

Council votes to apply for LAV III monument

A special meeting of council was held Friday evening to discuss a recommendation made by Mayor Jeremy Williams to submit an application to the Canada Corporation LAV (Light Armoured Vehicle) Program to request a donation of an LAV for the Town of Orangeville.

The request would be for an LAV III Monument, which is constructed from pieces of old LAV IIIs which have been declared surplus through the Government's LAV III upgrade program. They are non-functional, and have been welded together by volunteers and students to create a replica of the LAV III.

"The equipment is very symbolic," said Mayor Williams. "It's a tangible, solid piece of evidence to the commitment of our soldiers to our country. We have equipment from the second World War near the Cenotaph, but there is nothing else that we really have from any other wars."

Prior to World War II, there were two German canons at the County buildings, however those were removed and melted down for machinery and weapons during the second World War.

The LAV program is government run, and communities are chosen to qualify by the Monument Selection Committee, comprised primarily of Afghanistan veterans, and chaired by Major General David Fraser (retired), a former Canadian Commander who served in Afghanistan South in 2006.

If Orangeville's request is approved, not only will the installation require ownership of an approved property and a prebuilt concrete pad (which must meet Canada Company specifications), the Town would also be responsible for the transportation of the monument from London, Ontario, and the actual installation itself.

"They are providing communities with the monuments for free," said Mayor Williams. "However, as with most free things, there are some catches."

According to supporting FAQ documents provided with the announcement of the special council meeting, Canada Company estimates that the cost to the Community will range anywhere from \$5000 to \$20,000, depending on the community's location.

Mayor Williams has already reached out in discussion to the Erin Legion, who are also applying for a monument, about shipping the two LAVs together to help save on shipping costs.

Councillor Kidd raised concerns about whether shipping two at once would actually be possible, due to the weight of the vehicles. Mayor Williams explained that while they hadn't done the full research, Canada Corporation had mentioned that two could fit in one shipment. Since the interior of the vehicles is removed, leaving just the outer shell, the weight decreases significantly.

Council members also discussed the possibility of where the monument would be placed ? at either Bravery Park or in Alexandra Park near the Cenotaph.

"Bravery Park is in support of having it, however they have produced drawings of the park development, and this wasn't part of that design," said Mayor Williams. "I've spoken to Town maintenance staff who provided advice that the best location would be at the Cenotaph. There are security cameras there, it will be easier to maintain and easier to make sure the monument isn't being abused."

He added that another reason he felt putting it in Bravery Park shouldn't be the primary choice is that the park isn't meant to be strictly about Afghanistan.

"What happened in Afghanistan may have been the catalyst that brought about Bravery Park, but it's not actually about Afghanistan," he said. "It's not a cenotaph recognizing a specific war, it's a memorial about the conflicts Canadians have participated

it and teaching about the aspects of those wars. It's a little bigger than just about Afghanistan or one particular soldier.?

The range of the costs surrounding the project have such a large gap, because the actual cost to a community will depend on the type of financial resources that community has available for it. While the Town could use finances in the reserves for the project, Mayor Williams is hoping that the funding can come from elsewhere.

As with many other projects, Council will be looking to different businesses in the community to help support this memorial, and at the recommendation of Councillor Nick Garisto, the Mayor will be contacting both Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson and the Orangeville Legion to find out if there are federal or provincial grants available for such a project.

?I believe this project is absolutely appropriate,? said Councillor Campbell. ?The Afghan war is pertinent to all Canadians. I think it's appropriate that we pursue this application.?

Council voted to pass the recommendation for the Mayor to file the application, which needs to be submitted as soon as possible. While the application will move forward, further discussion on what happens next will be deferred until council receives word as to whether or not the application is approved.

?This is very important, because these vehicles aren't just about representing the conflict and our role in Afghanistan, it's a Canadian success story as well,? said Mayor Williams. ?These LAV are manufactured in London, Ontario and exported all over the place. There's so much that is important about this monument.?

Mayor Williams has confirmed that upon submission of the application, he will begin immediately at looking into funding for the project.