

Suggested Text for **Story of the Defence of Hong Kong**

Good afternoon and welcome. I'd like to start by thanking our host, XXXXX.

Many Canadians are unaware that Canadian soldiers fought in Hong Kong in World War Two, so let me briefly tell you that story.

In the fall of 1941, the government of Canada responded to a request from Great Britain to send troops to Hong Kong by dispatching nearly 2,000 soldiers ... mostly from the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers ... to Hong Kong. Their mission was to bolster the garrison there, which was expecting an attack at some point by the Japanese Imperial Army. The Japanese had been fighting in China since before 1937, and by 1941 had effectively surrounded the British colony of Hong Kong. The colony was strategically important to Britain as it lay directly on the shipping route for oil and other war materials between Japan and sources in Southeast Asia.

The troops arrived in November of 1941. It was not known when the Japanese would attack, and the troops settled into a routine of garrison duty. But on December 8th, simultaneously with the December 7th attack on Pearl Harbour, the Japanese Army suddenly struck. Their bombers obliterated the British aircraft and airport, and their soldiers began to come overland from China into Hong Kong. The Japanese had over 50,000 troops, well outnumbering the British garrison of about 12,000, including the Canadians. The Japanese were battle-hardened and well-equipped, while the defenders were short of battle experience, and had no means of resupply.

The battle raged for 17 days. Many defenders were killed, including nearly 300 Canadians, during fighting that took place in the mountainous and extremely difficult terrain of Hong Kong. Finally, when it became obvious that the situation was hopeless, the British Governor of Hong Kong surrendered to the Japanese on December 25, 1941, and ordered the troops to lay down arms. The defenders who survived the battle were taken prisoner and spent the remainder of the war ... until the Japanese surrender in August 1945 as POWs, subjected to brutal and inhuman conditions. Nearly 300 more Canadians died in the POW camps. Many of those who did survive had to live with medical conditions caused by their ill-treatment, lack of food and primitive living conditions during their 3 years and 8 months of captivity.

Our association ... the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association ... exists to help ensure that this chapter of Canada's military history is never forgotten.

Which brings us to our dedication. We have a program of installing commemorative plaques in places where Hong Kong Veterans have gathered. [This text should be customized to the situation, including the names of Hong Kong veterans who have frequented the location] We are very pleased that the XXXXXXXXXX has consented to having a plaque hung where it will serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made by Canadians during World War II.

I'd like to ask XXXXXXXXX to come forward and unveil the plaque.

PLAQUE UNVEILING

Thank you all for attending