



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: June 29, 2020

SUBJECT:	Ontario Heritage Conference 2020, Cancellation of the Event
PREPARED BY:	Regan Hutcheson, Manager, Heritage Planning, ext. 2080
REVIEWED BY:	Ron Blake, Senior Development Manager, ext. 2600.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the staff report titled “Ontario Heritage Conference 2020, Cancellation of the Event”, dated June 29, 2019, be received;
- 2) That the Markham Local Organizing Committee be disbanded and the Committee members noted in Appendix A be thanked for their commitment and involvement in the planning and organization of the three day conference: and
- 3) That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the cancellation of the 2020 Ontario Heritage Conference.

BACKGROUND:

Markham was selected to host the 2020 Ontario Heritage Conference

Markham was specifically invited to submit a bid to host the annual Ontario Heritage Conference for 2020 on behalf of Community Heritage Ontario (CHO), the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) and the Ontario Association of Heritage Planners (OAHP).

On February 27, 2018 Council authorized the Director of Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship to develop and submit a proposal to host the 2020 Ontario Heritage Conference. Staff was also authorized to create a Local Organizing Committee if Markham is awarded the conference.

The Joint Conference Committee on April 22, 2018 announced that Markham was the choice to host the conference in 2020.

Local Organizing Committee (LOC) was formed

A Local Organizing Committee (LOC) was created in the spring of 2019 to assist with planning and organizational tasks. The members of the LOC are identified in Appendix ‘A’ and includes two Council representatives, municipal staff, Heritage Markham members, individuals from local heritage groups and organizations and other appropriate community stakeholders. The City of Markham as the sponsor of the LOC is also responsible for financial record keeping and providing a conference treasurer. LOC meetings began in May 2019.

Conference was planned for May 28-30, 2020

The theme of the conference was “20/20 Vision – Clarity for a New Decade” and the three day event was scheduled for May 28-30, 2020. Extensive conference planning was undertaken

including evaluation and selection of conference venues (Coptic Church, Angus Glen Banquet Facilities, and Markham Museum), the development of a comprehensive and engaging program (Opening and Gala Dinner keynote speakers, 19 Concurrent sessions with 49 confirmed speakers, local tours), Gala Dinner, Entertainment, Heritage Tradeshow, the creation of a Sponsorship and Exhibitor Program, Marketing and Advertising, Conference Hotel and Financial/Budget.

Conference was postponed to October 22-24, 2020 due to Covid-19 issue

Due to the impact of Covid-19 on community events and social gathering, in March 2020, it was decided through consultation with Markham officials and the three provincial organizations (CHO, ACO and OAHP) to postpone the conference to the fall of 2020. The new date was October 22-24, 2020 and all venues and conference hotel were re-booked and all speakers were notified and re-confirmed.

DISCUSSION:

Future of the 2020 Conference

Recently, there has been some discussion regarding whether the October conference date is realistic due to ongoing concerns related to Covid-19. Although some places may well be open again, physical distancing issues are likely to remain in place, a potential second-wave is anticipated and people may be hesitant to gather in a conference setting, especially older individuals who are more the target audience of the conference.

The Community Heritage Ontario (CHO) Board, which is the governing body for the conference, is meeting on June 28, 2020 to discuss the future of the 2020 conference and has asked for input from the Markham LOC. The Board of the Ontario Association of Heritage Planners (OAHP) has indicated that in light of the uncertainty surrounding gatherings of any size in the foreseeable future, as a sponsor of the Ontario Heritage Conference, the OAHP feels that the conference for 2020 should be moved to 2021. The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) has also expressed concern about the feasibility of a traditional conference.

LOC has recommended cancellation of the 2020 conference

The Markham LOC met on June 3, 2020 to consider four options regarding the conference:

- 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

Each option was evaluated considering the implications on a variety of conference subject areas (i.e. venues, financial, registration/delegates, speakers, sponsorship, exhibitors, LOC/volunteer commitment).

Holding the conference in October as planned (or in some other format) was not considered practical by the LOC. Moving the conference to next spring was also not supported. The availability of a vaccine (and its wide distribution) by May 2021 was discussed. Committee members expressed serious doubt about the timing of a vaccine and that this again would impact delegate registration/speaker attendance and sponsorship/exhibitors. This could result in yet

another cancellation next spring. After much thoughtful debate and discussion, the consensus of the LOC was to support the following resolution:

“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 due to the uncertainty around the COVID-19 situation and that Markham consider re-applying to host at a future date, perhaps 2023”.

This information was forwarded to the Board of CHO for their consideration at their June 28, 2020 meeting.

Follow up to be undertaken

Cancellation will require Markham staff to undertake the necessary follow up with the speakers, venues, sponsors, exhibitors, etc. Seed money, exhibitor fees and sponsorship monies will need to be returned to their sources.

The work and effort undertaken to develop program topics and appropriate speakers may still be useful as it could potentially be applied to a future conference either in Markham or elsewhere.

Disbanding of the Markham LOC

LOC members expressed their feelings of disappointment in the outcome of the 2020 event due to the extent of excellent conference planning that was undertaken. The committee members expressed their appreciation of working with each other and many offered to continue to serve if the LOC is re-established for a future conference in Markham.

It is recommended that the Markham LOC be disbanded and that the members be thanked for their commitment and involvement in the planning and organization of the 2020 Conference.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Council approved \$20,000 to assist with the 2020 Ontario Heritage Conference. Unused funding is to be returned to source. Staff will be negotiating the return of venue deposits.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Undertaking this initiative aligns with the City's strategic goals of achieving an engaged, diverse and thriving city, as well as offering exceptional services by exceptional people.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship Department, Planning and Urban Design Department

RECOMMENDED BY:

Biju Karumanchery, RPP, MCIP
Director of Planning & Urban Design

Arvin Prasad, RPP, MCIP
Commissioner of Development Services

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Appendix ‘A’ – Local Organizing Committee Members

Name	Affiliation
Graham Dewar	Chair of Heritage Markham
Barry Nelson	Former President of the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill, former member of Heritage Markham, resident in Thornhill Heritage Conservation District
Dianne More	President of Markham Village Conservancy
David Nesbitt	Former Chair of Heritage Markham, resident of Unionville Heritage Conservation District
Ron Waine	Former Chair of Heritage Markham, resident of Markham Heritage Estates
Stephen Chait	Former Director of Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship
Karen Rea	Councillor, Markham Village
Reid McAlpine	Councillor, Unionville
Christina Kakaflikas	Acting Director of Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship
Cathy Molloy	Manager, Markham Museum
Emma Girard	Communication Advisor, Corporate Communications
Jemima Lee	Senior Financial Analyst, Finance Department
Wayne Morgan	President of Community Heritage Ontario
Ginette Guy	Vice President of Community Heritage Ontario
Shannon Kyles	Architectural Conservancy of Ontario
Marlee Robinson	Architectural Conservancy of Ontario
Regan Hutcheson	Manager, Heritage Planning
George Duncan	Senior Heritage Planner
Peter Wokral	Senior Heritage Planner