

Governor General accepts first poppy, reflects on meaning

Speech Delivered by Governor General Mary Simon **We are meeting** to express profound gratitude to members of the Canadian Armed Forces who sacrificed their lives to make the world a safer place.

We do this by wearing a red poppy.

This powerful symbol takes us to the fields of Flanders.

Those fields were scarred by the devastation of the First World War.

And yet, the poppy bloomed.

A vivid crimson red.

We wear it as our collective pledge: that we will never forget those we lost; never forget the veterans who walked home?some whole, some scarred, all changed.

This past spring, I walked through the Holten Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands.

The Dutch people were honouring Canadian veterans on the 80th anniversary of the liberation of their country.

I stood in silence among the graves of over a thousand Canadian soldiers.

Later that day I visited Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery.

Over 2,300 Canadian troops are buried there.

As Governor General and Commander-in-Chief, I invite you to draw your thoughts to these brave souls.

Quite simply, war is loss.

The red poppy signifies this loss.

It's a visual reminder of what can be taken from us?when we defend our freedom, and the freedom of our allies.

With the poppy, we remember our connection to those people Canadians served alongside in Europe.

In Afghanistan.

In Haiti,

In Somalia,

And in the former Yugoslavia.

Always fighting for human dignity, democracy and equality.

Since the First World War, the poppy has reminded us that we are not alone in our desire to protect these values.

I wear it with great pride.

Thank you to The Royal Canadian Legion for its ongoing efforts to give Canadians a chance to wear a poppy in November.

To all veterans, to all members of Canada and the United Nations' peacekeeping forces, to all serving members of Canada's military forces: we thank you.

It is with reverence and gratitude that I accept this First Poppy.