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**Subject:** Memorial Park Commemorative Spaces

**Staff Report No.** CS-005-24

**Commission:** Community Services Commission

**Date:** June 5, 2024

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**Recommendation:**

- 1) That Council direct Staff to leave the Canada 150 garden at its current location at Booth Drive and Park Drive South; and,
- 2) That Council direct Staff to contact the Department of National Defence to decline the receipt of the demilitarized Leopard Tank from the Department of National Defence; and,
- 3) That Council direct Staff to return the Cenotaph to Memorial Park in the area north of Burkholder Street and Park Drive (North Pavilion Site).

**1. Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to confirm Council direction on appropriate locations for the Canada 150 Garden, the Cenotaph, and whether to proceed with the acceptance of a donated demilitarized Leopard Tank from the Department of National Defence. Should Council direct staff to proceed with the donation, then Council should also advise on an appropriate location for the demilitarized tank.

**2. Executive Summary:**

Council cited concern over resident input following the December 6, 2023, Council report seeking approval to relocate the cenotaph to Memorial Park, as well as receive the donation of a demilitarized Leopard tank from the Department of National Defense. As a result, Council passed a resolution on January 17, 2024, directing staff to undertake public consultation to obtain feedback with respect to the future design of commemorative spaces in Memorial Park.

### 3. Background:

On September 13, 2023, a delegation was received by Council from the Immediate Past President of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #459, also known as the Stouffville Legion. The presentation requested the Town's assistance to relocate the cenotaph and accept the donation of a decommissioned Leopard tank from the Department of National Defence.

Over the years, the Town's memorials and cenotaphs have been relocated from Memorial Park to Civic Square, to the former Legion location on Ninth Line and then to its present location on Mostar Street at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #459.

The origin of Memorial Park came about in 1921, when Sir William Mulock and Sir Henry Pellatt came to Stouffville to support the Dedication Ceremony for the unveiling of the original Cairn to honour the memory of the enlisted of Whitchurch who had lost their lives in WWI. The park has been a central point of activity for the residents of Stouffville for over a century and has evolved over the years. It has grown from an open field to a community gathering space with a variety of amenities including the Leisure Centre, sports courts, bandshell, skate park, lawn bowling club, picnic area and playgrounds.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Legion was met with significant challenges and almost closed, nearly leaving the Town's cenotaph without a home. After an open discussion and through a Membership vote, it was decided that Branch #459 would approach the Town and request that the cenotaph be returned to its original home in Memorial Park.

On December 6, 2023, following the Legion's request, a report was submitted to Council seeking approval to relocate the cenotaph to Memorial Park, as well as receive the donation of a demilitarized Leopard tank from the Department of National Defense to form a new, larger memorial area to commemorate veterans and members of the armed forces who lost their lives in the line of duty. Two (2) locations in Memorial Park were identified as potential locations for the new memorial: Option A, located at the southeast corner of Booth Drive and Park Drive, and Option B, located north of Burkholder Street and Park Drive (North Pavillion Location). In the report, staff recommended that Council authorize staff to proceed with the location identified in Option A due to its prominent location and flexibility for expanding events and large crowds into the street intersection and adjacent park spaces. It was noted that this location would require relocation and adjustment to the existing Canada 150 Garden, which is presently maintained by the Stouffville Horticultural Society. The report was approved by Council on consent.

Following community feedback citing concern over resident input, Council passed a resolution on January 17, 2024, directing staff to undertake public consultation to obtain feedback with respect to the future design of the memorial. A survey was released on February 29, 2024, seeking input from the public on the future of commemorative spaces in Memorial Park. Specifically, the survey requested feedback on the Canada 150 Garden, the relocation of the Cenotaph, and the donation of the demilitarized Leopard

Tank. The survey remained open for feedback until April 4, 2024. In total, 1093 survey responses were received and 380 respondents indicated that they would like to be notified on the status of the Cenotaph, donated tank and the Canada 150 Garden, including Council meetings and other public engagement opportunities.

At the May 15, 2024 Council meeting, a Member's motion was passed indicating that Council reconsider the Council Decision from the December 6, 2023 Council meeting as it pertained to Report No. LCS-015-23 - Cenotaph Relocation and Tank Donation. As a result of Council's original decision being reconsidered and rescinded, staff have brought this report forward for consideration.

#### **4. Analysis and Options:**

The Memorial Park Commemorative Spaces Survey sought feedback from the public on preferred locations for the Canada 150 Garden, the Cenotaph, and the demilitarized Leopard Tank, should the donation be accepted. Based on the responses received from the survey, staff have identified proposed locations for each of the three elements below. It should be noted that the survey is not scientific, it was issued to gauge public input. There are several methodological challenges associated with online surveys.

Acting in fairness, we did not restrict online surveys to one per person (or visitor) as it is recognized that if the restriction of one per person was in effect, and that this restriction was governed by IP address, then individuals in the same household may not be able to cast their opinion because their IP address had already been used.

