

**Remarks of the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, P.C.
Chief Justice of Canada
at the Vimy Award Dinner**

**November 20, 2009
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Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. **Distingués invités, Mesdames et Messieurs.**

It is a great honour to be here tonight as we present the Vimy Award to a highly accomplished and well-deserving recipient, Warrant Officer William Kenneth MacDonald.

The Vimy award recognizes a Canadian who has made an outstanding contribution to the defence and security of Canada, and the preservation of our democratic values. This award commemorates the bravery and sacrifice of Canadian soldiers who won the battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917. **Cette distinction se veut un hommage à la bravoure et aux sacrifices des soldats canadiens qui ont remporté la bataille de la crête de Vimy en 1917.** So it is fitting this evening to present this award to a soldier who has not only steadfastly put service before self, but also exemplifies the best of Canada's values.

It is no exaggeration to say that Warrant Officer Kenneth MacDonald has devoted his entire adult life to military service. He joined the Royal Regina Rifles when he was only 16. Over the next years, he served in numerous operational tours, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and most recently in Afghanistan where, as a Reconnaissance Section Commander with First Battalion,

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Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group, he was involved in numerous engagements with insurgents. His courageous and selfless actions in the heat of battle led him to receive the Star of Military Valour, an award given in recognition of gallantry and devotion to duty in combat.

Since then, Warrant Officer MacDonald was posted to Land Force Western Area Training Centre, where he has been employed on training duties and Acting Company Sergeant-Major for Basic Company. An unrelenting giver, he has applied his leadership experience in Afghanistan to motivate fellow soldiers, police officers, and students. But being the tireless soldier, he expects to be back in Afghanistan as early as 2011.

In the last hour and one-half, I have come to know Warrant Officer MacDonald personally. I can share with you that his friends call him "Willy". I can also share that he talks frequently and with affection about his mother. Finally, I can share that he is a man of sterling will, not just on the battlefield, but at the table. In passing on the rolls, the gravy and the salad dressing, he advised that he still fits in the first uniform he acquired, at the age of 16.

Warrant Officer MacDonald, you are the first non-commissioned officer to win the Vimy Award. This recognition underscores the full scope of your achievement, and serves to demonstrate that the greatest leaders can come from anywhere in the ranks. You are truly a "soldier's soldier." Canadian troops are fortunate to have you among them — a loyal combatant committed to the defence of our security and democratic values here and abroad; a soldier who will never let them

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down in time of need. Tonight, the people of Canada celebrate your contribution , and that of the thousands of men and women who have served with you. **Le peuple du Canada vous remercie pour tout ce que vous avez accompli.**

It is an honour for me, Warrant Officer MacDonald, to present you with this Award.

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