



## THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

### OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

***Mission Statement:*** As stewards of the Town of Amherstburg, we strive to improve the quality of life of all residents through the delivery of effective, efficient, and affordable services.

<b>Author's Name:</b> Adam Coates	<b>Report Date:</b> June 24, 2024
<b>Author's Phone:</b> 519 736-5408 ext. 2147	<b>Date to Council:</b> July 8, 2024
<b>Author's E-mail:</b> acoates@amherstburg.ca	<b>Resolution #:</b>

**To:** Mayor and Members of Town Council

**Subject:** River Canard Bridge Plaque Recognition

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#### 1. RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

1. The report from the Heritage Planner dated June 24, 2024 regarding the River Canard Bridge Plaque Recognition project **BE RECEIVED for Information**; and,
2. A contribution of \$3,000 be made to the County of Essex project initiative to provide two bilingual recognition plaques for the River Canard Bridge, **BE ENDORSED**.

#### 2. BACKGROUND:

This report is in reference to a collaborative project between the County of Essex, the Town of LaSalle, and the Town of Amherstburg.

In 2023, the County of Essex Council received report 2023-1018-IPS-R33-AB with information on the proposed installation of a commemorative plaque at the bow string bridge over River Canard. The River Canard Bridge borders the Town of LaSalle and the Town of Amherstburg along County Road 8.

Essex County Council adopted a recommendation that administration prepare and submit an application to the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) requesting a plaque to be installed at the River Canard Bridge. County Council also supported that two, bilingual signs be installed, one on both the LaSalle and Amherstburg sides of the bridge.

The County is required to submit the request to the OHT by July 31, 2024, for consideration in September 2024 by the OHT selection committee. Installation and unveiling will occur in 2025 at a date yet to be determined.

The Town of LaSalle Council received an administrative report on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 requesting a contribution of \$3,000 be committed to the project.

The County of Essex Council will be receiving an administrative report on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 recommending that administration make an application to the Ontario Heritage Trust by the end of the month, and commit \$16,000 to the project.

### **3. DISCUSSION:**

The County of Essex Administration will prepare the application to the OHT along with input from both the Town of LaSalle and the Town of Amherstburg. Should the OHT accept and award plaques to the County of Essex, discussion will continue regarding final wording, location, costs, delivery, unveiling ceremony, etc.

Input on the wording will come from the County of Essex, Town of Amherstburg, Town of LaSalle and the OHT. The Count of Essex will provide the following as a draft proposal.

“This iconic bridge connects the communities of Amherstburg and LaSalle, crossing the River Canard near its mouth at the Detroit River. Situated in the shadow of historic St. Joseph Church, a designated heritage site, the River Canard Bridge is the only concrete tied arch or bowstring bridge that remains in the County road network from an original inventory of four. The bridge deck is suspended from overhead dual arches and, unlike most bowstring bridges, features thin vertical hangers and concrete railings. It was constructed in 1937 with a span of 36 metres and underwent significant rehabilitations in 2001 and again in 2016. It is one of the most photographed and painted structures in all of Essex County and serves as a landmark for River Canard.”

### **History of the River Canard Bridge**

The following was provided in the Town of LaSalle report. (AD-2024-11)

“The bowstring bridge on County Road 8 linking the municipalities of Amherstburg and LaSalle holds substantial provincial significance as a testament to Ontario’s rich engineering heritage and its historical development. Constructed in 1937, this bridge over the River Canard exemplifies the bowstring arch design, an innovative architectural style prevalent in the early 20th century. This design is characterized by its elegant parabolic arch and vertical suspender cables, which provide both structural efficiency and aesthetic appeal. The bridge's enduring presence over the past 87 years highlights the durability and ingenuity of early 20th-century engineering practices.

The bridge represents a critical period in Ontario's infrastructural evolution, reflecting the advancements in construction techniques and materials that were emerging at the time. The bowstring bridge is not just a functional structure but also a symbol of the province’s commitment to developing robust and long-lasting transportation networks that support both local and regional economies. Its construction facilitated improved connectivity between rural and urban areas, enhancing trade, mobility, and economic growth in the region.

The bridge also embodies the social and economic dynamics of Ontario in the early 20th century. As a rural infrastructure project, it played a vital role in integrating remote communities into the broader provincial economy, enabling farmers and local businesses to access larger markets and resources. This integration was crucial for the economic sustainability and growth of rural areas, contributing to the overall prosperity of the province.

