

Long wait over for legion

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flags will be raised, speeches will be made and the new facility will be open for business.

Among the dignitaries expected to be at the ceremony are Mayor Wayne Emmer-son, MP Paul Calandra and MPP Helena Jaczek.

Also taking place during the grand opening is the unveiling of two street signs that will signify the honorary dedication of Mostar Street between Main Street and Hoover Park Drive as Veterans Parkway.

A barbecue will be held. Tea and coffee will be served.

Starting at 5 p.m., entertainment will be provided by country band S Town Ride and at 9 p.m. rockers Midlife Crisis will take to the stage.

The party continues on Sunday with Zed Head, a blues band, performing at 1 p.m. at the legion.

All events are free.

Contractors and legion vol-unteers were busy getting the place ready this week.

The new legion was a long time coming.

After nearly three years of negotiating with York Region on the expropriation of the 64-year-old building, a deal

was reached last year, which enabled the legion to purchase 1.3 acres of land in the Beacon Hill Business Park and construct a new building.

The Ninth Line land was needed in order to re-align the intersection.

Money received from the region paid for the construction of the 10,500-square-foot building, which is just 500 square feet larger than the old one, but it's all on one level.

Other features include the bright and spacious banquet hall, which is about 25 per cent larger than the current one and a slightly larger and more modern kitchen. The club room will remain the same size.

Parking bays increased from 30 to 96.

Banquet hall rentals help sustain the legion and with a new building comes new pricing. The old legion cost \$150 to rent and included use of the kitchen. Now, rental rates range from \$100 for meetings to \$300 without the use of the kitchen. That's an additional \$200.

"We have to rent the hall to stay alive," Mr. Pattenden said.



Rob Bolzicco (left) and Mike Massi of Dur Electric work on an outdoor light at the new Royal Canadian Legion Thursday.

The cornerstone from the Ninth Line building has a home at the new facility on Mostar Street.



STAFF PHOTOS/JIM MASON

WAR VETS REMEMBERED

Although it's a nice, new, modern building, the legion's local history has not been forgotten.

The 1947 cornerstone from the Ninth Line building has been removed and embedded into the front entrance of the new facility.

Branch 459 was built after veterans of the Second World War came home and felt something was missing. They realized it was that camaraderie gained while serving.

Men initially met at Dr. Stanley Ball's office and then at Old Fellows' Hall. The veterans were supported in their endeavour to remain a tight-knit group by local First World War veterans Dr. Ball, Del Jennings and Bert Lickorish.

On April 11, 1947, Royal Canadian Branch 459 received its charter.

Its president was comrade George Abell.

The men wanted a place to call their own. Win Timbers donated the land on Ninth Line, while 'Dirty' Hodgins contributed money for the mortgage.

In order to raise money to complete the building and pay off the mortgage, the veterans organized and hosted bingos, street dances, horse shows and car raffles.

The fundraising continues today. Earlier this year, the ladies auxiliary co-ordinated the creation of plaques commemorating local war veterans. The women also worked on another plaque for people who wanted to donate to the construction of the new facility.

In total, four plaques were created - one in memory of local veterans, two with the names of local veterans and one for general donations.

The project raised \$40,500, which went to the building fund. The auxiliary wanted to raise \$90,000.

Donations are still being accepted.

The Stouffville branch, which also serves Markham, has 310 members.

For more information, go to www.stouffvillelegion.ca

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