



## Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

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**REPORT #:** CDS-24-051      **COMMITTEE DATE:** 2024-04-03  
**REPORT TO:** Municipal Heritage Committee      **DUE IN COUNCIL:** 2024-04-30  
**SUBJECT:** Wrapping Hydro Boxes – Heritage Permit Application – CDS-24-051

### 1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 The Heritage Permit Application, HER-08-2023, for wrapping hydro boxes in vinyl art in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District be recommended to Council for approval subject to the following conditions:
  - 1.1.1 The alterations be carried out substantially in accordance with the Heritage Permit Application in **Appendix I**;
  - 1.1.2 Permission is acquired from the Director of Community and Services annually by Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro for the locations of hydro boxes selected each year to be wrapped in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. The Director of Community and Services may ask for reconsideration of locations at their discretion; and
  - 1.1.3 Consideration is given to selecting art that is compatible and sympathetic to the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

### 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro submitted a heritage permit application to the Municipal Heritage Committee (MHC) in June 2019 to wrap hydro boxes in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.
- The request was denied by the MHC and several reasons were provided for this denial. In particular, it was recommended that another location would be a better pilot area.
- NOTL Hydro has been wrapping hydro boxes since 2019 in the rest of the urban areas of the Town with the partnership of the Communities in Bloom Committee, the Niagara PumpHouse Arts Centre, and the Town.
- Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro (NOTL Hydro) has reached back to the MHC to request again for a heritage permit for the proposal to install wraps on hydro boxes in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (HCD).
- The hydro boxes are located in various areas of the Queen-Picton HCD.
- No negative impacts are anticipated from the installation of wraps with artwork by local artists on hydro boxes and as recommended, the Town will continue to have oversight with yearly permission required.

### 3. PURPOSE

This report provides a recommendation to the Committee and Council regarding an application for a Heritage Permit (**Appendix I**) for the installation of vinyl art on hydro boxes in the Queen-Picton HCD which is a Part V designated district under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

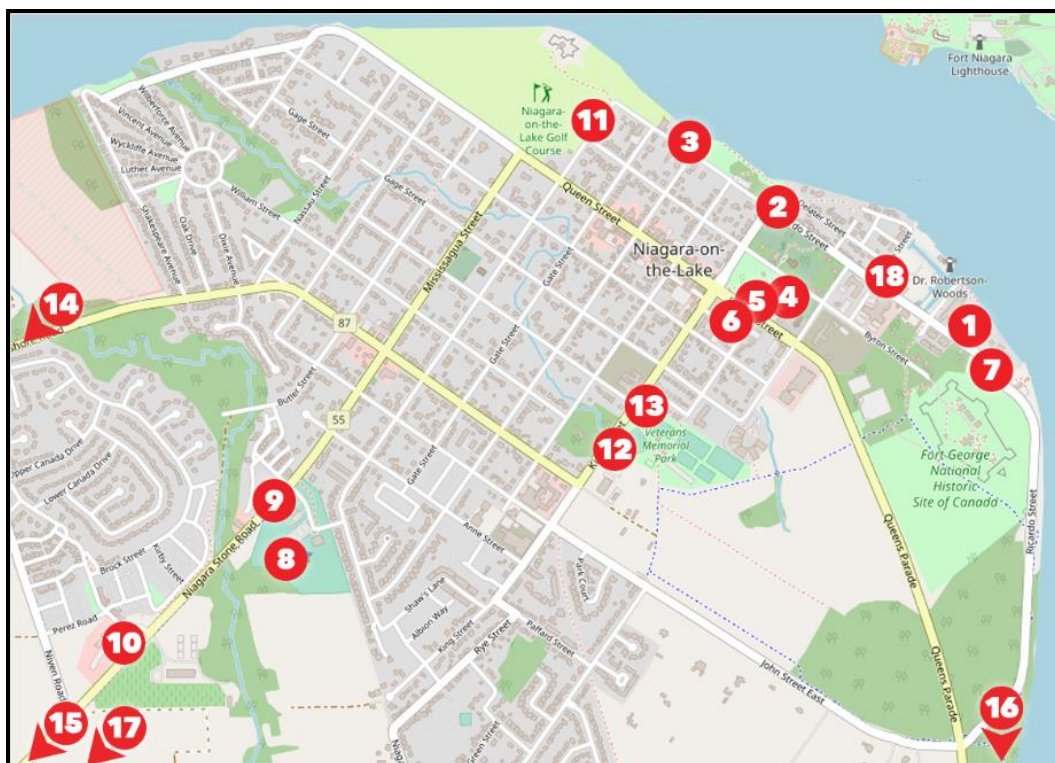
### 4. BACKGROUND

NOTL Hydro initially submitted a request to MHC in June 2019 (**Appendix II**). In their heritage permit application, they offered to provide funding to beautify various hydro boxes in the HCD by wrapping them with art printed on vinyl. The work was to be done in partnership with Niagara PumpHouse Arts Centre and the Communities in Bloom Committee. The request was denied by the MHC with the following direction being provided to Council for consideration (**Appendix III**):

- Identify eligible transformer locations
- Locate the project in another urban area, i.e., Virgil, St. David's, Glendale or Chautauqua
- Usage of historic photos or art for a sense of place
- Ensure safety
- Establish durations and end dates of the pilot
- Establish indicators of success
- Ensure that NOTL Hydro is responsible for maintenance
- Ensure removal within a reasonable timeframe depending on the durability of the wrap

In 2019, NOTL Hydro began the process of hydro box beautification in locations outside of the HCD. **Figure 1** below shows the locations of the hydro boxes that have already been wrapped. The location of the hydro boxes is selected based on high foot traffic areas. The respective art for these hydro boxes can be found in **Appendix IV**.

