

February 8, 2011

Dr. Robert Campbell, President
Mount Allison University

Dear Dr. Campbell:

As an organization dedicated to the preservation of historic buildings, the Westmorland Historical Society is deeply disturbed by Mount Allison University's plan to demolish the old Memorial Library/Student Centre. Designed by Canadian architect Andrew Randall Cobb as a memorial to the more than seventy Mount Allison students who remained in Flanders' fields after WWI, and the many more who came back wounded and scarred for life, it is a significant part of Mount Allison's, and by extension Westmorland County's, historical and architectural heritage. Together with the Flemington Building and Centennial Hall, also designed by Cobb, it is among the university's most attractive buildings.

Its destruction would be another of the tragic architectural losses on the Mount Allison campus in recent years--one that will diminish the university, and indeed the whole community.

We have been given to understand that the rationale for this unfortunate decision is an estimated extra cost of \$5 million over what it would take to replace the building with a new one, together with an analysis by a consulting firm concluding that the building is structurally unsound. Having struggled very hard to restore an entire wall of our two hundred year old Keillor House in Dorchester (which truly *was* structurally unsound), we are sympathetic to the university's cost concerns. However, our experience has taught us that even structurally unsound buildings can be made sound again; it is all a matter of priorities and values. We can assure you that the cost and effort has been more than worth it. It seems to us that \$5 million, while not inconsiderable, is nonetheless small in comparison to the estimated cost of the new facilities for the Fine and Performing Arts. It is conceivable that the university could lose that much and more through the ill will generated by this decision. In any case, if the Memorial Library can be incorporated into the new centre, as recommended in 2002 by the highly respected Toronto architectural firm of Diamond and Schmitt, it is our opinion and considered recommendation that this should be done, since it would be in the best interests of Mount Allison University and the wider community it serves.

We sincerely hope that the university will pay attention to the many voices that have been raised in protest against this decision and reconsider the soundness of the arguments opposing this decision before further damage is done to the University's reputation as a responsible steward of architectural heritage and of the memory of those who have given so much for this community--and for this country.

W. Eugene Goodrich, President, for

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