



Staff Report

Report To: South Huron Council
From: **Dan Best, Chief Administrative Officer/Deputy Clerk**
Date: July 17 2017
Report: CAO 17.21
Subject: Vimy Oak Project

Recommendations:

That the report of Daniel Best, Chief Administrative Officer dated July 17, 2017 regarding the Vimy Oak Project; AND

That Administration be authorized to coordinate with the Royal Canadian Legion (Exeter) to proceed with the implementation of commemorative saplings with the Municipal monument at Huron Park; AND

That Administration be authorized to move the Municipal Monument from its current location to a new location on South Huron property in front of the water tower in Huron Park; AND

That a ceremony be coordinated with the Municipality of South Huron and the Royal Canadian Legion (Exeter) for the re-location of the Monument, planting of the Vimy Oak saplings in honour of the 150th Anniversary of Canada and the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Purpose:

Council authorization

Background and Analysis:

Lieutenant Leslie H. Miller, a soldier with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (1914-1919), sent acorns home to Canada that he had gathered up after the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 1917.

These acorns are now large majestic oaks that are growing on his former farm, today the home of the Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church, in Ontario.

Ten of the original oaks exist today. Descendants of these great symbolic trees are to be repatriated to Vimy Ridge to create a living memorial to honour the memory of all those who fought, connecting modern Canada and modern France and reaffirming our comradeship with France and her people.

The Vimy Oaks Legacy Corporation has partnered with The Vimy Foundation to repatriate descendants of these oaks back to Vimy Ridge 100 years later to promote the memory and legacy of Canadians who fought in the First World War. This project named The Vimy Foundation Centennial Park will be a landscaped planting of 100 Vimy Oak trees on land beside the Canadian National Vimy Memorial Historic Site.

In addition, Vimy Oaks Legacy has partnered with NVK Nurseries in Dundas, Ontario. Since January 2015, NVK has been growing oaks from cuttings and acorns collected from the Scarborough site, that are direct descendants of the English oaks (*Quercus robur*) destroyed during the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917.

These oak saplings have been offered for sale early in 2017 to organizations that are committed to planting them at commemorative sites such as cenotaphs, town squares, memorial sites and parks, heritage sites, schools, military cemeteries and sites, Royal Canadian Legions, public locations associated with World War One and at sites that communicate messages of universal values and peace.

The purchase price will be a \$125 fee to recover administration and nursery costs plus a variable freight cost from Dundas, Ontario to the shipped destination.

The administrative costs will help cover the cost of planting saplings in France. Funds from the sale of saplings that are in excess of Vimy Oaks Legacy costs will be donated to the Vimy Foundation to assist in the construction costs of the Vimy Foundation Centennial Park which will be located adjacent to the lands of the Vimy Ridge National Memorial in northern France.

Administration has coordinated with the Legion representatives and approval has been received for four Vimy Oak saplings to be available for a project in South Huron.

In discussion with Legion representatives, it was determined that space for the Vimy Oak saplings would need to accommodate a canopy of approximately 30 feet per sapling at maturity. Administration assessed potential locations and believe that coordinating with the Municipal Memorial in Huron Park would be a suitable location but require the movement of the Monument as the current location would not facilitate the proposed design/placement of the saplings at maturity.

The proposed design would place each of the saplings at each corner of the Monument representing a guard or sentry standing at their post. The movement of the Monument erected by veterans of Royal Canadian Air Force Station Centralia and Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 167 in June 1992 and dedicated to the men and women who served at Centralia as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization air training system would be re-located to municipal property in front of the water tower in Huron Park to facilitate the design.

A re-dedication ceremony coordinated through the Royal Canadian Legion (Exeter) would be required and would be incorporated as part of the 150th Anniversary of Canada and the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Operational Considerations:

An assessment would be required to determine if the moving of the monument could be conducted safely with Municipal resources. If not possible, coordination with a contractor would be required to facilitate the re-location.

South Huron's Strategic Plan:

Section 6.2.2 of the Municipality of South Huron 2015- 2019 Strategic Plan identifies key priorities and strategic directions. The following elements are supported by the actions outlined in this report:

- ✓ Improved Recreation and Community Wellbeing
- ✓ Increased Communications and Municipal Leadership
- ✓ Transparent, Accountable, and Collaborative Governance

Financial Impact:

There will be no cost to the Municipality for the saplings as those costs have been secured through the Royal Canadian Legion. Any costs associated with this project may be related to the contracting of services to re-locate the

monument if Municipal resources are unable to re-locate the monument safely.

It is anticipated that these costs can be incorporated within the 2017 operating budget.

Legal Impact:

There are no legal implications as a result of the actions outlined in this report.

Staffing Impact:

There are no staffing implications as a result of the actions outlined in this report.

Policies/Legislation:

None

Consultation:

Royal Canadian Legion, Exeter Branch 167

Related Documents:

None

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Best', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dan Best MPA, BA
Chief Administrative Officer