



Administrative Report

Office of the Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Allan Botham, P.Eng.
Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services

Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Subject: River Canard Bridge Plaque Proposal

Report #: 2023-1018-IPS-R33-AB

Purpose

The objective of this Administrative Report is to provide County Council with information pertaining to the proposed installation of a commemorative plaque for the River Canard Bridge, B-08-02. The report will enable an informed decision-making process regarding this noteworthy historical preservation endeavor.

Background

Originally built in 1937, the rare concrete tied arch or bowstring bridge on County Road 8 at the Amherstburg-LaSalle border, is the only remaining structure of this type on the county road network and is considered to be a historic landmark. ^[1] These features have defined this structure as a candidate Heritage Bridge under the Ontario Heritage Act. ^[2]

River Canard, one of North America's oldest European settlements, dates back to the 18th-century French colonial era associated with Fort Detroit and the Detroit River. Descendants of these early settlers, known as the "Fort Detroit French," still reside in the region. While Ontario's French community has distinct historical backgrounds, they occasionally collaborate on shared concerns, like promoting French education in schools and preserving the language within French-speaking congregations.

To honor the subject bridge's significance, Essex County Council supported the following motion to install a commemorative plaque. ^[3]

"Whereas the bow string River Canard Bridge, which is owned by the County of Essex and located on the boundary of LaSalle and

Amherstburg, is an Essex County landmark with historical significance to the area;

And whereas this bridge has deep ties to our communities and is widely photographed and painted by artists;

And whereas other bridges of lesser historical or architectural significance have historical or descriptive plaques recognizing them;

Now therefore, Essex County Council requests County Administration to prepare a Council report on the feasibility of having a plaque installed at the location of the bow string River Canard Bridge.”

Discussion

Administration understands that the specific request is to investigate feasibility and options to purchase and install a plaque near the subject bridge, with wording that provides readers with relevant, historical significance.

Consideration was given to:

- County of Essex policy regarding naming assets (plaques on bridges)
- Need for links to accessible documents by way of smart phone links
- Provision of French language translation
- Provincial/Federal partnerships
- Size and shape of the plaque to accommodate preferred wording
- Opportunity to purchase a plaque from suppliers
- Location, Construction and Maintenance

Policy 17-001 Naming of Corporate Assets Policy is the only County of Essex policy remotely applicable, but was intended to address requests to add actual names to an asset. For example, the Gordie Howe Bridge. The CAO is satisfied that policy 17-001 does not apply to the Notice of Motion. Further, there are no policies or best management practices prohibiting the application of a plaque on a County of Essex bridge.

In pursuit of the commemorative plaque project, diligent efforts were made to engage with various organizations, including the Ontario Heritage Trust and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC), to explore potential sources of support and collaboration. Simultaneously, outreach was extended to several private firms with expertise in plaques, signage, and monument creation. Administration was able to glean insight to ensure the successful execution of this historically significant project.

Through examination of existing plaques overseen by the Ontario Heritage Trust throughout the County, approximate measurements and content were

obtained. This information was essential for firms to offer insights into the project's scope and requirements. Moreover, we have identified several critical factors that can influence the cost estimation for the plaque project. For example, provision of a double-sided plaque to accommodate bilingual historical information, the choice of materials such as aluminum or bronze, and the intricacy of any 2D or 3D symbols that may adorn the plaque. These considerations will play a pivotal role in determining the overall pricing structure for the project and will inform Council's decisions moving forward, making sure to not compromise on quality.

Private firms and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) accept application intakes without set deadlines. In contrast, Ontario Heritage Trust currently schedules intakes exclusively in the month of September each year.

For comparison purposes, typical Ontario Heritage Trust plaques contain between 160 to 180 words, featuring bilingual content with one side in English and the other in French. The plaques are designed to be independently mounted on a pole. The base and installation will be provided by the County while the plaque and pole will be provided by the Trust. The specific dimensions of the plaque, as illustrated in Figure 1, were determined to be as follows:

1. Total Height: 95.5 cm.
2. Total Width: 103.5 cm.
3. Main Height: 72 cm.
4. Pole Width: 8.9 cm diameter, with a perimeter of 28 cm.
5. Border Width: 2 cm.

Historically, bronze has been the preferred material for plaques and castings. However, aluminum has recently emerged as a strong alternative due to its similar casting capabilities, intricate artwork possibilities, cost-effectiveness, and lighter weight. The choice between these materials should consider specific factors, such as location and traffic. In high-traffic areas where plaques may encounter pedestrian or vehicular traffic, bronze is often recommended for its robustness and durability. Yet, for a plaque at the bowstring bridge, where prominence and bilingual presentation are essential, aluminum stands out as the better choice. Its lighter weight and affordability simplify installation on a post near the bridge, allowing for an English version on one side and a French version on the other. This accommodates visitors from both linguistic backgrounds, making aluminum the optimal choice in this context due to its versatility and cost-effectiveness.

Administration prepared draft wording for the plaque for Councils review and comment (please refer to Appendix I).



Figure 1

Financial Implications

Preliminary quotations were received from three private firms. The Ontario Heritage Trust pricing structure is fixed. Ontario Heritage Trust has an extensive application process focusing on the bridge's historical significance and importance.

Administration also contacted the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC). While they did not disclose the specific expenses, it is essential to highlight that due to the bridge's lack of federal designation, it does not qualify for cost sharing with HSMBC.

Maintenance is assumed to be minimal and as needed, similar to typical road signs on County road allowances. It is worth noting that the Ontario Heritage Trust provides for annual cleaning and minor maintenance by summer students.

The quotations received can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1

<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Quote in Canadian Dollars</u>
Private Company	Prices ranged between \$10,000 and \$20,000 (plus taxes)
Ontario Heritage Trust	\$6,500 (plus an "in kind" donation)

The Amherstburg Historical Society has offered to contribute to the cost of the plaque. Once Council has provided direction on the option and wording, Administration will confirm the commitment from the society.

Consultations

1. Kotsis, J. (2016, March 16). River canard bridge to undergo \$500,000 rehabilitation - Windsor star. River Canard bridge to undergo \$500,000 rehabilitation. <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/river-canard-bridge-to-undergo>
2. Bateman, T. (2012). (rep.). County Road 8 — Bridge at River Canard Proposed Load Restrictions (pp. 1–2). Essex, Ontario: Corporation of the County of Essex.
3. Wikimedia Foundation. (2023, January 26). River Canard, Ontario. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Canard,_Ontario

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report 2023-1018-IPS-R33-AB, and
That Administration be directed to prepare and submit application to the Ontario Heritage Trust requesting a plaque to be installed at the River Canard Bridge B-08-02, including the suggested wording provided the by the County of Essex.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Allan Botham

Allan Botham, P.Eng., Director, Infrastructure and Planning Services

Concurred With,

Sandra Zwiers

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
Appendix I	Draft Paragraph – Story for Proposed Plaque