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Ottawa Journal: We Will Remember Them

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Remembrance Day is once again quickly approaching.

It's of utmost importance that we all stop and remember the exceptional men and women who've courageously and selflessly defended our country and values. They are Canada's finest because they have put their lives on the line for us when they've been called upon to serve our country.

On November 11, we can show our Veterans and those who've fallen, how much we appreciate their sacrifices by taking the time to remember and honour them.

Canada's finest have a long and proud history of protecting and defending peace and freedom. This history goes as far back as the South African War of 1899 to 1902, which marked the first time Canada sent troops to an overseas conflict.

By the time this War would come to an end, more than 7,000 Canadians, including 12 female nurses, would serve, with 267 making the ultimate sacrifice.

An enormous loss of Canadian lives would be experienced in the First World War that would follow 12 years later in 1914. By the time the War ended in 1918, more than 650,000 men and women from Canada and Newfoundland served with more than 66,000 giving their lives and more than 172,000 being wounded.

The Second World War, which took place from 1939-1945, saw an even larger contribution of Canadian soldiers to the war effort. More than one million Canadians and Newfoundlanders served their country in this global conflict. By the end of the War, more than 55,000 Canadians were wounded and over 45,000 made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

Just six years later, Canada's finest once again answered the call to serve their country in the Korean War. By the end of the War in 1953, more than 26,000 Canadians volunteered to serve and 516 would give their lives.

Following these wars, the outstanding men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces would go on to proudly and honourably serve our country in conflicts, such as Afghanistan. This particular mission involved the deployment of over 40,000 personnel, which was a considerable contribution, one not seen since the Second World War. When the last of the Canadian Armed Forces members left Afghanistan in March 2014, 158 Canadians had lost their lives serving their country.

This year, 2016, marks two significant anniversaries of Canada's efforts to defend and protect our shared values of democracy, peace, freedom, and the rule of law. The first is the one hundredth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and Beaumont-Hamel, which took place during the First World War. These grueling and fateful battles saw Allied soldiers leaving their trenches to face heavy enemy fire from the German lines. The battles would carry on for more than four-and-a-half months and would cost Canada dearly with 24,000 Canadian lives lost before the end of battle in November 1916. Canada's national identity was solidified at the end of this war, but at a huge cost in Canadian lives.

2016 also marks the sixtieth anniversary of Canada's first large-scale participation in peacekeeping with the Canadian component of the United Nations Emergency Force, arriving in Egypt on November 25, 1956. Since that time, approximately 100,000 Canadian peacekeepers have participated in more than 50 peacekeeping missions including: Cyprus; Haiti; Iraq; Croatia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; East Timor; Ethiopia and Eritrea; to name a few.

When looking back at the extraordinary contributions Canada's finest have made to bring peace and stability to areas of conflict around the world, we are quickly reminded of the immense sacrifices of these phenomenal men and women. We are also reminded why it is essential for us to remember and honour them on Remembrance Day because the peace and freedom we enjoy today is due to their incredible valour and sacrifice. They are Canada's heroes and we owe them our deepest gratitude and respect.

On November 11th, join me in taking the time to honour and thank our Veterans and those who've made the ultimate sacrifice protecting and defending Canada. Let's show these remarkable men and women how much we appreciate them and that we will never, ever forget them or their courageous, selfless efforts to ensure we may live in peace.

We will remember them.