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June 23, 2020

The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay
Minister of Veterans Affairs and
Associate Minister of National Defence
Veterans Affairs Canada
66 Slater St., 14th Floor
Ottawa, ON K1A 0P4

Dear Minister,

Thank you again for taking time out of your schedule today to discuss the dire financial situation many vulnerable Royal Canadian Legion branches are facing due to Covid-19.

As I mentioned to you during our call I spoke with Legion Command on June 22nd. I believe they are doing all that they can. They are accessing their emergency funds and in desperation some branches have started GoFundMe campaigns just to keep the lights on.

Because of Covid-19 and the need for social distancing many Legion branches are unable to rent their facilities, operate their restaurant and lounge facilities or hold fundraising events on their premises. All important sources of revenue. While it's true that each year millions are raised through the National Poppy Campaign these funds are set aside by the Legion for the benefit of veterans not operations.

As you know, the Royal Canadian Legion has already written the Prime Minister twice on this matter. First on April 28th and again on June 3rd. I was pleased to hear that you

are aware of their concerns, that you have spoken with the Legion directly on this issue and that you are working to find a solution.

Legions play an important role in hundreds of small communities across Canada. They serve as places for Veterans to gather, a place for the community to honour them and to remember the sacrifices of those that did not return. In small towns across Canada Legion branches serve as town halls. They are a place to celebrate weddings and support families in mourning. They are where many of our fellow Canadians exercise the democratic rights our veterans have fought so hard to secure. In a nutshell, they are central to the fabric of many rural communities in Canada and as a nation we simply can't afford to let financially vulnerable branches fail due to Covid-19.

Unfortunately, the Emergency Community Support Fund is simply insufficient to address the situation. The program was just not designed to address the predicament vulnerable Legion branches currently find themselves in.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration on this important matter. I urge you to keep working with the Legion to find a solution to keep vulnerable Legion branches operating. Please keep me abreast of any developments on this file.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil McColeman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Phil McColeman
Member of Parliament – Brantford-Brant

Cc: Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada

Mr. Thomas Irvine
Royal Canadian Legion - Dominion President

Honourable Andrew Scheer
Leader of the Opposition

Luc Desilets, MP
Rivière-des-Mille-Îles

Rachel Blaney, MP
North Island – Powell River