

# OPINION & EDITORIALS



## The CENTRAL NEWSPAPER

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### Vimy Ridge reminds us of what we're capable of

David Bercuson

Before Vimy Ridge, Canada sent men to Britain's wars. After April 9, 1917, Canada fought its own.

April 9, 1917: The morning was cloudy with intermittent rain and snow showers as some 80,000 Canadian soldiers waited in their chalk tunnels at the foot of Vimy Ridge. Located a few kilometres north of the German-occupied French town of Arras, the Ridge was a dominant feature in the front lines, captured by the Germans in October 1914, which gave them unlimited views of Allied positions to the north, west, and south. The British and French armies had tried to take the Ridge back but had failed, and now the Canadian Corps — four heavy divisions of some 20,000 men each — would try again.

The Canadian Corps had never fought together before. The first division had arrived at the front in early 1915 and fought a hard defensive battle against German attackers at the Second Battle of Ypres. The Germans had used poison gas for the very first time in the war. They had driven the Canadians back, but the Canadian line did not break despite heavy casualties. The Second, Third, and Fourth divisions had entered the fray in the succeeding months, with the Fourth Division blooded at the end of 1916. Now under the command of British General Sir Julian Byng, the four divisions had prepared for this battle since January.

The Canadian attack was to coincide with a British attack against Arras as soon as pre-battle preparations had been completed. That would take almost three months.

Using lessons gained by the French army at Verdun, brought to the Corps by Canadian Major General Arthur Currie, who commanded the First Canadian Division, and lessons learned from the British in the previous 30 months, the Canadians were ready. Thousands of artillery shells had been stockpiled, Canadian and British gun positions had been trained on German artillery and German strongpoints on the Ridge, a full-scale mock-up of the Ridge had been prepared several kilometers back of the front to teach the Canadian attackers where German defenders could be found, and tunnels had been dug in the chalk to the foot of the Ridge to shelter the Canadian attackers as they advanced in the first wave of the attack.

By this point in the war, the Canadians were prepared for the hard fight that lay ahead. Battle-tested in major confrontations from early 1915, the Canadian Corps had come together like a well-oiled machine. Although there was a lack of significant representation from French-speaking Quebec, Canadians from one coast to the other had learned the hard lessons of trench warfare and learned how to work together and trust each other in facing the enemy. The newly arrived Fourth Division was to attack on the most northern flank with the Third, Second, and First divisions lined up to the south.

Several hours before the attack time of 5 am, a massive barrage opened fire on the Ridge, blasting German strong points and gun positions. At the appointed hour, the Canadians left their tunnels and followed a creeping barrage up the Ridge. German defensive fire was heavy, but the Canadians quickly built up momentum, especially in the south, where the First and Second Divisions made the deepest penetration on April 9. In the northern sector, the Fourth Division ran into heavy opposition at a feature known as "the pimple," a small hill at the northernmost point on the Ridge. It would eventually take the Canadians three more days to capture the entire Ridge.

The capture of Vimy Ridge did not significantly affect the outcome of the war. There was no breakthrough because none had been planned. The battle was what historians call a "set-piece" battle. The end of the war did not come for another 19 months. But the battle showed Canadians back home what their little army was now capable of. From then on, the Canadian Corps was referred to as the "shock troops of the British Empire." And in succeeding battles to the end of the war, the Canadians led the way in almost every battle fought by the Imperial forces.

Victory at Vimy did not come cheaply; the Corps suffered 10,602 casualties with 3,598 fatalities. But the victory has come to represent a significant event in the transition of Canada from colony to nation. On July 26, 1936, the Vimy Memorial at the top of the Ridge was dedicated as ground forever belonging to Canada, and some 6,000 veterans attended the ceremony. One observer recorded that at the moment of dedication, he saw all of Canada, from coast to coast, represented by the towering monument.



### Practicing Water Conservation

by Lorraine Roulston  
'Protecting Our Ecosystem'

After reading that the Colorado River is experiencing severe low water levels, it's a reminder that Canadian waters need our safeguarding. If you haven't already begun, by making small changes to conserve water in your home, your water bills will be lower as well.

The family chefs can become water efficient when rinsing fresh produce. Place these foods in a bowl of water rather than running the tap. Add a little salt or vinegar and let the vegetables sit for several minutes to help remove pesticide residue.

Vegetable stock that is used to create soups can also be poured over oats to make porridge or used to boil rice. Save pasta water to thicken soups.

Allow frozen foods to thaw in the fridge rather than immersing them in running water, unless the instructions on the package state otherwise.

Run your dishwasher when full. If washing dishes by hand, rinse them first in a bowl of warm water to keep your soapy water clean and hot. Soak sticky pots and pans overnight.

Cooking with a steamer or pressure cooker uses less water than boiling veggies in a pot.

Place a jug of water in the fridge so that you don't have to run the tap for a cold drink.

Aerators can be installed on faucets. They will mix air with water which reduces the flow rate without water pressure being compromised. Be on the lookout for leaks and dripping pipes.

Opportunities also exist in the bathroom by simply turning off the sink's tap while shaving, brushing teeth, and soaping hands.

Taking showers with cooler water saves energy and has been noted to boost muscle recovery, increase circulation and energy levels.

Installing low-flush or dual-flush toilets and water-saving shower heads will reduce water usage.

In the laundry room, wash full loads in cold water. If you are able to catch rinse water, use it to wash mats, slippers, or to wipe floors. Wear clothes more than once, thus reducing the amount of laundry.

Use a bucket of water rather than a hose to wash the car. Strive for low maintenance landscaping that includes native plants. Replace some grassy areas with a ground cover.

