

Remembrance Day 2018: 100th Anniversary of the End of WWI

By David Tilson

Remembrance Day is quickly approaching. It's of utmost importance that we all take the time to pause and reflect on the immense sacrifices made by those who've served and currently serve our country. The peace and freedom we enjoy today wouldn't be possible without their valour and service to Canada. This year, 2018, marks the 100th anniversary of Canada's Hundred Days and the end of the First World War, which reaffirms our need to ensure we continue to honour and remember these exceptional Canadians.

When the First World War began in 1914, Canada was a relatively young country of eight million and still in search of its identity as a nation. However, Canadians from all over this country answered the call to serve. These young men and women left their families, their careers, and their entire lives to serve their country. They faced trench warfare, poison gas, heavy artillery, barbed wire, machine gunfire, and unimaginable conditions, but they persevered.

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.

The extraordinary courage and bravery shown by these phenomenal Canadians, significantly contributed to bringing an end to the war. During Canada's Hundred Days, which represents the last three months of the First World War, the Canadian Corps' achievements were remarkable, as more than 100,000 Canadians advanced 130 kilometres and took approximately 32,000 prisoners, and captured nearly 3,800 artillery pieces, machine guns, and mortars.

Sadly though, Canada paid a horrendous price for its success and enormous contributions to the First World War. More than 650,000 men and women served their country in this War, and of these, 66,655 made the ultimate sacrifice for their country and another 172,950 were wounded. Nearly one of every ten Canadians who fought in the war did not return home. These are sobering statistics and remind us that we must never forget the cost of war, as well as the importance of remembrance.

The tremendous valour demonstrated by Canadians in the First World War has been proudly honoured by hundreds of thousands of Canadians who've served our country since that war and continue to do so. This year also marks several other important anniversaries, including: the 65th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice; the 10th anniversary of National Peacekeepers' Day; as well as the 75th anniversary of the invasion of Sicily and the beginning of the Italian Campaign of the Second World War. On Remembrance Day, we also take time to remember and honour all of the incredible men and women who've served in the Second World War, the Korean War, and Afghanistan, as well as those who've served in peacekeeping missions, and are currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to bring peace, stability, and security to areas of conflict around the world.

We can show our deep gratitude and appreciation for their immense sacrifices and service to Canada by wearing a poppy throughout Veterans' Week, attending one of the many Remembrance services taking place across Dufferin-Caledon and all of Canada, talking to a veteran or a member of the CAF and saying, 'thank you for your service to Canada,' as well as learning the stories of those who've served and sharing those stories with others. These acts of remembrance will ensure their contributions and sacrifices will never be forgotten.

On November 11th, let's join together strong and proud to honour and remember our country's finest while we mark the 100th anniversary of Canada's Hundred Days and the end of the First World War, as well as all of the outstanding men and women who've since served our country and continue to serve. Let's show them the torch of remembrance will continue to burn brightly and their sacrifices will never be forgotten.

We will remember them.