



TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HURON

REPORT

Item No.

REPORT TO: Reeve Vincent and Members of Council
PREPARED BY: Pat Newson, Director of Recreation and Facilities
DATE: 19/03/2018
SUBJECT: North Huron Museum
ATTACHMENTS: North Huron slide deck, Huron County Museum slide deck, Correspondence from Friends of the Museum, Blyth Lions, and Barn Dance Museum, Building Facility Condition Report.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron hereby receives the report from the Director of Recreation and Facilities, dated April 3, 2018 regarding the North Huron Museum for information purposes,

AND FURTHER, THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron hereby directs staff on next steps for the North Huron Museum building and program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a collection of information available to staff regarding the North Huron Museum. The report provides an overview of the available information and seeks Council direction on next steps for the North Huron Museum. Through Council's decision making process, future staff reports will be provided to assist with Council's selected path for action.

At the April 3, 2018 meeting, staff will be making a presentation to Council on the information contained in this report. Staff have also invited Elizabeth French-Gibson, Senior Curator, Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol, to present information regarding trends and programming needs for Ontario museums.

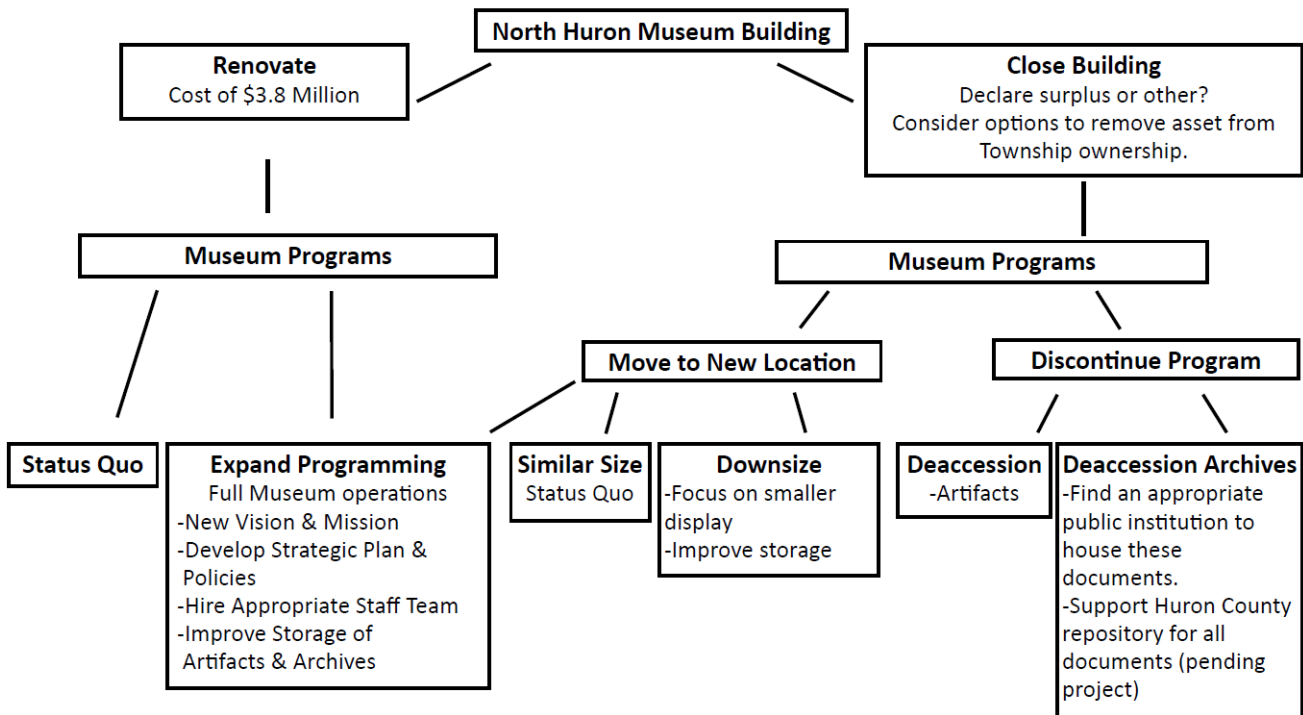
DISCUSSION

At the North Huron Council budget meeting held on February 8, 2018, Council passed a motion to direct staff to discontinue museum programming and close the building for 2018. Council also requested staff evaluate the use of the building and museum programming, and report back to Council prior to the end of this year. Staff suggest there are four components of the museum to be considered:

1. the building;
2. programming, artifacts, archives;
3. Barn Dance Museum; and
4. Alice Munro artifacts and garden.

