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## Business gets insight into military needs

### Reservists called asset

By [BILL KAUFMANN](#), SUN MEDIA

Local business and military leaders joined forces yesterday to smooth the way for part-time soldiers to serve their country.

About two dozen members of the business community were given a crash boot camp in Armed Forces gear, weaponry and rations while being urged to ensure greater job flexibility for staff who've joined the military reserves.

While employers in Calgary are generally receptive to empowering staff to serve, an awareness gap stands in the way of many so-called weekend warriors who could volunteer for training and missions like Afghanistan, said Col. Art Wriedt of 41 Canadian Brigade Group.

"We have a lot of work to do ... it's communications and education," said Wriedt, a reservist who works for a city engineering firm.

"We're relative novices at this compared to the U.S."

Given the city assures its reservist staff pay, benefits and continued work, other employers should be able to supply leeway on soldiers' schedules, said Mayor Dave Bronconnier, who earlier tried on a shoulder-held rocket launcher for size. "As employers, I believe we have an obligation," he said.

The leadership, drive, problem-solving and organizational skills fostered by military service translate well in the workplace, said Bronconnier. "The skills and training are second to none -- you will be able to use that in attraction and retention."

There are about 800 reservists in southern Alberta.

RBC vice-president Al Block said the lunch meeting was an eye-opener. "It gave me a greater appreciation of what reservists do," said Block. "It'll allow me to go much easier, to make reservists much more relaxed in asking for leave."

Last year, paramedic and city employee Cpl. Michael Starker was killed in Afghanistan serving as a reservist. The city ensured his benefits weren't interrupted after his death, said Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart.

