Canadian delegation invited by Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs to attend November 11 remembrance service in Korea

The Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs of the Republic of Korea has issued personal invitations to a prestigious delegation of Canadian Korean War Veterans to participate in the 2011 Turn Toward Busan National Ceremony of Thanks and Tribute to the Fallen. It will be held at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan, Korea on November 11.

The Canadian delegates are (in order of retired rank):
- Lieutenant General Charles H. Belzile
- Major General Claude A. LaFrance
- Major General Herbert C. Pitts
- Commodore James M. Cumming
- Lieutenant Colonel John Bishop
- Warrant Officer Robert Erb
- Caporal Albert Gagnon

Vince Courtenay, the only non-Korean member of the Republic of Korea 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee is the initiator and coordinator for the ceremony.

The ceremony and program is also participated in by veterans from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and by serving personnel from their missions in Korea and by serving personnel with U.S. Forces Korea.

Senator Yonah Martin has been very supportive of Canada’s participation in this national ceremony. She has discussed the special program with MPVA Minister Park Sung Choon, both in Korea, when she attended the Battle of Kapyong 60th Anniversary commemoration in April and in Ottawa when the Minister attended the Korea Day Ceremony on July 24, 2011.

“‘The Canadian delegates will be representing all of Canada’s Korean War Veterans at this important national ceremony,’ Senator Martin explained.
“Minister Park and other officials at the MPVA have expressed appreciation that these influential veterans are accepting the invitation to participate in the ceremony,” she noted.

“They will be our Korean arm of a November 11 Turn Toward Busan ceremony that will simultaneously take place in Ottawa, and will also be observed by veteran groups across Canada on Remembrance Day.”

The ceremony in Ottawa will be held on the evening of November 10 at 9 p.m., coordinated by Lieutenant Commander (Ret’d) Bill Black, president of the National Capital Unit of the Korea Veterans Association of Canada.

The Canadian Turn Toward Busan ceremony in Ottawa is a joint activity of KVA Canada and Veterans Affairs Canada.

Participating in Ottawa will be Veterans Affairs Minister Steven Blaney, His Excellency Nam Joo Hong, the Republic of Korea's newly appointed Ambassador to Canada, high level officials from the Department of National Defence, the City of Ottawa, and of course, a large turn out of Korean War Veterans representing all of the services and units that served in Korea.

Because of the advanced age and guarded health conditions of some of the veterans and the fact that the Ottawa ceremony is held in the cold night, the service will take place indoors at the Ottawa City Hall.

Bill Black can be contacted for additional details about the Ottawa service by e-Mail: verbil@sympatico.ca

Additionally, Turn Toward Busan services will take place throughout Canada with local groups of Korean War veterans holding their own programs and turning to face coordinates 35°7'39"N 129°5'50"E, the exact GPS setting for the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan.

These services will be held both on the evening of November 10 and also on Remembrance Day, November 11.

They are observed across Canada not only in meeting places of the Korea Veterans Association of Canada and the Royal Canadian Legion but also in several of the regimental and services messes, including those at active duty bases.

One such observance took place for the first time last year in the officers mess at RCAF Base Cold Lake, Alberta, with officers from the RCAF 419 Squadron turning to face toward Busan and pay their respects to Canadians who fell in Korea, and sadly, after 60 years, still are in Korea.
In Korea, members of the Korean War Veterans Association of the Republic of Korea are encouraged to take a two-minute break in their activities and turn toward Busan at 11 a.m. on November 11, no matter where they may be in Korea. A brief history of the Turn Toward Busan service and a timetable for the program is included at the end of this article.

The Canadian Delegation

Lieutenant General Charles H. Belzile, CM, CMM, OStJ, CD
Platoon commander, Korea, Queen's Own Rifles of Canada
Commanding Officer Royal 22e Regiment
Commander 4 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group
Commander Canadian Forces Europe
Commanding General Canadian Army (then called Mobile Command)
Patron Korean War Commemoration Council of Canada
Past Grand President Royal Canadian Legion
Former President, Canadian Battlefields Association

