



Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

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REPORT #: CDS-23-247 **COMMITTEE DATE:** 2023-12-05
REPORT TO: COTW-Planning **DUE IN COUNCIL:** 2023-12-12
SUBJECT: Appointment of the Town Historian

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council appoints the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum as the Town Historian for the 2022-2026 term of Council; and
- 1.2 Council endorses and adopts the Terms of Reference for the Town Historian, attached as **Appendix I**.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum (the “Museum”) has served as the Town Historian since 2018.
- The Museum has successfully supported the Town in the role of Town Historian. They have access to many historical records and documents and are well-equipped to undertake the required research to assist staff in advancing the heritage portfolio.
- Town recommends re-appointing the Museum as Town Historian for the 2022-2026 Council Term.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the role of the Town Historian and to recommend re-appointment of the Museum to this role.

4. BACKGROUND

The position of Town Historian has historically been a voluntary position and an honorary title. By-law No. 3138-97 initially established the position of Town Historian and appointed Joy Ormsby to this role.

In 2018, the Municipal Heritage Committee recommended that a new Town Historian be selected and that a Terms of Reference be established outlining the duties required of the position. Following this process, the Niagara Historical Society (Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum) was appointed as the Town Historian.

The Museum successfully served as the Town Historian during the previous term of Council (2018-2022). Through discussions with Staff, the Museum has agreed to continue in this role during the 2022-2026 term of Council.

5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

The Town Historian provides strong knowledge and demonstrates a commitment to preserving

cultural heritage resources within the Town. The role supports Municipal Staff by researching properties that are being considered for designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act* or for listing on the Niagara-on-the-Lake Municipal Register of Properties of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest (the “Municipal Heritage Register”). They have access to many historical records and documents and are well-equipped to undertake the required research.

Duties of the Town Historian may include:

- Acquiring, preparing, recording, and reporting facts about historically significant Town events, themes, facts, people, properties, buildings or structures.
- Assembling research required for commemorating properties, buildings, structures, or landmarks.
- Conducting historical research related to properties on the “Municipal Heritage Register.”
- Collaboration with other Town and Provincial organizations.
- Reports to Town Council as required on history-related issues.
- Consolidating information as required for distribution on the Town’s media platforms, at the discretion of the Manager of Planning.
- Providing historical research to Council, the Town’s Municipal Heritage Committee, Town Staff, and other Committees of Council.
- Assisting in research for the purpose of designating properties under the Ontario Heritage Act.
- Assisting Planning Staff by providing research that may assist in the review of Heritage Permit Applications, Heritage Grant Applications, Heritage Tax Rebate Applications, or Planning Act applications that may impact a cultural heritage resource within the Town.
- Researching and writing articles to be placed in the media regarding the history and cultural heritage of the Town.

The Town Historian is to be guided by the Terms of Reference, attached as **Appendix I**. The Terms of Reference has been reviewed and agreed upon by Staff and a representative of the Museum to ensure it continues to meet the needs of both parties. Communications with the Town Historian are directed through the Manager of Planning or their delegate.

This role may be further defined when the Town and Museum enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the future, as identified as an action item in Council’s Strategic Plan.

6. STRATEGIC PLAN

The content of this report supports the following Strategic Plan initiatives:

Pillar

1. Vibrant & Complete Community

Priority

1.2 Economic Development & Community Partnerships

Action

1.2 b) Community Partnership

7. OPTIONS

7.1 **Option 1:** Council appoint the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum as the Town Historian

for the 2022-2026 term of Council and endorse the Terms of Reference
(Recommended)

- 7.2 **Option 2:** Council direct Staff to advertise for a new Town Historian. This action is not recommended as the Museum has successfully supported the Town in the role of Town Historian and has the necessary knowledge and tools to continue to do so.
(Not Recommended)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A; there are no financial implications at this time.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A; there are no environmental implications.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

Discussions have occurred between Town Staff and the Museum regarding this re-appointment. Should Council accept this recommendation, the Town will advise the Museum and work with them to define preferred communication methods and a process for tracking requests.

11. CONCLUSION

In light of Bill 23, it is more important than ever to work with our partners to advance heritage preservation. The Museum has the expertise, tools, and familiarity required to continue successfully in the role of Town Historian. Staff recommend the Museum be re-appointed to continue in this valuable role.

12. PREVIOUS REPORTS

N/A

13. APPENDICES

- **Appendix I** – Terms of Reference for Town Historian

Respectfully submitted:

Recommended by:



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Submitted by:



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