

Reconsideration of Cenotaph tank "well justified"

(Re: Brock's Banter, November 5)

Councillor John Abel's recommendation to bring the matter of installing a replica of an infantry fighting vehicle on the Peace Park property back to Council to reconsider a more suitable location is well justified.

The Peace Park is a place of reverence. To "transform" the park by any means dismisses what this property is intended for.

Cenotaphs are defined as significant monuments built to honour those who went to war in the service of their countries, those who didn't return home and were buried elsewhere. Veterans of all war-time conflicts are remembered.

Online media articles indicate the cost of replication of 250 units, created from decommissioned LAV III (light armoured vehicle) hulls, will be funded by communities that receive approval from the selection committee. Information about the program was unveiled last year by the Conservative government as a means to recognize the service of veterans of the war in Afghanistan.

Some would argue the most appropriate manner to acknowledge the dedication and service of veterans is for government to ensure that proper long term medical care and guaranteed financial assistance is provided.

There is no war machinery, replicas or decommissioned, placed as monuments outside the Peace Tower or at the National War Memorial in Ottawa; there are none at the Canadian National Vimy War Memorial in France, or at the Menin Gate in Belgium where solemn services of remembrance are held nightly at 8 p.m., or at the Canadian War Memorial in Passchendaele, at Calais or at Somme.

Placing a visual reminder of war machinery at a place of peaceful remembrance has the appearance of lack of sensitive thought to the death and destruction caused by war machines, to those who have felt the indescribable heartache caused by the loss of a loved one killed as a result of an armoured vehicle roll over, and the horrific deaths and tearing apart of limbs when an armoured vehicle is blown apart by an improvised explosive device.

Respectfully, there are a number of possibilities for communities to consider for the placement of war vehicle replicas that highlight a specific war, other than Cenotaphs and Peace Parks: War museums, armouries, military bases, community settings and parks, outside of legions and town halls.

Cenotaphs have served to honour veterans of wars for over 100 years. No war is forgotten.

Each year a Veteran's Memorial Service is held at the Aurora Cemetery in September to remember those who returned home, many with life-changing injuries and emotional scars that have since passed on. Over 400 graves are marked by candlelight the night before the service. The service held on Sunday, September 20th was attended by dedicated veterans, cadets, representatives of the legion, individuals from various organizations, military personnel and others, along with a few thoughtful people from the general public, some with small children.

Noticeably absent were members of Council who apparently had other things to do that afternoon, with the exception of one, yet it's interesting to note they seem to believe the public needs to be reminded of a specific war by approving "in principle", placement of a replica war vehicle at the Cenotaph and Peace Park.

Respect and remembrance for veterans of all wars comes from the heart. It doesn't require weapons of war in revered places. It's the kind of heartfelt respect a teenager showed walking along Yonge Street when he noticed the Veteran's Memorial Service at the cemetery. He removed his baseball cap and held onto it.

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