This report provides background information and evaluates each of these four components in great details. The components can be addressed separately or grouped. A flow chart suggesting Council's decision making process is provided below for ease of reference and consideration. As the chart suggests, Council's first decision is whether to invest \$3.8 million to renovate the existing North Huron Museum building.

North Huron Museum Options



The Building

As Council is aware, the Township engaged the services of Allan Avis Architects to perform a Facility Condition Assessment on the North Huron Museum building. The report provides conceptual and preliminary cost estimates to renovate the building for public museum purposes. Cost estimates provide a generalized estimate of the work to be completed and are not intended to be all encompassing and comprehensive.

The consultant's report identifies serious inadequacies in the areas of mechanical, electrical, accessibility, and building structure. To continue operating the building as a public museum, the study concludes that a renovation budget of \$3,870,500 is required to meet the standards for public buildings under the Building Code, and HVAC standards for a museum. This works out to an estimated cost of \$405/square foot. While this cost may seem high, it is not unreasonable estimate in today's construction market. In his report, the consultant suggests this level of investment can be rationalized if the building is going to be highly utilized. Staff suggest Council needs to consider whether attendance/visitors records justify this expense and if not, are there other public uses for this building that could rationalize this level of investment? Staff also suggest Council needs to consider whether this building serves a greater public use than the \$500,000 Council invested in Blyth Memorial Hall? A copy of the Architect Building Facility Condition Assessment is attached to this report for Council's consideration.

During a recent museum tour, artifact professionals noted that a number of the artifacts currently in storage are not properly stored. For example, textiles and clothing are stored in boxes, and should be stored in containers which minimize exposure to deterioration agents such as humidity, pests, pollutants and light. Proper artifact storage also requires space with climate control and sufficient space to minimize

possible damage to artifacts, and high risk artifacts (e.g. sharp objects) should be in proper storage containment.

As noted above, temperature and humidity are two deterioration agents. Both of these factors need to be controlled to ensure the conservation of artifacts. The North Huron Museum building does not have an air handling system and therefore, no air conditioning or mechanical ventilation in the building. Vintage buildings, such as this former Post Office, have to be carefully studied and properly understood prior to installing air conditioning (AC). AC would not only improve building comfort for occupants, it would also assist in the control of indoor humidity. At the present time, the only way to control indoor humidity is by standalone portable de-humidifiers and window air conditioners. The Barn Dance Museum, located in the basement, is particularly susceptible to high humidity and has invested in this type of control system. Staff suggest standalone portable de-humidifiers and window air conditioners are not ideal and require ongoing staff attention.

If Council decides to continue with the display and storage of artifacts, an improved building environment is needed. In addition to an improved building environment, a number of artifacts require better storage containers. The Canadian Conservation Institute provides guidelines and standards for the storage of artifacts. This would be an additional expense should Council decide to renovate the North Huron Museum building and/or continue with the display and storage of artifacts.

Heritage Designation

Another consideration of the building is its heritage designation.

The Old Post Office and Customs Building was constructed 1904-07. In 1914, the clock tower was extended upward to accommodate the clock mechanism and the clock. The building operated as a post office until 1968. In 1972 the property and building were acquired by the Town of Wingham. In speaking with the Ontario Heritage Outreach Consultant from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the Town of Wingham designated The Old Post Office as being of architectural and historical value or interest in By-Law 1683-81, dated July 5, 1981. The Ministry's Outreach Consultant also advised the heritage designation does not preclude North Huron from selling or altering the building in the future. Council also has the option of commencing a prescribed provincial process to remove the heritage designation from the building. Depending on Council's selected path of action, a future staff report can be provided regarding Council's heritage designation options for this building.

