

## Remembrance Day observances begin Saturday



Remembrance Day observances are now underway across Aurora.

Last week, Remembrance and Poppy flags were ceremonially raised at the Aurora Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, Town Hall and Town Park to mark the start of the poignant time of year where we all stop to remember and pay tribute to the men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice for King, Queen and Country.

With the flags fluttering on high, observances will continue in earnest at the Legion this Saturday, November 4, with the annual Veterans Dinner, which will take place beginning at 6.30 p.m. (tickets are still available from the Legion Bar).

As Remembrance Day, November 11, falls on a Saturday this year, the Legion will host one parade and service at the Aurora Cenotaph on the day.

"Poppies are available always from the last Friday of October to Remembrance Day and they are available for a voluntary donation," says Bonnie Robertson, who is once again serving as the Aurora Legion's Chair of the Poppy Campaign. "The biggest misnomer, I think, about the Poppy Campaign is that [it goes right to the Legion]. All of that money raised goes directly to support veterans and their families, and veteran programs such as service dogs for PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), the Blind, as well as the Veterans' Wing at Sunnybrook, which supports our veterans who are pretty much in the last stages of life. We try to make those days as memorable and meaningful for them as possible. It doesn't go towards any of our administration or overhead. That's the biggest thing I think keeps people from donating is they don't realize the money directly goes to veterans and their families."

The importance of this will be underscored in myriad ways this month beyond this Saturday's dinner.

Next Saturday will drive this point home not only through spectacle, but through a poignant service at the Aurora Cenotaph, which pays tribute to the fallen of the First World War, Second World War, and Korean War, but also all who served in the Afghanistan conflict.

"Since Remembrance Day is actually on the weekend this year, we have our parade and our full service all on one day? Saturday, November 11," says Robertson. "The parade forms up at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School on Dunning at 10 a.m. and we will step off around 10.20 to head down to the Cenotaph for our service, laying of the wreaths, and having a full service, followed by

refreshments back at the Legion, as well as some camaraderie.

?If people want to watch the parade, we suggest getting there around 10.15 a.m.?

This year, there will be fewer veterans of past conflicts than ever before up on the dais.

Veterans of more recent conflicts might be in the crowd, but those who are willing to don the mantle of ?veteran? might still be reluctant.

?It is difficult, but even our current veterans, our older generation of veterans, a lot of them still don't consider themselves veterans because they didn't see active duty,? says Robertson. ?It's a whole mindset the veterans, but we have the regiment down on Industrial Parkway (the Queen's York Rangers) we work with and try to encourage them to join the Legion. We work with our Cadet Corps, the 2799 Army Cadets, and the 140 Air Cadets, and we work with them to try and get them involved at a younger age. When they age out of the Cadet program, we give them their first year of Legion membership free and try to get some of the younger people in, realizing the importance of the Legion and our commitment to veterans. The toughest part is changing the mindset of the veterans.?

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