

Staff Report



Corporate Services Department

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REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: June 8, 2022

SUBMITTED BY: Elin Moorlag Silk, Interim Director, Equity, Anti-Racism & Indigenous Initiatives, 519-741-2200 ext. 7049;
Niall Loble, Director, Parks and Cemeteries, 519-741-2600 ext. 4518

PREPARED BY: Elin Moorlag Silk, Interim Director, Equity, Anti-Racism & Indigenous Initiatives, 519-741-2200 ext. 7049;
Jake Linklater, Senior Indigenous Advisor, Equity, Anti-Racism & Indigenous Initiatives

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Wards

DATE OF REPORT: May 27, 2022

REPORT NO.: COR-2022-253

SUBJECT: Queen Victoria Statue: Community Engagement and Public Education

RECOMMENDATION:

That staff be directed to launch:

1. an equity-driven community engagement process to gather ideas and feedback from the community with respect to the Queen Victoria statue located in Victoria Park, and,
2. a public education process around the history related to Queen Victoria, the statue and its impacts

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to present a strategy for City of Kitchener staff to undertake an equity-driven community engagement strategy to gather ideas and feedback from the community on how to proceed with the Queen Victoria statue
- Given the complex nature of the issue and the historical legacy that the Queen Victoria statue represents, an integral component of this strategy will include public education related to Queen Victoria, the statue and its impacts, including the ongoing effects colonialism has had on generations of Indigenous, Black and racialized persons.
- The proposed strategy will take place over an 8 – 12 month period, in collaboration with multiple stakeholders and ongoing work happening at the City through the *Places and Spaces* project and active involvement in the Regional Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RAPWG)
- The cost estimate for these activities is between \$15,000 - \$30,000, which staff propose to be funded through the Capital Contingency budget

*** This information is available in accessible formats upon request. ***
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

- Conducting equity-driven community engagement will be a key component of this strategy. This engagement process will provide opportunities for the public at large to provide input while prioritizing the voices of Indigenous, Black and racialized community members.
- This report supports A Caring Community through the City's commitment to operating as a municipality where racism and oppression are not permissible at either an individual or systemic level

BACKGROUND:

The Queen Victoria statue in Victoria Park has been the subject of criticism by Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities and allies over the past year. On July 1st and August 15th, 2021, and May 5th and May 25th 2022, red paint was applied to the statue. On all four occasions the paint was cleaned off the statue, which in some cases was done immediately and in the case of May 5th, done after a period of eleven days. The paint being left on for a period of time and the paint being cleaned off have both been subject to negative public criticism and increased media attention.

The Queen Victoria statue was commissioned by the local chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.) and officially dedicated in 1911. The purpose of the Order was to promote British loyalism and imperialism. Over the past 10 years, approximately \$60,000 has been spent to preserve and remediate this artwork. Based on a conservation assessment in 2013, annual maintenance for this piece is estimated at \$3000 and restorative work at the time was estimated at \$2500. Removal of the paint costs approximately \$5,000 each time paint has been applied to the statue, depending on the amount of paint and complexity of the application.

Interpretive signage was installed at the base of the statue on September 29th, 2021, just ahead of National day for Truth and Reconciliation. The purpose of installing this signage was to signal to the community that work was underway towards equity and reconciliation in the realm of public art. To this end, City of Kitchener staff are working with the Regional Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RAPWG), where a subcommittee has been struck to focus on the issues related to naming or renaming of municipal roads, spaces, facilities and commemorations and artwork in the public realm. The subcommittee aims to examine the narratives and stories that shape our current public spaces and commit to making changes to how we commemorate harmful legacies.

REPORT:

Staff have researched strategies related to next steps for the Queen Victoria Statue through consultation with City staff, review of relevant corporate and municipal policies, review of processes/actions being taken by other municipalities, and review of relevant external policies, processes and documents. What is being presented to Council for consideration is a strategy that includes equity-driven community engagement alongside a robust awareness and education component, as outlined below:

Queen Victoria Statue Engagement & Education Strategy



Phase 1: Preparation & Research *July – September 2022*

- Collaborate with internal stakeholders, develop a detailed workplan and budget to implement the strategy.
- Gather/compile research focused on Queen Victoria and the legacy of colonialism, develop education and awareness materials for public engagement and consultation.
- Develop engagement strategy and accompanying education/awareness campaign, including rationale and background, proposed engagement methods, communications tactics, identification of key external stakeholders, proposed timeline and cost estimate

Phase 2: Engagement & Education *October 2022 – February 2023*

- Implement equity-driven community engagement strategy. This engagement process will provide opportunities for the public at large to provide input while prioritizing the voices of Indigenous, Black and racialized community members.
- Engagement may include tactics such as online surveys, focused conversations with small groups and/or presentations/idea sharing at association/organization meetings, all done through a combination of virtual and in-person facilitation
- Implement accompanying education/awareness campaign

Phase 3: Summarize & Report *March/April 2023*

- Summarize results of the community engagement strategy and bring staff report back to Council with community-led, equity-driven recommendations on potential next steps for the statue for Council consideration

Phase 4: Implement Results *May/June 2023*

- Following Council direction, implement results of the engagement strategy

Although this strategy is focused specifically on the Queen Victoria statue in Victoria Park, it is important to view this project as a small piece of a much larger body of work that the City of Kitchener is in the very beginning stages of undertaking. Acknowledging and addressing the harms colonialism has had on Indigenous, Black and other racialized populations and incorporating an equity-driven approach to conducting community engagement and gathering public feedback is a small but important step towards reconciliation and decolonization in all the work that we do. Staff expect this project to generate difficult and complex conversations within

and outside the organization, which is also an essential part of doing this work and necessary as part of our commitment to meaningful and sustained organizational change.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports A Caring Community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The cost estimate for this strategy is between \$15,000 - \$30,000 for the following project elements:

- Engagement of an external consultant if needed for research, education & engagement expertise for overall project design & implementation
- Print materials for engagement and education phase of the project
- Expenses related to conducting community engagement (equipment, supplies, refreshments, accommodation for barriers to participation if needed)

Staff propose that this project be funded through Capital Contingency, as it is something that has been raised with some level of urgency and falls outside of the scope of current capital or operating budgets within relevant divisions.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting. Ongoing transparency with the community about this strategy will be an important component. Once Council direction is received on the launch of this project, public messaging will be shared to provide further details about the project, timelines, and plans and opportunities for engagement.

COLLABORATE – Conducting equity-driven community engagement will be a key component of this strategy. Given the anticipated public interest in this issue, the engagement process will provide opportunities for the public at large to provide input, although the voices of those members of the community who have experienced harm from the legacy of colonialism will be prioritized throughout the process (i.e. – Indigenous, Black and racialized communities).

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

There are no previous reports/authorities related to this matter.

APPROVED BY: Victoria Raab, General Manager, Corporate Services

ATTACHMENTS: none