

Local family receives financial support from Shelburne Legion as young child undergoes major surgery

Written By **Paula Brown**

When facing a medical emergency, the last thing most families want to think about is the costs of staying closer to their loved ones.

The Shelburne Legion Branch 220 has helped alleviate those financial concerns for a family after making a \$10,000 donation to legion member, former bugler and veteran David Burgess and his family.

The donation was given to Burgess and his family to help with accommodation costs while his great-granddaughter undergoes recovery from a major surgery.

In May, Burgess' four-and-a-half-year-old great-granddaughter, Clarissa, underwent a hemispherectomy surgery to remove dead brain tissue equivalent to one-third of her brain. Prior to the surgery, Clarissa was at times having up to 20 seizures in an hour time frame.

The surgery was required to prevent her from having further seizures and extending her life.

While preparing for Clarissa's surgery, her family found out they didn't qualify for the Ronald McDonald House during Clarissa's stay at SickKids Hospital, and were faced with finding accommodations close to the hospital.

When Chris Skalozub, a past executive member of the Shelburne Legion, learned about the family's circumstances he approached the legion's executives requesting a \$500 donation for Burgess and his family to help pay for accommodation in Toronto.

The initial request for \$500 was increased to \$5,000 before finally reaching a total of \$10,000.

"Our job is to look after our veterans and other professionals in our community and if we can do something like this as a non-profit organization, especially for a four-and-a-half-year-old child that's gone in for major surgery, I think that's pretty damn good," said Skalozub.

Burgess recalled the moment he found out they'd been given \$10,000 from the Shelburne Legion to help with the financial burden.

"I almost dropped the phone. When I told the family, Clarissa's mom burst into tears and we just couldn't believe it. The money really was a godsend," Burgess said.

"It's really hard to put into words, it is a miracle to have people care that much to offer a helping hand," he added. "They're just phenomenal people at the branch and it leaves me speechless to have that much generosity."

Since the surgery, Burgess says his great-granddaughter is progressing well and was up walking and talking shortly after the surgery.

"She's got more courage in her thumbnail than I do in my entire body," said Burgess.

Burgess, Clarissa and her family plan to visit the Shelburne Legion once she has fully recovered so she can meet the people who helped her and her family.