

## News release

For immediate release

### **Italian-Canadians want further actions on the unjust internment and treatment of individuals of Italian origin during World War II**

**Montreal, Quebec, June 20, 2019**—The national representative organizations of the Italian-Canadian community comprised of the following: The National Congress of Italian-Canadians, the National Federation of Canadian Italian and Business and Professional Associations, and the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy of Canada, wish to thank Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for his support of the Italian-Canadian Community and his commitment to offer a formal apology in the House of Commons for the wrongs inflicted upon our Community during World War II.

During the Second World War 6,000 Italian-Canadians were arrested, 5,300 of these were released from jail on the condition that they report each month to the RCMP; the other 700 were interned by the federal government for an average of 15 months, without ever being charged, with no right to a fair hearing and no right to counsel. The entire Italian-Canadian Community was wronged and under siege by the unjust elements of discrimination, harassment and hardship and have long sought reparation.

*“Piazza Petawawa”* is an emotional and compelling documentary that charts the Canadian journey of the internment with stories told from the point of view of surviving family members who were witnesses to the discrimination, harassment and hardship imposed on those interned. The documentary chronicles the internment, before and after the war and describes the plight of the Italian immigrants to Canada as they persevered to establish their place in Canada seeking respect through hard work and ultimately becoming significant and successful contributors to Canadian society. The documentary was made in an effort to educate fellow Italian-Canadians and all Canadians on an important, though somewhat unspoken and troubling time in our country’s history.

For over three quarters of a century this injustice and the matter of compensation to the Italian-Canadian community has been addressed by successive government administrations without ever reaching a proper and just conclusion. “The government has made reparation to other communities through community compensation, notably the Japanese-Canadian, Ukrainian-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian communities” said Gianni Leonetti, National president of the National Federation of Canadian Italian and Business and Professional Associations, “in the interest of fairness and equality our community should not be treated any less” added Mr. Leonetti.

“The promise to apologize formally in the House of Commons by our Prime Minister is an important step in a process. Unfortunately, it will not take place until after the election. It is my hope that all other party leaders will commit to the same promise” stated Carmine E. Filice, National president of the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy of Canada.

“The Italian Canadian Community has further requests beyond a formal apology including: an exhibition to commemorate this chapter of Canada’s History at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg and the Casa d’Italia in Montreal, the creation of Chairs of Studies in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver among other initiatives. **We would like to see some concrete action on these matters**” went on to say Mr. Colavecchio, National president of the National Congress of Italian-Canadians.

**Related link:**

**Piazza Petawawa:** <https://youtu.be/9Z2XXb6rS0c>

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