

Thank you Mr. Chair and through you to the committee members, I am here before you today wearing several hats:

- 7 year member of the Royal Canadian Legion
- I'm a resident of east London, where I live work and play.
- Vice-chair of your Committee of Adjustment and Property Standards here at City Hall.
- And I am also a board member of the Argyle Community Association, serving this year as the Outreach and Infrastructure Chair. It is in the last role in particular that I became involved in the proposal to create "Vimy Ridge Park" at the southeast corner of the Charley Fox Memorial Overpass at Hale and Trafalgar.

And on April 20, 2016, when I was elected to the Board of the Argyle Community Association, I was asked to lead the effort that has brought us before you today. At that April 20<sup>th</sup> ACA AGM, a motion was passed, that our association endorse the project and call upon the City of London to officially designate this space Vimy Ridge Park, which passed unanimously.

Committee Members, it is important to understand this park feature was driven by the community, but has had support demonstrated by all three levels of government.

Government Support to-date:

- through the office of Jay Stanford, those working on this project have received supplies; garbage bags, gloves, etc, for park clean-up purposes, and the City itself has planted trees on this land.
- The flag poles, donated by former City Councillor Bud Polhill, proudly fly flag donated by MPP Teresa Armstrong and MP Irene Mathysen.
- April 9<sup>th</sup> 2016, MPs Kate Young, Peter Fragiskastos, MPPs Teresa Armstrong and Peggy Sattler, Councillor Harold Usher attended the dedication along with the community, cadets, veterans.
- The London Police Services, the Traffic Management Unit and Development & Compliance Services here at City Hall all signed off on permits for an April 9<sup>th</sup> dedication event at this park, and did so AGAIN on for a November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Remembrance Day event at the Park, with the application's location designation approved at "Vimy Ridge Memorial".
- The Mayor issued a letter for November 11<sup>th</sup> function referring to the location as Vimy Park.
- Letters of Support from MP Irene Mathysen, MP Peter Fragiskatos, Vimy Branch Legion 145, Royal Canadian Legion Zone Command, and the VIMY Foundation of Canada.

**I hope I've made it clear to the Committee, that all indications organizers were receiving from government were POSITIVE, in regard to this location being recognized as Vimy Park.**

Unfortunately, organizers missed one very important step along the way, the land had not been officially designated as a park.

The cart got before the horse. So today we are here asking forgiveness, in lieu of having received permission.

From discussions with staff, we knew from the outset that due to the abeyance on the land, the staff would have to recommend a denial. But of course this is not the only land in such a state, and in order for the city to do the successful community building you all committed to in the London Plan, you cannot put off community development for 20 or 30 years for a project that may never happen. Should the high speed rail miracle occur, the ACA and the Legion would happily work with future councils on a relocation should that become necessary. Though given the lands already dedicated to rail in that area, it is unlikely further land expropriation would be needed...and the City would have to remove the Charley Fox overpass in order to accommodate that, a much greater concern than our small beautification project.

Through my experience as a member of your appointed Committee of Adjustment, I know there is ample precedent for the City to grant this park application despite the staff recommendation. The Committee of Adjustment regularly grants variances to by-laws that staff have had to recommend against. This is what we, as well as your planning department, refer to as a "matter of local consideration".

Again, through the Committee of Adjustment I've seen numerous examples of the difficulties caused by odd shaped "remnant" parcels of land...*and this really is a remnant from the expropriation of lands for the Charley Fox overpass. The shape, location and traffic flow from the overpass would greatly restrict any commercial value. Further old growth trees on the land would be need removal permits for development, a by-law this council recently enacted.*

This is, in every way the definition of a matter of local consideration which should supersede the staff recommendation.

Finally committee members, I would ask you to take note that additional support for this project has been received since the submission was made to the Clerk. The Vimy Foundation of Canada has granted permission for the use of the Vimy Logo on Park signage. And in addition to zone command, the Vimy Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion 145, has also issued a letter of support. I want to call Committee Members attention to the fact that a similar letter was provided for the next item on your agenda.

It needs to be clear the Vimy Branch Legion is not endorsing either project over the other, but simply wishes to see the City move ahead with an appropriate commemoration, ideally in time for 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. *(Hello Shawn, Simply, the branch encourages all appropriate community endeavors but will not endorse any one initiative over another, Randy)*

As a Legion member, I can tell you, memorials in out of the way locations, such as the alternative proposal, may be celebrated initially, but quickly fade from memory and care. The staff report on the next item notes it's location is not prominent enough, something that was not a concern with our proposal.

Committee Members, through volunteers, donations from 14 businesses in the area, and a community effort, an appropriate commemoration is already in place, in a location that literally thousands of Londoners see daily on their commute. This Vimy Ridge Park has to-date cost the city zero dollars. All the community wants the City to do is designate the park and erect a sign. Other locations would require much greater cost. Why tear down an existing, successful community project and start over at public cost, when you can be a fiscally responsible community partner instead?

I urge you, on behalf of the over 1000 members of the Argyle Community Association, and in particular the residents in the immediate neighbourhood, to show the political leadership to approve this proposal.