



## *Kelowna Veendam Sister City Association Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada.*

### *A Message from the Board of Directors and the City of Kelowna:*

Burgomaster Ab Miejerman, Mayor of The City of Veendam, The Netherlands, has extended an official invitation to Mayor and Council of the City Of Kelowna, representatives of Local Authorities, Veterans, members of the Kelowna Veendam Sister City Association, and interested Citizens of Kelowna to join with them to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Holland on May 4<sup>th</sup>, and May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The City of Kelowna and its sister city association have graciously accepted the invitation on behalf of the above. Plans are now underway for a pilgrimage from Kelowna to attend.

At a November meeting of the Kelowna Veendam Sister City Association, which included representatives of the City of Kelowna and School District 23, the Board of Directors unanimously passed a motion to organize a tour departing 01 May 2010.

The tour itinerary has been completed. To add extra spice to the tour, it was decided to extend the tour beyond the quality time in Veendam to include, Flanders, Vimy, Normandy Beaches and Paris. Arrangements have been made with the airlines, a motorcoach company, and hotel accommodations. These are tentatively blocked. Now we need numbers to finalize the above. We require a minimum of 30 persons, but can accommodate up to 40.

Kelowna in particular has had an ongoing bond with the citizens of Veendam, The Netherlands. "The British Columbia Dragoons" (Okanagan's own regiment) fought its final WWII battle in the Delfzijl Pocket May 1945. The BCDs were then seconded to the City of Veendam where it was instrumental in re-establishing Veendam's municipal government and public affairs before returning home in January 1946. During the troops' nine month stay in Veendam, many friendships were bonded with the citizens, which carried on after their return and still to this day. In 1980, steps were taken to establish a sister city relationship between the two cities. These two municipal bodies and their respective sister city associations have been actively engaged in mutual exchanges such as:- attending Holland's major Liberation Celebrations, Citizen Visitations, Veteran Visit Program, Student Exchange Program, and staff from both cities have been involved in peer to peer relations.

Every five years since WWII, Holland has hosted thousands of Canadian Veterans who responded by the hundreds to Holland's invitation to attend, celebrate their Liberation Days with them, and give thanks to Canadians for their sacrifices. Canadian Veteran numbers are rapidly dwindling. The Dutch Citizens continue to show their respect. This 65<sup>th</sup> Liberation Celebration in May 2010 may be one of the last big ones. We encourage everyone who wishes to respond to this invitation to join this pilgrimage, come along on the tour with us to say "**Thank You Holland**" for your gracious hospitality.