Major General Claude A. LaFrance, DFC (US), AM (US), CD, Légion d'honneur (France)
USAF F-86 fighter pilot exchange officer in Korea
Flew 50 combat missions over North Korea
Flew with 16th and 39th Fighter Interceptor Squadrons USAF 51st Fighter Wing
Awarded USAF Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal
Served in France as RCAF flight commander with NATO Forces
Commanding Officer Canadian Forces Base Winnipeg
Commanding Officer No. 10 Tactical Air Group
Director General Policy Planning, Canadian Forces Headquarters
Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs at the North American Aerospace Defence Command in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
Major General Herbert C. Pitts, MC, CD
Platoon commander, Korea, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
Decorated with Military Cross for bravery and outstanding command
Commanding Officer Queen's Own Rifles of Canada
Regimental Commander Canadian Airborne Regiment
Colonel Commandant Canadian infantry Corps
Honourary Colonel:
Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry;
Queen's Own Rifles of Canada;
Canadian Airborne Regiment
Patron 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion Association
Patron Korean War Commemoration Council of Canada
Former President, Commissioner and International Commissioner Scouts Canada
Recipient of Korean Scouting's "World Brotherhood Award"
Central role in constructing, funding, organizing and commemorating Korea Veterans Association's National Wall of Remembrance, Brampton, Ontario
Honourary President, British Columbia/Yukon Command, Royal Canadian Legion

Photograph not available at this time

Commodore James M. Cumming, CD
Navigating Officer in HMCS Sioux in Korean waters
Commanding Officer, HMCS St Croix (DDE 256)
Director for Exercises, NATO Headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander
Atlantic
Commanding Officer, HMCS Preserver (AOR 510)
Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, in Maritime Command HQ, Halifax
Naval Attache in Washington, DC

Lieutenant Colonel John Bishop, CD
National President Korea Veterans Association of Canada 2011-12
Corporal Section Leader in Korea 1950-51, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light
Infantry
Fought in Battle of Kapyong, April 1951
Commissioned in 1953
Served in Germany 1959-62 with NATO as Battalion Operations Officer
Served in Ghana 1968-70 as CO Infantry School
Served in Vietnam 1973 with ICCS as Team Site Commander
Served in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Jordan 1975-76 as Defence Attache
Served in South Korea 1982-84 as Canadian Defence Attache and
Canada's Representative at Panmunjom
Vince Courtenay, MSM

Initiator Turn Toward Busan international services
Member Advisory Council, 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee, Republic of Korea
Chairman, Korean War Commemoration Council of Canada
Served in Korea, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
Designed, developed Monuments to Canadian Fallen, UN Memorial Cemetery in Busan and in Confederation Park in Ottawa
Honourary Life Member, United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission Secretariat
Author: Hold the Hook; Patricias in the Korean War; Love and Duty, a Canadian remembers the Korean War
Publisher The Korean War Veteran internet journal

Photograph not available at this time
**Warrent Officer Robert E. Erb, CD**  
Served in Korea in tank recovery unit  
Also served UN Peacekeeping missions in Egypt and Cyprus  
Brother Private Kenneth Irvine Erb SF 13966 killed in action March, 1952 serving with The Royal Canadian Regiment, buried in Grave 1249, United Nations Memorial Cemetery, Busan

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**Photograph not available at this time**

**Caporal Albert Gagnon, CD**  
Served with three brothers (four brothers serving) in Korea with the Royal 22e Regiment  
Fought in November, 1951 Battle of Hill 227-Hill 355 in same infantry company with two of his brothers.  
One brother, Joseph Omer Gagnon SD 4937 killed in Korea, June, 1952, buried in Grave 1150, United Nations Memorial Cemetery, Busan  
Caporal Albert Gagnon served for 15 years until injured. While on NATO service in Germany he went to Scotland and procured his Regiment's Mascot, the famous white goat named "Baptiste," which he brought back to the Regiment's post in the Citadel in Quebec City, Canada.

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**Brief history of the Turn Toward Busan services**

The Turn Toward Busan service was first held at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Korea on November 11, 2007. It was convened by the Korean Veterans Association of the Republic of Korea and participated in by 300 veterans and dignitaries.

The service had been planned throughout 2006 after two visiting British veterans had asked officials at the UN Cemetery if it was possible to commemorate the Fallen who are buried there on the traditional November 11 Remembrance Day.

The Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs had observers and participants on site. They were much impressed with the solemnity of the service and the MPVA Minister elevated it to a national commemoration service, to be held again in 2008.

In Canada, the first Turn Toward Busan service was held in Ottawa in 2007, with Lieutenant Commander (Ret’d) Bill Black coordinating. It was held outdoors at the
Monument to Canadian Fallen (Korean War), which faces along a plot line to the matching monument in the Canadian Graves section in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery.

