

Government will match donations made in memory of Tehran victims

The Federal Government will match donations made in memory of victims of this month's devastating plane crash in Iran, which killed 176 people ? including more than 55 Canadians, two of whom had deep roots in Aurora.

On Wednesday, the Federal Government announced it will match donations made to the Canada Strong Fund up to \$1.5 million.

The Canada Strong Fund was launched following the tragedy by Mohamad Fakih of the Fakih Foundation to collect funds for the victims of Flight 752.

?Moved by this tragedy and wanting to pay tribute to the lives lost, many Canadians have been learning the names of the victims and reading their personal stories,? said the Foundation in a statement after the donation fund was established. ?The families of the 57 victims from across Canada will face a number of expenses. We are encouraging Canadians to support the families of the victims by making a donation. With oversight from Dentons Canada LLP, all donations will flow through Toronto Foundation to qualified [recipients] to benefit those affected.

?This is a time for all Canadians, regardless of race or religion, to come together and show the world what it means to be Canadian.?

The Government's commitment to match funds is in addition to the \$25,000 previously announced that will go to each family to cover funeral and travel expenses. It also comes on the heels of the Ontario Government stepping up with financial contributions of its own.

As The Auroran reported last week, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa joined Premier Doug Ford to announce the establishment of a scholarship fund in tribute to the victims.

The fund will disburse the proposed scholarships of \$10,000 to 57 students across the Province, one in memory of each victim.

?This was a terrible tragedy, and my heart goes out to the victims' families and loved ones,? said Premier Ford. ?Many of the victims were students and professors with bright futures, studying and teaching at Ontario universities and colleges, and contributing to the advancement of research in many lifechanging fields. We will honour their memories through these scholarships to recognize their incredible contributions to our communities.?

The Ontario postsecondary institutions who lost students or faculty in the fatal plane crash included Carleton University, Centennial College, Fleming College, George Brown College, Lambton College, McMaster

University, Queen's University, Ontario Tech University (formerly UOIT), the University of Guelph, the University of Ottawa, the University of Toronto, the University of Waterloo, the University of Western Ontario, the University of Windsor, and York University.

Criteria for the proposed scholarships will be open-ended, awarded based on academic merit and financial need, and determined in consultation with Ontario's colleges and universities, as well as with the families of the victims. Scholarships will be allocated in honour of each of the 34 victims to the institutions to which they belonged, with the remainder allocated to other eligible institutions based on a competitive process.

?The Ministry of Colleges and Universities is leading the development of the scholarship fund and will engage various partners, including the federal government, cultural community groups, and other institutions,? noted the Province. ?The ministry will share more information in the coming weeks.?

For more information on the Canada Strong fund, visit torontofoundation.ca/canadastrongcampaign.

By Brock Weir