NOTL Hydro has reached back out to the Town to request reconsideration of wrapping hydro boxes in the Queen-Picton HCD.



**Figure 1: Locations of Currently Wrapped Hydro Boxes**

## **5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS**

### **5.1 Ontario Heritage Act**

The proposed locations of the hydro boxes fall within the business area of the Queen-Pictou (HCD) which is designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Section 42 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* requires the following with respect to alterations:

*Erection, demolition, etc.*

42(1) No owner of property situated in a heritage conservation district that has been designated by a municipality under this Part shall do any of the following unless the owner obtains a permit from the municipality to do so:

1. Alter, or permit the alteration of, any part of the property, other than the interior of any structure or building on the property.
  2. Erect, demolish, or remove any building or structure on the property or permit the erection, demolition, or removal of such a building or structure.
- 2005, c. 6, s. 32 (1).

### **5.2 Queen-Pictou Heritage Conservation District Plan**

The Queen-Pictou Heritage Conservation District Plan (District Plan) provides the following policies with respect to roads, curbs, and services in section 6A.10:

- Basic Municipal Services in the business district including roads, curbs, and sewers shall be brought up to acceptable standards.
- Construction of basic municipal services shall be accomplished in

*coordination with other streetscape improvements.*

These policies do not strictly address the beautification of hydro boxes.

The District Plan also contains policies with respect to signage in the business area in section 6A.9. Although the wrapping of hydro boxes in art does not meet the definition of signage, the objectives for the sign policies in the District Plan are relevant in the guidance they provide with respect to preventing clutter and using signs that complement the historic character of the district. The following objectives provide relevant considerations:

#### 6A.9.2 Objectives

- To provide signs that are complementary to the historic streetscape.
- To provide signs that are functional and easily read by pedestrians and motorists.
- To encourage signage that is restrained and well-designed.
- To prevent a clutter of signage that detracts from the overall clarity of the streetscape.
- To discourage plastic and back-lighted signs.

Although the sign objectives discourage the use of plastic and vinyl, in this instance the vinyl would be wrapped directly onto the hydro boxes and the material will not be apparent. The District Plan is clear in its caution against too much signage which can be "confusing and detrimental to the appearance of the historic building."

### **5.3 Hydro Boxes and Design**

Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro first began the process of hydro box beautification in 2019 in partnership with the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, The Communities in Bloom Committee, and the Niagara Pump House Arts Centre. The program has been successful in celebrating local artists and beautifying the Town. Each year since 2019 there has been a call for entries with a theme attached to it. Local artists submit their artwork to the Pump House and several are chosen each year to be turned into a hydro box wrap.

### **5.4 Impacts**

NOTL Hydro has reached out to the Heritage Staff in anticipation of being allowed to install wraps on hydro boxes in the Queen-Picton HCD. The location of the hydro boxes in the HCD can be seen in **Figure 2**. Most of the hydro boxes are located off of Queen Street, which is the most commercially active area. Therefore, the wraps are not anticipated to create clutter in an already active commercial area.



**Figure 2: Queen-Picton HCD and Location of Hydro Boxes**

The hydro boxes are also small in size and are located on the ground as seen in **Figure 3**. They do not interfere with the pedestrian's visual perspectives when walking up and down Queen Street. Therefore, they are not anticipated to disturb or take away prominence from the HCD streetscape.

Most of the paintings seen in the previous wraps appear to be linked to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. For wraps to be installed in the HCD themes for the paintings of the hydro wraps can be linked to the history and significance of the Old Town urban area and the colours used can be sympathetic and compatible with the HCD.





**Figure 3: Example of a Hydro Box at the Intersection of Victoria Street and Queen Street**

## **6. STRATEGIC PLAN**

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

### **Pillar**

3. Enrich Community Assets, Environment, & Infrastructure

### **Priority**

3.1 Assets

### **Action**

3.3 a) Infrastructure Investment (Physical & Green)

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The project to undertake the vinyl wrapping will be fully funded by NOTL Hydro. There are no other costs to the Town. The heritage permit application, any staff review, and administrative costs are borne by the Town.

## **8. COMMUNICATIONS**

The recommendations of the Municipal Heritage Committee will go to Council for final approval. Upon approval by the Council, the comments would be relayed to the applicant by Staff.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

Heritage Permit Application HER-08-2024 for the wrapping of hydro boxes in vinyl art is recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions.

## **10. PREVIOUS REPORTS**

MHC-19-024, Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Heritage Permit Application Wrapping Hydro Boxes

## **11. APPENDICES**

- **Appendix I** – Heritage Permit Application
- **Appendix II** – MHC-19-024 Hydro Box
- **Appendix III** – MHC-19-024 Meeting minutes
- **Appendix IV** – Gallery of Wrapped Hydro Boxes

Respectfully submitted:

**Prepared by:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sumra', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Sumra Zia, B. Arch, Dipl. Architectural  
Conservation  
Heritage Planner II**