

**Speech for General (retired) Natynczyk
former Chief of Defense Staff 2008-2012
Unveiling Ceremony - 1 Nov 2025**

Good day everyone! / Bonjour à tous!

Your worship, Mayor Bryan Paterson

City councillors

Distinguished guests

Serving Members of the Canadian Armed Forces, Veterans and their families,

Folks from the amazing community of Kingston and the region,

Thank you for attending this ceremony today where we will pay homage to the tens of thousands of Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our nation.

Merci d'être présents aujourd'hui à cette cérémonie où nous rendrons hommage aux dizaines de milliers de Canadiens qui ont fait le sacrifice ultime au service de notre nation.

Before going further, I would like to thank the members of the National Wall of Remembrance Association for their exemplary and steadfast efforts over many years to organize, to fund and to erect this beautiful tribute to our Fallen. Bravo to you all!

Equally I wish to thank and congratulate the Mayor, councillors and leadership from the City of Kingston for the close and collaborative partnership to achieve this great monument of Remembrance. Let's give them all a round of applause.

We gather here today on sacred ground.

Nous nous réunissons ici aujourd'hui sur une terre sacrée.

Here, along the Kingston waterfront—where the wind carries whispers of Canada's military history—together we will unveil an enduring tribute to Canada's fallen heroes.

Today, we dedicate the National Memorial to the Fallen.

Aujourd'hui, nous inaugurons le Monument commémoratif national aux canadiens tombés au combat.

A memorial that was conceived, planned and funded by the contributions of individual, caring Canadians.

This noble monument of stone and bronze embodies a solemn promise—that our nation will never forget the over 120,000 Canadians who have given their lives in service to this country, from before the War of 1812 to this present day.

These grounds—this park—are now home to four tall granite pillars, carved with powerful significance and standing in quiet strength. At their centre, the Canadian flag flies, in honour of those who served to protect Canada.

Beneath our feet, the memorial rests on stone shaped in the form of a compass, a reflection of the far corners of the world where Canadians have deployed to fulfil their duty of service to enable security, peace, and humanity.

But even more poignant than the structure itself are the stories of the individuals who are honoured here.

Every one of the over 120,000 names commemorated today is recorded in the Books of Remembrance, housed in the Memorial Chamber of Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

Each pillar of this memorial reflects a chapter in Canada's military history:

- The first, represents Canada's early conflicts before the First World War—when Canada's military came of age.
- The second recognizes sacrifices and heroism during the Great War, where a young nation stood tall and proved itself in the face of horrific conditions.
- The third reflects Canadian's service on the battlefields of the Second World War, fighting tyranny across Europe, Asia, and on the high seas.
- The fourth, the post-1945 world—from the hills of Korea, to United Nations peacekeeping, to operations in Rwanda, the Balkans, and combat in Afghanistan, to the missions our Canadian Armed Forces undertake today.

Each of these chapters came with sacrifice. Each with heartbreak. Each with courage that defies comprehension.

And carved at the base of each pillar are four powerful words: Service. Sacrifice. Honour. Mourning.

Et gravés à la base de chaque tour se trouvent quatre mots puissants : Service. Sacrifice. Honneur. Deuil.

These words reflect the realities of the shared experience by every person who has worn the uniform.

As we reflect together, we must pause and remind ourselves: those we remember today were people like us with full lives, with families, with hope for a better future.

They were young and old. French-speaking and English-speaking. Indigenous and settlers. European, Black, Asian, and immigrant Canadians from across the world.

Men and women from every province and territory—from prairie farms and Atlantic harbours, from big cities and remote communities.

Some signed up to fight for King and country. Others were conscripted in times of desperation. Some volunteered with quiet conviction. All of them stood in the space between danger and the people they loved.

They are the reason we are able to gather in freedom today.

When we say their names are “remembered,” it is heartfelt.

The eight Books of Remembrance hold every name, handwritten with care, page after page. Every morning on Parliament Hill, a soldier stands in silence as the page is turned to honour a different group of the Fallen.

