



APPENDIX A of MO-03-19

Juno Beach, 75th Anniversary of D-Day Commemorative Activities Trip Report

It's been six months since I became Mayor of the City of Burlington. To say it's been a busy whirlwind is an understatement. City Council has already accomplished a great deal, and I've met more of our amazing and passionate residents at countless events and fundraisers than I ever thought possible. It's such a privilege and I'm grateful every day for the things I get to do and the people I get to work with.

This past week, however, has been the ultimate highlight so far.

On June 3rd I travelled to Normandy, France as part of a delegation of people from our great city to help commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day on Juno Beach. As most of you know, D-Day was a seminal moment in the liberation of Europe during WWII and a turning point in the war. Thousands of young men and women volunteered (that's right: volunteered!) to fight overseas, some only in their teens. Many of them did not return home to their families.

Their sacrifices were not in vain, as they did their job and pushed inland despite many human losses to defeat German forces hill by hill, house by house, and town by town. It was the start of the end of the war, and the world owes them an immeasurable debt of gratitude we can never repay.

Many people don't realize the strong connection Burlington has to the events of that day and the battles that followed. We have a few legendary D-Day veterans still living in our fine city who were there on June 6th, 1944, such as Jim Warford and Gordon Schottlander.

We also have an amazing group of residents who brought the Juno Beach Centre Museum to life, led by D-Day veteran and Burlington resident Garth Webb. It didn't sit right with him that other countries had a museum remembering the sacrifices their soldiers made to secure our freedoms, but Canada did not.

Story has it that the idea for the Juno Beach Centre Association was hatched in a basement on Woodward Avenue, then shared with the world. Garth had to fight for the Centre too. The first town in France wanted it to be part cultural centre, part museum. Then permission was withdrawn altogether.

Undeterred, Garth moved down the coast to Courseulles-Sur-Mer. The mayor there fought local opposition to establish the centre on a favourite local camping spot.

Then Garth, his family and many local residents spent another few years raising the funds to build the Centre, which was designed by local Burlington firm Chamberlain Architects.

The Juno Beach Centre is Canada's only museum in France that tells the story of what our soldiers did for their country and for the world in WWII. The centre is Burlington's gift to our country's memory of D-Day.

Garth's son, Don Cooper, who is now the President of the Juno Beach Centre Association, has taken the torch and continues to make it a place our whole country can be proud of. The Centre's team is full of supporters from Burlington, whether they're students spending time there as tour guides for the

summer, or local Director Pam Calvert, who first opened my eyes to this amazing connection we have when she reached out to meet with me this past February.

My family has lived in Burlington for 19 years but didn't know this story. We wondered how many other residents also didn't know? Pam and I then conceived of an idea that day in my office to tell the story of Burlington's contribution to D-Day, and the Juno Beach Centre.

Our **Juno75** event on May 6th of this year was the result. It was a sold-out night at the Burlington Performing Arts Centre and showed the dedication our residents still have to remembering the young men and women who made so many sacrifices for our freedoms.

You can read more about that special night and watch the event in its entirety via [this link](#).

When I learned our Burlington Teen Tour Band and local residents were travelling to Juno Beach for the 75th Anniversary, I knew I needed to accompany them and represent our city and our city's contribution to this national memorial and day of remembrance.

JUNE 5:

The day after we landed, I was able to tour the museum as part of a private delegation that included all the Canadian veterans who'd been able to make the trip.

In a ceremony before the tour, it was particularly moving to see Frank Godon from Manitoba, the grown son of Francis Godon, a Métis veteran from the Winnipeg Royal Rifles, presenting his dad's uniform to the Museum along with the last letter he'd written home still in his pocket.

Our tour of the Centre started in a dark room shaped like the landing craft that ferried the soldiers to land, some to their last day. A movie played on screens on three sides of us, surrounded by images of waves and the sounds of gunfire, to simulate what it must have been like to arrive on those shores and hear the words "down doors."

It was incredibly moving, and it was just a simulation. We can never fully understand what it must have been like - the terror, the uncertainty of what they were facing, and not knowing if they'd ever come home.

Some were pulled under by the weight of their bags or the depth of the water and never came up. Some were shot and killed as soon as the doors opened. Others had to swim past the lifeless bodies of their friends who'd been alive only moments before.

