

War Memorial fund shines light on legal, 'moral' responsibility for maintenance

By Brock Weir

Renovations might be complete, money might be spent, and many Aurorans take pride in the result, but the \$3,500 left over from efforts to restore Aurora's Cenotaph will remain in place despite a recommendation to close the account.

Dan Elliott, Treasurer for the Town of Aurora, made the recommendation to roll the remaining funds into the overall Parks and Recreation Reserves last week, but Councillors voted against the move, citing Aurora's shared interest in the monument with the people of King Township and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

The landmark tower standing on Yonge Street between Edward Street and Allaura Boulevard was dedicated in 1925 by Sir William Mulock to commemorate the men from all three municipalities who died in the First World War.

A subsequent memorial, the Altar of Sacrifice, was dedicated over 30 years later as a memorial to those who gave their lives for King and Country in the Second World War.

The remaining \$3,500 in the War Memorial Reserve stems from renovations carried out at the monument over the last decade.

'The account has a remaining balance [and] no ongoing source of funding,' said Mr. Elliott, recommending it be turned over to the Parks Operations department tasked with maintaining the site.

That wasn't always their task. Until relatively recently in the monument's history, that work was carried out by members of a special board tasked with looking after the site. When that board became aged, the task was then left to others. The question then remained on where the buck ultimately lay on maintaining the site.

'My research suggests that although it is considered to be a multi-municipal site, the last time we were going to undergo a major restoration, we attempted to seek funding from the other two municipalities,' said Mr. Elliott, responding to questions on any existing agreements between the three from Councillor John Gallo. 'Only one of them came forward with funding. There is no subsisting agreement with respect to these facilities, so it is sort of an ad-hoc facility. Since Parks looks after this, it is in our municipality, and at this point there is no view to any major future restoration in the short or medium term, [it is recommended the fund be closed].'

As far as short and medium term horizons go, this means it is not likely to be up for refurbishment for at least another 10 years.

'Perhaps if there was a special project for a restoration if it were to get struck by lightning or something of that nature, perhaps we would reach out again to the other municipalities and see some participation at that time.'

Although there is a relative paltry figure left in the account, Councillor Evelyn Buck argued in favour of keeping it open and linked to the monument.

'I am not sure [closing it] is the right thing to do because of the shared responsibility with King and Whitchurch-Stouffville,' she said. 'The War Memorial is for the men who fell in our area at that time. Their names are on the Cenotaph and if there is not a legal agreement, there is certainly a moral responsibility for them to share.'

'Since that circumstance [the War Memorial Board was disbanded]. It remains the same. It is still the memorial for the men who fell in the three municipalities. I would like to keep that as a separate fund to maintain the joint responsibility of the three municipalities for maintaining the memorial.'