Building Repairs

As noted above, the building was acquired by the Town of Wingham 46 years ago. Without continual investment, buildings generally reach their life expectancy in 40 years. Since 2003, the Township's investment in the building has been limited to keeping the building safe and operational. Such repairs have included repairing a leaking roof; replacing the oil heating boilers; and improvements to meet the fire code. The level of investment in the building over the last few years has led to the current condition of the building. Few improvements have been made beyond what was necessary.

Programming, Artifacts and Archives

Council's decision regarding future plans for building have a direct impact on museum programming, and the display of artifacts and archives. If Council decides to invest \$3.8 million to renovate the building, museum programming could continue to be provided out of the building; artifacts could continue to be

displayed; and archiving could continue after the building renovation. Additional costs on top of the actual renovation would include moving and storing the artifacts in another suitable location during the renovation. After the renovation, continued investment in the building and an asset management reserve account would be required to extend and prepare for the building's life cycle in the future.

If Council decides not to invest in the building, future museum programming, the artifacts, and the future location of the archives would need to be considered. Possible options include moving the museum programming to another building, and relocating, downsizing, and/or distributing the artifacts and archives to other museums/locations. If Council decided to relocate the existing museum contents to another building/location, similar square footage would be required. Below is a summary of the square footage of the current building.

The next section of this report speaks to how the artifacts and archives would be addressed should Council decide to downsize or distribute the artifacts and/or archives to other museums/locations.

Current Museum Size and Use

Floor Level	Approximate Gross Floor Area (sq.ft.)	Use
Third (Attic) Floor	2,100	Museum archive and storage. The bell mechanism is located in the tower, on its own floor level, above the attic ceiling.
Second Floor	2,700	Museum exhibits, archive and one single-occupant unisex washroom.
First (Main) Floor	2,700	Museum exhibits, office, meeting room, one single-occupant unisex washroom, one barrier-free washroom and storage.
Basement	2,050	Museum exhibits, one single-occupant unisex washroom, building services and storage.
Total	9,550	

Artifacts, Archives and Deaccessioning Policies and Procedures

Museums are a service of a community's heritage. As history has shown, they are not a source of revenue and the collection cannot be listed as a municipal asset. To protect their value, a museum must maintain a well-organized, managed and documented collection. Storage and display standards must be met to properly preserve the artifacts.

The following is a summary of the items in the North Huron Museum collection:

1108 Accessions (groups of items donated at the same time)

Objects 6,455

Photos 2,238

Library 30

Archives 3,207

Total items 11,930

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has advised that the deaccessioning of artifacts needs to follow a municipally approved policy. Once an artifact is donated to a museum, it becomes part of the public

collection and is in the care and control of the museum operator. If items in the museum are on-loan for display, they would be returned to their rightful owner and not become part of deaccessioning process.

North Huron has no deaccessioning policy. If Council was to decide to close the building and downsize or distribute the artifacts to other museums or suitable institutions, a policy and procedure for the deaccessioning of the artifacts would need to be prepared and adopted by Council. The policy and procedure document would be developed by staff, in consultation with the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and the Huron County Museum. The policy and procedure document would be used by staff to deaccession the artifacts. Council's role in the process would be to authorize the deaccessioning of the artifacts, and approve the policy as By-law. Questions regarding items not addressed in the policy would be brought to Council for review and a decision. The process to work through the 11,930 items in the North Huron Collection will take a significant amount of staff time. An additional staff resource will be required on a temporary basis (estimate 1 year) to manage the deaccessioning process.

Stakeholders

There are four key stakeholders in the museum, and each will be discussed in greater detail:

- The Barn Dance Museum
- Alice Munro Artifacts and Garden
- The Friends of the Museum
- Township/Community

Barn Dance Museum

The Barn Dance Museum moved to the North Huron Museum basement in 2003 as part of a lease agreement. Prior to this it was located in the Wingham Armories municipal facility. The Barn Dance Museum operates separate from the North Huron Museum and if the building was closed on a permanent basis, the Barn Dance Board would need decide how their artifacts and program would be handled.

