

# CALIAN EXECS ON CANADA'S DEFENCE INDUSTRY

BY GABRIEL OAKLEY

*This Ottawa-based company has been delivering a breadth of services supporting both CAF capability requirements and its service members. CDR recently caught up with Patrick Thera, president of Calian's Saskatoon-based Systems Engineering Division, and Sandra Cote, VP of Calian IT Professional Services based in Ottawa, to talk about the industry, growth priorities and current projects. Here is that conversation . . .*

**CDR:** Hi Patrick & Sandra, thank you for taking the time to speak with us. You both do significant work with the industry's original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). In your opinion what are they looking for in partners?

**Cote:** There's several factors. For one, they're looking for strong Canadian suppliers that can really bring that Canadian content to their program. We're happy to be that partner, because Calian is 100% Canadian – headquartered in Ottawa, investing in innovation, and employing 3,200 people

across the country. Second, they're looking for a suite of capabilities. OEMs don't want to have to go to a large number of Canadian suppliers to deliver their program – it can create a complex supply chain. So I think they appreciate having a one-stop shop.

**Thera:** We have a wide and deep offering for our OEMs and prime contractors, across defence and commercial markets. At whatever level they need our involvement, we have a model that will work for them. So these may be solutions like white labelling our product offerings, developing custom solutions or components, or custom manufacturing and testing.

For example we manufacture the power control module for General Dynamics Land Systems—Canada in its production of the LAV 6.0s for the Canadian Army. We took a prototype and turned it into a fully military-qualified product. We manufacture, test, maintain and support this high-availability component in-house. Another example is in our partnership with DRS Land Systems for their MSTAR radar. We're delivering systems and components for this radar system for the Canadian Army for surveillance and target acquisition. We want industry to recognize that we can design and build to specification, that we can work with prime contractors to help reduce risk and provide excellent products.

**CDR:** Has the federal government done a good job ensuring enough Canadian content in Defence procurement?

**Cote:** I think we're heading in the right direction. We support the government's Innovation Agenda and approach to Industrial and Technical Benefits (ITBs), which is focusing on Canada's key industrial capabilities. I think this approach is important as we look for ways to better support Canadian companies and help them innovate. At Calian we want to leverage our established and emerging capabilities in areas such as cyber resilience, satellite ground systems and AI. In cyber, for instance, we are growing our products side of the business as a best-in-breed solutions provider, so we're looking forward to participating in Ottawa's consultation on a new approach to cyber security procurement. I think this really has the potential to simplify and expedite procurement of cyber and IT security services for Canadian companies.

**Thera:** I agree. Canadians can be modest and sometimes we're guilty of being a little



Calian provided the European Space Agency with the deep space antennas required for the Rosetta Mission



At Calian we want to leverage our established and emerging capabilities in areas such as cyber resilience, satellite ground systems and AI says Sandra Cote

too modest. Sometimes we need to do a better job telegraphing the great industrial capabilities we have here in Canada and find ways to make them even stronger. You know, it is through our projects and customers that true innovation happens. You are probably familiar with the Rosetta Mission, led by the European Space Agency, where they chased down a comet about half a billion kilometres from Earth and landed a probe on it. Well, it was our deep-space antennas in Spain, Argentina and Australia that communicated with the Rosetta spacecraft and made that mission possible. I think we need to recognize and support the successes of Canadian-owned and operated companies like ours.

**Cote:** One thing I would like to add is that our capabilities are strong – and so are our services for people of the CAF and their families. At Calian we were impressed with Strong, Secure, Engaged in the way that it broadened the Defence Policy well beyond capabilities. The Policy puts emphasis on people – on resilient people and families. This resonated with us at Calian because our services for the CAF extend across the military person’s entire journey, including health services, various levels of training, cyber security, support for veterans as they become civilians, and even in access to health care for military families. So, it’s not just our capabilities I want to talk to here – but also the extent of Calian’s involvement in the military person’s entire journey. When you look at the full picture of the capabilities we deliver and our focus on operational readiness and wellbeing of our military, we like to think we demonstrate a 360 approach to the Defence Policy.

**CDR:** What did you think of the federal government’s \$2.05 billion investment into NASA’s Lunar Gateway project?

**Thera:** I’d say this is a positive, important step for Canada’s space industry. The government has made a 24-year funding commitment, which I think gives the country’s space companies an opportunity to innovate over the long-term and to develop and deliver some key capabilities supporting Lunar Gateway. It was also encouraging to see R&D support for small and medium-sized enterprises. I think it’s important to draw on the innovation of smaller companies to support the evolution of the Canadian industry. Canada is stepping up and showing international leadership in the evolving the global space economy, which is forecasted to be worth trillions of dollars in the coming decades. At the same time, I think more could be done to develop Canada’s capabilities to participate globally.

Since the 1990s Calian has been working with the Canadian Space Agency, where we’ve created a centre of excellence for multi-mission support. And at our Saskatoon division we have expertise capable of supporting deep space missions as well as large deployments of commercial gateway solutions. We are currently working on some key space projects such as Polar Epsilon 2 as a subcontractor to MDA. The project is intended to expand Canada’s access to a domestic source of space-based Earth observation data, provided by the Radarsat Constellation Mission. As for Lunar Gateway, we will be looking for ways put forward our capabilities as more details are unveiled about Canada’s involvement in this signature program.

**CDR:** Are there opportunities for Calian in the Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC) program?

**Thera:** Certainly. In fact we’re already lined up to provide our design, engineering, manufacture and test capabilities on this program – and we can provide multi-tiered support. We are a Tier 2 partner with BAE Systems and Lockheed Martin Canada. As the program gets rolled out in the coming months and years, we’ll be bringing forward our entire suite of capabilities. We hope to see some additional opportunities materialize as well. The CSC program is well suited to us as a defence industry player. You know, we’re registered in the Controlled Goods Program and we are well versed in compliance with the International Traffic in Arms Regulations and the Export Administration Regulations.



Patrick Thera is President of Calian’s Saskatoon-based Systems Engineering Division

Calian has deep engineering capabilities beyond our Division in Saskatoon. Calian’s engineering service team in Ottawa is also ISO 9001 certified and provides a wide range of support for DND. This includes covering the safe visit of nuclear vessels to Canadian ports, DND’s use of radioactive material, naval projects and lifecycle management support, and airworthiness technical support for the RCAF. I think it comes back to how our diverse services play across the spectrum of DND’s and CAF’s equipment and capabilities.

**CDR:** We’ve heard that Calian is involved in a project called Engaging Women in Cyber Defence, which is examining the barriers to women in cyber defence careers. Tell us how you got involved in this project and what you’re looking to achieve.

**Cote:** This came from a project in partnership with Willis College in Ottawa, where we received a small grant from DND’s Defence Engagement Program. Calian and Willis are involved in training programs and professional services for cyber security defence professionals, where engagement is predominantly men, so in this project we wanted to understand why. Why are military and defence women not choosing the cyber career path? We ran an online survey (CyberWoman.ca) and held public consultations in Fredericton, Vancouver and Ottawa to help identify barriers to female engagement. A report outlining our findings will be delivered to DND this spring. I think it’s a fantastic project that hopefully can help increase female participation in these important trades of the digital economy.

**CDR:** Thank you