Obtain a rain barrel. Water your lawn with grey water. Retain water in your garden by composting and placing mulch around plants.

Watering your garden in the early morning reduces evaporation loss and prevents fungal growth by allowing leaves to dry.

Sweep walkways, steps, and driveways rather than using a hose. When using a hose, control the flow with an automatic shut-off nozzle. Avoid water toys that require a constant stream of water.

If going to a spa, take your own robe and towels. It's such a waste to see these being washed after a single use. Small challenges and awareness! These simple acts will help retain our waterways.

## Letters To The Editor:

WHAT IS ON YOUR MIND? Send letters to [newspaper@ocentral.com](mailto:newspaper@ocentral.com)

Dear Editor:

What does a government do when its corruption is exposed? If you're the Ontario PCs, you change the law so the public can't see any more evidence.

The Ford government has announced plans to strip the public of access to documents held by Doug Ford and his ministers' offices — records that would otherwise be accessible under Ontario's freedom-of-information laws. But it doesn't stop there.

The legislation will reportedly be applied retroactively, meaning it will likely hide documents tied to the PCs' "Skills Development" slush fund. When politicians are caught in financial scandals, they should answer to the taxpayers. The Ontario PCs' solution is to hide the records and rewrite the rules. That is the kind of behaviour Ontarians have come to expect from Liberals. At this point, the Ontario PC Party is nothing more than an extension of the federal Liberal Party of Canada: Growing government, rewarding insiders, and shutting out the citizens who pay their salaries when they get caught. If Doug Ford and the Ontario PCs have nothing to hide, then they shouldn't be trying to hide it.

Belinda Karahalios

Dear Editor:

I want to follow up on the recent announcement from the Province of Ontario introducing the proposed Better Regional Governance Act, 2026, which would fundamentally change how regional chairs are selected in several municipalities, including Durham Region.

If passed, this legislation would shift Durham's regional chair from an elected position -- chosen directly by residents -- to one appointed by the province.

This marks a significant departure from the model that Durham residents supported through a referendum in 2010. At that time, our community made a clear and deliberate choice to have a direct voice in selecting regional leadership.

For that reason, I share the concerns expressed by Regional Chair John Henry and many across our region. Removing the public's ability to elect the regional chair raises important questions about democratic participation and local autonomy. At its core, this change moves decision-making further from the people it is meant to serve.

I recognize that the province has framed this legislation as a way of improving efficiency, accelerating housing and infrastructure delivery, and strengthening alignment across levels of government. These are important goals, especially at a time when municipalities like Whitby are experiencing rapid growth and facing complex challenges.

As one of the fastest-growing communities in Ontario, Whitby is navigating significant pressures. We are working to address housing affordability and availability, respond to needs related to homelessness, mental health and addictions, and advocate for a more sustainable municipal funding model that ensures we can provide the infrastructure our residents rely on.

With that in mind, it will be critically important that, if this legislation proceeds, the process to appoint Durham's next regional chair is conducted in a way that reflects the needs of our entire region. Durham is a diverse community, made up of urban, suburban, and rural municipalities. It is essential that our regional leadership understands and represents this full spectrum and works collaboratively with local councils to guide us through this period of growth.

I will continue to advocate for Whitby and work closely with my colleagues across Durham to ensure our shared priorities remain front and centre, no matter how governance structures evolve.

I want to recognize and thank Chair Henry for his leadership since 2018. Over the past eight years, he has guided Durham through significant challenges and important milestones with steadiness and integrity. His approach to leadership has earned the respect of colleagues on Regional Council, and his commitment to the residents of Durham has left a lasting impact on our communities."

Elizabeth Roy, Mayor of Whitby

Dear Editor:

"It's no secret that we're at a critical time for housing in Ontario. Economic uncertainties and rising cost of living are impacting the province's housing market, from new construction to buyers and sellers on the sidelines. We need our leaders to take charge and steer us in the right direction to get housing starts and sales back on track.

The Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, introduced today by the Government of Ontario, is exactly what we need to see if we want to right the ship. This proposed legislation features a wide suite of REALTOR®-led solutions, and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) and our nearly 100,000 Members commend the Ford Government for listening and standing up for the next generation of homeowners.

We are particularly thrilled to see the Bill proposing to enact a longstanding recommendation from OREA – cutting red tape to make it easier to build housing supply. This includes proposals to simplify municipal land-use planning approvals, as well as reviewing the Building Code in depth to reduce barriers to new homes. These ideas will help bring more missing middle housing options to market and further enable modern housing construction methods like factory-built housing across the province.

The new Bill also proposes several actions to address the runaway costs of development charges (DCs), as highlighted in our latest policy report. OREA is pleased to see the provincial government championing transparency and accountability through the proposed disclosure of DCs and other hidden fees in new home agreements of purchase and sale. In addition, today's announcement of \$8.8 billion in federal and provincial funding over 10 years to support Ontario municipalities that reduce and maintain low DCs aligns with OREA recommendations for all governments to work in collaboration to fund and enable necessary infrastructure.

The new proposed Bill will also see the Ford government continuing to advance the implementation of municipal services corporations for infrastructure required to support new housing in Peel Region, aiming to create a model that could be adopted province-wide. This is a big win for new home buyers and municipalities, as infrastructure costs could be amortized over decades, helping everyone keep more money in their pockets.

If implemented, these will be transformative initiatives for housing in Ontario, now and in the future. This is the kind of bold action we need to drive economic growth, support jobs, and keep the dream of homeownership alive. We thank Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rob Flack for putting this Bill forward and we look forward to collaborating on solutions to create a stronger, more resilient housing market in Ontario."

Kim Fairley, 2026 OREA President

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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or

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