

## MAY 5, 2024 CANADIAN WARPLANE HERITAGE MUSEUM - SPEECH AND THANK-YOU'S

### SPEECH OF THE CONSUL GENERAL OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHER- LANDS IN TORONTO



**Mount Hope, May 5, 2024**  
*Dear Friends of the Bond  
van Wapenbroeders and  
Dutch Canadian Veteran  
Association, distinguished  
veterans....*

David Rohrer, president/CEO of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, Chris Kruter, president of the Dutch Canadian Veteran Association, Mayor of Hamilton Andrea Horwath, The Netherlands Luncheon Club and its president Henny Groenendijk and Bas Opendekelder,

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
First of all I would like to thank you for inviting me here to your celebration in Mount Hope on the anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands in 1945, and for the opportunity to say a few words. This is such an impressive and appropriate environment for this occasion!

I want to pass on the warm greetings of our Ambassador Ines Coppoolse, and today I am accompanied by our defense attache from Ottawa, Lieutenant Colonel Mark de Wit, and other members of our Canada team: deputy consul general Laurenske van den Heuvel, Wendy Sewell, Jelle de Boer, Mickey McLaughlin and Karen Empson.

It is on the 4th of May, that we remember the fallen soldiers during armed conflict and especially those who sacrificed their lives during the 2nd World War. And it is the 5th of May when in the Netherlands we celebrate our liberation, a day of joy, freedom and friendship.

This commemoration of our liberation remains as important as ever. Canada played such an important role in our liberation – and we will never forget that. It was a monumental struggle of service and sacrifice of Canadian soldiers in the defense and pursuit of democracy and freedom. And the bravery of many Canadian soldiers, like our esteemed veterans here, was instrumental in bringing an end to the occupation of our country. We are eternal-



ly grateful to Canada for the key role its brave soldiers played.

Now that time passes on, we see that veterans are getting older and every year at these gatherings we see less veterans that actually still served during World War II. How sad this may be, it also means we need to find new ways to remind ourselves that war is something we should avoid at all costs.

That is an important message also for younger generations. On many of the events that I have visited during the last 3 years, veterans shared their concern that younger generations need to be aware how fragile peace and freedom can become and that society needs to invest in increasing this awareness, especially during the current times of global uncertainty and conflict.

May 5th next year, will mark the 80th anniversary of the Netherlands' liberation by Canada at the end of World War II. For this special occasion, we are looking to create (in Ontario) a lasting tribute to Canada and the Canadian soldiers, that will inspire younger generations to reflect on peace, freedom, and democracy. It aims at thanking Canada and its veterans, while at the same time reaching out to younger generations to promote understanding of the enormous efforts of the armed forces, the role of the resistance and the daily lives and courage of regular people. There is a group of dedicated Dutch Canadians working on this who can use all the help (also financial) to make this tribute a reality.

We are proud and grateful that in 2019 the Canadian Parliament declared the 5th of May as 'Dutch Heritage Day' in all of Canada! And of course, there is also the month of May which since 2011 is known as Dutch Heritage Month in Ontario – thanks to the initiative of former deputy premier Elisabeth Witmer.

Lastly, a personal story. I was born in 1964. My dad was born in 1934. He lived in Drente in the North of the Netherlands once in a long while he would tell me a story of World War II. But through the eyes of an 8 year old boy, because that was his age at the time. Once he told me about a German plane that was shot down. With his friend they went to see what it looked like from close by and he was impressed with the instrument panel onboard. They stole some of the instruments and took them home.

Myself I am from a generation that grew up during the Cold War. In my experience at the time, that was more an abstract concept than a war. Russia's recent illegal invasion of Ukraine is the closest that armed conflict has come to my own country since World War II. As a family we realize more than ever the fragility of peace, freedom and democracy and appreciate more than ever the braveness of those, like you, that fought for our peace and our freedom. Today is a day to celebrate that fragile peace, and show our gratitude to those that helped us protect our freedom and democracy. I thank you very much!

*Harman Idema*

Good Morning Henny,

I want to thank you very much for last Sunday, May 5 and all the work that you and your committee did to make it happen, not only this year but also in all the previous years. My father Doug Iverson (99) thoroughly enjoyed himself, as did the rest of us who attended with him. Since you are becoming a Social group going forward, will the services be the same for next year or is it a "wait and see" situation?

Thank you again, Henny.

*Jan Gallo*

*Today an excellent WWII event took place at the Museum that attracted some 200 participants. It was organized by the Canadian Veteran Association and The Netherlands Luncheon Club. Part of the program saw Baldwin Verstraete receive the prestigious NLC Community Service Award. I sponsored 100 Operation Manna prints as give-aways and presented Baldwin with the last available limited edition of the 100 signed by Canadian Veteran Flight Lieutenant Davies who was on board of one of the Lancasters delivering the food drops over Holland in April 1944.*

*Theo Luykenaar*

Hey Bas,

Thanks ever so much for the pictures AND everything else you did to make the day very special for so many people. Personally I am still enjoying the "afterglow" for having received the award. That was beyond special and a 100% surprise. The HAL voucher recipient's name is (Mrs) Lukie de Waard. In writeups/articles you are doing regarding my award: Henny gave a bit of a background on the work we have done in the past with veterans to Holland etc. She made reference to Welcome Again Veterans. If you plan to refer to them, all good, but state specifically that Verstraete Travel represented "WAV" until 2020. Warmest regards to you and Louise.

*Baldwin Verstraete*

Dear Henny and Bas,

*Many thanks again for a wonderful well-organized event on Sunday, May 5th! We're also grateful for the beautiful tulips. All the friends who accompanied us really enjoyed the entire event. The snacks and the lunch were also excellent! We wish you a great Summer, and all the best until we meet again! Love,*

*Gé and Jack*

Hi Bas.

I was so sad to have to miss the service and remembering together with the families of the Canadian soldiers! It was poor timing with flight schedules. Hopefully we are able to participate next year! Thanks Bas. Groeten

*Tjitske van Rheenen, Libertas Male Choir*