

10 November 2010 (email)

Hello Fellow Allisonians,

I am sending this email to fellow members of the Mt A alumni and others associated with the university whose email addresses I have been able to find. I have never been an activist before but Mt A is doing something that I disagree with so strongly that I want to make sure you know about it.

You may have heard that Mt A is planning to build a new center for the fine and performing arts which it hopes will become the new focal point of the campus.

Unfortunately, they are planning to tear down the building known in my day as Memorial Library and later as the student center. The location will be used for the new construction.

I strongly disagree with this idea for several reasons:

- The Memorial Library is an architecturally important building designed by renowned architect Andrew Cobb. It has been an important architectural feature of the campus for almost 100 years.

- The Memorial Library is a heritage building which complements the other buildings and gives character to the campus.

- The Memorial Library was built in the 1920s as a memorial to the 70 plus Allisonians who gave their lives in WWI. It would be breaking faith and very unethical to destroy such a memorial.

As John McCrae said:

*"If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields."*

- Many of the arguments given by the current administration to raze the building are questionable. They argue that they already spend large amounts of money maintaining other heritage buildings such as the Owen's and former Trueman House. This is true and very necessary but they also spend an inordinate amount of money maintaining buildings that have much less architectural or heritage value to the campus than Memorial Library.

They have already knocked down numerous heritage buildings including Palmer Hall and Hillcrest, Hess, Sprague and Baxter Houses. Many Sackville residents were shocked to find some of these buildings had been destroyed during the night even while efforts to save them were still underway.

- The Memorial Library was one of the most important buildings on campus for many generations of students. Having been the library and later the student center, many students of all disciplines forged life long relationships there.

- Other sites on campus have been identified as better or at least satisfactory locations for the proposed new arts center.

I have written to my class president to see if our class would speak with a unified voice in support of retaining at least part of the building to be incorporated into the design of the new arts center.

That may not happen but possibly individually we can make ourselves heard in ways that will cause the current administration to reconsider.

In the end it will be a matter of dollars. Since the alumni has always been a major source of revenue for Mt A, the administration should respect our ideas. We should make our views known. Letters to the President (rcampbell@mta.ca), the Board of Regents or printed in nationally read or even local newspapers may all help. It is my understanding that the decision to take down the Memorial Library has now been made. What is necessary now is the application of enough pressure (embarrassment?) to cause the authorities to reconsider the decision.

Think about making your voice heard before it is too late. Based on past history, time may be of the essence.

Possibly a fund raising campaign could be started to raise the extra funds to save this architecturally important building and one that was to be a lasting memorial to those brave Allisonians who died in WWI.

Something should be done to stop the current administration from breaking the faith even though poppies still grow in Flanders fields.

If you share my concerns, please make sure that your other Mt A contacts are aware of the situation and encourage them to make their voices heard.

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