

April 3, 2025

To: Members of Town Council Subject: Cenotaph Renewal – A Path Forward

# **Cenotaph Renewal – A Path Forward**

## **Council's Decision and Our Continued Support**

Dear Council Members,

The future of the cenotaph project is now in your hands. If you decide not to proceed, we want to emphasize that our extensive research and contacts remain available to you at a future date. Should circumstances change, we are willing to collaborate again when the time is right.

## **A Call for Reconsideration**

We respectfully ask Council to reconsider the recommendations put forth by the ad hoc committee regarding the renewal of our town's cenotaph. At a time of renewed Canadian patriotism, we have a unique opportunity to honour our veterans with a tribute that reflects our national pride and evolving identity. While maintenance and restoration are valuable, we believe our soldiers and their families deserve more than the preservation of the status quo.

## **Commitment to a Meaningful Tribute**

The Southamptton Community Cenotaph Committee remains dedicated to ensuring a respectful and meaningful renewal of our town's cenotaph. While we acknowledge the challenges encountered during this process, we firmly believe there is still an opportunity to achieve a positive outcome that honours those who served and reflects the values of our community.

We have compiled research and expert insights on cenotaph and memorial design, backed by strong community support. Our resources and contacts are available to Council, and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate further.

## **The Opportunity for a Lasting Legacy**

By choosing to retain and simply refurbish the existing monument with its current religious symbolism, the Town is missing a profound opportunity to create a powerful piece of public art that can more comprehensively commemorate the sacrifices of our veterans. A new monument has the potential to represent our community's depth, diversity, and collective memory in a way that the existing structure cannot. Furthermore, Southamptton currently lacks significant public art, and a new cenotaph could serve as both a meaningful memorial and an inspiring civic landmark.

A renewed cenotaph also presents an opportunity to educate future generations about Canada's history and its role in global conflicts and peacekeeping efforts. A well-designed monument can foster a deeper understanding of our nation's contributions on the international stage, ensuring that the sacrifices of our veterans are never forgotten.

This initiative was originally identified as a funded project for 2025 by Town Council and Town Staff, prompting our committee and community partners to respond in good faith. As stewards of this effort, we are committed to ensuring that the cenotaph renewal process respects the historical and cultural significance of the site while also meeting the evolving needs of our community.

Our committee includes long-standing Legion members, current executive members, and representation from Saugeen First Nation. The Legion had supported this initiative for many years, reinforcing the importance of a cenotaph that appropriately honours our veterans. We share a common goal: to create a cenotaph design that is appropriate for Southampton and aligns with our town's unique heritage.

## **Community Support and Financial Backing**

The existing monument is modest compared to local and global standards. There is no intention to desecrate or disrespect the existing cairn or cross; the decision to propose a replacement only came after extensive research to ensure that the existing elements were honoured and that any changes reflected both historical significance and the aspirations of the community.

The community support for this initiative has been substantial. Organizations such as the BIA, the Royal Canadian Legion, and the Rotary Club have demonstrated their backing, with financial commitments and substantial pledged contributions. These funds were raised based on the Town's initial commitment to the project, and our donors contributed with the understanding that their support would lead to meaningful enhancements to the cenotaph.

## **The Need for a Broader Approach**

We must express our disappointment with the mandate and restricted focus of the ad hoc committee formed to assess this project. Rather than embracing a comprehensive and inclusive discussion, the committee's limited scope has hindered the opportunity for a thorough evaluation of the best possible outcome. A project of this significance deserves a broader approach that fully considers historical preservation, community aspirations, and expert recommendations.

Should the Town proceed with the current recommendation to simply refurbish the existing monument, we respectfully request that all donors be offered a full refund of their contributions. These funds were given in good faith towards a vision of a renewed and reimagined memorial, not a restoration of the status quo.

## **Looking Forward**

We appreciate your time and thoughtful consideration of this matter. We remain hopeful that, together, we can find a solution that best serves our community and ensures a dignified tribute to our veterans.

Sincerely, Ralph Lynch



On Behalf of the Southampton Community Cenotaph Committee