The Barn Dance Board is aware of Council's decision to not open the facility in 2018. Staff met with the Chairpersons of the Barn Dance Society Board, and this group was invited to share their thoughts as an attachment to this report.

The Barn Dance Jamboree / Campout Weekend is a very well attended camping event held annually at the Blyth Campground. One of the objectives of this event is to raise funds to support the Barn Dance Museum and the collection. Rent is paid annually to the Museum for use of space in the basement. The rent presently paid is \$4,357 which represents 68% of the 2017 museum revenue budget. Rent for the museum space is collected on July 1 of each year. Since the building is not opening in 2018, it is suggested Council consider reducing or waiving the rent until direction for the North Huron Museum building is provided.

When the museum building has been staffed, visitors have been invited to view the Barn Dance Board's collection. During their Campout fundraising event, the museum is open to visitors. In 2018 the Barn Dance is celebrating 21 years of success as a Campout event. This year's Barn Dance Campout and Jamboree weekend is being held May 24-27, 2018. The Barn Dance Museum will be open on May 25, 2018 for four hours and staffed by Barn Dance Museum volunteers.

Comments from the Barn Dance Historical Society Museum and Jamboree/Campout Board of Directors are attached to this report for Council's consideration. The Blyth Lions have also submitted a letter of support for the Barn Dance Jamboree/Campout. The Blyth Lions letter is also attached to this report for Council's consideration.

Alice Munro Artifacts

In recent times, a report titled "Alice Munro Feasibility Study: Final Report" was written as part of the Alice Munro Partnership Group. The report suggested a standalone facility for an Alice Munro Museum was unwise because of capital and operating costs that would be imposed. There is a small space in the North Huron Museum dedicated to Alice Munro. If Council decides not to invest \$3.8 million in the building, it is suggested Council direct staff to consult with the Alice Munro Festival committee for ideas on future plans for the Alice Munro artifacts.

Alice Munro Garden

The Alice Munro Garden is located on the south side of the North Huron Museum building property. If Council decided not to invest in the building, future discussions would be needed regarding the Alice Munro garden. One option would be for the garden to be severed from the museum property to maintain its status at its current location. A second option is to move the garden to another location.

Friends of the Museum Volunteers

This group of volunteers was formed in 2009 and disbanded in 2017. They were an active group supporting the museum programming with staff support. As a past museum stakeholder, this group has submitted comments for Council's consideration. The comments are attached to this report for Council's review.

The Township/Community

North Huron Museum as a Tool for Economic Development - Tourism

It is often stated that community museums are an economic development driver for municipalities. Staff agree that community museums can be a tourism draw and build economic development opportunities. However, the North Huron Museum has been operating as a seasonal service with minimal marketing and programming activities. Staff have learned through the preparation of this report that museums of today are interactive, and offer temporary exhibits to draw repeat visitors. They offer special events and programming to draw regular visitors to the museum.

North Huron's museum programming has been minimal compared to other museums in the area. Examples include the Huron County Museum and the Strathroy-Caradoc Museum. The Strathroy-Caradoc and North Huron Museums are categorized as a small museums while the Huron County Museum is categorized as a medium sized museum.

Below is a table outlining the attendance records of the North Huron Museum in 2017. The museum was open to the public from May to August (4 months) and staffed by one summer student. Also below are the visitation numbers and staffing for the Strathroy-Caradoc Museum and the Huron County Museum. Both the Strathroy-Caradoc and the Huron County Museum offer interactive and roving themed displays, outreach programs and special events and programming to attract regular visitors.

