

New Perley Rideau seniors' apartment named after \$1M donor



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Erin McCracken, Metroland

Doreen Morgan, left, celebrates the June 17 unveiling of the newly named Commissionaires Ottawa Place, where she lives at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre. She was joined by Grete Hale, honorary co-chair of the Perley and Rideau foundation's capital campaign, and Paul Guindon, chief executive officer of Commissionaires Ottawa.

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By Erin McCracken
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When maintaining the house in Elmvale Acres they had lived in for years became too much, Doreen Morgan and her husband moved into a newly constructed apartment at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre.

It was Sept. 25, 2013, an important milestone in their lives.

"That was the first day we could move in," Morgan said, referencing last year's opening of two new 139-unit apartment complexes for seniors, including veterans, at the centre, located at 1750 Russell Rd. "We were anxious to get in."

But, just one month later, her husband, 92, was admitted to hospital with serious heart problems.

All he wanted to do was return to the Perley and Rideau, which he considered to be his home.

When he was finally allowed to leave the hospital, he found solace.

"He was happy he was home," said Morgan. 84. That night, in the early morning hours, he passed away.

Despite her very tragic loss, Morgan said she finds comfort living at the Perley and

Rideau which she considers to be her home, where other residents rallied around her and where she can keep busy doing the many activities offered at the seniors village. As of June 17, her home now has a new name. Building A, as it has been called since construction began on the apartment complexes in 2011, is now known as Commissionaires Ottawa Place.

It's named in honour of Commissionaires Ottawa, which donated \$1 million to the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation's \$5-million Building Choices, Enriching Lives capital campaign, which will help pay for the complex.

"I am humbled," said Paul Guindon, a retired navy captain who joined Commissionaires Ottawa as its chief executive officer 10 years ago. "As a Canadian Armed Forces veteran, like many of you, I join you in supporting the Perley and Rideau as a very important anchor in our community." He said it was only natural for Commissionaires Ottawa to support the creation of independent and assisted-living apartment units for seniors, including war veterans.

"Commissionaires Ottawa is a private, not-for-profit, self-funded company and our social mandate includes a primary focus on hiring veterans and caring for them," he said, adding that the organization first began at the national level in 1925, and it is celebrating its 75th anniversary in Ottawa this year.

In addition to providing security services, threat-risk assessments, mobile-alarm response and criminal background checks, "we also ... give back to veterans and military families. That's who we are."

The organization is expanding, which means good news for veterans, he said.

"When we grow, we can create more jobs for our veterans and can afford to give back to community causes like the Perley and Rideau seniors village," Guindon said.

The announcement was also celebrated by long-time community volunteer and highly regarded philanthropist Grete Hall, who is an honorary co-chair of the capital campaign.

"It's a historic day. I like history and historic occasions," said Hale, 85, who noted that June is Seniors' Month.

One of the principle reasons Hale agreed to co-chair the campaign is the Perley and Rideau's long history of serving veterans and seniors, including her late husband, she said before 300 residents of the new buildings and donors who contributed to the campaign.

The unveiling event coincided with the launch of the public phase of the fundraising initiative, as well as the success of the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation's work in generating half of the campaign's goal.

That money will help offset the \$3.8-million cost of the seniors village, which includes an in-house pharmacy, hairstylist, dental hygienist clinic, physiotherapy and a hearing clinic, in addition to the apartment units. Of that total cost, \$38 million in loans must be repaid.

Construction on the two buildings began in 2011, and Building B was completed in March 2013, while work on Building A wrapped up in September 2013. About 90 per cent of the units are already full.

There is a critical need for long-term housing for seniors, Hale said, adding that "If the statisticians are correct, there will soon be a lot more of us."

More than 90,000 seniors live in the National Capital Region, and that number is expected to triple within the next 20 years, according to statistics provided by the Perley and Rideau foundation.

"Clearly there's a tremendous need for seniors to have access to a secure, supportive environment where they can be useful, active and respected," Hale said.

Building B at the seniors village will be named once a donor comes forward.

To donate to the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation or to learn more, visit buildingchoices.ca or perleyrideau.ca.

By the numbers : \$43.8 million: construction cost of two apartment buildings Funding provided by \$32.3-million mortgage secured from Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation \$5.4 million through a non-refundable grant from all three government levels \$5 million through the capital campaign (ongoing) \$1.1 million from Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre