

Council remains supportive of LAV placement at Cenotaph

By Brock Weir

Passionate delegations to Council last week threw cold water on the idea of finding an alternate location for a Light Armoured Vehicle (LAV) planned for the Aurora Cenotaph.

While Council members reiterated their support for the initiative, degrees of support varied.

For Councillor Sandra Humfries, opposition from members of the public might be attributed to a 'misunderstanding' of the purpose behind the LAV's placement as a way to honour the contributions of Canada's Afghanistan veterans.

'I spent a lot of time thinking about it over the last few weeks understanding that this is coming from our current and past soldiers and this initiative is coming here to help honour that,' she said. 'We accepted the opportunity to have this, and very honourably so, [but] there should have been a little bit more communication around how we were selected, how the criteria fit, and the meaning behind it.'

The potential for a reconsideration was brought about through a motion from Councillor John Abel. Following a delegation from Col. Kirk Corkery of the Queen's York Rangers, Councillor Abel said he was 'overwhelmed' by the address.

'I am very satisfied,' he said. 'This just allows a second thought to be forward so people can understand how that decision was made in a little bit more detail and the significance of it, which is to honour. I am still in favour of the placement of it [and] I hope this satisfies those who were wondering why other options were not presented and why this is the most appropriate place.'

Mayor Geoff Dawe and Councillor Tom Mrakas also voiced their continued support.

'I was in favour of this proposal when it came to Council about a month ago and I have been in favour ever since,' said Mayor Dawe. 'We did get comments from people who are not in favour and we respect their right to do that, but my father served in the military and I suspect a lot of people here have a similar experience. Perhaps some of the people who served in the military aren't keen about where it is going either, so everyone has their opinions.'

Councillor Wendy Gaertner added she had been at the receiving end of some of these opinions. Although she said she had initially changed her mind over the proposal, she was ultimately convinced of her initial support following the delegations. She did, however, question the assertion made by the delegates that no members of the military, or their families, had spoken against it.

'There are people here in the audience who have discussed having the LAV at the Cenotaph and who are opposed to it, but I would just like to say for the record that the people I have heard from are people who did serve in the military and are opposed to it,' she said.

Responding to comments from Legion president Dave Franklin that everyone has different ideas of peace, and the instruments that make it happen, Councillor Harold Kim highlighted the dual purpose of the land in question as both a war memorial and a 'peace park'.

'When my parents first came here in the early 70s, they had a lot of factory jobs that were really painful,' he said. 'My dad worked at a cotton factory but was too short to pick the cotton, so he was let go, and in this too I don't think I would want to have a symbol of his struggles. I just want to remember him as a person serving his family. Is it the same example, or is it totally different? It might be totally different and I am still kind of weighing it because in the end I honour you guys. It is a difficult decision for me, but as a member of being a member of an elected body I would imagine there is at least one out of eight who might disagree.'