

Legion ready to welcome guests to 100th birthday Open House on Saturday



Major Stephen Boyne (RET) and his hospitality team are ready to receive members and visitors to a 100th Birthday Open House featuring free BBQ, entertainment, kids' games, and door prizes on Saturday.

All is in readiness at Branch 385 for the four-hour event that starts at 1 p.m. with a flag-raising ceremony to kick off nationwide celebrations of the Legion's 100th anniversary in Canada.

After the dignitaries acknowledge the historically-significant passage, visitors and members will be treated to a free BBQ from 1:30-3:30. Live entertainment will be provided by The Diamond Dogz who take the stage at 1:30 p.m. Kids' games and door prizes will complement the proceedings of the day which will wrap up at 5 p.m.

Major Boyne's invitation to enjoy the hospitality of Branch 385 was clear as we chatted amid the buzz of Sunday afternoon activities at the venerable service club.

?We're encouraging members of the public to celebrate the Legion with the Legion and enjoy free BBQ and live entertainment on Saturday. I hope members of the community come by and see the Legion for what it is and what it isn't.

?The Legion has been accepting non-veterans for a long time. As long as you support the idea of supporting veterans?that's what we're looking for from new members.?

Legion membership across Canada is up significantly and the newly-elected President of Branch 385 explained reasons for the surge.

?Part of the reason our numbers are rising is that new members in 2026 get their membership for free as part of a 100th Anniversary initiative. So many people who have participated in Legion sports or show up for dinners and euchre in the past are taking the plunge this year. They've decided that now is a good time to become a member.?

Other reasons were offered by Major Boyne to explain the jump in membership.

?Belonging to the Legion offers camaraderie, access to our facilities including our games room with its excellent snooker tables, and we have the largest darts facility in southwestern Ontario. We have 8 boards in our dart room, we can add four more upstairs, and can put up sixteen more boards in the Banquet Hall. We host professional-level darts tournaments here in Aurora.?

The recently-installed President attributed the steady growth of the Aurora Legion to a number of factors.

Unfortunately, some of the smaller legions are no longer, but we've noted that after the Pandemic, people wanted to come out and reconnect in community settings. This is a very active Legion to connect and every night there's something going on?euchre nights, song circles, Friday night dinners and dancing, dart tournaments, snooker, World Cup Watch Parties?this Legion has more activities because the more members we have, the more kinds of entertainment and events we can run.?

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 385 boasts 636 members in good standing and Major Boyne pointed to the steady upward swing in membership over the last five years.

In 2021, we added 13 members. In 2022, 20 new members were welcomed. In 2023 and 2024, our membership started to jump upwards ? with 38 and 34 members, respectively, joining Branch 385. In 2025, the number of new members jumped again by 45. We've always encouraged people to join and this year's anniversary incentive?which offered free membership to the Legion's facilities in 2026?led to 153 becoming new members of the Branch.?

Major Boyne expressed his satisfaction at seeing the Branch's growth since 2021, at being the President during a special time in the Legion's history, and providing service to his community.

The best part of this weekend's celebrations is being able to be involved in an historical event?it's such a significant day for the Legion, for our Branch, and for our country. As an Officer, I'm very much a proponent of ?servant leadership.' I'm here?as I was in active duty?to make it easier for people to do their job. As President of the Legion, supporting veterans and serving soldiers is our mission. There's a significant parallel between those roles and it's fulfilling to serve the needs of the community of Aurora and those that have served their country.?

Flag-raising Event in Town Park

Prior to the big party at 105 Industrial Parkway on Saturday afternoon, the President of RCL Branch 385 Major Stephen Boyne will take part in a flag-raising ceremony at Town Park at 11 a.m. during the Aurora Farmer's Market to formally recognize the 100th anniversary of the Legion's beginnings in Canada.

By Jim StewartLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter