



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Heritage Markham Committee

**FROM:** Regan Hutcheson, Manager-Heritage Planning

**DATE:** June 10, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Ontario Heritage Conference 2020 Update

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**Project:** Ontario Heritage Conference  
Theme: 20/20 Vision – Clarity for a New Decade

**Background:**

- The City was awarded the hosting duties of the **2020 Ontario Heritage Conference** in 2018 and has been planning the event with the **Local Organizing Committee (LOC)** ever since. The conference organizations are: Community Heritage Ontario (CHO), Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO), and the Ontario Association of Heritage Professionals (OAHP).
- Originally, the event was scheduled for May 28 - 30, 2020, but that date was not feasible due to the Covid-19 crisis. The conference was then **postponed to October 22 -24, 2020**. All venues and conference hotel were re-booked and all speakers were notified and re-confirmed.
- Recently, there has been some discussion regarding whether the October date will be feasible. Although many places may well be open again, we still may have physical distancing issues, a potential second-wave and need to consider if people will want to pay to gather in a conference setting, especially older people who are more the target audience of the conference (and unfortunately, the target of Covid).
- Recently, the Board of one of the three conference partners (Ontario Association of Heritage Planners -OAHP) met and indicated the following:

In light of the uncertainty surrounding gatherings of any size in the foreseeable future and the likelihood that the National Heritage Conference will be completely on-line, as a sponsor of the Ontario Heritage Conference the OAHP board feels that the conference for 2020 should be moved to 2021. We recommend that Markham host the 2021 conference in May and the 2022 conference be offered to Brockville. We feel that this is a prudent move and will be the easiest to carry out, especially if done sooner rather than later.

### **Staff Comment:**

- The **Community Heritage Ontario** (CHO) board which is the governing body for the Conference will be meeting on June 28, 2020 to discuss the 2020 conference and whether it may be necessary to further postpone/cancel the conference.
- Markham's Local Organizing Committee (LOC) met on June 3, 2020 to assess the advisability and feasibility of holding the conference in October of this year given the ongoing issues related to COVID 19.
- Staff had prepared four options for review and consideration-
  - Continue with October 22-24th as organized
  - Continue with October 22-24th in a different format
  - Postpone the conference to May 2021
  - Cancel the conference and Markham's participation
- After considerable discussion, the consensus of the LOC was to recommend the cancellation of the conference and not postpone to a later date (such as May 2021). There was a fear that people will not want to gather at conferences until a vaccine is available and in use and the LOC did not think that this would happen by April 2021. There was also concern that registration (numbers and revenue) would be impacted as would needed revenue from sponsors and exhibitors who are also being economically impacted by COVID.
- There was no interest in holding some form of virtual conference (concern that people will not want to sign up for two days of sitting in front of their computers to watch on-line presentations, and from a host community perspective, this option would not achieve the objectives of providing economic value or promotion for Markham).
- The LOC passed the following resolution to be forwarded to the Community Heritage Ontario's Board of Directors for its June 28th meeting:
  - "That the 2020 Ontario Heritage Conference Local Organizing Committee recommends that the 2020 Conference scheduled for October 22-24, 2020 with Markham as the host community be cancelled and that Markham re-apply to host the conference to be held in 2023".

### **Suggested Recommendation for Heritage Markham**

That Heritage Markham Committee receive for information the update on the 2020 Ontario Heritage Conference; and

That Heritage Markham Committee supports a Markham bid to host the conference in the future.

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