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Legion temporarily closes after president resigns

Ceremonies still taking place locally to commemorate Remembrance Day

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Shelburne Legion, Branch 220, will remain closed throughout the majority of November following the resignation of their current president.

Chuck Arrand, Zone Commander for E-3 of the Royal Canadian Legion, told the Free Press that he received the resignation of Shelburne Legion President Judy McCarrol on Oct. 22, before their 7 p.m. monthly general meeting. Unable to elect a viable candidate, the Zone Commander was forced to enact a temporary closure of Branch 220.

?In the bylaws and regulations of the Royal Canadian Legion, a branch cannot open it's doors without a president,? explained Arrand. ?Closing [the legion] was an absolute last resort; all other avenues were exhausted before we arrived at this decision.?

Traditionally, when a local legion is unable to or fails to elect a president to oversee the branch it is closed permanently. The permanent closure means that the building, along with all of its assets, are sold and the revenue from the sale is donated to charities within the community it resides.

Arrand said the permanent closure of a legion is typically due to the membership aging out and failure to find younger members.

In the case of the Shelburne Legion, instead of permanently closing, Arrand was able to receive permission from Ontario Command to have a temporary closure for 30 days and allow for an election of a new president at their next meeting on Nov. 26.

?If there is no successful election on Nov. 26 it will go from a temporary to permanent closure, unfortunately,? said Arrand.

Despite the temporary closure of the local branch, Arrand remains optimistic about the longevity of the Shelburne Legion.

?I believe that there is a very viable solution for Nov. 26 and that the membership will rally to come up with someone they can support, who will stick with the job,? said Arrand. ?I believe, in my heart, that they will elect a president. They will overcome this obstacle, and the Shelburne branch will be around for a very long time.?

The local legion sidestepped a similar result in September after then-President Phillip Norris stepped down from the role and was succeeded by McCarrol.

?I'd had assurances that they would stay in place until Nov. 15, but that was not the case. The situation became untenable for them and they resigned,? said Arrand.

The temporary closure of the Shelburne Legion comes as veterans, legion members and local residents prepare to commemorate Remembrance Day on Nov. 11.

?I'm a veteran myself and I'm married to a veteran, so when I stood up there and closed the branch temporarily, it was absolutely heartbreaking. It was heartbreaking to see a branch come to that point in time and not be able to change the outcome any more than I did,? said Arrand. ?There's no worse month for a legion to be closed than November.?

The Dufferin Veterans Association will be hosting an event at the Museum of Dufferin on Nov. 2 in honour of Veterans Week, and

the Town of Shelburne, in partnership with the Dufferin Veterans Association, will be taking on the task of hosting the community's Remembrance Day service on Nov. 11.

?Remembrance Day will not be lost in Shelburne,? reassured Arrand.