

**Supporting Public Spaces of Remembrance
presented by**



**Pre-budget Submission
to the
House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance
August 2020**

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Ministry of Veterans Affairs provide a total envelope of \$700 000 over five (5) years for care and maintenance of overseas commemorative sites at Vimy Ridge and Hill 70.

Recommendation 2: That the Ministry of Veterans Affairs implement changes to the current funding systems to include overseas sites.

Recommendation 3: To assure long-term sustainability of both sites, that the Ministry accept both spaces as part of their European site management mandate.



Context

The Hill 70 Memorial and the Vimy Foundation completed significant memorial projects in France in 2018; the Hill 70 Memorial Park, constructed 8.8km North East of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, and the Vimy Foundation Centennial Park, constructed on Vimy Ridge, adjacent to the Memorial.

Both projects represent significant private efforts to celebrate and remember Canada's participation in the First World War and its place in our national narrative and create opportunities for increased Canadian presence in France. The Hill 70 Memorial and the Vimy Foundation are committed to retaining strong ties with the communities that host these spaces, Givenchy-en-Gohelle and Loos-en-Gohelle.

The Hill 70 Memorial and the Vimy Foundation have engaged to maintain their respective memorial spaces at a standard befitting public memorial sites and are considering a management partnership to co-administer the maintenance, budget and project management of the two sites.

A Case for Urgency

The Ministry of Veterans Affairs provides some funding for repair of Canadian monuments located in Canada but does not currently have an envelope that is flexible enough to allow for maintenance funding of foreign sites. Both the Hill 70 Memorial Park and the Centennial Park are now part of the Canadian commemorative space in France and will require permanent maintenance funding to ensure that they are maintained to a similar standard as at the National Canadian Vimy Memorial.

The Ministry of Veterans Affairs has a two-fold mandate: to support current veterans and to promote recognition and remembrance of the achievements and sacrifices of those who serve Canada during times of war. Organisations like the Hill 70 Memorial and the Vimy Foundation help the Ministry achieve its commemorative mandate through projects like the Hill 70 Memorial Park and the Centennial Park.

Without investment by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, both sites are reliant entirely on private funding for maintenance costs, which can fluctuate based on donor appetite. The urgency is increased given the current COVID-19 pandemic and the effects it has had on Canadian charities like the Vimy Foundation and the Hill 70 Memorial. A longer-term solution in partnership with the Ministry would allow for increased stability and ensure that these sites continue to be an overseas destination for Canadians and a complement to the Canadian National Vimy Memorial site.



Short term funding

The Hill 70 Memorial and the Vimy Foundation are considering an accord to negotiate and manage maintenance for the two sites for the next five (5) years.

Both organisations have agreements with their respective neighbouring communities, including land use, liability, and water supply. The yearly budget for maintenance of both sites includes the following:

Landscape and hardscape maintenance contract	\$60 000 per year
European-based project manager	\$25 000 per year
Site upgrades and improvements	\$40 000 per year
Canada-based administration	\$15 000 per year

TOTAL	\$140 000 per year
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Organisational Breakdown

Hill 70 Memorial	\$44 650 per year
Vimy Foundation	\$95 350 per year

A maintenance partnership such as the one proposed would allow both organisations to maximize efficiency, while ensuring the best possible price for maintenance services and avoid duplication. By including local partners like the two communes and a local project manager, the agreement would mitigate the challenges of managing a European based site.

We ask that the Ministry of Veterans Affairs provide a total envelope of \$700 000 over five (5) years for care and maintenance of overseas commemorative sites at Vimy Ridge and Hill 70

Changes to the Current Funding Model

The Ministry of Veterans Affairs provides funding for construction or refurbishment of monuments in Canada through the Community War Memorial stream of the Commemorative Partnership Program. The current program has a limited budget and sites like the Hill 70 Memorial Park and the Centennial Park are excluded since they both require maintenance funding, which is not covered, and are located in Europe.



Sites like the Hill 70 Memorial Park and the Centennial Park help the Ministry to achieve its mandate but are currently not eligible for support from the Ministry. Unlike most Canadian memorials, these sites are not Canadian public land and all support from the surrounding communes has been negotiated individually. Since both communes are small, they do not have collective budgets large enough to support all the maintenance required by the properties, though they are willing to contribute services.

Changes to the current funding model to include overseas sites would help to ensure that these important parts of the commemorative landscape in France and Belgium are maintained at a level appropriate to their purpose.

We ask that the Ministry of Veterans Affairs implement changes to the current funding systems to include consideration of maintenance costs for overseas sites

Long-term Sustainability

The Hill 70 Memorial and the Vimy Foundation have both committed to maintaining their respective sites for as long as possible. However, as private entities, both groups are vulnerable to changes in the funding environment. This has been highlighted particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen a significant decrease in revenue in charitable organisations across the country, all while demand for the services they provide continues and, in some cases, has increased.

To assure sustainability for the Hill 70 Memorial Park and the Centennial Park, the projects could be turned over to their respective communes, leaving the French civic government responsible for Canadian memorial sites, however neither commune has shown willingness to do so at this time. Clearly, a long-term solution with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs for the sites is preferable.

To assure long-term sustainability of both sites, we ask that the Ministry accept both spaces as part of their European site management mandate.

Conclusion

The commemorative sites at Hill 70 and Vimy Ridge provide additional context for visitors to the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, educating them on Canada's role during the First World War, and encouraging them to remember those who served their country. They are meant to supplement the Vimy Memorial, not to overshadow it.

Ensuring the longevity of the two sites will require investment, whether public or private, over the next five years. The Hill 70 Memorial and the Vimy Foundation are willing to examine working together towards our common goal of remembering Canadian leadership and sacrifice in the First World War.

We hope that we can count the Ministry of Veterans Affairs as our third partner in working towards achieving this goal.

