



ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION

PATRON - HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

May 1, 2014

Mayor Bratina and Members of City Council,
71 Main Street West,
Hamilton, ON
L8P 4Y5

Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of City Council:

The 447 Wing (City of Hamilton) Royal Canadian Air Force Association (RCAFA), www.447wing.com, has made a proud contribution to the history and social fabric of Hamilton since its formation in June 1962 at what was then RCAF Station Hamilton at the airport.

As a friendly gathering place for air force veterans and members of the general public, where people can enjoy “home cooked” food, weekend entertainment and a variety of social activities, The Wing maintains a distinctive presence. We serve the community, and visitors to our community, in our present location at 3210 Homestead Drive in central Mount Hope. In fact, The Wing is now regarded as the hub of social activity in Mount Hope.

The former Wing prospered into the 1990s until membership began to decline and the Second World War-vintage building at the airport began to show its age. By 2009, Tradeport had other plans for the property where the old Wing was situated, and we had to relocate.

We picked up roots and found rental accommodation in the first floor of what had been the old Lee’s Restaurant on Homestead Drive. The relocation required The Wing, for the first time in its history, to negotiate a lease. This has proven to be an onerous financial challenge. A tremendous amount of volunteer work was done to bring the old facility into shape as the new Wing quarters. It took some time and the CF-100 jet fighter that had been displayed at the Wing was sold in 2009 to cover the rent for the first year.

Eventually, The Wing settled into its refurbished new home, complete with an extensive display of Air Force memorabilia. We opened our door to the public again in 2010 and membership began to grow. We currently have a membership of approximately 160 Regular and Associate members. The positive results were achieved only through the tireless efforts of Wing directors, members and donors.

In 2012 The Wing celebrated 50 years of operation as the RCAFA Wing to the City of Hamilton. The year was also exceptional for 447 Wing as we were named the *Wing of the Year for Ontario Group* of the RCAFA. Later that year we were extremely proud to be named *Wing of the Year for all of Canada* at the RCAFA AGM held at the Sheraton Hamilton. Several of our Wing members were also recipients of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for their contributions to Canada.

We are pleased with the extent to which the public has responded to our relocation, but unfortunately we continue to face a difficult financial situation. We are making every effort to raise funds to secure the future of The Wing, most recently through our first annual Community Appreciation Day on March 22. The event was a most encouraging success, with the help of numerous generous sponsors led by WestJet. However, the terms of the lease, hydro and other costs make it increasingly difficult to keep The Wing open.

The Wing greatly appreciates the support and goodwill shown by Mayor Bratina, Councillors Brenda Johnson, Brian McHattie and other Members of Council and the generous City of Hamilton grant for renovations. We recently applied to the Hamilton Future Fund for assistance with new furniture.

As a long-term solution, to ensure the viability of The Wing, we respectfully request that the City consider the possibility of acquiring the property. The Wing would be responsible for the costs of operating and maintaining the facility.

Such a contribution by the City would be an investment in an organization which has a special camaraderie and enriches Hamilton in many ways. First and foremost, the Wing takes pride in honouring air force veterans. In that regard, it is a main participant in the graves decoration ceremony of Commonwealth War Graves in Mount Hope. The graves are of Royal Air Force airmen who lost their lives in training during the Second World War.

Equally of value, The Wing helps young people as well. In 1969 The Wing sponsored the formation of 779 Black Knight Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets and has actively supported the squadron ever since. The Wing has also sponsored the Glanbrook Rangers minor hockey team. Our Roundel Room with a full-size snooker table, pool table, dart boards and games tables that are enjoyed by our guests. The recreation provided at The Wing helps to keep teenagers off the street.

Our weekly live entertainment has a variety to suit any taste and our events calendar is filled with entertaining evenings and afternoons with local singers, bands and social get-togethers. In addition, the Flag Room is available to rent for those special occasions, or as a free meeting room for business, club and association meetings. The Wing has raised money for the Bob Kemp Hospice, the food bank, the Boy Scouts and more.

We believe that 447 Wing has, and will, enhance the City in ways that cannot be measured by dollars alone.

Our efforts to ensure a bright future for 447 Wing, whatever the challenges, are an inspiring demonstration of the motto of the RCAF: *Per ardua ad astra* ("through adversity to the stars"). Your consideration of ways to be a partner in our goals would be greatly appreciated and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bill Grahlman CD", followed by the letters "C.D." in a more formal, blocky font.

Bill Grahlman CD,
President,
447 Wing RCAFA