

Platinum Jubilee medal could honour pandemic heroes: MP Van Bynen

Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen is one of 96 cross-party Members of Parliament who have called on the Ministry of Canadian Heritage to reverse its decision and award a Federal medal to honour the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Medals were issued by the Federal Government in 1977, 2002 and 2012 to mark the 25th, 50th and 60th anniversaries of Elizabeth II's accession to the throne ? the Silver, Golden and Diamond Jubilees ? but a decision has been made to not follow the tradition for this year's 70th anniversary of her reign.

Issuing a medal this year, says MP Van Bynen, would be a great way to honour not just the Queen's milestone but the frontline heroes who have stepped up to the plate during the global pandemic.

?I think there are a number of Members of Parliament across the House of Commons altogether who feel that this is an important opportunity to recognize not only the significant achievements of the Queen but the significant achievements of our community,? he said. ?[The efforts] are very informal at this stage, but there are a lot of people who feel this might be a great opportunity to acknowledge the achievements of people who have been providing some outstanding support during COVID, as we seem to be turning a corner. I think everyone knows at least five people who have done some outstanding things for the community and this is a great opportunity to acknowledge those achievements.?

Such honourees, he adds, could be frontline workers ?in all dynamics? from healthcare, service groups, and ?people who made sure food was delivered.

?There are a lot of not-for-profits that went out of their way, a lot of people who volunteered to put in extra time to respond to the pandemic ? people in the food banks, people who went to work to make sure that the shelves were covered, people who put in extra time as a result of essential workers being infected. There are lots of them, but I wouldn't want to restrict it only to the emergency essential services because there's a lot of essential services that need to be recognized.?

The Federal Government has issued a Platinum Jubilee pin which will be distributed throughout the country upon request by the Monarchist League of Canada, but a medal through the Canadian Honours System would ?kick that level of recognition up a notch,? said MP Van Bynen.

But Aurora-Oak-Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy has a slightly different perspective on the matter. While she agrees these workers should be recognized, she says she's not convinced that a Platinum Jubilee Medal is the right path forward.

?I feel we should have something to recognize these people [but] I don't necessarily think it has to be a Platinum Jubilee medal,? she said. ?I wasn't terribly for or against it; I like the idea of having something we can say to people, 'Thank you for your service.' For a lot of people, the Diamond Jubilee medals are very important and meaningful, but from my perspective, we're at a different place in Canada.

?While I have no huge objection to the monarchy, neither do I see it as necessarily who Canada is today. I wouldn't sign [the petition] but I do think we should have medals and was kind of brainstorming on what other kinds of medals we can come up with that is Canadian that we could be giving to people. I am not terribly opposed, but I wasn't going to sign a petition that we need a [Jubilee] medal to give people. There's a lot of people deserving them right now.?

Since the Government of Canada decided against issuing a Platinum Jubilee medal, several provincial governments have made the decision to issue medals of their own. Such provinces include Alberta and Saskatchewan and, most recently, Nova Scotia.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter