

# Remember sacrifices of war, reflect on peacetime highway tragedies

*Twice as many Canadians killed by automobiles in the last 50 years as in all three wars combined*

Tomorrow is Remembrance Day. Canadians will wear poppies and gather at war memorials across the country to pay tribute to those who died in war. At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, we will observe two minutes of silence to remember.

War is a phenomenon most of us view through the lens of a television camera. For those of us who were born during peacetime, war is a surreal concept. Remembrance Day breathes life into those blurred photos and tattered letters in the attic; it serves to remind us that more than 100,000 Canadians made the ultimate sacrifice, dying so future generations could live in freedom.

It's difficult for younger generations to understand the unwavering commitment that prompted so many to sacrifice so much. It's even more difficult to picture what life was like for those families affected by World



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War I, World War II and the Korean War, not just for the soldiers but also for those waiting at home. We simply can't imagine how it felt to anxiously wait for any word from overseas, getting through each day by praying your loved one did the same.

## Remembering the war

I was at a road safety conference recently, and I had the great fortune of hearing The Honourable Barry Shearman speak. Mr. Shearman is a member of the British Parliament, and was part of the team that fought for and eventually instituted mandatory seatbelt legislation in Great Britain.

Barry remembered the war. He

knew what it was like to be that family I referred to earlier.

He explained that everyone's deepest fear at the time was the appearance of a government vehicle on the street. He described how people pulled back the curtains and held their breath, waiting to see which house the car stopped at, which family would receive the news that their son, father, brother or husband wasn't coming home again.

He went on to say that an army official on our doorstep isn't something we fear anymore. But, what we should fear, and don't, is the police officer burdened with the horrific task of telling us there's been a car accident, and our loved one isn't coming home.

War deaths are remembered, honoured by hundreds of thousands of people, from school children struggling to understand what it all means, to veterans struggling to maintain their composure. Public figures deliver poignant speeches, asking us to

remember the sacrifices others have made in the name of freedom, to ensure those 100,000 Canadians didn't die in vain.

And they didn't.

But, since 1950, 200,000 other Canadians have.

It's staggering. The number of Canadians killed on our roads in the last 50 years more than doubles the number of Canadians killed in all three wars combined.

## No just cause

There are no nation-wide memorials for these people. There is no day set aside to remember them. They didn't give up their lives willingly for a cause they believed in. Those 200,000 men, women and children died for no reason other than they were in a vehicle.

Most of us don't think about what would happen if the unthinkable did happen. We catch a newscast on yet another crash and yet another death,

but it's not real to us. We think, "Oh, that's horrible" and wait for the weather forecast.

And we, as a society, view these deaths as some sort of acceptable risk, the "price of doing business." But those families who've had that phone call, that knock on the door, will tell you it's not acceptable that someone left in the morning and never came back, and that the pain never goes away.

When you attend your Remembrance Day service tomorrow, please pay your deepest respects to those you are there to honour. Later, when you're home, perhaps you could remember those other Canadians, too. Their deaths are a national tragedy, and shouldn't go unnoticed.

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