

# Regiment's English-only plaque creates stir

## B.C. officials reject trilingual memorial honouring Ukrainian-Canadian soldier

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TORONTO — The decision of a British Columbia regimental senate to reject the offer of a free trilingual plaque honouring a Ukrainian-Canadian winner of the Victoria Cross in the First World War is sparking some behind-the-scenes ill will.

Yesterday in Toronto, the Royal Canadian Legion's branch 360 unveiled a trilingual plaque honouring Victoria Cross winner Filip Konowal.

But a few officials are fuming over the rejection of an offer to install an identical plaque to honour the late Mr. Konowal at his regiment's headquarters in New Westminster B.C.

Lubomyr Lucuik, a professor of geography at the Royal Military College in Kingston and an official of the Ukrainian-Canadian Civil Liberties Association, said the plaque is being rejected because it contains French and Ukrainian.

"It's racism," he said.

Colonel William McKinney, the honorary colonel of the Royal Westminster Regiment and chairman of the regimental senate that rejected the offer, said the regiment has another V.C. winner from the Second World War and two equal-sized plaques will be installed in the armoury in one ceremony next May.

The plaques will be in English only — not bilingual or trilingual — because all the public plaques in the city of New Westminster are in English, Col. McKinney said in a telephone interview.



Jerry Gangur, former president of the Royal Westminster Regiment, praised the late Victoria Cross winner Filip Konowal at a Toronto ceremony yesterday. (RUDY PLATIEL/The Globe and Mail)

"We're not anti-Ukrainian, we're not anti-French, we're a proud Canadian regiment and have been since 1863," he said. "We're not a bigoted regiment. We are anything but. We are a very proud and honourable regiment..."

"It's just that we are 99.9-per-cent English in this city."

Recognition of Mr. Konowal's

bravery and willingness to fight for Canada is important to the Ukrainian-Canadian community.

Mr. Konowal was one of several thousand men of Ukrainian origin who fought for Canada when 5,000 other Ukrainian-Canadians were arbitrarily imprisoned without charges in detention camps in Canada because they were consid-

ered possible enemy aliens.

But the whole issue of the New Westminster armoury has left some angry — including the president of the Royal Westminster Regiment Association who had proposed it.

Jerry Gangur of New Westminster, now past president of the association, said he got the idea of having a plaque installed in the drill hall of the armoury when he learned that plaques and other ceremonies were being held in Toronto and Ottawa to honour Mr. Konowal.

"If people were putting up a plaque in his honour, I wanted to be involved and I felt I had a duty as the president of our association to do that," Mr. Gangur said in an interview yesterday.

When approached, the Toronto legion and the Ukrainian-Canadian Civil Liberties Association offered to cover the cost entirely, according to Mr. Gangur.

But while the members of the regimental association endorsed the idea, it was rejected by the regimental senate composed of former commanding officers, Mr. Gangur said.

While he refused to talk about what was said specifically in rejecting the Ukrainian-Canadian offer of a plaque, "a lot of the things said really hurt," Mr. Gangur said.

"The armoury is a public building and we thought we could erect a plaque on a public building but obviously we're learning a few things."