

Battle of Britain 75th Anniversary Commemoration

Sunday September 13, SSM Airport – 1:00 P.M.

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good afternoon everyone. It is my great pleasure to be here today. I'd like to thank the 432 RCAF Algoma Wing of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association for inviting me to participate in today's ceremony.

We are here of course to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, one of the pivotal turning points in World War Two.

It is hard for many of us to imagine now, but in the summer and fall of 1940 the outcome of the war was very much in doubt. Hitler's Germany had conquered most of Europe and Russia and the United States had not yet entered the war on the side of allies. England was left to stand on its own and its prospects of survival were quite uncertain.

Between England and invasion stood the Royal Air Force, supported by pilots from Canada, the commonwealth, and the occupied nations of Europe.

Though they were severely outnumbered, these flyers were able to prevent the German air force from gaining superiority in the skies above England. Hitler ultimately had to abandon his plans for an invasion.

The allied victory in the Battle of Britain was a crucial one. Had England been invaded and occupied by Nazi forces, the course of world history might have been very different.

Today, with 75 years having elapsed, there are few living veterans of the Battle of Britain left. It is incumbent on us to continue to remember their courage and what was at stake in the conflict.

As well, we must also continue to commemorate the bravery, service and sacrifices of Canadian pilots who have served our country in both war and peacetime. This includes local pilots such as Sault Ste. Marie native Borden Gray, who is memorialized inside the terminal beside us.

Thank you again for the invitation to speak today and for allowing me to share these thoughts with you.