That ceremony was covered in its entirety by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s CBC Television, with senior executive producer for news Mark Bulgutch, personally supervising the crew, and then personally editing the tape and producing the coverage. It was broadcast as a major segment of the November 11 national coverage to every municipality in Canada.

The first MPVA national service was held at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in 2008, with more than 600 participants, including Korean War
Veterans from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States and high level officials from the Ministry of National Defence, the MPVA and the various Commonwealth embassies.

The MPVA sponsored national service was deferred in 2009 over concerns about the H1N1 influenza epidemic, but a smaller, no less solemn service was held at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery.

The 2009 service at the UN Cemetery was participated in by 60 Republic of Korea Korean War Veterans from the Busan region, by an American minister and by the daughter of a deceased British officer who had flown in from her home in France to take part in the service.

The MPVA national ceremony had to be deferred once again in 2010 because the date conflicted with activities of the G-20 Group of Nations that took place in Seoul on November 11.

The national ceremony was carefully planned to take place once again this year, with participation by delegations from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Honourable Park Soon Chung, Minister of Patriots and Veterans Affairs has endorsed the service.

At the conclusion of the ceremony program, the veterans, along with diplomats, will attend the Remembrance Sunday service that will be held in the Anglican Cathedral in downtown Seoul.

This service, which is coordinated by the British Embassy, is participated in by diplomatic representatives from all Commonwealth nations and by military representatives from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

It will be the last Remembrance Sunday service in Korea for His Excellency Martin Uden, Her Majesty’s Britannic Ambassador to Korea.

Ambassador Uden will be returning to the United Kingdom within days of the service to take up a new post. He has served two tours of duty in Korea, currently as ambassador and before that in a high ranking diplomatic position. He is very well liked and respected throughout the diplomatic community – and by veterans from the Commonwealth
nations who have met him.

**Itinerary for the Delegates in Korea**

The ceremony at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan will take place on November 11 at 11 a.m. This is Remembrance Day, on which the Fallen from all wars are commemorated in the four Commonwealth nations that are participating. The service hour and two minutes of silence is being solemnly observed.

Additionally, November 11 is Veterans Day in the United States, again, with Fallen from all wars solemnly commemorated.

There are 1,578 Fallen comrades from the four Commonwealth nations buried in the UN Cemetery, as well as 36 Republic of Korea soldiers who fell during the Korean War. In total 2,300 Fallen servicemen from 11 nations are buried in the UN Cemetery.

Thirty-six Americans who served in Korea during the war also are buried in the cemetery. They stayed on in Korea as expatriots or died in country in civilian status.

The service takes place at the Wall of Remembrance that is located in the cemetery, with its own reflective pond and eternal flame. This new structure, donated by the Government of Korea, was commemorated in October, 2006, at the same time that the bases for all grave markers in the cemetery were converted from concrete slabs to carved granite.

The Wall of Remembrance is inscribed with the names of 40,896 servicemen from 17 nations who fell in Korean War service, including those listed as missing in action.

The names include Australia, 346; Canada, 516; New Zealand, 41; the United Kingdom, 1,177 and the United States, 36,492.

**Timetable**

The veteran delegations from the four Commonwealth nations arrive in Korea on November 9 and stay overnight at the Grand Ambassador hotel.

On November 10 they travel to Panmunjom and return to Seoul later that day to take the KTX bullet train to Busan.

In Busan they will stay at the Novotel Ambassador hotel for two nights.

They will participate in the Turn Toward Busan National Ceremony of Thanks and Tribute on November 11, which will be followed by a commemoration banquet.
The delegates will return to Seoul on November 12 by KTX train the next day and will have open time or guided tours in Seoul.

All delegates are invited to attend the Remembrance Sunday service at the Anglican Cathedral in downtown Seoul on Sunday, November 13.

Delegates will leave for their respective homes on November 14.

Things will not be rushed and camaraderie, respect and appreciation set the mood for the program, which focuses on solemn remembrance of Fallen comrades.

There will be local and international news media coverage of the service at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery.

In addition to commemorating Fallen comrades, the Turn Toward Busan service also has a goal of familiarizing Korea's younger generations with the history of the Korean War, and the unique and selfless contribution by servicemen from many free nations who came to the fledgling country's assistance.

Their selfless sacrifice is forever symbolized by those who rest in Busan and elsewhere in Korea or Japan or who were committed to the sea or who are buried in their home countries.