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*c/o 49 Bridge Street,*  
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via e-mail to:

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Dear Allisonians and Friends:

It has been written that Administrators from Mount Allison University have issued this statement regarding the decision to demolish the Memorial Library: *“The report concluded clearly that it would be imprudent to retain this building for a number of compelling reasons including evidence of fatigue in the main supporting beams.”*

In published letters from Mount Allison Professor Emeritus of Engineering Ron Boorne, he explains that *“this statement is meaningless”*; that *“in engineering terms structural fatigue is always associated with repeated or variable loading.”* In response, he has apparently been told: *“this is a matter of opinion”*.

I am not an engineer, nor did I take engineering at university. I was fortunate, however, to sit as an attentive student in the late Professor Dr. Bill Noble’s first year physics classes when I was at Mount A and I do remember much of his lessons.

He taught that structural fatigue results from major repeated loaded forces over time – the type of forces that would occur on a aircraft that is landing and taking off many times and moving through environments with significant gradations in barometric pressure exposure. Structural fatigue would not occur in a static building subjected to static loading. The beams that support the Memorial Library would not have developed structural fatigue as a consequence of the weight of the 100,000 or so books that I remember were sitting on the library shelves when I was privileged to explore there as a child under the watchful eye of Dr. Ella Smith\* who delighted that children should read. Nor would the beams have suffered structural fatigue from the occasional forces generated by the hundreds of my contemporaries who enthusiastically danced together when I was a Mount A student in that same “reading room”, by then known as Hesler Hall.

Furthermore, I understand that this stone edifice, erected in 1927, may have been constructed with steel beams, which were considered to be an added protection to the valuable collection of books against possible fire. The building, built as a Memorial, would surely have been designed to last for centuries? One sees similar such elegant and gracious structures in Europe that have stood for millennia. It is likely that floor joists, roof rafters, window frames, doors and other wooden components were all constructed from primary growth timber still available at the time. Mount Allison is fortunate to have on campus scientists with a special competency in tree growth and dating of forests and wood by looking at tree growth rings. I am sure that they will agree that much old growth lumber is denser and therefore stronger than similar boards available today – and therefore is, of itself, very valuable. For many reasons the construction of buildings today cannot equal the construction of older structures. We need to preserve, renovate and rejuvenate where at all possible, even if there is a greater dollar cost.

Not all costs are measured in dollars and the costs of demolishing the Memorial Library may be far greater to the University than the cost of any new structure that any architect might imagine.

It is possible that consultants have found and report something that does present concern but this would definitely not be structural fatigue. As a physician I must ask: Can anyone of conscience support the demolition of a heritage building on the basis of a diagnosis that “there might be something wrong” when any verification has not been provided as to the exact nature of the

ailment? Even when a firm diagnosis, one that has been based on solid evidence and expert consultation (including second or more opinions as needed) is clear, one must carefully consider the risk benefit ratio of any purposed treatment options, the side effects of any interventions, the cost-benefit ratios and the long term prognoses.

Are identified problems in the Memorial Library or are they in the newer addition, the Tweedie Annex that was erected to adjoin the Memorial Library in 1960? I urge the University to publicly and openly share all reports from all consultants about both buildings, allowing others to see for themselves, so that all data may be reviewed and studied by anyone with an interest in preserving Mount Allison's wonderful historically valuable edifices. Well-respected architects have offered that, with will and ingenuity and reasonable investment, the Memorial Library Building CAN be restored and repurposed. It would not be inconceivable that the newer structure at 50 years, the Tweedie Annex Building, needs greater rehabilitation than the older Memorial Library. Newer buildings are not always as well constructed and perhaps may suffer more without regular and careful maintenance. (Many elderly folk are fitter and healthier than many teenagers!). Perhaps the older Memorial Library structure could best be served by removing the Tweedie Annex, restoring the Memorial Library Building to the single unencumbered proud monument that it once was and use it for a different purpose - and create a fine Fine and Performing Arts Center elsewhere if such is really needed? If the Arts Center was not tied to the Memorial Library or to this site, what would be the future of the Memorial Library Building?

References have been made to engineering reports and architects reports. Why have these been withheld from public view? Has there been written a "statement of significance" by a professional heritage consultant and, if so, is there a reason that this has not been shared with the University Community, the Alumni and the Heritage Committee of the Town of Sackville? May we hear directly from the heritage professional(s) consulted? Mount Allison is part of the Community of Sackville. Who represents the Town of Sackville on the planning committee for this project? Why has the Sackville community not been hearing from this voice? Like it or not, Mount Allison and the Town of Sackville are as irrevocably joined as most Siamese twins; the Heritage of the University is also the Heritage of Sackville. These conjoined twins must work together.

