

Subject: Aurora War Memorial 100th Anniversary, Collaboration

Staff Report No. CS-007-24

Commission: Community Services Commission

Date: June 19, 2024

Recommendation:

- 1) That Council receive Report No. CS-007-24 for information.

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to inform Council that staff are working in collaboration with the Town of Aurora and King Township to plan for the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial in 2025 and outline the collaborative plan of action.

2. Executive Summary:

In 2025, the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial will take place. In 1925, Aurora, King, and Whitchurch-Stouffville came together to memorialize those who made the ultimate sacrifice during WW1. After discussion with the Town of Aurora and King Township, a recommended plan of action along with a preliminary budget and grant funding options were identified. While some elements will apply only to the Town of Aurora, others will be collaborative. Those collaborative elements include an outdoor, virtual, and travelling exhibits, along with soldier commemoration via street banners in each respective municipality, and a special ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the unveiling and dedication of the Aurora War Memorial in October 2025. The recommendations were passed at the Aurora Committee of the Whole meeting on May 7, 2024. The plan of action was approved by Aurora Town Council at their meeting of May 28, 2024, and staff were asked to report back to Council with financial specifics as part of their 2025 budget process.

3. Background:

In 1925, Aurora, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville came together to share in memorializing those who made the ultimate sacrifice during WW1. The Aurora War Memorial was constructed at that time at what is now known as the Aurora Peace Park, Yonge Street. The Altar of Sacrifice was added in 1960 to honour those who fell in WW2, and the Korean War Memorial was added in 2022. In 2025, the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial will take place. Aurora, King, and Whitchurch-Stouffville have a unique relationship that transcends municipal borders.

At their Council meeting held on November 28, 2023, the Town of Aurora Council passed the following motion:

1. Now Therefore Be It Resolved That the Town of Aurora staff collaborate with the Aurora Legion, King Township, Whitchurch-Stouffville, the Provincial and Federal governments to commemorate this significant celebration; and
2. That staff report back with a collaborative plan of action with possible budget considerations; and
3. That a copy of this resolution be provided to King Township, Whitchurch-Stouffville, the Minister of Veteran Affairs, and the local MPPs and MPs of each municipality.

On May 7th, 2024, the Town of Aurora Committee of the Whole approved the recommendations as presented in Report CMS24-015 and staff were instructed to report back at a later date with final budget considerations. The plan included items specific to the Town of Aurora such as site work and enhancements to the Aurora Memorial Peace Park and a permanent memorial dedicated to Indigenous veterans. The plan also included the elements that would be collaborative which are listed in this report. A Council communication from the Town of Aurora was circulated on December 28, 2023 as part of the Council Communications for Information for the January 17, 2024 Council meeting.

4. Analysis and Options:

To properly honour this significant anniversary, staff from the Town of Aurora reached out to consult with all parties identified in the first recommendation to develop a collaborative action plan. Subsequently a planning team was formed with members of the Museums from the Town of Aurora, King Township, and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Collaborative elements were identified and include:

An outdoor, virtual, and travelling exhibition will be developed.

A series of outdoor, virtual, and travelling exhibitions will explore how the three municipalities came together to share in memorializing those who made the ultimate

sacrifice during the First World War. Content from all three municipal collections will be showcased to help tell the story of how the Aurora War Memorial, and surrounding Peace Park, came to be. The Town of Aurora will recruit contract staff to assist with exhibition research, development, installation, and other parts of the project, as needed.

The outdoor exhibition will be located at the Aurora War Memorial, Peace Park and will be displayed from August to November 2025. A virtual exhibition will be launched on the anniversary of the memorial dedication. Finally, a travelling exhibition will be developed for display in Whitchurch-Stouffville, King Township, and other possible locations.

Soldiers from the First World War will be commemorated through the street banner program in each of their respective municipalities.

Banners will fall into two categories: the first includes information about the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial, the second category will feature individual soldiers whose names are included on the Aurora War Memorial. The design of the banners will be standardized, and each municipality will highlight individuals local to their area who made the ultimate sacrifice during the First World War.

A special ceremony will take place commemorating the 100th anniversary of the unveiling and dedication of the Aurora War Memorial.

A special ceremony will take place to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial. The Aurora Legion will lead this ceremony and it will include a re-dedication of the restored monument, speakers, and a selection of traditional music and readings. Staff will endeavour to connect with descendants of individuals who were responsible for organizing, fundraising, and advocating for the construction of the Aurora War Memorial in 1925.

5. Financial Implications:

In collaboration, staff from the Town of Aurora, King Township and Whitchurch-Stouffville are pursuing several federal grants that would help to offset project expenditures, including but not limited to: Community War Memorial Funding, Legacy Fund, Commemorate Canada, Digital Museums Canada – Community Stories, and Museum Assistance Program – Exhibition Circulation Fund. The result of the grant application process isn't expected to be known until early 2025.

Where appropriate, staff expect for some expenses to be shared between the municipalities. These expenses will be itemized clearly as planning continues. Preliminary costs that could be shared would include the following:

The divided shared cost would be proposed as a one-time budget item in support of the Aurora War Memorial 100th Anniversary and would be included in the 2025 operating budget under Community Services, Museum and Heritage Services.

Exhibitions Design, panel production, outdoor signage rental, production of travelling exhibition materials, and translation.	\$38,000
Street Banners Design, banner production, installation (in required)	\$12,500
Commemorative Ceremony Refreshments and program production	\$3,000
Total	\$53,500 (divided equally between partner municipalities)

6. Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- 3. An Engaging Town
Increase Community Engagement & Outreach

7. Attachments:

Attachment #1 - Town of Aurora Council Resolution of November 28, 2023 Motion 10.1 – Councillor Gilliland; Re: Aurora Cenotaph 100 Year Celebration

Attachment #2 - Town of Aurora Council Report - Aurora War Memorial 100th Anniversary

8. Related Reports:

None

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For further information on this report, please contact the Department Head: Rob Braid, Commissioner, Community Services at 905-640-1900 or 1-855-642-8697 ext. 2245 or via email at rob.braid@townofws.ca