

ONTARIO REGION REPORT
AGM - August 18, 2017

My name is Mike Babin, and I am the son of Alfred Babin of the Royal Rifles and Christina Babin.

Since my last AGM report in December, 2016, we've lost one veteran: Lawrence Ross, RRC. We will remember them.

Sadly, we also lost one widow, Jesse Clayton.

I'd like to thank Ruth Murgatroyd and her terrific team for all their work in organizing this excellent event.

This organization is absolutely dependent on volunteers to function. Without their hard work and time invested, we would accomplish nothing. So, I'd like to recognize our volunteers in Ontario who give so much to the HKVCA:

- Lori Atkinson Smith, our membership Chair and den mother of our Area Reps.
- Mark Purcell, our Treasurer for several years now.
- Ted Terry and Ann Hyland, Mitzi Ross and Ian Doull from Ottawa. They have sought out opportunities to get the Battle of Hong Kong story out there, and have also put a tremendous amount of work into organizing events such as the annual ceremony in December at our Memorial Wall in Ottawa and last year's AGM.
- And finally, thanks to our Ontario Area Reps: Dorothy Felix, Jackie LeDrew, Tim Hodgkinson, Pam Newhouse, Shelagh Purcell, Mitzi Ross, and Marilyn Wilbur Morgan. They are the ones who do the essential work of keeping in contact with our veterans and widows and providing material for our quarterly national newsletter.

Now let me give you a few highlights from Ontario since our last AGM. I apologize to those whose events or work is not mentioned, as I know there are things that have taken place that I'm not aware of.

First of all ... our membership numbers. There has been essentially no change the last AGM. In Ontario, we have 3 Veterans (down one from last year), 31 widows (also down one), 138 regular members (up two) and 8 non-voting members. While the good news is that our numbers have not significantly changed over the past year, if we look back further than last year's AGM, we find that our regular membership (that is, people like you and me) has declined by about 10% since 2012. Our challenge is to find ways to keep our members, and as the Veterans pass on, to keep their families engaged in the HKVCA.

Lori Atkinson Smith has spearheaded a campaign this year to place commemorative plaques into Legion branches and other locations which have been the haunts of our

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Veterans. So far we have placed three ... one of them recently unveiled by 99 year old Hong Kong Veteran Gerry Sunstrum in Niagara Falls, and the others in London and Pt Colborne ... and have at least four more in the works, and ideas for others. This program is significant not only because of the long-term commemorative impact of having a visible reminder of the Battle in appropriate locations, but because each one so far has garnered media coverage which helps us to accomplish our mission of educating Canadians.

Lori has been also been working on a program to have grave markers made available to every family of a Hong Kong Veteran who would like to place it on his gravestone. I'll give you a brief update on this program later.

A very exciting development earlier this year was the discovery of a watch belonging to a Royal Rifle who was killed just before the surrender. The watch was found at Stone Hill in Hong Kong by an amateur historian, in a spot very close to there the soldier, Pte Ray Donald Jackson, was believed to have been killed. The historian, Dave Willott, recognized that the watch belonged to a Canadian soldier by the engraving he found on its back, and contacted the HKVCA to see if we could locate his next-of-kin so that the watch could be returned to them. Happily, we located his closest relative, a great-nephew, who lives near Toronto. The folks in Hong Kong made a beautiful presentation box for the watch before shipping it to us, and we presented it to the great-nephew in a very moving ceremony in Niagara Falls.

Gail Angel, from Ottawa, is retiring as our President and I'd like to express my appreciation to her for her diligence in executing this important role in our Association. Earlier this year her employer, IBM Canada, recognized Gail's contribution to the HKVCA over many years with an article in its internal employee newsletter. Gail has also successfully applied for Community Grants from IBM on the HKVCA's behalf and these grants have helped to fund our educational programs.

Finally, I was again honoured to represent the HKVCA at the Royal Hong Kong Regiment Association's annual Foundation Day Dinner, and this year presented a certificate of appreciation to the Association. This group of former military from Hong Kong are ardent supporters of our Association.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Babin
Regional Director, Ontario