



News Release

DOMINION INSTITUTE COMMENTS ON THE PASSING OF GREAT WAR VETERAN, PERCY DWIGHT WILSON, TODAY IN TORONTO

Toronto, Ontario – May 9 – The Dominion Institute wishes to extend its condolences to the family of Percy Dwight Wilson. “We honour his service to Canada during the First World War,” said Rudyard Griffiths, Executive Director of the Dominion Institute.

Mr. Griffiths continued: “With only one Great War veteran remaining, we hope that the federal government will follow through on the motion unanimously passed in Parliament last November to offer the family of the last Great War veteran in Canada a full State Funeral. As the highest honour the Government of Canada can bestow on an individual, a full State Funeral would be fitting tribute not only to this individual’s service to our country but also the half million Canadians he fought alongside in the Great War and the 60,000 who died. “

With Mr. Wilson’s passing, there remains only one Canadian veteran of the Great War – John Babcock (106 years of age). He constitutes Canada’s only living link to the sacrifices and triumphs of the more than half million Canadians who served in the First World War and the more than 60,000 who died between 1914 and 1918. The Dominion Institute urges the Government of Canada to offer the state funeral to the family of Mr. Wilson. If the family declines this offer, we would hope the Government would extend the same offer to Mr. Babcock at the appropriate time. It will then be the decision of his family whether to accept this singular offer.

On November 22, 2006 the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion to hold a state funeral for the last veteran of the First World War. The passage of the motion brought to a conclusion the Dominion Institute’s online petition asking the federal government to offer a full State Funeral to the family of the last Great War veteran resident in Canada. Close to 100,000 Canadians signed the online petition (www.dominion.ca/statefuneral) in 3 weeks.

Recent surveys undertaken by the Dominion Institute reveal that Canadians’ knowledge of the First World War is fading rapidly with barely one in four being able to name the battle of Vimy Ridge as a key Canadian victory in the First World War. These same surveys indicate that three in four Canadians support offering a State Funeral to the last veteran of the First World War. See www.dominion.ca/polling.htm for more information on the Institute’s polling studies.

The Dominion Institute initiated its call for a State Funeral on behalf of the veterans who volunteer with its Memory Project. The Memory Project Speakers’ Bureau consists of 1,500 veteran volunteers who have visited with over 300,000 young people since 2001. The Institute conducted an informal survey of this group last month and found that fully 76% supported providing a State Funeral to the family of the Last Great War veteran resident in Canada.

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