

# Niagara-On-The-Lake

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**June 11, 2019**

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Municipal Heritage Committee</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Heritage Permit Application Wrapping Hydro Boxes</b>

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 The pilot project to wrap hydro boxes in vinyl art in the Queen-Pictou Heritage Conservation District be approved subject to the following conditions:
  - a) The hydro box at the corner of King Street and Queen Street be wrapped in historic black and white photos of the adjacent cultural heritage resources to the satisfaction of the Director of Community and Development Services.
  - b) The hydro boxes on Market Street and Wellington Street be wrapped in art that is related to local culture and heritage to the satisfaction of the Director of Community and Development Services.

The purpose of this report is to review the application to wrap hydro boxes in decorative vinyl art for conformity with the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan.

NOTL Hydro has offered to provide funding to beautify various hydro boxes in Old Town by wrapping them with art printed on vinyl. The Town would like to partner with the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre to advertise an art competition for designs. The theme of artwork is community beautification and would include but not be limited to gardens, landscapes and local history and landmarks.

The Town is considering this as a pilot project beginning with three hydro boxes in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (see proposed locations and hydro box conditions assessment in **Appendix A**). The proposed locations are not directly located on Queen Street. Locations include Market Street in front of the public washrooms, King Street beside the Apothecary building, and the corner of Picton and Wellington Street by St Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Church.

Examples of wrapped boxes as used in the Town of Sidney, British Columbia, are shown in **Appendix B**.

## **4. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Ontario Heritage Act**

All of the proposed hydro boxes fall within the business area of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District 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).*

### **4.2 Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan**

The Queen-Picton 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 pedestrian and motorist.
- To encourage a 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.

Firstly, the sign objectives and the District Plan, in general, discourage the use of plastic and vinyl. In this instance, given that the vinyl would be wrapped directly onto the metal hydro boxes the vinyl material will not be apparent. As such, the use of vinyl wrap can be considered appropriate.

The District Plan is very clear in its caution against too much signage which can be "confusing and detrimental to the appearance of the historic building." Staff are concerned that bold and colourful artwork on the hydro boxes could contribute to visual clutter in the business area of the Heritage District, which already contains significant commercial signage. Additional visual stimulation in the form of art and images draws the attention of pedestrians away from the historic building stock and streetscape which should remain the focus in the Heritage District. Caution should be exercised when considering adding artwork and images to the streetscape, especially with respect to impacts to the streetscape composition.

The sign objectives highlight the importance of signs that are complementary to the District. A successful example of art beautification in the District are the historic photos that were erected on construction hoarding at 135 Queen Street. In this instance, the historic photos provided pedestrians with an additional way to interpret and understand the Heritage District, providing simultaneous opportunity for education and beautification. However, the hoarding artwork was temporary. The vinyl wrap proposed for the hydro boxes would serve as a more permanent streetscape display.

Staff note that the hydro box locations for this proposed pilot project are not located directly on Queen Street, which is the area where the majority of commercial signage (and visual clutter) is located. However, the box on the corners of King and Queen Street is still centrally located in the District and visually connected to Queen Street. It is recommended that the hydro box on King Street be wrapped in black and white photos of the historic streetscape so as to contribute to cultural heritage interpretation within the Heritage District. The use of black and white photos would assist in reducing visual clutter on this busy section of King and Queen Street. Historic photos should include images of the buildings and intersection that are immediately adjacent to the box, such as photos of the Apothecary, the intersection of King and Queen Street, or the Prince of Wales Hotel (see examples in **Appendix C**). Permission would be required to use these photos, many of which belong to the Niagara Historical Society and Museum and the library.

The areas in which the remaining two hydro boxes are located (Market Street and Wellington Street) are off the main street and less cluttered with commercial signage. As such, staff recommend that the designs could be artists choice, employing the use of colour, but must still relate to local culture or heritage.

## **5. STRATEGIC PLAN**

Not applicable.

## **6. OPTIONS**

Not applicable.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The pilot project to undertake the vinyl wrapping will be fully funded by NOTL Hydro. There are no other costs to the Town with approval of this Heritage Permit application. There is no fee for a Heritage Permit application and any staff review as administrative costs are borne by the Town.

## **8. COMMUNICATIONS**

The recommendations of the Municipal Heritage Committee will go to Council for final approval. Sections 33 and 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act set out that, within 90 days after the notice of receipt is served on the applicant, the council may give the applicant:

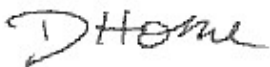
- (a) the permit applied for;*
- (b) notice that the council is refusing the application for the permit; or*
- (c) the permit applied for, with terms and conditions attached.*

The *Ontario Heritage Act* should be consulted in regard to process and for further information. No alterations can take place on the property until Council approval and a Heritage Permit has been received by the applicant. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all necessary planning and building approvals and permits have been obtained.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The Heritage Permit application for a pilot project to wrap hydro boxes in vinyl art is recommended for approval subject to the above conditions as there are no anticipated negative impacts to the Heritage District with the proposed hydro box locations. There will be no costs to the Town as NOTL Hydro is providing funding for this beautification project.

**Respectfully submitted,**



**Denise Horne, MA, Diploma Heritage Conservation**

## Planner II



**Rick Wilson, MCIP, RPP**  
**Manager of Planning**

### ATTACHMENTS



[Appendix A - locations.pdf](#)



[Appendix B - wrap types.pdf](#)



[Appendix C.pdf](#)

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First Capital of Upper Canada - 1792