



Letter to the editor April 2019

From John T. Mogensen, Past President and Public Relations Chair, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 554 Rockland, Ontario

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There is a perception that the Legion is made up of old men sitting around playing cards and drinking beer.

This could not be further from the fact.

The Royal Canadian Legion boasts a membership of over 260,000 in 1400 branches across this vast country and abroad and connects us to our past, our present and our future.

Our members care deeply about supporting the men and women who serve and have served this country and strive to make a difference.

As a resident of Clarence-Rockland and in my job as a taxi driver I get to notice many things including the number of Veteran's licence plates that are in this city. Strangely I don't recognize many of the drivers. *This tells me they are not Legion members and I have to ask myself why?*

Has the Legion done something to offend these vets? They are proud enough to apply for and display a Veteran's licence plate.

Before anyone gets riled up, I am not judging but simply asking a question. Why are you not a member?

We have a web site, we have telephone numbers, we are approachable so come and talk with us.

Rockland branch 554 is the smallest branch in Zone G5 which has 10 branches located primarily in the Orleans, Ottawa area and was chartered in September 1955, which makes our branch over 60 years in operation.

Rockland branch has a membership of around 50. Of these, a small core of dedicated members, have been able to operate your Legion at the present time but they need help.

Most of the executive members chair more than one committee.

Frankly, they are burned out.

With a population of close to 20,000 that number should be 3 times that. *So why?*

Membership is no longer limited to the military. It is open to all, 18 years of age or older.

Let's look at what the Rockland Legion is doing or has done.

The most visible activity is the Legion's Annual Poppy Campaign that starts the last Friday in October and culminates on Remembrance Day November 11.

The branch distributes over 150 donation boxes to businesses and schools throughout Prescott-Russell.

We also man tables at Parent Independent Grocers and Walmart during the campaign each year.

**"Poppies are not sold and never will be. We only accept donations"**

Thanks to your generosity each year we realize approximately \$14,000.00 in donations.

These donations are used to support various local veteran and youth programs such as your local Air Cadets, bursaries for students wishing to continue their post-secondary education and youth competitions such as our literary and poster contests.

Along with the Poppies we also offer Legion pins, hats and other memorabilia which we sell and the funds are used to ensure the continued operation of the branch.

Each year we offer for sale wreaths that are laid during our Remembrance Day ceremonies at the Cenotaph.

We offer immediate assistance to veterans in need, with the assistance of our Branch Veterans Service Officer. This assistance is always kept in strict confidence.

Poppy funds are also used for donations to assist veterans at the Perley Rideau Heath Centre. Last year we purchased an electric bed for \$2750. Adding the Afghanistan inclusion to the Cenotaph at a cost well over \$2000.00. Donated \$10,000.00 to Dominion Command to a program designed to assist veterans called "Leave the Streets Behind". Several veteran assistance organisations, such as "Healing Waters" Fly Fishing Canada. We also support the local firefighters by donating to their education program for youth and the Veterans Memorial Park.

Lastly each November we gather at the Cenotaph in front of Rockland City Hall to remember all of our fallen comrades that have been killed in all the conflicts that Canada has participated in.

Every year this event is well attended by many serving and past military personnel, RCMP, OPP, Fire Fighters, Knights of Columbus, Cadets, Scouts, Guides, Cubs, Brownies and Sparks, local dignitaries and many more organisations, the Legion and of course the general public and many young people.

Last year we had the added benefit of the RCAF fly past which fit perfectly with our schedule.

It is our chance to bow our heads and remember all those that gave the ultimate sacrifice, their lives, so you can live in a free country, worship as you wish and speak the language of your choice.

The Legion would like to thank the Rockland Band, City of Clarence-Rockland, the OPP and Rockland Fire Department for all their assistance.

The executive meets on the second Tuesday of each month year round. General meetings are held every second month starting in September, November, January, March and June. The Annual General Meeting this year will be held on May 15, 2019. All meetings start at 19:30.

I urge you to visit our web site ([www.rcl554.ca/](http://www.rcl554.ca/)) or contact one of our executive if you would like to join one of the largest and most rewarding organisations in Canada.

**We Will Always Remember!**