

Date:

Mr. Dan Albas, MP
House of commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Re: Federal Support for Royal Canadian Legion Branches

Dear Mr. Albas

I am writing in support of Branch 192 in Keremeos and all Royal Canadian Legion Branches across our country.

Many Branches were hit hard by the COVID-19 outbreak, yet federal relief programs released to date cannot help most of them pay their operational bills. There is a federal loan option, however not all Branches qualify, and some cannot take the risk. If we do not help suffering Branches weather this situation, it could mean the end of their critical work to support Veterans and communities. I do not want that to happen. I hope you feel the same way.

I ask you to help ensure federal leaders fulfill their promise to provide an aid program that will include Legion Branches and help them with operational costs. Our Dominion President Thomas D. Irvine, CD, has explained the situation to the federal government more than once; in June, the Prime Minister stated that they were *"...working with the Minister of Veterans Affairs and other officials to try and ensure that we're supporting these organizations that are so important, not just for Veterans but for their communities as well."* Veterans Affairs Canada told us that an aid package is in the works - but weeks later, the Legion is still waiting to hear back.

Soon after this pandemic began, Provincial Commands and Branches accessed temporary relief through the Legion's national reserve funds, but those are running out. Some Branches started *GoFundMe* initiatives and other temporary and unsustainable measures to raise funds. Understandable restrictions on Branch re-openings means fewer dollars raised from events, hall rentals and food service. Many Branches, unfortunately, have simply had to remain closed.

Despite extreme challenges, our members continue to do amazing work, such as preparing and delivering meals to Veterans and seniors, reaching out to homeless and near homeless Veterans and their families to provide immediate financial assistance and support, helping Veterans apply for benefits and organizing remembrance-related events. If a community loses a Branch, it loses all of this.

Contributions donated yearly during the Legion's National Poppy Campaign are not a source of operational revenue and must only be used to help support Veterans, families and communities. Our Legion Branches need help now. The situation is already dire for some that are on the brink of failure. A Branch in Ontario, open since 1927, recently closed its doors indefinitely, unable to make ends meet. How many more will follow?

I ask you to please be a voice in Government to help expedite a federal aid package that will work for our Branches, one that allows them to survive this pandemic and continue to help our Veterans and communities.

Sincerely,

The Royal Canadian Legion #192 - Keremeos