North Huron Museum Attendance Records (May to August, 2017)

- One Summer Student

	Total
Adults	260
Kids	32
Volunteers	29
Barn Dance Volunteers	9
Alice Munro Volunteers	28

Grand Total: 358

Strathroy-Caradoc Museum

- Full time permanent staff – 2

Strathroy-Caradoc Museum Museum Visits	18,687
Total volunteer hours	764
Tours and Special Events	42
Exhibits and Displays	28

Huron County Museum Attendance Records (January to December, 2017)

- Full time permanent staff – 8
- Part time, permanent staff – 2
- Students – full time, summer students – 5 or 6 depending on funding
- Students – part time, summer students – 2
- Students – part time (winter) - 3

Huron County Museum	22,146
Huron Historic Gaol	14,844

Museum Programming

A well operated museum has strengths and strategies in the areas of visitor service, marketing and communications, membership, volunteer management, event planning, and sponsorships. To attract a significant number of regular visitors to the North Huron Museum, these areas would require a significant investment of staff and volunteers. The 2012 Strategic Plan Report from Huron County Museum states that the industry standard for staff costs is between 50%-60% of the total operating budget. For Huron County the staffing cost in 2012 was \$535,116 which represented 45% of the overall

operating expenditure budget of \$1,183,356. Staff suggest the commitment to programming and staffing at the North Huron Museum is reflective of the number of visits.

Provincial Funding

In Ontario, Museums operate under the authority of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Community museums in Ontario are custodians and interpreters of the provinces' irreplaceable heritage collections. There are approximately 185 community museums in Ontario which receive provincial operating grants. To maintain their eligibility for the grants, the community museums must satisfy criteria established in Regulation 877 "Grants for Museums".

The North Huron museum does not satisfy the criteria established in Regulation 877 and for this reason, has not received provincial funding for the past 10 years. In order for the museum to receive operating funding, the standards for community museums in Ontario must be met. To meet these standards, North Huron would need to develop a set of standards, planning, policies, operating standards, and guidelines for the museum. This would require additional operating funds to acquire the necessary staff and resources to meet the criteria. It is also noteworthy that at the present time the province is not accepting new applications for the Community Museum Operating Grant Program. For this reason, if the North Huron Museum did satisfy the criteria established in Regulation 877, there would be no guarantee North Huron would receive provincial funding.

Huron County operates a well-staffed, well organized, strategically planned museum program and facilities for all of Huron County. The mission of the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol is to engage the Huron County community in preserving, sharing and celebrating Huron County culture. The North Huron Museum operates independent of the Huron County Museum, however, the Huron County Museum does provide some support in the form of managing the artifact cataloging software. In speaking with the Huron County Museum staff, they are not interested in taking over or operating the North Huron Museum program or building for North Huron.

Municipally operated museums are part of the larger municipal task of improving the lives of local citizens. The challenge for museums, in a municipal governance structure, is that they provide a non-legislated "soft" service that competes with "hard" and legally mandated municipal tasks. Over time, the North Huron Museum building and programming has deteriorated as a result of increased demands of limited financial resources. Past Councils have been forced to make difficult financial decisions with respect to the North Huron museum building and operations. To reverse this pattern, a significant commitment of financial and staff resources on an ongoing basis would be required. As a result of the recent facility assessment, Council needs to make some decisions regarding the future of the building and the program. The building is operable now, but most of the infrastructure of the building is at its life cycle end, and a major renovation is needed in order to maintain status quo for the programming. A significant programming and operating investment is also required to meet Ontario Standards for operating a museum and there is no guarantee North Huron would receive grants or create the economic benefit as a tourism draw for the community.

North Huron Museum Establishment of Museum Board and Volunteers

To help Council understand the formation of this museum, the following is background on when the museum was established. Below is the history of the inception and changes in museum programming over time.

In 1976 the Town of Wingham adopted By Law 1586 to establish a Board of Management to operate a museum. The Regulation was made under the Ministry of Colleges and Universities Act 1971 Grants for museums, authorizing a Board of Management to operate a museum on its behalf.

In 2001 the Town of Wingham amalgamated to become the Township of North Huron. A North Huron By-Law 31-2001 was adopted to appoint a Board of Management to operate a Museum in the Township of North Huron. At this time the museum building main floor, basement and yard was used to operate a Nursery School, and the museum was in the upstairs of the building.

