

Government of Canada Marks Merchant Navy Veterans Day

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The Honourable Gordon O'Connor, Chief Government Whip and Minister of State, today represented the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), at a commemorative ceremony at the National War Memorial to mark Merchant Navy Veterans Day.

"Wars have found soldiers on land, air and sea. The oceanic battlefield welcomed many brave Canadians to its turbulent wake during the Second World War," stated Minister Blackburn. "Canada's Merchant Navy was vital to the Allied cause."

Canadian men and women at sea contributed greatly to the victorious outcome of the Second World War. Merchant Navy ships were there to protect, defend and deliver equipment, fuel, goods and personnel to Europe and around the world.

"Canadians have shown their courage in the face of danger many times throughout history," stated Minister O'Connor. "It is important that we always remember their sacrifice, whether they fought at home or in foreign lands or seas."

Vice Admiral Dean McFadden, Chief of the Maritime Staff, spoke at a reception following the ceremony on the important role of the Merchant Navy.

"Few Canadians were asked to bear as much of the burden of battle for their nation for so long, as was asked of our Merchant Navy," Vice Admiral McFadden said. "This is why it's so vital that we commemorate their legacy to Canada and the world."

On September 3, Canadians mark Merchant Navy Veterans Day in recognition of the contributions made by Canada's Merchant Navy. Between 1939 and 1945, more than 1,700 Merchant Navy personnel lost lives due to enemy action. This figure includes Canadian seamen who were lost while serving aboard 278 Canadian and Allied ships.

For more information on the Merchant Navy, visit the Veterans Affairs Canada Web site at www.vac-acc.gc.ca.

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