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CFB PETAWAWA — A Belleville native has assumed command of a storied Canadian Army battalion.

Lt.-Col. Don Denne, the man who commanded the 3rd Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group in Afghanistan, said goodbye to soldiers in the regiment after handing over control to Lt.-Col. Rory Radford recently.

For two years, Lt.-Col. Denne led 3RCR as its commanding officer. During a change of command ceremony the responsibility of leading 3RCR was handed over to Lt.-Col. Radford, a 20-year veteran of the Canadian Forces.

"I thought this day would never come, but all good things come to an end, it is said," Lt.-Col. Denne said in his farewell address.

"I'm extremely proud of the accomplishments of 3RCR during my command," he added.

Those accomplishments included participating in an exercise held in the Killaloe area, constructing complex live-fire ranges in Wainwright, Alta., and more recently parading in front of Gov.-Gen. Adrienne Clarkson during a trooping of the colours ceremony on Parliament Hill two weeks ago.

Perhaps the most significant event that has occurred within the last two years is 3RCR soldiers being deployed to Afghanistan as part of Operation Athena Roto 0.

"What an amazing story that

was," noted Lt.-Col. Denne, adding the regiment was well supported by other units and soldiers performed their duties with dignity and honour.

"All in all, it has been an extremely action-packed two years," he said.

"I will be eternally proud to say that I have soldiered with you."

Col. Peter Devlin, commander of

2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, who was the reviewing officer of the ceremony, said Lt.-Col. Denne is a powerful leader who has created a skilled unit while making the battalion, regiment and brigade proud.

As for the regiment's new commanding officer, Lt.-Col. Radford, Col. Devlin said he has always

looked up to him.

"He commands respect to all he touches," he said.

Lt.-Col. Radford, a graduate of Centennial Secondary School, enrolled in the Canadian Forces in 1984 after graduating from the University of Guelph. In 1985 he was commissioned into the RCR and posted to 3RCR. Throughout his career he has received numerous promotions and has served in overseas missions. He has a master's degree in military studies and has attended the Marine Corps School of Advance Warfighting Studies program. His decorations include the Canadian Forces Decoration, United Nations Protection Force Medal with Commander-in-Chief commendation, the Special Service Medal and the Canadian Peacekeeping Medal.

During the ceremony Lt.-Col. Radford said he is honoured to take over 3RCR as its commanding officer.

"It won't get any better for me. As Don has said, enjoy it while it lasts because it all goes too quickly," he said.

In his speech, Lt.-Col. Radford thanked his family, explaining that this posting to Petawawa marks his family's ninth move in 20 years. Families, he said, play an important part in military life, and without their support he and his fellow soldiers wouldn't be where they are today.

"I urge you to thank your families who do great deeds when we are not around," he said.