



Government of Canada

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The National Battlefields  
Commission

Commission des champs  
de bataille nationaux

## PRESS RELEASE

*For immediate release*

# **250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battles of Québec** **A look back on a city in a state of war and siege**

*“The colony is lost if peace doesn’t come; I cannot see anything that could save it.”  
(letter from Montcalm to Lévis, January 4, 1759)*

**Québec City, August 24, 2009** – Next August 28 and 30, on the Plains of Abraham, the National Battlefields Commission will present two free commemorative events to which the population is invited, within the framework of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battles of Québec: **State of War** and **State of Siege**. A look back on the significant and troubled past of the city to help us get a clearer picture of our history.

### **State of War – August 28**

*“May God hear our prayers and see to it that the English  
shatter their ships on the reefs of the river and thus delay their arrival.”  
(inspired from the Journal du siège de Québec by Aegidius Fauteux ed. and the Journal... by Mr. de Foligné)*

The spring of 1759. Québec is about to withstand the onslaughts of the British troops that took Louisbourg the previous summer. The French colony’s inhabitants are already suffering from the repercussions of the war. In addition to the conflict, the harvests are poor and the food supplies are low. But high society still has its balls despite the terrible famine. There is simmering discontent among the population, which lives in an atmosphere of fear and corruption. There are obvious conflicts among certain leaders. Despite the daily problems of survival, some 11,000 Canadians aged 16 to 60 join the militia to defend their colony, that is, approximately 15% of the entire New France population.

To get a clearer picture of these difficult conditions the public, through animated lectures, will learn what soldiers, leaders, militiamen, courtesans and other players of the period, thought: the Marquis de Montcalm, writing to the Chevalier de Lévis, Intendant Bigot protecting his good name, an exchange between Wampum and the Amerindian allies, a nun telling about the fear of the inhabitants, militiamen fighting for their native land, and artillery drill.

Although partial, this historical presentation, which draws its inspiration from sources of the period, is intended as a living, moving testimony of the situation in which the region's inhabitants found themselves before the official onset of the hostilities in 1756 and June 1759. Two giant maps providing an overview of the conflict will be available for consultation near the bandstand, and H  l  ne Quimper, one of the Commission's historians and co-author of the book *Qu  bec ville assi  g  e, 1759-1760, par les acteurs et les t  moins*, will be on the premises to answer questions from the public.

The free presentation, which lasts approximately 90 minutes, will take place in the open at the Edwin-B  langer Bandstand, Friday August 28, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. We suggest that the people attending this activity bring a chair.

## State of Siege – August 30

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« *The British report that during the summer of 1759 they shot nearly 18,000 projectiles, including shells, incendiary bombs and cannon balls on the city.*”  
(according to George Williamson, George Williamson Family Fonds, LAC)

It is 1759, and September is fast upon us. The British have settled themselves outside Qu  bec. Largely destroyed, the besieged city is caught headlong in this ruthless war. Ever since July 12, Qu  bec has been heavily bombarded. The city's surrounding area is already subjected to the military pressure of the British and to all the horrors that accompany the battles. Raids, skirmishes between the two camps, fire and destruction are the everyday lot of the besieged town and its surroundings. But even then, life goes on although with difficulty, amid the desolation and ruins.

In order to get a better grasp of the impacts this had on the lives of Qu  bec citizens and the tensions they went through a few days before the onset of the battle of the Plains of Abraham, a historical day is planned to lift the veil on the hidden side of the siege. Interpretation, historical demonstrations and lectures are on the agenda, in order to provide a better grasp on this chapter of our history: defence system, bombardments and weaponry, violence perpetrated on the countryside, desertion, navy, militia, Amerindians, and more.

There will be approximately twenty historical stations including instructional interpretation workshops on subjects such as archaeology, cartography and military engineering. Several historical animations will shed light on little-known aspects of the war such as military life, famine, the presence and role of Amerindians, surgery and care of the wounded, fire ships, desertion, defensive works, the Royal Syntax (*le coup des   coliers*), peasants and the war, destruction and bombings, the Canadian Militia, etc. Finally, a few demonstrations, real and fictitious, of rifle shooting, cannon firing and military drill will be presented.

Two renowned lecturers will meet history buffs at 1:30 p.m.: Denys Del  ge, author and Universit   Laval professor, will lecture on *La participation des Am  rindiens    la guerre de Sept Ans* (“The Amerindians' contribution to the Seven Years' War”), and at 3:00 p.m., Charles Andr   Nadeau, who has a 33-year career in the Canadian Navy, will discuss *L'aspect naval du si  ge de Qu  bec* (“The naval aspect of the siege of Qu  bec”).

The free activity will take place Sunday August 30, 2009, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., at Martello Towers 1 and 2, as well as on the path separating them (at the corner of Taché and de Bernières). The lectures (in French only, limited places) will take place at the Pavilion (near the Edwin-Bélanger Bandstand).

## Information

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418 649-6157  
www.theplainsofabraham.ca



## In co-operation with

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- 30 -

Source: Joanne Laurin, Communication Officer  
National Battlefields Commission  
418 649-6251, joanne.laurin@ccdn-nbc.gc.ca