The Honourable Mélanie Joly

House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario

Canada

K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Joly,

During Canada's first national internment operations of 1914-1920, a large camp holding Ukrainians and other Europeans was established at Spirit Lake (today, La Ferme), in the Abitibi region of Québec. It held hundreds of Ukrainians and other Europeans, who were forced to perform heavy labour in very harsh conditions. Many of the men, women, and children imprisoned were parishioners from St. Michael’s Ukrainian Catholic Church, in Montréal. Men, and some children, were buried in the internee cemetery between December 1915 and October 1916. The camp was closed on January 28, 1917.

Over the years, efforts to restore and re-consecrate this cemetery have not been successful. It has now fallen into serious disrepair and will soon be lost forever in the region's boreal forest. Determined to prevent that from happening, the Chairman of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Mr. Roman Zakaluzny, has asked for your personal intervention:

"There are no less than 16 men and children buried in the Spirit Lake internee cemetery. Minister Joly should instruct her officials to investigate how a cemetery, set up by the federal government, came to be sold to the Province of Québec, and then re-sold to a private landowner, and whether this internee cemetery, one of the very few of its kind in Canada, should be designated a national historic site. At a minimum, this sacred space should be re-consecrated and restored, allowing for internee descendants to hallow the memory of those who died at Spirit Lake – people held behind Canadian barbed wire not because of any wrong they had done, but only because of who they were and where they had come from.”

On behalf of the (*name of your USO)*, representing Ukrainian Canadian students *at the University of your USO*, I urge you to help restore this vital landmark in Canadian history.

Regards,

*Firstname Lastname*

*USO* President