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## **First in service, last in honours**

By Tim Dunne

On a per capita basis, more members of the Canadian Forces come from Nova Scotia than from any other province. An estimated 12 per cent of the military is made up of Bluenosers.

The number of Nova Scotians who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our nation in Afghanistan is also disproportionate. With only 2.5 per cent of the Canadian population, Nova Scotian service members represent eight per cent of the fatalities of Canadian military operations there.

Canada has recognized each of its fallen servicewomen and men with ramp services as they departed Kandahar and returned to CFB Trenton.

Ontario has recognized each one, as he or she made that last trip down the Highway of Heroes.

We can be assured that once Canada's mission in Afghanistan is completed, and all our sailors, soldiers and airmen and airwomen have returned, there will be further recognition at the National War Memorial.

Manitoba has named lakes after those from that province who have died in uniform. Nova Scotia's fallen service personnel should also be recognized by this province in a manner that is respectful, appropriate and permanent.

Nova Scotia has 21 provincial parks. How fitting a memorial it would be to name these parks, or the campgrounds within those parks, after those who have given their lives in that far-off country, fighting a war, as their nation demanded of them.

The previous provincial government declined to even consider this. Former Natural Resources minister Charlie Parker wrote to me that these things should be left to the local communities that were home to our fallen soldiers.

I disagree. As a province, we should honour the memories of these Nova Scotians who made the supreme sacrifice on behalf of the nation that sent them and the province they came from.

Lest we forget, here is the list of Nova Scotians who gave their lives in Afghanistan:

Pte. Nathan Smith of Tatamagouche and Pte. Richard Green of Mill Cove (April 18, 2002); Pte. Braun Scott Woodfield of Eastern Passage (Nov. 24 2005); Cpl. Paul Davis of Bridgewater (March 2, 2006); Cpl. Christopher Jonathan Reid of Truro (Aug. 3, 2006); Warrant Officer Frank Robert Mellish of Truro (Sept. 3, 2006); Cpl. Kevin Megeney of New Glasgow (March 6, 2007); Cpl. Christopher Paul Stannix of Dartmouth (April 8, 2007); Capt. Jefferson Clifford Francis, (July 4, 2007); Pte. John Michael Roy Curwin of Mount Uniacke and Cpl. Thomas James Hamilton of Truro (Dec. 13, 2008); Sgt. Kirk Taylor of Yarmouth (Dec. 30, 2009); Petty Officer (second class) Craig Blake (May 3, 2010); Sgt. James Patrick MacNeil of Glace Bay (June 21, 2010).

In total, Afghanistan claimed 161 Canadians in our decade-long effort against the Taliban, triggered by their complicity in al-Qaida's attack on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001.

Of these 161, four were civilians, no less courageous and no less heroic than our fallen soldiers.

The first was Canadian diplomat Glyn Berry, who died when a suicide bomber collided with a Canadian road convoy on Jan. 14, 2006. Jacqueline Kirk of Outremont, Que., and Shirley Case of Williams Lake, B.C. — civilians working for the New York-based aid group, the International Rescue Committee — were shot to death on Aug. 13, 2008. The fourth, and most recent, was Calgary Herald journalist Michelle Lang. She and four Canadian soldiers died on Dec. 30, 2009, when the armoured military vehicle in which they were riding struck a roadside bomb.

The remaining 157 fatalities are members of the Armed Forces, mostly from the army, although some came from the navy and the air force.

All served with equal distinction; all died with equal honour; all deserve equal commemoration.

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