

Canada's 100 days: August 8 ? November 11, 1918

BY DAVID TILSON

This year, 2018, represents a very special and important year for Canada. It's not only the 65th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice, the 10th anniversary of National Peacekeepers' Day, and the 75th anniversary of the invasion of Sicily, as well as the start of the Italian Campaign in the Second World War, but it's also the 100th anniversary of Canada's Hundred Days and the Armistice. Canada's Hundred Days, which goes from August 08 to November 11, recognizes the considerable contributions the Canadian Corps made to the final offensive during the last three months of the First World War, to end the long and devastating conflict.

Following Germany's advances early on in the war, the Western Front became a stalemate of horrible trench warfare leaving a zigzagging frontline of almost 1,000 kilometres from the coast of Belgium to the border of Switzerland. Outside of the trenches, the soldiers faced the enemy across a very narrow strip of land between the opposing trenches, also known as 'No Man's Land.' This area was composed of barbed wire, mud, shell craters with machine gun fire made it very difficult to break through the enemy lines. Both the Allied and German armies wrestled with devising strategies to overcome this type of warfare with attacks that often came with a heavy death toll and without critical gains. The War would carry on for another four years before a considerable breakthrough would be seen on the Western Front.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge along with other Canadian successes of the First World War, such as Passchendaele, rightfully earned the Canadian Corps the reputation as 'storm troops.' Therefore, when plans were made for the Allied offensives that would eventually lead to the end of the War, this unparalleled fighting force would play a leading role in the attacks.

From August 08 to November 11, we as Canadians, pause to reflect on Canada's achievements during the last one hundred days of the First World War and the tremendous sacrifice that was made by the exceptional men and women of the Canadian Corps who participated in the grand final offensive, as we mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Amiens, the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Canal du Nord, and the 100th anniversary the Liberation of Mons. However, these victories came at a terrible price ? nearly 40,000 of our soldiers were wounded and more than 6,800 made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

It's important to note that thirty brave Canadians and Newfoundlanders received the Victoria Cross for their immense courage defending our Canadian values during the last one hundred days of the First World War, from August 08 to November 11, 1918 ? nearly one third of all Victoria Crosses in our military history. Canada proudly remembers them and their sacrifices to help bring an end to the conflict to ensure the peace and freedom we enjoy today. Their commitment to standing on guard for their country is something we continue to see 100 years later in the extraordinary men and women of today's Canadian Armed Forces who serve our country honourably and courageously each and every day.

We, as Canadians, must always remember the sacrifices made by the outstanding men and women who answered the call to serve their country in the First World War and in all subsequent conflicts. We can do this by sharing their stories, make an effort to learn more about their sacrifices and achievements, participate in commemorative events between August 08 and November 11, or visit a cenotaph or other local war memorials. In taking this action, we can show our deep appreciation and heartfelt gratitude for their selfless service to Canada. Such efforts will also ensure their memory and legacy will live on for generations to come.

As the Member of Parliament for Dufferin-Caledon, I encourage you take time over the coming weeks and months to commemorate Canada's Hundred Days and the valiant service of our country's finest. Together, we can show we remember their immense contributions and sacrifices in the First World War and that they'll never be forgotten.