14,000 Canadian soldiers stormed the beaches that day. 359 were killed along with many more in the days that followed.

The Juno Beach Centre Museum tells their story.

It is full of history and memorabilia from the battle on Juno Beach and the months of battles that followed. It's an immersive and moving experience and one I will never forget. While it's an ocean away, it is absolutely worth the trip and I recommend it to any school group, lover of history, and all Canadians who want to know more about why and how we enjoy the freedoms we have today.

It is a powerful testament to what can be accomplished when people from different countries and walks of life all work together for a common goal. It seems that every day we are faced with another reason to remain vigilant in the fight for peace around the world.

The recent anti-Semitic hate crimes in Burlington are a frightening and sickening reminder that we can never rest in the fight for justice, equality and freedom.

Museums like the Juno Beach Centre are an essential part of the history we need to help us avoid past mistakes and build a better future.

The museum also has a rotating exhibit. When we were there it was dedicated to the contributions women made to the War effort, at home and on the field of battle. I wept as I read letters between mothers and their sons, some just 18, the same age as my own son and daughter.

The next scheduled exhibit will remember the Holocaust.

Later that evening I was honoured to attend the Juno Beach Centre Foundation's fundraising gala, the first of its kind. The Centre receives some government assistance but relies heavily on personal donations. I am committed to telling the story of the Juno Beach Centre and encouraging our citizens to give generously to ensure its ongoing success.

One of the fundraising initiatives is the buying of a "brick" on the concrete remembrance pillars at the Centre. The City of Burlington has a brick, as do a number of other cities, schools and businesses. Residents can also purchase a brick in the name of a soldier or otherwise. You can find out more at [this link here](#).

During the gala I had an opportunity to present the Canadian Peace Flag to Mayor Frederic Pouille of Courseulles-sur-Mer, the town that welcomed Garth Webb and his museum with open arms.

Each Peace Flag is flown on Parliament Hill for one day and there is a long list of requests to receive one. Given the importance of the Juno Beach Centre, and in honour of the 75th Anniversary of D-Day, we were able to secure a peace flag for the town of Courseulles-sur-Mer.

I was pleased to offer Mayor Pouille this flag as a gift to symbolize the friendship between our two cities and signify the start of an even deeper relationship going forward. He returned the favour by offering me the medallion of Courseulles-sur-Mer, which I will proudly display in my office at City Hall.

The entire community welcomed us with open arms and treated us like royalty. They truly appreciate the contribution Canada made to liberating France, the role that our Burlington veterans played in those battles and in securing the Centre so that we will always remember.

The gala was also attended by Canada's Governor General, Julie Payette, Canadian Army General Jonathan Vance, The Honourable Harjit Singh Sajjan, Canada's Minister of National Defence, and, among others, Mayor Brian Bowman of Winnipeg who attended the 75th Anniversary ceremony in honour of the significant contribution the Royal Winnipeg Rifles made to D-Day.

JUNE 6

Day 2 of my tour was June 6th: the official 75th anniversary of D-Day itself and included two commemorative ceremonies on the beach in front of the Museum.

Our very own global music ambassadors, the Burlington Teen Tour Band played throughout the ceremony and, as always, made us proud. Over 167 band members and their leadership team camped out on air mattresses and in sleeping bags in a local gym the entire week, many finding time to study for the high school exams they would write the week they return home.

One band member had just been released from cancer treatments and faces an operation to remove a tumor upon return but did not want to miss this special trip. Several missed their high school graduation ceremonies, and one celebrated a birthday.

The dedication and spirit of this group is beyond measure. They put everything aside to represent Burlington on this historic day.

The Canadian ceremony began at noon and was attended by Canadian dignitaries including Canada's Prime Minister, the Honourable Justin Trudeau, Canadian Army General Jonathan Vance, Minister of Defence Harjit Singh Sajjan, and the Prime Minister of the Republic of France, Édouard Philippe. In the crowd of thousands, I met people from across the world, including some familiar faces from home in Burlington.

But the real VIPs in the audience were the veterans.

There's Jim Warford, who I have had the pleasure of knowing since I became a councillor. Jim is now 96 years old and has continued to share his stories and the history of that time with residents young and old across Burlington and beyond. For our Burlington Remembers Juno75 event on May 6th, he gave us letters to read that he and his wife wrote to each other while he was in France during the war.