My time in the science programs at Mt A taught me the value of good evidence when considering decisions. My time in the arts programs taught me the worthiness of an education broadened by literature, music, theatre, fine art, religious studies, languages and history. I value my solid Mount Allison education from both disciplines; I am interested in both jurisdictions.

Would the University Administrators and Regents please share with all Allisonians and Sackvillians what the University actually proposes to house in a new building? What exactly are the needs? What exactly are the wants? How and when were both the needs and the wants defined and by whom? Who has decided that a proposed Fine and Performing Arts Center need be on this campus site? Why? Do we need a totally new building to achieve both the needs and the wants for Fine Arts and Performing Arts? What are the urgencies of having any new building constructed now? What are the current funds on hand for this project?

A statement, issued independently over the signature of the V.P. University Advancement and also that of the Director of Alumni Relations states: "*At an estimated \$30 million cost, the project will require \$20 million in private donations (a challenge in itself) and \$10 million from the University's operating budget.*" This implies that the \$20 million projected cost has not all been firmly pledged or received and that the University will take or borrow from operating funds to finance some of any

capital costs of construction. If the Memorial Library is razed then will Alumni and others still contribute with their traditional generosity? Perhaps, but not with any certainty; some definitely will not. I am not a financial expert but in a personal financial budget, using “household operating funds” to finance a vacation, a cottage or even a needed or desired renovation, would not be prudent. For a University to finance a huge capital expenditure project that will not be very dollar generating when completed, from “operational funds”, would seem questionable. I ask what problems this “internal borrowing” may cause the University in the future.

If the University would share the answers to such questions with the broader community of students, of faculty, of Allisonians, and of Friends of MT A it would go along way to motivating creative minds to offer solutions (both structural and financial) towards achieving a new Fine and Performing Arts Center, if needed, whilst still retaining the Memorial Library Building. If this building site is requisite and the Memorial Library, with or without the Tweedie Annex, cannot be respectfully rejuvenated for the desired Cultural Center, then energy and resources should be directed to restoration of at least the older portion, the Memorial Library Building, for a different purpose and planning begun for a different solution for Arts needs.

Further, Mount Allison has purported to have an environmental conscience; indeed she now has an Environmental Studies Program. Hopefully students enrolled there are learning that is it a much “greener” practise to reuse, recycle and repair than to destroy and rebuild. Mount Allison has a website aimed at raising environmental awareness: [www.mta.ca/environment/](http://www.mta.ca/environment/) where the logo for campus / community initiatives is posted. The Eco-Logic logo reads: “Live it. Learn it. Lead it.”

Would that the Administrators and Regents, who currently occupy their roles in trust for the whole of the Mount Allison Community, past and present Allisonian Alumni and current students all, will do just that: Learn it. Live it. Lead it.

I trust that a sober second thought on behalf of all decision makers, and the courage to change course, will allow the Memorial Library Building to continue to be a vibrant Memorial to those who didn’t make it home from the battlefields and beaches of the Great Wars to get their Mt A degrees. They made the ultimate sacrifice for us and we need to continue to be so reminded. The Memorial Library Building should soldier on, a monument standing proudly at the heart of the Mount Allison campus, for that reason alone.

Aye for the Garnet and Gold – and the Memorial Library!

Yours truly,

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PS. \*Dr. Ella Smith, M.A. Oxford ’21, D. Litt. MT A ’63, aunt of well know contemporary nonagenarian Sackvillian and another Mt A Honorary Degree recipient, Dr. Frances Smith, was a lecturer in History at Mount Allison ’40-’51 and Acting Head History from ’40-’46. A colourful personality from Mt A’s past, Dr. Smith counted herself, at least in stories told to a wee girl, a veteran - though perhaps war correspondent might have been a more appropriate tag. In the Spanish Civil War (late 1930’s) she travelled and slept under either of two passports, used alternatively as connivance demanded. Depending on which side was in control wherever she found herself, she presented whichever passport she deemed the safest to be carrying; she had been an “undercover agent, a spy of sorts” and had great stories to tell. She loved history. She loved books. She loved the little bookstore she ran after she “retired”. And she truly loved the Memorial Library!  
& Read more of these remarkable Allisonians at: [http://heritage.tantramar.com/WFNewsletter\\_37.htm](http://heritage.tantramar.com/WFNewsletter_37.htm)