

SPEAKING NOTES
Speaker Noël A. Kinsella

Veterans Week and Remembrance Day Ceremony
November 6, 2008

Honourable Ministers,
Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,
Chief of Defence Staff,
Veterans and Families of Veterans,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

Welcome to the Senate Chamber. This is the Chamber in which the three elements which together constitute the Parliament of Canada, namely the Crown, the Senate and the House of Commons, come together when the presence of all three is required. These occasions include the Speech from the Throne, formal Royal Assent to bills which have been passed by both Chambers, and the installation of a Governor General.

The Chamber is replete with symbols of our nation, including particularly the eight paintings which adorn the walls and which depict scenes from the Great War as it was called at the time, and which sadly later came to be renamed as the first World War.

It is thus a special place in Canada, an appropriate place for a gathering such as this, where we have come together to formally begin a week of remembrance of our veterans, of their valour in war and of their importance in maintaining peace.

Canadians are justifiably proud of their veterans and all that they have accomplished both at home and abroad. And we remember them.

We remember them throughout the year when we pass the cenotaphs across the country. We remember them when we travel and visit memorials in places like Ypres, Vimy and Beaumont-Hamel, where so many made the ultimate sacrifice to secure the freedom which we enjoy today.

It is also important to remember that Canada was not alone in this great endeavour, and that other countries also fought for this freedom, as we saw during a Senate visit earlier this year to Notre Dame de Lorette, with its museum, ossuaries and as its 20,000 markers representing fallen French soldiers mutely testify. A significant number of those soldiers were Muslims from North Africa and I am sorry to say that many of their markers were desecrated. It was therefore that we visited their restored resting place to express our Canadian multicultural solidarity with these fallen heroes. The actions of those who defiled these markers demonstrate a lack of understanding, reinforcing the importance of ceremonies such as this which help us recall milestones in our history.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the Armistice which ended the Great War, and we have but one known surviving Canadian veteran of that war. But John Babcock at age 108 is not the only one who remembers. The families of veterans remember. And Canadians remember.

We remember the accomplishments of the men and women of our military in our museums, in our art, in our poetry, in our literature, and in our films. The name Passchendaele was brought back to the forefront of our memories this year by a film of that name.

We should also remember that Canadians have made the ultimate sacrifice not just in the European theatres during the World Wars, but on different continents and in many countries around the world over the years, including Africa, Asia and most recently in Afghanistan. We have with us today a number of families of our men and women who are presently serving in Afghanistan, together with CFB Petawawa Base Commander Lieutenant Colonel Moore, and our hearts and minds are with them as well. And we have Major William Fletcher, who will be sharing his reflections with us today.

This is a time to reflect on the valour of our veterans, and on all that they have accomplished. It is a time to pay homage to those who have made our nation possible. It is also a time to remember the families of veterans and all that they have sacrificed. And Canadians do remember them, one and all, now and forever.