He knows the importance of passing on that knowledge and honouring the legacy of the friends and soldiers who are no longer with us. At his advanced age, you can imagine how tough it is to stay in good health, but despite spending many weeks in recent months in the hospital, he summoned the strength and spirit to fly back to Juno Beach this week with his grandson and the help of Veterans Affairs Canada.

Jim joined dozens of his fellow D-Day soldiers at the Canadian D-Day Commemoration Ceremony on Juno Beach. He watched a moving ceremony that took place right in front of the Juno Beach Centre along with thousands of others from all over the world who had travelled there to pay their respects and ensure that "We Will Remember Them". There were moving video and musical performances, speeches, and moments of silence that brought us to tears.

Much of the ceremony was live broadcast by CBC, and I heard from several residents who rose early at 6am to watch and were also moved to tears.

Later the same day, an International Ceremony of remembrance was held, with dignitaries, veterans and representatives from the 15 different countries that were part of Operation Overlord on D-Day. Canada's Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of the Republic of France returned, as did Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House from the United States among others.

Children from each country read a quote or a passage that told part of the history and stories of their soldiers. Dignitaries laid wreaths on Juno Beach for each of the 15 countries as their national anthems were beautifully played. It was, again, a great reminder of how countries can come together for the common goal of peace, and a wonderful way to end the day.

JUNE 7

On June 7th, I joined the Burlington Teen Tour Band for the morning to visit spectacular Mont Saint-Michel, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Rising out of a rocky tidal island, this historic town is crowned by a medieval monastery in the sky and began its construction in the 10th century. It was epic in both scale and design. I felt like I was in an episode of Game of Thrones (or Lord of the Rings) exploring ramparts and archways and spiral stone stairwells. It was great to meet and spend time with some of our young band members and watch them explore this place in awe. It's an experience they will not forget.

I then accompanied the band to the Canadian war cemetery at Beny-sur-Mer. Lovingly designed and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, it is a beautiful homage to our soldiers and their sacrifices. The 359 soldiers who died on D-Day are buried there, along with over 1600 more who died in the months of battle that followed. Each Teen Tour Band member was given a dog tag before the trip with the name of a soldier who was buried there. They found their soldiers and what I saw there made the tears flow once again. Some sat on the ground in front of their soldier's tombstone and had a quiet conversation. Some did paper rubbings of the tombstone with crayon to bring home. And some brought special gifts from the families of their soldier, having reached out to them before the trip.

I know these students will carry these stories and memories throughout their lives, and help their generation remember this important history.

Many tombstones had a loving message etched in it from each soldier's family, and they were deeply moving to read. I wept as I saw the graves of young men 18, 19, 20, 21 years old. They were just starting their lives and they were cut down in sacrifice for us. These souls came from across our country, of different nationalities and faiths, and united in a common purpose of freedom from tyranny. I noted many graves of Jewish soldiers, marked with the Star of David. They were fighting against Hitler, who was systematically exterminating Jews across Europe in the Holocaust.

Their sacrifice put an end to Hitler.

JUNE 8

On June 8th, the town of Courseulles-sur-Mer went above and beyond in creating an event to commemorate D-Day and honour our Canadian veterans. It started with a parade through the centre of town, accompanied by the Burlington Teen Tour Band, stopping at the memorial for the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, where the mayor of Courseulles-sur-Mer and I together raised the Canadian flag.

We then marched on to the memorial square for a formal ceremony with the Canadian veterans who were able to join us. This included Burlington's own Jim Warford along with others like Richard Rohmer.

I had an opportunity during the ceremony to meet Mr. Rohmer, a local veteran born and raised in Hamilton, Ontario, who is now the Honourary Lieutenant General of Canada. Mr. Rohmer flew 135 missions in WWII, including two on D-Day. His face was on the posters and banners throughout Courseulles-sur-Mer promoting the Juno75 ceremonies.

He is now age 95 and has been married for 70 years to his wife Mary. His countless medals and passionate storytelling impressed me beyond words. We are so lucky to have veterans like him to keep those important stories alive and pass them along to new generations.

