



MERCHANT NAVY COMMEMORATIVE THEME PROJECT

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The Honourable Senator Peter Harder

The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
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February 10, 2020

Dear Senator Harder:

I am writing you in support of the historic luxury liner S.S. Keewatin, the last Great Lakes passenger steamship, and the last Edwardian passenger liner in the world. Also, I cannot overemphasize the paramount role these historic meccas play in the preservation of our heritage. It is critical to the enrichment and transmission of the Canadian culture for future generations to experience. *The Passing of the Torch must be ensured!*

By way of formal introduction, I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Merchant Navy Commemorative Theme Project (MNCTP), a Canadian driven initiative dedicated to honouring our Allied Merchant Navy and American Merchant Marine Veterans as the mainstay of the Allied Forces victories in both World Wars. It will also highlight their contributions to the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

The S.S. Keewatin is representative of a bygone era, when attention to craftsmanship and opulence was an art form. The "Kee" is a true symbol of growth and development in North America. Similarly to the H.M.C.S. Sackville (located in Halifax, N.S.), the last of Canada's 123 WWII corvettes, the Keewatin is a treasured piece of our history, and holds a special place in Canadian and global naval/maritime heritage. In addition, the S.S. Keewatin is a window into the glorious and forgotten past of the merchant navy/marine, and the many unsung heroes that sailed the ships during peace and war.

On June 19, 2003, the Merchant Navy Veterans Day Act (S.C. 2003, c. 17) received Royal Assent, and established the third day of September each year as "Merchant Navy Veterans Day." This victory was the result of an arduous six year battle and tireless efforts by the townspeople of Collingwood, Ontario, and under the leadership of former Simcoe-Grey MP Paul Bonwick. It is also due to the efforts of The Honourable Senator Joseph A. Day, who sponsored the Bill in The Senate of Canada, that this became the law of the land.

On September 8, 2019, The Friends of Keewatin was the host for the 80th Anniversary of Merchant Navy/Marine WWII Commemorations, working in conjunction with the MNCTP, and in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Legion – Branch 80 – Midland, Midland Pipes and Drums, and Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps (286) Trillium – Midland. This first-time commemorative event was held under the auspices of the Merchant Navy Veterans Day Act. September 3 is also officially recognized in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

Over the last decade, The Senate of Canada, through the office of The Honourable Senator Joseph A. Day, has provided support excellence in advancing the cause of our unsung sailors and other forgotten military and civilian wartime heroes/heroines. From sponsoring Bill C-411, hosting several MN Day of Remembrance receptions in The Senate Foyer, attending various ceremonies/events on behalf of

The Senate of Canada, Senator Day's statesmanship has been nothing less than praiseworthy. Moreover, such was his dedication, that I established *The Honourable Senator Joseph A. Day Leadership Excellence Award* (please see attached News Release for additional information).

With the upcoming 75th Anniversary of the Victory of WWII, I will be recommending that the award be presented to nations/individuals that have significantly contributed to the cause of the Merchant Navy/Merchant Marine. A special award presentation event will be proposed to be held in The Senate Chambers near or on the date of this year's MN ceremony. Furthermore, I will be requesting that The Senate of Canada become the "World Champion" for the Allied Merchant Navy and American Merchant Marine Veterans, and for all other forgotten heroes that have needlessly been left behind.

In this way, we are hoping that you will use your influence to encourage your colleagues, departments, and agencies to support our vision for the preservation of the historic S.S. Keewatin. In addition, we wish her to be recognized as a monument to our Merchant Navy/Marine Veterans that were integral to the Allied victory in both World Wars. As you may know, there are several organizations concerned with the preservation of our history, heritage, and cultural identity, and we have been working to strengthen the solidarity among us. The Senate of Canada has been vital to our success. The support and brotherhood of our government members is critical to the fulfillment of these efforts.

Your support, and that of other offices of government, will allow us to maintain the S.S. Keewatin Merchant Navy Day ceremony, and to focus on ensuring that each year's event will increase awareness of the appreciation of the Merchant Navy's contribution to the lifestyle available to us today. It will also help Canadians recognize that you and The Senate of Canada helped to build, grow, and encourage the inclusion of these people in the community of services that allow us to be recognized as one of the most accepting, free, and democratic countries in the world.

In closing, I leave you with a quote from President Abraham Lincoln that expresses my message perfectly. It is as follows:

"Honour to the soldier and sailor everywhere, who bravely bears his country's cause. Honour also to the citizen who cares for his brother in the field, and serves, as best he can, the same cause."

We look forward to discussing collaborative opportunities in promoting The Senate of Canada to Canadians and the international community as the highest body of governance that safeguards the honour and memories of our veterans. Thus, upholding the fundamental values inherent in our freedoms and systems of democracy, for which our veterans so nobly fought and died.

My very best regards,



Stéphane Ouellette
President and Chief Executive Officer
Merchant Navy Commemorative Theme Project (MNCTP)