

Legion focused on the future after sizzling milestone 50 years in the making



The Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion has their eyes fully trained on the future after marking an important milestone in a blaze of glory last month.

Legion members came together at the Industrial Parkway branch on June 23 for a celebratory mortgage-burning party, marking a significant turning point in the organization's fundraising efforts.

While the mortgage-burning was a celebration, it was the close of one chapter for the Legion at the cusp of another.

"To our members past and present - thank you!" said Branch President Bonnie Robertson. "You stuck by us through thick and thin. You were there when we needed you. To those who have volunteered over the years selflessly, whether Branch members, or members, or community members, our appreciation is and always will be in the forefront. We could not have done it without you."

"At some points the branch really struggled and we had to renew our mortgage, but we paid it off in December, so we had a party to celebrate," Robertson told *The Auroran* following the ceremony. "As part of that, we had an unveiling of our new sign. Our theme for the mortgage-burning was 'Pride in the Past, Faith in our Future' and this new sign combines the two initiatives - keeping our namesake, Colonel Fred Tilston VC on the sign as a memorial to him, as well as incorporating the new Legion logo, which is taking us into the future."

Being the Branch President at this time of transition "means a lot," says Robertson, as "we can't lose our history."

"We can't forget where we've come from and how we got here, but also going into the future, even though we don't have a mortgage anymore, we need to make sure that we save money to maintain the building," she says. "We need to make sure that we're still financially prudent to cover not only the operating costs, but the capital repairs we need to do as our building ages."

Setting themselves up to finally consign the mortgage to history was a team effort on many fronts. They received grant funding for their efforts, internal initiatives to realize cost-savings, and looked at various ways of "penny-pinching" since the lean COVID years.

Now, able to look ahead, they're hoping to also double down on efforts to ensure the Legion continues to serve the community with new members and a renewed mission.

?We're a community hub, so as part of the party we had a free dance, a live band, and invited the entire community to come,? says Robertson. ?I want to stress that the Legion is not just for veterans. Anyone can come and enjoy any of the events that we're having. Our membership is open to the public and our events are open to the public.?

For more information on the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, including upcoming events, programs, and initiatives, visit them at auroralegion.ca, on Facebook @AuroraLegionBranch385, or follow them on Instagram @aurora_legion.

By Brock Weir