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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. CMS24-015

Subject: Aurora War Memorial 100th Anniversary

Prepared by: Michelle Johnson, Collections and Exhibitions Coordinator

Department: Community Services

Date: May 7, 2024

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS24-015 be received; and
2. That Council approve the collaborative plan of action as presented in this report; and
3. That staff report back at a later date with an update including final budget considerations.

Executive Summary

Since 1925, Aurorans and members of surrounding communities have consistently gathered in Aurora War Memorial Peace Park to memorialize those who made the ultimate sacrifice during global conflicts. In 2025, the Aurora War Memorial, and surrounding Peace Park, will have served as the epicentre for this shared sentiment for one hundred years.

- A collaborative plan of action to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial is being developed.
- Site work and enhancements to Aurora War Memorial Peace Park should be considered ahead of the 100th anniversary celebrations.
- An outdoor, virtual, and travelling exhibition will be developed.
- Soldiers from the First World War will be commemorated through the street banner program in each of their respective municipalities.

- A special ceremony will take place commemorating the 100th anniversary of the unveiling and dedication of the Aurora War Memorial.
- A permanent memorial dedicated to Indigenous veterans should be explored and potentially included in these centennial celebrations.
- Staff have developed possible budget considerations for the 100th year.

Background

A collaborative plan of action to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial is being developed.

In 2025, the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial will take place. In response, Council recently 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.

To properly honour this significant anniversary, staff have consulted with all parties identified in the first recommendation to develop a collaborative action plan presented in this report.

Analysis

Site work and enhancements to Aurora War Memorial Peace Park should be considered ahead of the 100th anniversary celebrations.

In consultation with the Parks Division, the following site work and enhancement opportunities have been identified for Aurora War Memorial Peace Park:

- Hardscaping – remove the existing lock stone, re-level the base, re-install the existing stones, and spray/seal 220 linear feet of asphalt pathway.

- Permanent seating – addition of four memorial benches installed on a 3'x7' slab on grade.
- Memorial restoration – correct misspelled last name, remove incorrect medal attribution, preventative conservation, and restoration of the Aurora War Memorial.
- Electrical– upgrade power supply.
- Additional lighting – add lighting to the Korean War Memorial and LAV
- Wreath standards – refabricate and replace wreath standards.

The work required on the Aurora War Memorial to correct a misspelled last name and remove incorrect medal attributions will be brought forward to the Heritage Advisory Committee for review and comment.

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

Aurora, King, and Stouffville have a unique relationship that transcends municipal borders. A series of outdoor, virtual, and travelling exhibitions will explore that relationship by focusing on 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 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 in Aurora War Memorial Peace Park and will be on view 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 Stouffville, King, 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. After the project, the soldier banners will be given to the Aurora Legion for their use.

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.

Staff will report back with more detail about the commemorative ceremony as collaborative planning efforts progress.

A permanent memorial dedicated to Indigenous veterans should be explored and potentially included in these centennial celebrations.

For 100 years, Aurora War Memorial Peace Park has been identified as the place community members go to memorialize those who have been lost to armed conflict. Missing from the landscape is a memorial dedicated to Indigenous community members who have lost their lives in conflict since the beginning of European settlement. A new memorial dedicated to Indigenous people who have made the ultimate sacrifice is being considered as part of this project.

Staff have developed possible budget considerations for the 100th year celebrations.

The collaborative action plan as presented features a variety of ways that the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial and Peace Park can be celebrated, including site work/enhancements, exhibitions, street banners, a commemorative ceremony and the installation of a new memorial focused on Indigenous contributions to armed conflict. The combined cost estimate for these projects is approximately \$144,000.

Staff 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 also expect for some of the expenses to be shared between municipalities. These expenses will be itemized at the next update where final budget considerations will be shared.

A breakdown of projects and estimated costs are provided below:

Table 1: Aurora War Memorial 100th Anniversary Proposed Budget

Site Work and Enhancements	\$53,500
Hardscaping, permanent seating, restoration, electrical upgrades, lighting, and replacement wreath standards.	
Exhibitions	\$38,000
Design, panel production, outdoor signage rental, production of travelling exhibition materials, and translation.	
Contract Staff	\$12,000
Exhibition research, development, installation, and other parts of the project as needed.	
Street Banners	\$12,500
Design, banner production, and installation.	
Commemorative Ceremony	\$3,000
Refreshments and program production.	
New Indigenous Memorial	\$25,000
Design, production, artist fee, dedication and unveiling.	
Total	\$144,000

Advisory Committee Review

A detailed memo about restoration work required on the Aurora War Memorial, including the correction of a misspelled last name and removal of incorrect medal attributions, will be brought forward to the Heritage Advisory Committee for review and comment.

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

The total proposed one-time budget in support of the Aurora War Memorial 100th Anniversary is \$144,000 as detailed under Table 1. Upon confirmation of the final budget for this initiative, a new capital project could be included in the capital plan as part of the Mayor's budget. The funding source(s) for this project would be confirmed at the time. However, funding sources are likely to include federal grants and contributions from municipal partners.

Communications Considerations

Communications will develop a plan to inform the public about the items in the action plan culminating with the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations in this report do not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Aurora War Memorial 100th Anniversary supports the following Strategic Plan goals and key objectives:

Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

- Invest in sustainable infrastructure
- Celebrating and promoting our culture
- Strengthening the fabric of our community

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may provide further direction.

Conclusions

As requested by Council, this report summarizes the proposed collaborative action plan, including budget considerations, to mark the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial in 2025. Staff are seeking Council's approval of the plan and are committed to reporting back at a future date with additional detail as planning efforts progress.

Attachments

None.

Previous Reports

None.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on April 18, 2024

Approvals

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer