

**Speaking Notes for
The Honourable Gordon J. O'Connor, P.C., M.P.
Minister of National Defence**

**At the
2006 Vimy Award Ceremony**

**Museum of Civilization
Ottawa, Ontario
17 November, 2006**

Please Check Against Delivery

General Hillier [General Rick Hillier, Chief of the Defence Staff]

General Manson [General (Ret'd) Paul Manson, President of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute]

Brigadier-General Fraser [BGen David Fraser, Recipient of 2006 Vimy Award]

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here this evening and join members of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute, and your distinguished guests for this year's Vimy Award ceremony.

For fifteen years now, the CDAI has sponsored this important Award.

And I commend the CDAI for bringing it about.

Every year, it provides an excellent opportunity to pay tribute to a Canadian who has made a significant and outstanding contribution to the defence and security of our nation and the preservation of our democratic values.

I'm also pleased to see previous recipients of the Vimy Award with us this evening, including Mr. Gordon Hamilton Southam, last year's recipient.

Tonight, we honour a man who has selflessly done so much for our country. Brigadier-General Fraser, it is an honour to be in your company.

As this audience knows well, this prestigious award takes its name from an important Canadian victory during the Great War.

This was a period in our history when so many of our brave countrymen went overseas and fought for what they believed in. They were there to protect our values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Vimy was one of the great Canadian military achievements in the First World War. Many argue that it helped defined us as a nation.

Ladies and Gentleman, I think it is very fitting that this year's award be presented to Brigadier-General Dave Fraser.

Since joining the military in 1980, Brigadier General Fraser has done a great service for the Canadian Forces and Canada. His superior leadership skills, personal sacrifices and dedication to this country are second to none.

When he first enrolled, he was commissioned as an infantry officer with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

In 1994, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for his actions during the Bosnian Civil War.

Two years later, he assumed command of the 2nd Battalion of the PPCLI and took the Battalion to Bosnia as the first Canadian Battle Group with the NATO Stabilization Force.

In June 2005, he assumed command of 1 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group.

And in February of this year, he assumed command of the Multi-National Brigade (Regional Command South), from Kandahar.

With approximately 6,000 soldiers from eight different countries under his command, Brigadier General Fraser oversaw the critical and successful transition of international forces from the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom to NATO's International Security Assistance Force.

Canada's mission in Afghanistan is a priority for this government. And, Brigadier General Fraser, I want you to know that we have all been supportive of your efforts in Afghanistan.

You have been there serving our interests, promoting our values, and helping the Afghan people rebuild their lives.

Your accomplishments in Afghanistan are many. And you can feel proud of the difference you have made in the lives of the Afghans.

We also know that you led your troops through some harrowing circumstances in the face of a determined enemy. We cannot – and must not -- forget the sacrifice that our soldiers have made in Afghanistan.

I want all Canadians to know that the significant challenges and sacrifices we are making in Afghanistan will never be in vain.

And much like the Battle at Vimy Ridge, our involvement in Afghanistan is, in many ways, helping to define us as a nation today. A nation that stands up for what we believe in.

Before concluding though, I do want to take a moment to recognize your wife Poppie, and your two sons, Daniel and Andrew.

We owe each of you our thanks for the hardship and sacrifices you have had to make in the past nine months as your husband and father served the cause of peace.

Tonight is a time for you to be proud. Indeed, we are all very proud of Brigadier General Fraser.

The late Pierre Berton once wrote, "Canadians are not a warlike people. Yet when the trumpets sound and the cannons roar, we have, throughout our history, answered the call."

Brigadier General Fraser, you answered the call.

You have led from the front of the line.

We are very grateful for what you have done for our country.

And it is a privilege for me to present the 2006 Vimy Award to a most deserved recipient – Brigadier General Dave Fraser.

Thank you.