

# Community honours Canada's blue berets

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Staff Writer

The 2023 Veteran's Week poster commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Operation was unveiled last week in Esquimalt.

Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Veterans Affairs, unveiled the colourful poster at the annual Peacekeepers Memorial Parade on Aug. 9 at Memorial Park. The Peacekeepers Memorial Parade is in its 31<sup>st</sup> year and marks the day of the most significant loss of life during peacekeeping operations.

Petitpas Taylor, also the Associate Minister of National Defence, said all Canadians wearing the UN Peacekeeping insignia 'represent the very best of us'.

"Their commitment, bravery and dedication in the most hostile situations have served as a bright light to hundreds of thousands of people around the world," she said. "I can think of no better way to honour and remember their service and sacrifice than to unveil this tribute to them today on National Peacekeepers' Day."

The dignitaries, including Mitzi Dean, Member of the B.C. Legislature for Esquimalt Metchosin, Silver Cross parents Sheila and Shaun Fynes, each placed a poppy in a wreath at the Cenotaph following a moment of silence and *The Last Post*. Captain (Navy) Peter Sproule,

Maritime Forces Pacific Chief of Staff, was the Reviewing Officer for the event.

Lieutenant-Colonel (ret'd) Paul Paone, an organizer of the memorial, gave a heartfelt salute after placing a poppy and reflecting on the moment's significance.

"We are not only remembering those who have died in [peacekeeping] operations but also those whose experiences are complicit in their subsequent death or whose service was cut short regardless of the cause, no matter their mission at home or abroad," Paone said.

Since 1948, more than 125,000 Canadian Armed Forces personnel and 4,000 Canadian civilian police officers have served in peace support operations worldwide. The B.C. government was the first in Canada to declare a Memorial Day to honour those who have died in service of peace; it became a National Day of Remembrance in 2008. This year's memorial was organized by the British Columbia Chapter of the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association with the assistance of CFB Esquimalt.

Earlier in the day, Petitpas Taylor attended a ceremony at the B.C. Afghanistan Memorial in downtown Victoria. She was there with retired Brigadier General Joseph Gollner, President of the B.C. Afghanistan Memorial Society and Paone to lay a wreath. Afghanistan veterans and their families and current-serving Canadian Forces members were in attendance as well.



(Left) Minister of Veterans Affairs Ginette Petitpas Taylor, unveils a new poster commemorating the 75th Anniversary of United Nations Peacekeeping operations during a memorial parade, Aug. 9, 2023, at Esquimalt's Memorial Park. The minister is joined by Sgt (ret'd) Dave Munro and WO (ret'd) Terri Orser. Photo: Peter Mallett/ Lookout Newspaper