

Bill C – 533, an Act respecting a Srebrenica Remembrance Day

Honourable Rob Oliphant, Member of the Canadian Parliament and Member of the Liberal Party of Canada on June 10th introduced Bill C – 533, an Act respecting a Srebrenica Remembrance Day

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59 Elizabeth II, 2010
HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA

Bill C-533

An Act respecting a Srebrenica Remembrance Day:

Whereas the Srebrenica Massacre, also known as the Srebrenica Genocide, was the killing in July of 1995 of an estimated 8,000 Bosniak men and boys in the region of Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Bosnian Serb forces;

Whereas the Srebrenica Massacre is the largest mass murder in Europe since World War II and the largest massacre carried out by Serb forces during the Bosnian war;

Whereas the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, located in The Hague, unanimously decided in the case of Prosecutor v. Krstić that the Srebrenica Massacre was genocide;

Whereas the International Court of Justice ruled in February of 2007 that the Srebrenica Massacre was genocide with the specific intent to destroy Bosnian Muslims who were living in the area;

Whereas resolutions condemning the Srebrenica Massacre were adopted by the European Parliament on January 15, 2009, and by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in 2005;

Whereas on March 31, 2010, the Government of Serbia, led by President Boris Tadic, issued a full state apology for the Srebrenica Massacre, providing tacit recognition of the genocidal nature of the crime and endorsing the February 2007 ruling of the International Court of Justice;

And whereas the list of people missing or killed in Srebrenica, as compiled by the Federal Commission of Missing Persons of the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, includes 8,373 names to date;

Now, therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:

SHORT TITLE

1. This Act may be cited as the Srebrenica Remembrance Day Act. SREBRENICA REMEMBRANCE DAY

2. Throughout Canada, in each and every year, the eleventh day of July shall be known as “Srebrenica Remembrance Day”.

3. For greater certainty, Srebrenica Remembrance Day is not a legal holiday or a nonjuridical day.

Mr. Robert Oliphant’s comments in the House of Commons:

Moved for leave to introduce Bill C-533, An Act respecting a Srebrenica Remembrance Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased this morning to introduce a bill that seeks to establish a national Srebrenica remembrance day to be held every July 11. I thank my colleague the hon. member for Vancouver East for seconding the bill.

In July 1995, an estimated 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were massacred in the Srebrenica region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a UN declared safe area by Bosnian Serb forces. This was the largest mass murder in Europe since World War II.

Both the appeals chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Court of Justice ruled that the Srebrenica massacre was genocide. In addition, resolutions condemning the massacre have been passed by the European Parliament and the American House of Representatives and Senate.

This past March, the president of Serbia issued a full state apology and endorsed the ruling of the International Court of Justice.

Recognizing the devastating effects of the July 1995 Srebrenica genocide, this bill would provide the opportunity for all Canadians to stand with those in the Bosnian Canadian community to share in their pain and honour the memory of those men and boys massacred.

As we approach the 15th anniversary of this massacre, I hope this bill will serve as a step in the right direction which will ultimately provide some semblance of comfort to the survivors of this genocide and to the Bosnian community here in Canada.

Rob Oliphant talks about recognising the Srebrenica genocide

Liberal MP Rob Oliphant introduced a new Private Members' Bill today, and I caught up with him after Question Period to ask him more about it.

Q: Tell me about this Private Members' Bill you've introduced.

A: It's a bill to recognise July 11th as a memorial for the victims of Srebrenica. Fifteen years ago in 1995, there was a massacre that happened in a UN safe-declared area, and 8000 Bosniak – which is Bosnian Muslim – men and boys were massacred in a very short order of time. It's been declared by two international bodies as a genocide, and as well the American Senate and House of Representatives, the European Parliament, and the Serbian government itself has recognised this genocide. The Canadian government should do the same, and I think a memorial day would be the most appropriate thing to do for that. It's part of the healing process that needs to go on.

The other part of the story is that the NDP have a motion on the books, and came up with a new motion that they were seeking unanimous, all-party approval for, and the NDP, the Bloc and the Liberals agreed to it, but the Conservatives refused this week to give unanimous consent to it unless the "genocide" word was taken out. The genocide, however, was internationally recognised – this is not a matter of debate. I have no idea why they did not recognise that, or what they're afraid of. They refused to give unanimous consent for the motion, so my bill – which I'd already planned on doing this week as well – takes on a higher significance.

Q: In terms of the logistics of this bill, is this the one you're moving forward with when your turn comes up?

A: When my turn comes up, I'll decide which bill. I'll have several by then. My hope is that by then, a unanimous motion will have been adopted, so part of the Private Members' Bill is to push the government another step.

Q: You also had a question in QP today regarding your critic portfolio. Can you give me a little more about the background for that?

A: There was a report this week that retired Colonel Stogran, the Veterans' Ombudsman, has made quite strong statements, very critical of the government, and the treatment of returning soldiers – especially Afghan soldiers, but pretty much all 'modern veterans.' I have two concerns – one, for the well-being of the ombudsman, because as soon as someone is critical of this government, they kind of disappear, whether it's Paul Kennedy, or any of the number of other senior public servants who've been dismissed as soon as they're critical, so I wanted to get it on the record very quickly that we're worried about that, so that the government knows we're watching. The second goal was to continue to raise the issues that the ombudsman is raising, regarding the lack of new programming for a changed context, and I think this goes hand-in-hand with the fact that the Prime Minister has appointed a part-time Minister of Veterans Affairs for the first time in 50 years, when I think some of these issues require full-time attention.

Rob Oliphant holds a press conference introducing his bill, Bill C-533

Rob Oliphant MP Introduces Bill C-533 – Rob Oliphant holds a press conference introducing his bill, Bill C-533,, An Act Respecting a Srebrenica Remembrance Day.

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