

Pickering councillors want to name bridge Veterans Walkway Pedestrian bridge across Highway of Heroes seen as fitting tribute

PICKERING -- At least one councillor is pushing to have the city's new pedestrian bridge renamed in honour of veterans in advance of Remembrance Day.

Councillor Bill McLean broached the subject of naming the bridge Veterans Walkway at a council meeting on Monday, Oct. 17, but a motion to introduce discussion of the proposal was shot down. Although he was invited to submit a motion for the next council meeting, which will be held on Monday, Nov. 21, Coun. McLean is proposing a special meeting in an attempt to have the bridge named before Remembrance Day.

"What better opportunity is there, to name this bridge Veterans Walkway?" he said.

"With Remembrance Day just weeks away, it is imperative that we do everything we can to thank, honour and remember those currently serving, previously served or those who made the ultimate sacrifice."

Jim Corbitt, president of Pickering Legion Branch 606, said he supports the idea of naming the bridge, noting the location would make it particularly fitting.

"The Legion thinks it's a great idea, especially since it goes right across the Highway of Heroes," Mr. Corbitt explained.

"It's right near the Liverpool Road bridge and we've stood on that bridge many times to pay tribute during repatriations so I think this is very appropriate."

Mayor Dave Ryan said more discussion is needed before a decision is made.

"I think this is a wonderful idea and I'm not opposed to it, but I think many people may have ideas for naming the bridge," he explained, noting he's received other suggestions from the community, including calling it the Bicentennial Bridge to mark the city's 200th year.

"I don't see the need for a special council meeting, there's no urgency here," he continued. "I think the issue deserves a broader discussion with council and the community at large."

He also pointed out that because the bridge does not belong to the city, it would be unlikely any naming could be completed before Remembrance Day even with a council declaration.

"This bridge is not ours, it belongs to Metrolinx," Mayor Ryan explained.

"The best we can do is to request that Metrolinx consider naming it something. Even then that request has to go off to another body for consideration, which could take many months. My question here is, what's the rush?"

GO Transit currently has no set process for naming infrastructure, but indicated it would be willing to work with the City.

"Since there is no formal process for naming GO Transit structures or bridges at this time, we look forward to sitting down with officials in Pickering and discussing this further," said Malon Edwards, a spokesman for Metrolinx GO Transit.

"We are also happy to develop a naming process that will fit the needs of the community, stakeholders and local government. We do realize that local communities and government officials may want to provide suggestions on the names and we are happy to work with them."

In order to call a special meeting Coun. McLean needs to present a petition supported by at least four members of council. Currently, councillors Jennifer O'Connell and Peter Rodrigues have signed on in support of calling a special meeting.

The pedestrian bridge is expected to be completed and ready for use by late November or early December.

