

THE LATEST¹ » NEWS² » BILL C-597, AN ACT TO AMEND THE HOLIDAYS ACT³

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Bill C-597, An Act to Amend the Holidays Act



OTTAWA, ON, April 20th, 2015 – The Royal Canadian Legion was on Parliament Hill today to speak to members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage about Bill C-597, An Act to Amend the Holidays Act.

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Please see below for the Brief to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Honourable Chairman and members of the Committee; Good afternoon and thank you for the invitation to The Royal Canadian Legion to appear before the committee to speak on Bill C-597, An Act to Amend the Holidays Act. On behalf of Dominion President Tom Eagles and our 300,000 members, it is our pleasure to be here.

I am Brad White, Dominion Secretary of The Royal Canadian Legion. Since my arrival at the Legion in 1998 I have been involved in every major commemorative activity that the Legion has participated in as well as being the former Director of Canada's National Remembrance Day ceremony. Accompanying me today is Mr. Steven Clark who is my Director Administration and the current Director of the national ceremony. I will be speaking against the proposed amendment to Bill C-597 to make November 11th a legal holiday.

The Legion's advocacy work relative to Remembrance Day dates back to our inaugural Dominion Convention in 1926 when we first proposed to the Government that Armistice Day be observed on November 11th rather than the Monday in the week that date fell. That advocacy was successful with the Armistice Day Amendment Act in 1931.

In the ensuing years, Remembrance Day has been incorporated into the Holidays Act and is a federal holiday for all federal offices and federally-regulated employees. While not binding on the provinces, some jurisdictions have followed suit.

The Legion's position on this issue had been concern that Canadians, if given the time off as a legal holiday, may not take the time to remember; that it may simply become part of another long weekend or mid-week break. This position was most recently reinforced by the delegates attending our 2012 Dominion Convention.

It is paramount that the significance of Remembrance Day is inculcated into our youth and to the general population to show their respect for the sacrifices of our Fallen. To honour this day, many schools hold assemblies where they organize their own commemoration; others take their students to participate in ceremonies at local cenotaphs, thereby strengthening the impact of the significance of November 11th. The Legion works very closely with schools throughout the country to provide an educational component about Remembrance Day. In addition to welcoming classes at ceremonies, the Legion's Teaching Guide is another excellent educational tool, which has been viewed or downloaded from our website more than one million times.

So, too, are we encouraged to hear of organized commemorations in workplaces on November 11th. We need to

make honouring and remembering an important part of our regular routine on November 11th and not simply provide a day off from school or work. We need only look at Victoria Day, a legal holiday, and question what observances are held across the country to honour Canada's longest serving monarch. For most, it just provides for a long weekend in May. We must not let Remembrance Day suffer this same fate.

Regarding half-masting the Canadian flag on November 11th, it is the current policy to half-mast the flag on all federal buildings in Canada from sunrise to sunset. With respect to the Peace Tower, provision exists to half-mast the Canadian flag at 11:00 am on November 11th, which coincides with the start of the Two Minutes of Silence, as part of the Order of Service for the national Remembrance Day ceremony. It remains in that position until sunset. It is the Legion's position that this current practice remain unchanged.

We thank you, again, for this opportunity to allow the Legion to express our views on Bill C-597.

For further information please contact Bruce Poulin at Dominion Command, at (613) 591-3335 ext. 241 or by cell at (613) 292-8760 or bruce.poulin@legion.ca⁶.

1. <http://www.legion.ca/the-latest/>
2. <http://www.legion.ca/the-latest/all-news/>
3. <http://www.legion.ca/article/bill-c-597-an-act-to-amend-the-holidays-act/>
4. <http://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=http://www.legion.ca/article/bill-c-597-an-act-to-amend-the-holidays-act/>
5. [http://www.twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=Bill C-597, An Act to Amend the Holidays Act](http://www.twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=Bill+C-597,+An+Act+to+Amend+the+Holidays+Act)
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6. bruce.poulin@legion.ca