

PRESENTATION TO THE COMMUNITY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE

February 22-2017

Your Worship and Honorable members.....intro yourself.....I would like to express my sincere thanks for giving me a few minutes to speak to you about creating a small park next to the Charley Fox Memorial Overpass & Trooper Wilson Place.

As a former member of the RCNR I have always had a deep respect for our nation's Military, particularly our veterans.

I'm sure you'll agree the overpass, next to space I'd like to talk about, is the most beautiful roundabout in all of Canada with its three fighter planes splaying into the blue. It's a fitting tribute to our brave veterans and the wisdom of London's civic leadership who approved such a wonderful and efficient traffic mover.

Almost from day one after its 2011 dedication it was suggested to enhance the green area at the South-East corner. It started with the kind help of Jay Stanford, who provided a 40 yard dumpster, about 40 volunteers filled that huge box to the limit in a few hours. More clean-ups followed and continue to this day.

Yet, all the while there was a deep desire by the community to create a permanent park that included some kind of memorial feature, perhaps one that would honour Vimy Veterans. Some city officials were approached about the idea but we were advised there was simply no budget for such an undertaking.

Shortly after things started to happen. Besides keeping the property clean, somehow a simple little cross with a poppy wreath appeared on a small knoll.

Slowly, more items showed up.....a rifle with a WW 1 helmet on it, a couple of benches, two flag poles and several other relevant features. As well, events took place such as observances of Remembrance Day and Vimy Ridge Day on April 9. Every time Canadian military personnel, cadets and/or the RCMP attended.

The memorial itself was officially dedicated by a Padre while two jet fighters flew overhead followed by the Harvard Squadron.

Sincere thanks to the City of London Police Force who helped with traffic control.

But for years we pined to get the City behind the efforts by the community to *officially* create VIMY PARK. We know we skirted protocols, and we apologize for that. However, our number one concern was, and still is, that not a hint of a negative shadow would fall on those valiant soldiers we sought to honour. They went through living hell for us to preserve our freedom. By nightfall on April 12, 1917 the Corps had suffered 10,602 casualties: 3,598 killed and 7,004 wounded. A tremendous number considering Canada's population was just over eight million.

The Canada Vimy Foundation has given us full permission, in writing, to use the name VIMY below their beautiful emblem.

Honoured members; it's up to you now to take that last, tiny but necessary step to approve the creation of VIMY PARK. So far construction of the memorial itself has cost the city zero dollars. The only future expenditure to London would be a park sign and grass mowing when necessary. To date, about 5,000 (private & business) dollars have been spent on the project. It's a total win-win situation perfectly timed with the 100 year observance of that horrendous battle in France.

The Park should remain a simple, quiet and serene walk-to-only green oasis, perfectly in harmony with honouring every Canadian veteran who paid the ultimate price for our beloved Canada.

Your Worship and Councilors: Before I express my thanks, permit me to make a brief personal comment: This city needs a good-news story. Something that will unite us and have us say: Isn't that a wonderful effort by a community to build a memorial to honour those courageous Vimy heroes. They are the silent ones in eternity who deserve our admiration forever.

My sincerest thanks to all of you for the privilege of letting me make this presentation. I am confident, with your decision, you will help to entrench the memory of Vimy Ridge in our hearts forever.

I would be happy to answer any questions.