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Ottawa Journal: We will never forget

On November 11th, Remembrance Day, we stop to honour those who made immense sacrifices to protect peace and freedom around the world. We also use this day and Veterans' Week (November 05 ? November 11) as an opportunity to say ?thank you? to those who've served Canada and are currently serving overseas. When we take the time to stop and honour these brave men and women, we're letting them know we appreciate their countless contributions and that we will never forget their sacrifices or service to our country.

Here in Canada, our veterans' sacrifices and achievements have shaped the Canada we know today, as well as our international reputation as peacekeepers; something we can be incredibly proud of and reminds us of why the act of remembrance is essential. It is our duty to remember that more than 1.5 million Canadians served their country in the First and Second World Wars, as well as the Korean War, and that during these conflicts, more than 110,000 made the ultimate sacrifice for Canada. They gave up the lives they knew and left their families and homes to bring peace and security to those in need. Many would never see their families again and those who returned home would endure mental and physical scars for the rest of their lives.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the July 27, 1953 signing of the Armistice that ended more than three years of fighting in the Korean War. Our Government was proud to designate 2013 the Year of the Korean War Veteran. We, as Canadians, remember the heroes of the Korean War and their brave fight to uphold freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. In summer 2013, our Government participated in ceremonies across Canada marking the 60th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice and the first annual Korean War Veterans Day, a national day of recognition enshrined in law by the Government. We also recently unveiled a new Canadian monument in the Republic of Korea dedicated to the Canadian Armed Forces personnel who fought during the war. We remember the more than 26,000 Canadians who served during that War and the 516 Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The year 2013 also marks another considerable anniversary ? the 70th anniversary of the Italian Campaign during World War Two. The contributions of Canadian soldiers helped to liberate Italy and bring an end to the War. More than 93,000 Canadian soldiers participated in this very challenging and significant Campaign, which resulted in 26,000 casualties with nearly 6,000 of those casualties being fatal.

These anniversaries remind us of the unconditional willingness of young Canadians to defend our Canadian values of democracy, freedom, and rule of law at considerable personal cost to themselves. We live in the best country in the world because of their efforts and sacrifices to protect our values. They are why we enjoy peace today and why Canada is held in such high regard around the world.

Today, our country's finest continue to defend these values by bringing peace and security to conflict ridden areas of the world. We must honour the contributions and sacrifices of those who served and serve today by always staying true to our values, never ceasing our gratitude, and never forgetting their service to Canada.

On Remembrance Day and during Veterans' Week, I invite you to join me in expressing our shared gratitude to these brave men and women to honour their legacy. By taking an active role in remembering their sacrifices, we're saying thank you and ensuring their memory will live on for generations to come.

David Tilson, M.P.