

**Cross-sector collaboration honours Canadian military with modern day monument  
The London LAV III memorial is one of 33 being installed across the nation**

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Recognizing the service and sacrifice of the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan, London is one of 33 communities across the country erecting LAV III monuments to honour current day veterans from this generation's war.

The Light Armoured Vehicle (LAV) III Monument Program is an initiative of Canada Company, a Toronto-based national charity supporting military members and their families, and protecting the legacy of Canadian troops. Through this program, several cities - including London - are embracing an opportunity to feature full-size demilitarized vehicles as modern monuments for a modern day war.

Canada Company Director Shawn Deane says the program is a meaningful way to thank today's veterans, by creating a lasting legacy to this chapter of military history. "The LAV III monument speaks to Canada's response to 9-11 and honours those who served and lost their lives, while also providing citizens with a place to learn, mourn and reflect upon how soldiers continue to pay the ultimate price for their nation, just as they have for over 100 years."

Between 2001 and 2014, more than 40,000 Canadian troops fought for democracy in Afghanistan. The conflict proved to be Canada's longest war and its first significant combat engagement since the Korean War. In all, 158 military and four civilians died, including one Londoner - Trooper Mark Wilson of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, who was killed by an improvised explosive device (IED) in 2006. A further 2,000 personnel were wounded during the 12.5 years of Canadian involvement in this prolonged war - that still continues today.

To commemorate these courageous heroes, Canada Company liaises with municipal leaders in each of the 33 communities to identify an appropriate public site for the monument. The City of London has a longstanding connection with the Canadian Armed Forces. In 1923, historic Wolseley Barracks became headquarters to The Royal Canadian Regiment (The RCR) and is currently home to the 4th Battalion and The RCR Museum. So, as part of its Public Art and Monuments Program, the City purchased the LAV III from Canada Company and placed it at The RCR Museum outdoor exhibit at Wolseley Barracks on a permanent basis, through a licensing agreement with the Department of National Defence.

The RCR Museum, near the corner of Oxford Street East and Elizabeth Street, is a perfect place to preserve London's stories on Afghanistan, as it is home to military history and fosters broad understanding of the regimental experience during times of peacekeeping and war.

Equally important to the charitable program's success is solid, cross-sector support from business partner General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada (GDLS-Canada) and educational partner Fanshawe College. Both London entities are pivotal to the national program, through an arduous conversion process that transforms weaponized vehicle remnants - made available by the Government of Canada - into demilitarized objects of remembrance - destined for various locations coast-to-coast.

According to GDLS-Canada's John Ball, who serves as director of Canadian programs, this project demonstrates the strength of collaboration in rallying around an important common cause. Ball notes LAVs hold exceptional meaning for all company staff, "These vehicles were originally built in London and were instrumental in safely transporting our soldiers on their many missions in Afghanistan. Now, our team is proud of its supporting role in facilitating all written procedures necessary to convert the LAVs into public monuments." GDLS-Canada also prepared the vehicle remnants for the next phase of the process by removing all weaponry, and cleaning, capping and sealing the shells.

The final step in creating the lasting memorials was undertaken by a talented group of approximately 40 Fanshawe welding students, who regularly convened at a secure location in London to create and affix replica barrels and turrets to the demilitarized hulls. This key role by students in ensuring authentic touchstones of Canada's hard-fought war makes Fanshawe president Peter Devlin proud.

As former commander of the Canadian Army prior to taking the helm at Fanshawe, Devlin served in Afghanistan and frequently flew into the war zone to support the troops in his final years of service. From his vantage point, Devlin concurs the LAV III is a fitting symbol of Canada's fight for freedom and its commitment to the people of Afghanistan. "Next to our soldiers, this vehicle truly was the backbone of our Afghan mission - we relied on it every day with our lives. Now, it is gratifying to come full circle, as our students are experiencing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to turn these vehicles into memorials."

Commending both Canada Company and GDLS-Canada for including Fanshawe in the LAV program, Devlin recalls a recent conversation he had with a group of welding students, "They proudly announced they are making national monuments, and feel privileged to play a part. They touched my heart with the passion they brought to their poignant task."

For more on Canada Company and the LAV III Monument Program, go to [www.canadacompany.ca](http://www.canadacompany.ca), for General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada, visit [www.gdls canada.com](http://www.gdls canada.com), to see The RCR Museum, check out [www.thercrmuseum.ca](http://www.thercrmuseum.ca), and for Fanshawe College, visit [www.fanshawec.ca](http://www.fanshawec.ca).



Photo left to right: Peter Devlin, John Ball and Shawn Deane in front of LAV III Monument