In December 2002 the basement of the museum was leased to the Barn Dance Museum. This lease was most recently renewed with By-Law 28-2015 and ends on April 20th, 2020.

In 2003, North Huron adopted by-law 23-2003, that adjusted the composition of the Board and at this point in time, the Nursery School had moved out of the main floor, basement and yard. The museum had expanded to the entire building and the basement was rented by the Barn Dance Museum.

In 2007 North Huron council adopted By Law 06-2007 repealing by-law 23-2003 as a result of the disbandment of the North Huron Museum Board. The operations of the museum were downsized from having a full time curator to operating as a seasonal museum with a summer student.

Since 2007, the Museum Program has operated under the Clerk's department for the Township of North Huron. An active group of volunteers were involved in the programming, however in 2017 that group of volunteers disbanded. At times and since this group's disbandment, volunteers have assisted with operations, but not as a formal group. There continue to be two active volunteers assisting with cataloging of artifacts and archives.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Building

At the start of 2017 there was \$16,300 in North Huron Working Reserves Funds allocated to the North Huron Museum. In the 2017 budget \$15,000 of this was allocated toward the facility condition assessment. The expense to date for Part A of the study was \$7,892.15. This leaves approximately \$8,400 in museum reserves for further studies or for a renovation project.

The cost to renovate the Museum Building is estimated at \$3,870,500. This would equate to a \$265,000 debt repayment annually for the municipality over 20 years.

Moving the program to another location and upgrading the programming to meet the standards for community museums in Ontario, and to establish the museum as a tourist destination making an impact on economic development would require additional expenses.

- If moving - purchase or rent of 9,000 SF facility (for similar size operation)
- If moving – cost of moving artifacts and set up of displays in new location.
- Staffing for full time operation, meeting standards for provincial funding, and drawing tourism to impact economic development. (Huron County budget for staffing in 2012 was \$535,116.)
- Improved storage containment of artifacts
- Improved climate control for stored artifacts/archives
- Programming, marketing, and volunteer support budget
- Facility costs including utilities, cleaning, maintenance, service contracts etc.

North Huron Museum Operating Budget

<u>Item</u>	<u>2016 Actual</u>	<u>2017 Actual</u>
Revenue	7,289.25	6,387.52
Operating Expenses	12,417.75	9,240.30
Building Expenses	20,912.79	23,178.29
Museum Deficit	(26,041.29)	(26,031.07)

This operating budget does not include the building facility condition assessment study or depreciation.

If Council were to decide to close the museum permanently; dispose of the asset; and discontinue programming, there would potentially be a cost savings of approximately \$30,000 annually on the municipal budget, beginning in 2020.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Staff are seeking Council direction for next steps. The first decision for Council is whether the building will be renovated, making it viable to operate as a museum. This decision impacts the future of the programming which could be discontinued, or moved to a location of similar size with appropriate accessibility and HVAC requirements, or downsized to a smaller location with appropriate accessibility and HVAC requirements. There currently is no municipal building available to move the program. Moving the program would require purchasing or renting new space. To make an impact on economic development and to operate a successful museum by Ontario Museum standards, a significant investment in staffing and programming budget is required.

Summary of decisions for Council under the four components outlined at the start of this presentation, and the approximate order for making these decisions:

1. The Building;
 - Decision to renovate the building at a cost of \$3.8M
2. Programming, Artifacts, Archives:
 - Decision whether to discontinue the programming or move to a new location
 - Decision whether to invest in programming staffing and resources
 - Create and approve a deaccessioning policy
 - Decision whether to deaccession the artifacts and archives
 - Decision whether to keep artifacts and improve storage conditions
 -

3. Barn Dance Museum:

- Decision to waive or reduce rent until Council has clear direction for the Museum
- Decision whether to discontinue the lease agreement permanently

4. Alice Munro artifacts and garden.

- Decision on future of the Alice Munro exhibit
- Decision on whether to sever or relocate the Alice Munro garden

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Our administration is fiscally responsible and strives for operational excellence.



Pat Newson, Director of Recreation and
Facilities



Dwayne Evans, CAO