

Ottawa Journal ? Remembrance Day 2014

Remembrance Day is quickly approaching and it is of utmost importance for each of us to honour the countless contributions our veterans have made to peace and stability around the world, as well as to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. This Remembrance Day also marks several considerable military milestones for all Canadians to pause and reflect on ? the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War; the 75th anniversary of Canada's engagement in the Second World War; and the 70th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy.

I'm very honoured to be laying a wreath on behalf of the Government of Canada at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in Ypres, Belgium on November 11th, while I'm there leading an all-party parliamentary delegation to the European Parliament in my role as President of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association. The delegation will also be travelling to Riga, Latvia, as the Latvian Government will hold the next presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Canadian soldiers have a long history of standing up for democracy and freedom around the world. In 1914, Canada was automatically at war when Britain declared war on Germany. Canada, with a relatively small regular army of 3,110 men at the time, quickly recruited thousands of young men from coast to coast and within a few weeks, the army grew to over 32,000 men.

The young Canadian soldiers endured trench warfare, poison gas, heavy artillery, barbed wire, machine gunfire, and horrific conditions, but despite impossible odds, they fought valiantly. Canada, who entered the war as a nation of only eight million people, made an impressive contribution to the war effort which was key to the success of the Triple Entente. However, this success came at a heavy price - a total of 619,636 men and women served in the Canadian forces in the First World War, and of these, 66,655 gave their lives and another 172,950 were wounded. Nearly one out of every ten Canadians who fought in the war did not return home.

It was 75 years ago that Canada entered into the Second World War. It was a war that lasted six very long years and more than one million Canadians and Newfoundlanders served their country. More than 45,000 made the ultimate sacrifice and another 55,000 were wounded.

This Remembrance Day also marks the 70th anniversary of the June 06, 1944 D-Day landings where Canadian troops were integral to the success of these operations by progressing further than any of their allies that day. However, their successes came at a significant cost with 340 Canadians sacrificing their lives, 574 wounded, and 47 taken as prisoner.

Canadians continued to play an important role in the Normandy campaign and the struggle to liberate France. In all, Canadians suffered the most casualties of any division in the British Army Group during the Battle of Normandy with more than 5,000 making the ultimate sacrifice. The brave efforts of these outstanding young soldiers changed the course of the Second World War and ultimately helped liberate Europe from Nazi control.

We are forever in debt to our veterans and those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the First and Second World Wars, as well as those who have proudly served Canada in other conflicts and in peacekeeping missions. On Remembrance Day, we say ?thank you? to these brave men and women and demonstrate this appreciation for their outstanding service to Canada by wearing poppies and taking part in Remembrance ceremonies. When we participate in these acts of remembrance, we're ensuring their legacy lives on from generation to generation.

By David Tilson, MP