

Enough talk and more action needed as Legion 'Raises the Roof'?



By Brock Weir

When Dave Franklin transferred to the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion over 20 years ago, the hot topic was putting a new roof on their Industrial Parkway North home.

Two decades later, Mr. Franklin is now President of branch, and the hot topic is much the same. Now, he says, it is time to change the conversation.

The Legion is in the midst of their new 'Raise the Roof' campaign, a series of initiatives designed to raise capital to finally make their new roof a reality. Based on estimates from tenders issued over five years ago, the Legion estimates they will need in the ballpark of \$100,000 to bring the roof to fruition and have designed a series of initiatives to help them reach their goal.

'We have been having this conversation several times over the years and I just declared this year, which I believe will be my last as president, it is time to stop talking about it and begin the process of raising money to get a new roof,' says Mr. Franklin. 'Talking about it is not going to change it. We have set out some goals to try to accomplish creating money as quickly as possible.'

Last month, the Legion held a yard sale to raise some cash. This follows on the heels of the July 'soft launch' of a new lawn sign initiative, which was rolled out at their annual Christmas in July lunch. An initiative of a Legion member, for \$20 apiece, Legion members 'and members of the public alike ' can purchase a lawn sign bearing the evocative motto 'I will remember them' above a field of poppies.

'It is a matter of continuing to remember those who served their country and have gone abroad and put themselves in harm's way and try to protect our way of life and our standard of living so we don't succumb to the problems they are having abroad with terrorism and the horrible things that are happening in the Middle East,' says Mr. Franklin on why the public at large should take a moment to consider the state of the Legion's roof. 'I think this current campaign is something that highlights and brings to focus the fact we have yesteryear's vets and we have today's vets. We need to incorporate and encompass both of those groups.'

'We don't have many of yesteryear's vets left, but we have many and a growing number of today's vets and they deserve to be remembered for what they have done. We have paid a lot of attention to those who are injured and have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders, and things we have drawn financial support to but, in general those who have gone to serve their country and have come back into the community and have worked to provide and continue to support their communities and their country have kind of been lost.'

?That is one of the things the Legion has tried to do: bring focus to the fact we need to remember those people who answered the call and haven't suffered in the way people have talked about such as Invictus and other programs we have.?

Signs are now available to purchase from the Legion's Club Room at 105 Industrial Parkway North, but if you're looking for another way to support the campaign, watch this space. The Aurora Legion has secured the go-ahead from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) to hold a Chase The Ace-style lottery, which recently raised over \$2.7 million in a similar initiative in Nova Scotia.

The Legion is not looking to replicate that success to quite a degree, however, receiving the green light to raise as much as \$50,000.

?It is a deck of 52 cards, put them in envelopes, shuffle them around, and until the ace of spades is selected, the draw continues to build. 20 per cent goes to the winner of the draw of the week,? says Mr. Franklin. ?30 per cent goes to the community, and 50 per cent goes to the licensee. We're not going to be that grandiose in our goal [as Nova Scotia], but if we do two or three different draws successively, we should probably have a new roof.?