The survey should be regarded as a tool for gauging the opinions of the respondents and not as a tool to statistically measure the overall opinions of the residents and business owners of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

##### **4.1 Location of the Canada 150 Garden**

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their preference on the proposed location for the Canada 150 Garden, which is maintained through volunteer efforts coordinated through the Stouffville Horticultural Society since its inception in 2017. Out of the 1093 surveys that were received, 1056 respondents participated in this question, with 77.75% (821) of the respondents indicated that the Canada 150 Garden should remain in its current location at Booth Drive and Park Drive south, and new locations should be found for the memorial as originally presented in the December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Council report.

##### **Recommendation**

The Canada 150 Garden should remain in its current location at Booth Drive and Park Drive South.

##### **4.2 Donation of the Demilitarized Leopard Tank**

The Department of National Defence has offered a donation of a demilitarized Leopard Tank that can be incorporated into a larger memorial to honour Stouffville's veterans and fallen soldiers. As part of the Memorial Park Commemorative Spaces Survey, respondents were asked to share their feedback on whether the Town should receive the donation of the tank from the Department of National Defence. 1021 respondents participated in this question, with 69% (704) indicating that the Town should not receive the donation.

#### **Option A (Recommended)**

The Town should not proceed with the donation of the demilitarized Leopard Tank from the Department of National Defence and therefore consideration for the options outlined in section 4.3 of this report is not required.

#### **Option B**

The Town should proceed with the donation of the demilitarized Leopard Tank from the Department of National Defence.

### **4.3 Proposed Location of the Demilitarized Leopard Tank**

Should Council direct staff to proceed with the donation of the demilitarized Leopard tank from the Department of National Defence, then an appropriate location will need to be selected, as well as determination whether the tank be incorporated as part of a larger memorial with the Cenotaph or stand alone.

Question 6 in the survey asked respondents to share their feedback on where an appropriate location for the tank would be if the Town were to accept the donation. Question 7 asked respondents to indicate whether they preferred to incorporate the tank as part of a larger memorial with the Cenotaph. It is important to note that the option to provide a response to questions 6 and 7 in the survey was only made available to those who indicated support for receiving the donation of the tank. In total, there were 309 respondents who provided feedback on a proposed location of the tank and whether it should be included as part of a larger memorial with the Cenotaph.

The top 3 locations were as follows:

- 30.74% (95) of respondents preferred the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum
- 30.10% (93) of respondents preferred the Southeast corner of Booth Drive and Park Drive South
- 18.77% (58) of respondents preferred the location South of current lawn bowling greens, near the parking lot of "19 on the Park" (Civic Ave.)

Furthermore, 75.40% (233) of respondents indicated that the Cenotaph and the tank should be displayed together at the same location.

#### **Option A (Recommended)**

The demilitarized tank should be located at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum as a stand alone exhibit and not included as part of a larger memorial with the Cenotaph.

### **Option B**

The demilitarized tank should be located at Memorial Park as part of a larger memorial incorporating the Cenotaph located north of Burkholder Street and Park Drive (North Pavillion Location) as identified by the staff report brought forward to Council on December 6, 2023.

## **4.4 Location of the Cenotaph**

Survey respondents were asked to share their feedback on the proposed location of the Cenotaph as it related to Council's support of the Legion's request to return the Cenotaph to its origins in Memorial Park. 44.92% (460) of survey respondents indicated that the Cenotaph should remain at the Legion, whereas 33.89% (347) of respondents indicated that the Cenotaph should be relocated to Memorial Park. 21.19% (217) of respondents had no preference on the location of the Cenotaph. Although the highest scoring individual preference indicated that the Cenotaph should remain at the Legion, this option does not come without risk. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Legion was met with significant challenges and almost closed, nearly leaving the Town's cenotaph without a home. The Legion's request on September 13, 2023 was to return the Cenotaph to its original home in Memorial Park and return carriage and oversight to the Town.

### **Option A (Recommended)**

Relocate the Cenotaph to Memorial Park in the area north of Burkholder Street and Park Drive (North Pavilion Site)

### **Option B**

The Cenotaph should remain in its current location at Royal Canadian Legion Branch #459, also known as the Stouffville Legion.

## **5. Financial Implications:**

There are no budget implications as it relates to the Canada 150 garden, as it is recommended that the garden remain in its current location. Budget implications of the Cenotaph relocation as well as the Tank location will be dependent on direction provided as well as final design. Preliminary costing estimates of original proposed memorials ranged between \$250,000 to \$400,000. New design and associated exercises will need to be undertaken following direction received to determine costing and timelines for consideration in future budget submissions.

## **6. Alignment with Strategic Plan:**

1. An Engaging Town  
Increase Community Engagement & Outreach

## **7. Attachments:**

1. Attachment 1 – Memorial Park Commemorative Spaces Survey Results
2. Attachment 2 – Site Plan and Conceptual Renderings of North Pavilion Site

## **8. Related Reports:**

December 6, 2023 – LCS-015-23 Cenotaph Relocation and Tank Donation

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