Furthermore, the bowstring bridge is a rare and well-preserved example of a once-common bridge design, making it an important cultural and historical asset. Its preservation and recognition as a heritage structure would underscore the province's dedication to conserving its diverse architectural and engineering legacies. It serves as an educational tool, offering insights into the historical context of Ontario's infrastructural development and the technological advancements of its time.

By designating this bridge as a provincial heritage site, Ontario can celebrate its engineering heritage and acknowledge the significance of infrastructure in shaping the province's social and economic landscape. It also aligns with broader provincial goals of heritage conservation, fostering a sense of pride and identity among Ontario's residents. The bowstring bridge on County Road 8 is not merely a physical structure but a historical narrative that connects the past with the present, illustrating the province's journey through the decades.

Recognizing and preserving this bridge as a heritage site through the Ontario Heritage Trust would honor the engineering achievements of the past, provide educational opportunities for future generations, and reinforce the importance of maintaining Ontario's historical infrastructure.”

#### **4. RISK ANALYSIS:**

There is low Cultural Heritage risk associated with this report. The River Canard Bridge has recently been restored and is expected to remain as an important landmark.

There is moderate to high reputational risk associated with this report. This is a collaborative project with an upper tier and neighbouring municipality. Cultural heritage projects like this one can help foster a shared sense of community for residents and build a collaborative relationship between local municipalities while recognizing an important cultural heritage landmark.

#### **5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

The request for the Town of Amherstburg to contribute \$3,000 towards this project is matching the funds contributed by the Town of LaSalle. The contributions from LaSalle and Amherstburg are above and beyond the County of Essex expected contribution of \$16,000.

This was an unbudgeted item, however, the recommended \$3,000 contribution can be allocated to the Heritage Committee budget, as it falls in line with the project objectives. This financial commitment will put the Heritage Committee budget in a deficit at the end of the year of approximately \$2,000. Administration will review the committee and planning end of year budget to actuals to determine if there is sufficient surplus in one of

these operating budgets to address the deficit. Should there not be sufficient funding at year end to offset this deficit a report will be brought to Council seeking use of a reserve to address. Given the minor amount Administration does not recommend use if a reserve fund at this time.

**6. CONSULTATIONS:**

Preparation of this report included discussion and consultation with the Ontario Heritage Trust, and administration of both the County of Essex and the Town of LaSalle.

**7. CORPORATE STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:**

*Vision: Preserving our past while forging our future.*

<i>Amherstburg Community Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026</i>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PILLAR 1</b> <b>Deliver Trusted &amp; Accountable Local Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Improve trust between council and staff, and residents, by strengthening governance and internal accountability structures.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Deliver transparent and efficient financial management.</li> <li>✓ Increase effective communication and engagement with residents.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop our staff team, resources, and workplace culture.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to deliver strong core municipal services.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure Amherstburg is an inclusive accessible and welcoming community committed to reconciliation.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PILLAR 3</b> <b>Encourage Local Economic Prosperity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Encourage development of commercial and industrial lands.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to promote local tourism industry, especially overnight accommodation.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to facilitate downtown development for residents and visitors.</li> <li>✓ Continue to leverage partnership opportunities with other provincial, federal, and local governments, agencies, and organizations.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PILLAR 2</b> <b>Invest in Community Amenities and Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain safe, reliable and accessible municipal infrastructure and facilities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increase access to recreation opportunities for all ages.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finalize and execute plans for town-owned lands (e.g. Duffy’s site, Belle Vue)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create public access to water and waterfront</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize opportunities to reduce environmental impacts of Town</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PILLAR 4</b> <b>Shape Growth Aligned with Local Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Define and communicate a vision for the Town’s future and identity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote and plan for green and “climate change ready” development.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review and implement policies that promote greater access to diverse housing.</li> <li>✓ Protect the Town’s historic sites and heritage.</li> </ul>

operations and increase Town resilience to climate change.

Preserve the Town's greenspaces, agricultural lands, and natural environment.

## 8. CONCLUSION:

This project initiative aligns with the Strategic Plan and fosters municipal collaboration. The River Canard Bridge is a significant local landmark and is deserving of provincial recognition.



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Adam Coates

**Heritage Planner, Urban Design, and Community Improvement**

## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	River Canard Bridge Plaque Recognition.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jun 27, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

### No Signature found

Chris Aspila



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