

Dear Benoit Jolicoeur,

I have recently been made aware of the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs study of a Strategy for Commemorations in the 21st Century. I wish to submit a short submission below.

I am a veteran of 40 years, including having been Canadian Defence Attaché to 10 countries, with one year in Afghanistan. I also served 4 years as CEO of the Conference of Defence Associations and the CDA Institute, and 2 years with IBM as Executive promoting the employment of veterans.

Throughout my entire life, I have dedicated significant time working with both Veterans and young Canadians, with the aim of educating younger generations about the meaning of commemoration and how this contributes to better citizenry!

I have specifically tailored my comments below on what I interpret to be the mandate of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, as the Committee explores a long-term Canadian strategy for commemorations. My focus is on ONE overall main idea, with 3 supporting ideas.

MAIN IDEA - For a commemoration strategy to succeed in the 21st Century, it has to be intrinsically linked to EDUCATION of our younger generations, rather than to focus predominantly on veterans. Young Canadians must see themselves as direct beneficiaries of this commemoration strategy!

Supporting Ideas

- a. Link commemoration to the intertwined goals of security, peace and prosperity. Achieving and maintaining security is not something that 'just happens'. Our brave veterans have contributed to our security both at home and abroad through their participation in many conflicts, operations and assistance missions. The natural consequence of security is normally a state of prolonged peace, which leads to greater prosperity, including the civil liberties that we enjoy (and at times take too much for granted). The past can serve as a guiding light to our future generations, but it should not constrain future generations to be innovative in their own right. Younger generations need to be confident that our government and its Armed Forces do NOT glorify war through commemoration. The real purpose of commemoration is to remember, respect and learn from those who have had to endure war (both military and civilians, at home and abroad).
- b. There are currently too many organizations competing for precious resources and attention in the commemoration space. The overall results are hardly optimized! Competition has little, if any, value for an effective commemorative strategy. Collaboration, coupled with diversity and genuine inclusivity, will win the day!
- c. Showing up only on key anniversaries will, at best, generate short-term interest and hype, but little else. An authentic commemoration strategy for the 21st century must be deliberate and persistent; hence, the need for collaboration to get the most from precious resources available. Public-private partnerships are key to this deliberate strategy. VAC and a re-focussed, forward-looking Royal Canadian Legion have a central, orchestrating role to harness and support private initiatives.

In sum, to inspire and educate Canadians of all ages - with a concerted emphasis on young Canadians - can best be achieved by involving them in a deliberate commemoration strategy, whereby these same people see themselves as champions of those who have served and sacrificed to improve their quality of life, and for making Canada a better place to live!

I would be happy to elaborate on the above, if the Committee so wishes.

Respectfully,

Tony Battista