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The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

May you remain well during this difficult time.

I am reaching out again to express the critical need for federal government financial support to help Royal Canadian Legion Branches across our country due to the pandemic. We estimate that without such funding, some will face closure within several months.

Much to our surprise and alarm, the new *Emergency Community Support Fund* announced by your government cannot help our Branches with the operational costs they continue to incur; this was confirmed by direct communication with ESDC. The program's parameters need to be expanded in order to help the Legion and other not-for-profit entities. Recently, our national headquarters released funds from its own emergency reserves to help Branches stay afloat – but this help is temporary and running out. In desperation, some Branches have started *GoFundMe* requests, normally not allowed under our By-Laws, and to the tune of \$25,000. We simply cannot meet this level of need.

Businesses that cater to the public currently have access to a number of relief programs but our Branches operate primarily through volunteer work and do not qualify for the sort of help being provided to restaurants, retail outlets, and even sporting clubs.

If this nation's hundreds of Legion Branches are forgotten some of them will close permanently resulting in a huge ripple effect across the country. Branches are often the hubs of communities, and will be unable to support Veterans, Seniors and all citizens in the countless ways they do. Some of the most important work includes what they do to help *Veterans Affairs Canada* with benefit applications. This VAC service is already in turmoil due to the ongoing backlog. There are many other examples of what would be lost:

- Providing a safe place for Veterans and Seniors to gather
- Preparing and delivering meals
- Supporting youth through scholarships and community programs such as the Canadian Cadet Organization, Scouts Canada and the Girl Guides of Canada
- Organizing and conducting Remembrance activities and services
- Providing communities with affordable rental space
- Providing a place of social gathering and a community hub – often the only one in town

Our country's leaders may not realize the unique role the Legion plays in Canada, and that its structure is unlike that of any other non-profit organization. While our Branches distribute close to 20 million dollars each year to help Veterans and communities, the funds are donated by Canadians through the National Poppy Campaign and cannot be used for operational needs.

This means our 1380 Branches must regularly raise funds to keep operations going through restaurants and lounges, events, dinners, venue rentals, and more. That ability has been thwarted.

This pandemic has brought much of the country to a standstill, yet many of our Branches have found ways to support our communities through sheer goodwill and the hard work of volunteers. They have made countless meals, visited with Veterans and Seniors, made masks, and offered their venues for blood donation. They have continued to provide direct help to Veterans through the work of our Service Officers. This work cannot continue indefinitely without further support.

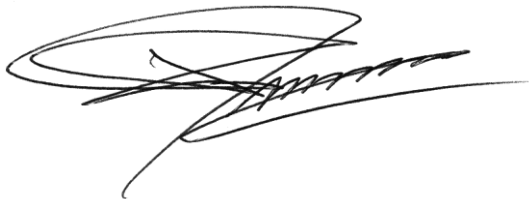
While I appreciate their value, I am angered to see that businesses whose sole purpose is to provide entertainment are getting relief, while our Legion Branches - which are literally helping to save lives and improve communities - are struggling with the fear of closure, with no government help in sight.

I was equally disappointed that my April 28 letter to you was met with silence from your office. Not even an acknowledgement. Why?

On behalf of The Royal Canadian Legion and its 260,000 members, it is imperative that you share swift news of relief programs that our Branches can actually access.

Our Veterans and communities are counting on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas D. Irvine', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas D. Irvine, CD
Dominion President

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