

Vimy Ridge anniversary to be marked by Rangers with Lt. Gov



By Brock Weir

One hundred years ago this April, Canadian troops emerged victorious at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, a battle which has become synonymous with the development of a unique Canadian identity.

To mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle, students, cadets and Canadians at large – including those from here in Aurora – will be making the trek to that unique patch of Canadian soil in France to pay tribute those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the First World War.

For those unable to make the pilgrimage, however, there will be an opportunity to mark the historic milestone close to home. On Saturday, April 8, the eve of Vimy Ridge Day, Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Queen's representative in Ontario will be the guest of honour at the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion as the Queen's York Rangers Regimental Council hosts the Vimy Centenary Evening.

This black tie affair is intended to honour the sacrifice and victory of the 20th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

The countdown to the Vimy Centenary Evening was launched at Council last Tuesday in the presence of two serving members of the Aurora-based Queen's York Rangers, donning uniforms representative of what would have been worn by serving members when the foundations of the Regiment were laid during the American Revolutionary War, as well as what serving members would have donned at Vimy.

"This year is the 150th anniversary of Canada and it is also the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge," said Regimental Council member Ferguson Mobbs. "Over 65,000 Canadians will be going to Vimy Ridge this year [and] the Regimental Council and the Queen's York Rangers presents a special commemorative evening of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

"As of today, I can confirm Her Honour Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, past Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario David Onley [will be present] with special guest speaker, the Hon. Peter Mackay."

Peter MacKay, the former Member of Parliament, served as Minister of National Defence from 2007 to 2013 and knows firsthand the experiences Canadian soldiers experienced during the Afghanistan conflict.

Tickets for the April 8 event are on sale now for \$125.

Money raised over the course of the event will benefit the Queen's York Rangers Regimental Council, which is composed of volunteers to promote, support and assist in the maintenance and development of the unit and the welfare of soldiers of the Regiment.

The Regimental Council provides advice and counsel to the Commanding Officer on a wide variety of issues but perhaps more pertinently the evening raises funds to support individual soldiers on deployment and returning soldiers returning to civilian life.

"There are many different reasons why we give money back to the troops," said Mr. Mobbs. "A lot of those reasons are private. A lot of times it is in order to assist them in different areas, so it goes back to the troops in a very tangible way. Their quality of life is

foremost in our concerns.?

Noting emcee Sean Cullen, Mr. Mobbs added, "Throughout the night we will have special poetry readings and things throughout the night, some of those which I will hold back because there will be surprises later on. The whole evening is an event, it is not just a dinner.?"

News of the Vimy Centenary Evening was greeted warmly by Council, who hailed the service the Queen's York Rangers, a reserve regiment, have provided here at home and abroad.

"I think this is excellent that you're putting this together,?" said Councillor Jeff Thom. "It is such an excellent piece of Canadian history and along with the 150th anniversary of Confederation it is certainly something that is worth noting and remembering as well, being the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge. Many historians say it is a birthplace of Canadian identity and Canadian nationalism throughout our history so it is very important and I am very honoured that you're putting this together in our Town.?"

Added Councillor Sandra Humfries: "We are honoured that you are going to have such incredible dignitaries at the event and we're looking forward to it. It's my wedding anniversary and I am going to be going there for dinner! I think it is a great way to give back to our Queen's York Rangers.?"

For more information on the Queen's York Rangers Regimental Council, visit www.qyrang.ca. To purchase tickets for the Vimy Centenary Evening, go to the website and click on "Kit Shop.?"