

**Briefing for the Standing Committee on
National Security, Defence, and Veterans Affairs
on the Hill 70 Project**

26 April 2023

A. AIM

To have Government of Canada assume ownership of the Hill 70 Memorial.

B. Key facts

1. The Battle of Hill 70 is a compelling but overlooked chapter in Canadian history commemorates first time Cdn Corps fought under a Cdn Comd, Lt-Gen Currie. There were 9500 casualties with 1877 Killed in Action. This was a critical point in the development of Canadian nationhood. Virtually every municipal war memorial in Canada lists Hill 70.
2. The construction of the Memorial is complete and is fully paid for. The monument park is beautiful and it is 8.8 Km NE of Vimy Ridge allowing tour groups to visit both sites in the same day.
3. The Hill 70 Project is a volunteer driven initiative. Prominent Canadians like actor Dan Aykroyd (who is the narrators for the self-guided site tour), and Col Chris Hadfield our National Spokesman have donated their services without cost. The Globe & Mail and Corus Entertainment are the official media partners of the project.
It has attracted the support and involvement of many prominent Canadians (see the project letterhead) but also, the public from all group ages and origins.
4. The Hill 70 Project consists of:
 - a. The memorial is built on the site of the battlefield; it will be the last of its kind in France. The French Gov't waived value added tax on all goods & services purchased in France for the project. This resulted in savings of approximately \$2 million.
 - b. The annual budget costs for the Memorial Park average \$30-50K which is covered by the trust fund created for that purpose by the Hill 70 Memorial
 - c. The municipality of Loos en Gohelle technical services are managing the park on our behalf.
 - d. A complete educational program continues to function:
 - i. A study guide that has already been distributed to 3,500 secondary schools across Canada. Included in this package is the multicultural story of the Canadian Army: aboriginal soldiers such as Mike Mountain Horse who came from the Blood tribe in Southern Alberta, Frederick Lee who was born in Kamloops to Chinese parents and who was killed at Hill 70, and Filip Konowal who won a Victoria Cross at Hill 70, the only Ukrainian ever to be awarded a VC. This has tremendous significance for new Canadians since it validates the fact that they have been valued citizens of this country for over 100 years.
 - ii. A travelling exhibit made available to museums across Canada at no charge.
 - iii. Hill 70's historic significance was recognized in Senator Serge Joyals' history of the First World War " *Le Canada et la France Dans la Grande Guerre 1914-1918*", by Art Global (Jan. 1 2016),

- i. Twenty videos are produced in English, French, Ukrainian, and Mandarin are narrated by project team members and leading Canadians such as Dan Aykroyd and Bernard Derome,
 - ii. Currently there is a revolutionary webcast in train the Upper Canada District School Board is partnering with us to use our Project as a vehicle for student focused history research. By the conclusion of the second semester in 2024, the students will have developed a soldier profile of every soldier listed as a death during the Battle of Hill 70. Those digital profiles will be loaded onto our website for access by all Canadians.
 - e. A peer reviewed official history which has been published by UBC Press and gone on to become a best seller on Amazon.ca, *Capturing Hill 70*
 - f. Five other books, including a graphic novel on Frederick Lee.
 - g. The establishment of a new permanent Hill 70 display in the Canadian War Museum was opened 26 March 2019.
 - h. A short Hill 70 documentary called *Finding Fred Lee* has won awards in California, Berlin and others in 2023.
5. Close cooperation with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission will see the expansion of their cemetery at Loos en Gohelle right up to the boundary of the Hill 70 Memorial Park, the installation of a new gateway between the Park and the cemetery, and their ownership of one of our walkways. The Ambassador and MVAC reps will attend the laying of the initial stone in May 2023.

C. Budget

The Project has a budget of \$10 million, which has been raised from private sources across the country. No funding is required from the Canadian Gov't for the completion of the project. Included in this funding is provision of about \$1Million in Trust for the long-term maintenance of the memorial.

D. Political considerations

1. Every aspect of the project from the web App, the website, the information panels on the property are all Bilingual. The styles, motifs, etc used at the memorial site conform to those followed by The Government of Canada and the CWGC.
2. The current relationship with Canada China is difficult. Ukraine is at war.
3. The Chinese Canadian community support for Hill 70 created an opportunity to have Chinese text carved in stone showing the importance of our relationship for over 100 years. The Ukrainian Canadian community raised over \$1 Million. Many attended the opening at which the Canadian Ambassador Mme Isabelle Hudon presided.
4. Several foreign governments sent representatives to the event- Ireland donated funds since two of the VCs were awarded to Irish-born men; Ukraine, to commemorate Konowal and where Canadian troops were serving at that time, and France who is still grateful for Canada's military support in defence of their freedom.
5. the Federal Government's relationship with Canadian veterans is a long but complex one. This Memorial offers the current Government an opportunity to be seen to be publicly honouring veterans and their sacrifice.
6. In sum, the cost to the government is minimal.

E. Next Steps:

1. The organizers of the Hill 70 Project would like to gift the Memorial to the people of Canada. Veterans' Affairs is responsible for many war memorials in Europe, which are administered by Parks Canada.
2. Recently Veterans Affairs supported the Juno Beach Centre. However, department staff insists political direction is required. We would welcome the opportunity to meet key Government representatives to lay out the case why this can be done without cost to the benefit of the Government and its citizens.
3. The Chairman of the Memorial Project is prepared to brief on request.



photo courtesy of Ginsight Films



Photo courtesy of The Hill 70 Memorial