



NEWS RELEASE

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NEW MEMORIAL TREE TO REPLACE DISEASED HERITAGE MAPLE

Due to its poor health condition, a heritage maple tree in Fort Langley that commemorates a fallen soldier must be cut back for safety's sake, but a new memorial will take root in the spring.

The Wilson Commemorative Maple, located on the traffic island at Glover Road and 96 Avenue, was planted in 1923 to honour A.W. Wilson, who lost his life in the First World War.

The big leaf maple has become a well-known landmark in Fort Langley, but it is approximately a century old and has decayed significantly. The average lifespan for big leaf maple trees is about 75 to 80 years, and fungal growth was recently found on the heritage tree trunk by Township of Langley staff. A specialized consultant was hired to report on the extent of the decay and other defects.

The tree's health has failed to the point that parts of it may fall off and cause damage to nearby buildings, vehicles, and even people. To mitigate the safety issue, Township arborists will cut the tree back and reduce its height to a stump of about 10 to 12 feet high, similar to other heritage trees on Trattle and Wright Streets.

The stump will remain in place at the original site and staff will also try to salvage and store any sound wood from the tree for future use. Work to cut back the tree is scheduled for early January.

"This tree honours one of the many brave soldiers from Langley who made the ultimate sacrifice, and their contributions to their community and country will not be forgotten," said Mayor Jack Froese. "While it is unfortunate that we have lost the original tree to decay, this is a fitting time to plant a new memorial tree and ensure those memories live on."

Wilson was killed at Vimy Ridge in France in 1917, and the 100th anniversary of that battle will be marked around the world in early April.

On December 12, Council passed Froese's motion that Township staff work with the Heritage Advisory Committee on plans to plant a new commemorative tree and hold a ceremony to memorialize the 100-year anniversary of Vimy Ridge this spring, either at the current heritage tree site or in a different, more suitable location.

The Wilson Commemorative Maple is one of several trees planted after an initiative was undertaken in 1919 to honour the more than 350 Langley men who served in the Canadian, British, and French forces during the First World War. Dr. Benjamin Butler Marr, one of the first men in Langley to enlist, and Archie Payne, the first municipal administrator, initiated the project to rename many of Langley's roads after fallen soldiers, and to plant memorial maple trees at major intersections.

