



It has been a few weeks now since I last connected with an update and I do hope you have been keeping well.

Over four months ago, the organization was impacted in an unprecedented way. We all know how the COVID-19 outbreak affected our programs, each branch and every member. It was, and continues to be, challenging. But throughout it all, Veterans and community service remained foremost in the thoughts and actions of Legionnaires across the country. We didn't let a pandemic stop us in fulfilling our Mission!

I want to thank each Provincial Command for the outstanding communications and information sharing that has continued throughout this pause in our normal operations. This vitally important nationwide connection helped strengthen our focus and aided greatly in our responses to issues. You have my sincere gratitude.

I have a few updates:

Federal Funding for Legion Branches

Comrade Tom has been leading our approach to government regarding the lack of federal funding programs for Legion branches. While his two letters to the PM remain unanswered, he has met twice with the official opposition party Veterans Affairs shadow cabinet member as well as the Minister of Veterans Affairs. While there is stated support to help branches, we have yet to see any program that all branches are eligible for. We are encouraged, however, by recent communication from government that a new aid package is in the works that will include support for Legions. Read an updated story at <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/more-than-150-legion-branches-face-permanent-closure-hope-for-federal-support-1.5031430>

Letter to Provincial Premiers

Many Commands have heard back from their provincial/territorial government following the letter of 25 June; some have met with government officials while others have meetings scheduled. For those who have yet to receive any response, a follow-up letter is being drafted. Its release is contingent on a timely response, or not, from government on an aid package. More to follow.

Interviews

A number of SEOs, Command Presidents, Executive Directors and others have been approached for interviews regarding the financial status and viability of branches (and some of you have been VERY busy honouring these requests). To assist with these interviews and to ensure we are all delivering the same, consistent message, Nujma Bond has drafted information that can assist with your media preparation. It is attached. Each of you is welcome to do interviews, and are encouraged to do so, but please remember that if it comes to making policy statements, that ability rests with the Dominion President.

AVIVA Canada Class Action

Some branches have been approached by AVIVA asking them to sign a form while others report receiving a call from them asking questions. In light of the ongoing legal action, should branches reach out to you about this contact, please direct them to Kevin Ross at Leners (KRoss@leners.ca) to seek guidance before signing any document or answering any questions.

Poppy Campaign and Remembrance Day Ceremonies

Many branches are asking how COVID will impact this year's campaign and ceremonies. While local restrictions will be important to determine, DC is continuing to review impact on these two important programs and will be providing an update and guidance in late-August. In the meantime, branches are encouraged to order Poppy supplies.

Poppy Supply Orders

Commands are encouraged to send in their Poppy orders as they receive them. Supply orders are now being shipped daily.

Legion House Re-opens 4 August

Staff will begin a graduated, rotational return to the office on Tuesday, 4 August. We will have approx. 2/3 of our personnel in the building at any one time throughout the month of August. We will move to full staffing on-site after Labour Day. All departments will be staffed and available to assist from 8:30 am – 4:00 pm. Our summer hours will end on 4 September with regular opening hours of 8:30 am – 4:30 pm to resume as of Tuesday, 8 September.

GoFundMe

Last week, we learned that GoFundMe cancelled a branch's campaign and returned the approx. \$5900 raised back to the donors. The issue was verification of NFP status. Read the news article at <https://london.ctvnews.ca/ingersoll-ont-legion-hoping-donors-reach-out-directly-after-gofundme-campaign-cancelled-1.5025467>. We reached out to our contact at GoFundMe Canada and their response was swift! Not only did they pull the list of all fundraisers for Legions to make sure this administrative mix-up would not affect their campaigns, they sent a donation of \$5935 to the branch that had their campaign cancelled. We shared this great news with the CTV reporter. Thank you, GoFundMe, for making this right!

Masks

The Legion-branded non-medical masks are a hit! While DC suspended the unsolicited mailing of masks to Veterans in LTC facilities, we are happy to send masks if requested – some Command Service Officers have facilitated requests for masks with area LTC centres. If you are approached, just let me know and we will be happy to send complimentary masks.

So whether we are settling into a new normal or are in an extended but temporary phase of operational adjustment, our focus remains constant. I think back to the co-theme of the 2018 Dominion Convention – Service Before Self. With how our branches and members have responded to this crisis, that statement could not be more true for this outstanding organization.

Be well and stay healthy,

Steven

Steven Clark
National Executive Director / Directeur exécutif national