Mayor Pouille and I read aloud the names of every Canadian veteran who was in attendance:

Lloyd Bentley	Art Boon	Colin Brown	Richard Brown
Hugh Buckley	Jack Burch	Bill Cameron	Emard Court
Rod Deon	Benoit Duval	Joe Edwardson	Alyre Gallant
Roy Hare	Alf Hebbes	Warner Hockin	Winston Judson
Earl Kennedy	Norman Kirby	Frank Krepps	Eugenie (Frankie) Turner
Jim Parks	Hugh Patterson	Alex Polowin	Charles Scot-Brown

John Stoyka

Jean Temple

Jack Miller

William Tymchuk

Alphonse Vautour

Jim Warford

Bill Wilson

G r nal Richard Rohmer

Accompanied by the singing of national anthems and a moment of silence, wreaths were laid by myself, Mayor Pouille, veterans and others at each of monuments in the square:

- Royal Winnipeg Rifles Monument
- St le de la Combattante
- St le de Gaulle
- Char Bold (a DD Sherman Tank recovered after D-Day)

Other Canadian dignitaries participating in the ceremony were St phane Lauzon, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence and Charlie Angus, MP for Timmins – James Bay.

Again, Burlington residents were there in the crowd, and a few called out a greeting to me when myself and the Mayor Pouille walked by.

Mayor Pouille was a gracious host to myself and everyone from the Juno Beach Centre, and I was blown away by the level of organization and intention they had put into this event.

WWII aircraft flew overhead, and local school children gave handmade poppies to every veteran in attendance.

Courseulles-sur-Mer did so much to show us how they value our veterans, our country, the City of Burlington and the Juno Beach Centre. The mayor has asked us to twin with them and I believe this is a fitting relationship to honour Burlington’s role in creating this Canadian memorial and ensuring we continue to tell that story at home and abroad.

I am looking forward to fostering this special relationship between Burlington and Courseulles-sur-Mer and seeing it deepen and evolve in the years ahead.

And with that special day, our D-Day commemorations came to an end. We drove the three hours back to Paris that night ahead of our flight to Burlington the next morning.

Some of the lighter moments during the trip:

- Rediscovered the joys of a stick shift! We arrived to pick up our rental car and found out it was a manual. Haven’t driven one in 20 years but it’s just like riding a bike.
- The roads through the small coastal towns of Normandy are about as big as our multi-use paths here at home. It makes everything much slower, which is probably a good thing.
- There are almost no stoplights, only roundabouts.
- Everything is closed before 10am, between 1 and 5pm, and after 10pm. And no two places have quite the same hours. I have to admire that, except when we were starving and missed our window.
- Forget coffee. Really, forget it.
- Get used to the weather changing on a moment’s notice, multiple times a day, from gale-force winds and driving rain, to hot sun and everything in between. Dress in layers and always bring an umbrella.

- I rediscovered that I haven't lost all my university French, and at the end was speaking like a pro. Formidable!
- We survived the roundabout at the Arc de Triomphe including the motorbikes that come upon you unannounced between rows of traffic. Never extend your arm outside an open window! Still, we returned the car without a scratch!
- Oysters. Lots of oysters. And wine that's cheaper than water.
- Intersections in Paris have as many as 8 streets converging, and the town plan can best be described as a wheel and spoke design. Street signs are small and posted on the building across the intersection, so you need binoculars to read them. Upshot: You can't do this without navigation and a navigator beside you, and even then, you take your chances. Mastery of a 3-point turn is a must.
- They loved my pedicure. My feet were featured in many selfies. Mayor Pouille exclaimed: "C'est énorme!" (Not a reference to my feet size, but, I presume, the French way of saying "awesome!")

And most fun of all:

- The exuberant way the French greet you, on first encounter as if you're an old friend, with a kiss on the both cheeks and a giant smile.

Being away from my family that long is always tough, but I'm so grateful for the experience and the stories I now have to share with them. The stories I now have to share with all of Burlington.

I consider it one of my highest responsibilities to ensure the history of our city and the contributions of its residents – like those made to the war effort and to the Juno Beach Centre - are told and remembered. This trip made me realize that my job is not Mayor alone. It is also Chief Storyteller. What a privilege and honour it is.

~ Marianne Meed Ward