

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: The 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge

By Chris Ballard, MPP

Newmarket-Aurora

This past Sunday was the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

One hundred years ago, more than 17,000 Canadian soldiers set off to capture a hill, not knowing if they would survive the day. One hundred years ago, 3,598 soldiers lost their lives in Vimy, France.

During this epic First World War battle, the Canadian Corps won an extraordinary victory over the Germans, seizing the heavily-defended ridge that the Allies had previously failed to take.

Canadian troops introduced new methods to the battlefield, like rolling artillery barrages, behind which men moved up the hill, somewhat protected; and key troops were trained behind the lines to prepare them for the attack.

Nevertheless, it was a blood bath.

I watched the live broadcast taking place at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, honouring the 60,000 men who died in WWI.

The thousands of empty boots on and around the memorial, each adorned with a poppy, was poignant. I remain thankful for the men and women who defend Canada and are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice.

While watching the CBC coverage, I was moved by the beauty of the Vimy Memorial. The memorial overlooks the Douai Plain from the highest point of Vimy Ridge. At its base, these words appear: "To the valour of their countrymen in the Great War and in memory of the sixty thousand dead this monument is raised by the people of Canada."

Sixty-thousand dead, in a country not much more in size than eight million souls. What an awful price.

Inscribed on the ramparts are the names of over 11,000 Canadian soldiers who are "missing, presumed dead" in France. The land for the battlefield park, some 91 hectares, is a "free gift in perpetuity of the French nation to the people of Canada."

We must remember those who lost their lives for Canada. We must support our soldiers who currently serve our country, and we must never forget the sacrifices that have been made, and continue to be made for our freedom.

At the Sunday ceremony, Prince Charles said of the military attack "This was Canada at its best." Perhaps it was, certainly a nation was forged. But I can't help but remember and honour the parents, wives, children and friends of those we left in France and Europe in this "War to End All Wars."

Job Numbers

Job numbers are in and once again Ontario's unemployment rate was lower than the national average. Full-time employment increased by 11,300. Since this time last year, Ontario has created 86,300 jobs, for a total of nearly 691,000 jobs since recessionary low in 2009.

We are consistently seeing new full-time jobs "many of which are above-average wage, and most in the private sector. I've written before about how well Ontario is doing economically.

We continue to lead G7 nations in growth and our Premier continues to reach out to businesses and governments around the world to increase Ontario's markets. As I write this, Premier Wynne is in Illinois, meeting with Governor Rauner and business leaders to strengthen our economic ties.

Foodland Ontario Celebrates 40th Anniversary

For 40 years, Foodland Ontario has been making it easier for families and consumers to identify and enjoy Ontario's locally-grown and harvested foods. By buying local, you are helping boost the local economy, create good jobs and strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector.

There are many ways you can help celebrate Foodland's 40th Anniversary. One way is to buy local. Both Newmarket and Aurora have fabulous Farmers Markets that will soon be open for all to enjoy! Living in such a lush area, surrounded by farms, we are blessed with many local farmers and vendors. Farmers Markets are great ways to meet our farm neighbours and buy local.

The Newmarket Farmers' Market is open 8am- 1pm every Saturday, May until October in the Newmarket Riverwalk Commons. The Aurora Farmers' Market opens the first Saturday in May and runs until Saturday, October 8. It is located at Aurora Town Park. There are many vendors throughout the season for everyone to enjoy. It's a great way to purchase farm fresh produce, home-made baking and find inspiration to create your very own local dish.

Supporting Ontario's farmers and food processors is part of Ontario's plan to create jobs, grow the economy and help people in their everyday lives. The agricultural industry in Ontario represents \$39 billion of the province's gross domestic product. Now that's something we can all be proud about.

Home shows

Thank you to the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce for hosting another great home show this year. Home Shows are a great way to kick-off the home improvement season and to highlight the many amazing, local, businesses that we have here in Newmarket-Aurora. Next up is the Aurora Home Show, April 21 to 23 at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex. See you there! As always, I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. I look forward to hearing from you.