

Ottawa Journal: honoring the sacrifices of our Afghan Vets

Our men and women in uniform represent the very best our country has to offer. Over the last 12 years, the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces fought and served this country valiantly in Afghanistan to defeat terrorism and to promote security and development so that Afghans can build a viable, stable, and secure country. Sadly, this service was not without loss as Canadians made the ultimate sacrifice for these goals and many others were injured carrying out their duties. With the completion of the Afghanistan mission, Prime Minister Stephen Harper made May 9th a National Day of Honour to commemorate the valour, strength, and sacrifices of the more than 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members who served in Afghanistan. At events across the country to mark this special occasion, Canadians had the opportunity to pay their respects to the Veterans and families of fallen soldiers. A relay team of veterans and one civilian participated in the Soldier On Afghanistan Relay, carrying the last Canadian flag from Afghanistan in a specially built baton from Trenton to Ottawa. The relay participants arrived on Parliament Hill with the National Day of Honour Parade and Prime Minister Stephen Harper accepted the flag on behalf of Canadians. In Ottawa, the official ceremony was attended by Veterans and the families of the fallen who were flown in especially for this event as well as Prime Minister Stephen Harper, David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, and General Thomas J. Lawson, Chief of the Defence Staff. The day was marked by a parade beginning at the Canadian War Museum and ending at Parliament Hill with a two minute moment of silence. After the moment of silence, a two-part fly-past salute and a public viewing of the Afghanistan Memorial Vigil in the Hall of Honour took place in the Centre Block on Parliament Hill. This National Day of Honour builds on our Government's continued efforts to honour and support Canadian Veterans. Previously, we honoured the sacrifices of Canada's Korean War Veterans by declaring 2013 the Year of the Canadian Korean War Veteran. We also held a special ceremony to honour the men and women who took part in Operation MOBILE in Libya. Canada's Afghanistan Veterans courageously demonstrated the strength, spirit, and determination that have defined our nation from the very beginning. Their collective sacrifices represent another chapter in Canada's long and proud history of fighting for a safer, better world for everyone. Canadians are forever proud and grateful.

David Tilson, M.P.