

Proposal to nominate Fort York for inscription in the World Heritage List of UNESCO

Date:	April 28, 2008
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	Deputy Mayor Joe Pantalone, Co-Chair of The City of Toronto Bicentennial Commemoration of the War of 1812 Steering Committee Rita Davies, Executive Director, Toronto Culture
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:/2008/Cluster A/EDCT/ECON DEV/ed0805-016

SUMMARY

Fort York National Historic Site has the largest collection of authentic War of 1812 structures in Canada. An unusually rich archaeological resource, Fort York connects the founding decades of the City of Toronto with the battle of York, remnants of the original eighteenth and nineteenth century landscape, and Toronto's first military cemetery. For these reasons, Fort York is a prime candidate for designation by the UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. There are presently no sites designated in the City of Toronto.

The purpose of this report is to have City Council officially support the effort to have Fort York declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The City of Toronto Bicentennial Commemoration of the War of 1812 Steering Committee was struck by City Council at its meeting of September 26 and 27, 2007. The Steering Committee is currently developing the plan required to nominate Fort York for inscription in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The nomination will be a significant project in the City of Toronto's Commemoration of the Bicentennial of the War of 1812.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism and the Co-Chair of The City of Toronto Bicentennial Commemoration of the War of 1812 Steering Committee recommend:

1. City Council support, in principle, the declaration of Fort York National Historic Site as a UNESCO World Heritage Site;
2. Toronto Culture staff, with the involvement of The City of Toronto Bicentennial Commemoration of the War of 1812 Steering Committee, undertake all actions and research within existing budgets in 2008 to further the UNESCO World Heritage Site Designation; and
3. Toronto Culture staff report, for consideration, through the 2009 Budget Process, on any operating and capital budget requirements for 2009 and beyond.

Financial Impact

There are no immediate financial implications arising from the adoption of this report to the 2008 Operating Budget Toronto Culture.

Once the work required to advance Fort York for consideration as a UNESCO World Heritage Site can be planned in detail, Toronto Culture staff will report through the 2009 Budget Process, on any operating and capital budget requirements for 2009 and beyond.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

This report is linked recommendations approved in the report on the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 former General Manager of Economic Development Culture and Tourism at the September 6, 2006 meeting of the Economic Development and Parks Committee. The full report may be found at <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/edp/edp060912/agenda.pdf>.

At its meeting of September 25, 26, 27 and 28, 2006, City Council considered Economic Development and Parks Committee Report 6 and adopted Clause (1) War of 1812 Bicentennial without amendment, <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/council/cc060925/cofa.pdf>.

In this clause Council directed staff to form a War of 1812 Bicentennial Steering Committee to provide recommendations to Council on the planning of Bicentennial events and on the development and coordination of supporting infrastructure and that the General Manager of Economic Development Culture and Tourism, in consultation with

the Councillor for Ward 19, report back to Council on the composition of the Steering Committee. At its meeting of September 26 and 27 2007, City Council considered Economic Development Committee Report 7 and adopted Clause (3) Proposed structure of the War of 1812 Bicentennial Commemoration Steering Committee and Project Update without amendment. (see Appendix A for list of Steering Committee members)

At its meeting of April 22, 2008, The City of Toronto Bicentennial Commemoration of the War of 1812 Steering Committee unanimously adopted a motion directing Co-Chair Deputy Mayor Joe Pantalone and Executive Director, Toronto Culture, Rita Davies to proceed with a request to City Council to support the effort to have Fort York declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, Toronto Culture staff undertake all actions within existing budgets in 2008 to further this effort and report through the 2009 Budget Committee Process on any operating and capital budget requirements for 2009 and beyond.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Fort York National Historic Site is the founding site of the City of Toronto, holder of the greatest number of authentic properties related to the War of 1812 in Canada, and perhaps in North America, and is an important national symbol of the conflict to control British North America. The conflict set Canada on the road to nationhood. As such, Fort York is also an important symbol of citizenship and resident engagement.

The Federal government passed ownership of Fort York to the City of Toronto in 1909 and Fort York became a museum in 1934. The Province of Ontario provides one annual operating grant. The Friends of Fort York, longstanding advocates for its protection and enhancement, and now, the Fort York Foundation also raise funds for the Fort.

While Fort York is both a National Historic Site and a heritage conservation district protected under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act, the UNESCO designation would guarantee further protection, as well as elevate the Fort's status as a heritage site of great significance. Furthermore, this would put the Fort in a much stronger position for funding from sources outside the City of Toronto.

COMMENTS

- This would be the first site for Toronto, Canada's largest and most international city, and only the second for Ontario to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site. (There are fourteen UNESCO World Heritage sites in Canada. Six are cultural and of these only three are urban: L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland; Historic Quebec City, and Old Town Lunenburg, Nova Scotia).
- The inscription in the World Heritage List would make Fort York more attractive for government and private sector funding because of its international status (augmenting its National Historic Site status) and its indisputable position as Toronto's most important historical site.
- The designation would be a major contribution to the shared goal of Ontario Tourism, Toronto Tourism and Tourism Toronto to make Toronto a cultural and heritage gateway to Ontario.
- In order to be added to the Canadian list of UNESCO nominees, which is extremely

limited, very solid community and political support will be required from the City, the Province, and the Federal government. This will include a commitment to UNESCO for the creation and strict enforcement of bylaws to protect the integrity of the designated area of the Fort.

- Curatorial and research work must be undertaken to build the strong case for the importance of the Fort's existence and it's worthiness to become an UNESCO world heritage site. Working with the individuals who prepared the successful nomination for the Rideau Canal and Fort Henry's inscription in to the UNESCO list will also be required. Work will include expanding on existing environmental assessments, conservation district designations and ongoing maintenance and capital strategies for the heritage site. Photography and other visual materials will also be required as well as consultations with the community and heritage representatives. Once this work can be planned in more detail, financial implications beyond 2008 can be developed for future Budget Process consideration.
- Staff resources will have to be dedicated to the nomination in order to meet a January 2010 deadline for submission.

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SIGNATURE

Rita Davies, Executive Director
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Deputy Mayor Joe Pantalone,
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ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: City of Toronto War of 1812 Bicentennial Commemoration Steering Committee List