myself. I think you fall behind in life if you don't."

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