But this memorial here—this place in Kingston—is where memory becomes personal.

Here, families may come. Veterans may reflect. Children may learn. Canadians may pay their respects to duty and sacrifice.

This is a space for the living, shaped by the lives of the Fallen.

And here, against the backdrop of Lake Ontario and beside the watchful walls of the Murney Tower, we make a national promise: that memory will not fade with time.

That sacrifice will not be forgotten. That service will be honoured—everyday of the year.

Many of the names we honour today did not fall in battle, but in training, in preparation for operations, or through the invisible wounds of combat.

And behind each one of those names is the suffering of grieving families: Silver Cross mothers, grief-stricken spouses, children without the understanding of why their loving parents weren't returning home, and siblings who wondered what could have been.

The cost of conflict reaches far beyond the battlefield.

That is why the names of each of the Fallen are also written on the National Wall of Remembrance Association's Online 'Virtual Memorial', where the Association is assembling information on every one of the Fallen.

C'est pourquoi les noms de chacun des disparus sont également inscrits sur le « Mémorial virtuel » en ligne de l'Association de la Muraille commémorative nationale, où l'Association rassemble des informations sur chacun des disparus.

It is a noble objective which will help keep alive the memories of those who died for Canada. And it is an integral part of the Association's efforts to help educate Canadians, especially the Youth.

Il s'agit d'un noble objectif qui contribuera à perpétuer la mémoire de ceux qui sont morts au combat pour le Canada. Il s'inscrit également dans les efforts de l'Association pour sensibiliser les Canadiens, en particulier les jeunes.

This memorial also honours those who serve today.

To our soldiers, sailors, aviators, and special operations personnel,

You carry forward the tradition of service that is unmatched in honour and scope.

You serve not for glory, but to protect. Not to dominate, but to defend. Not to seek war, but to enable peace.

We thank you. And we honour the burden you carry on behalf of our country.

And let this place be a reminder to you—and to all of us—that your service is recognized and appreciated. That your sacrifices are not in vain.

This memorial challenges us to live remembrance. To teach our youth. To understand the cost of freedom and democracy.

To visit places like this and tell our children what these symbols represent.

Because freedoms are not guaranteed. Democracy is not self-sustaining. And peace—though deeply cherished—is always fragile.

Our Fallen defended Canada and protected our way of life.

Our responsibility is to preserve their legacy with the same courage and commitment they carried into battle.

We must also commit to action beyond remembrance.

Let us support our veterans and their families.

Let us support the families of the Fallen—not just in their grief, but in their healing. Not just with sympathy, but with support that is enduring.

And let us ensure that monuments like this are not just symbols—but places of education, reflection, and national pride.

So today, on this solemn occasion, in this sacred space, we speak with one voice—as one nation:

To the Fallen,

We remember you.

We honour you.

We will carry your legacy forward.

Alors aujourd'hui, en cette occasion solennelle, dans ce lieu sacré, nous nous exprimons d'une seule voix, comme une seule nation :

À ceux qui sont tombés au combat,

Nous nous souvenons de vous.

Nous vous honorons.

Nous perpétuerons votre héritage.

Let this memorial stand as a watchtower.

Let it speak when we fall silent.

Let it guide us like the compass beneath our feet.

Let it remind us that our freedom was won by the sacrifice of our national treasure, the sons and daughters of Canada.

Que ce mémorial se dresse comme une tour de guet.

Que ce monument parle quand nous nous taisons.

Que ce monument nous guide comme une boussole sous nos pieds.

Qu'il nous rappelle que notre liberté a été conquise par le sacrifice de notre trésor national, les fils et les filles du Canada.

And above all, let it remind everyone who gave their life for Canada—

You are not forgotten.

Et surtout, qu'il rappelle à chaque un qui a donné sa vie pour le Canada :

Vous n'êtes pas oubliés.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

Au coucher du soleil et au matin, nous nous souviendrons d'eux.

Thank you. Merci