



CITY OF KINGSTON

**INFORMATION REPORT TO THE KINGSTON MUNICIPAL
HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

Report No.: KMHC-10-009

TO: Chair and Members, Kingston Municipal Heritage Committee

FROM: Cynthia Beach, Commissioner Sustainability & Growth

RESOURCE STAFF: Colin Wiginton, Manager, Cultural Services
Gordon Robinson, Curator, Civic Collection

DATE OF MEETING: May 10, 2010

SUBJECT: Accessibility, Conservation, Display and Use of City Hall Portrait Collection
which is a Historical and Cultural Resource

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In February 2010 Kingston City Council passed a resolution asking the Kingston Municipal Heritage Committee to request that staff improve public accessibility to the portrait collection contained within City Hall. A series of specific steps were identified in the short term as part of this resolution that this report addresses, including the relocation of selected portraits as well as the provision of additional information for the benefit of the public.

The resolution also requested that staff report back to the Kingston Municipal Heritage Committee and Arts Advisory Committee on longer steps that need to be approved related to the conservation of the collection, its better display and its use as an historical and cultural resource of the City of Kingston. That request is also addressed as part of this report by briefly outlining the work that is currently being done to inventory the civic collection as well as the additional policies, governance and resources that are needed to make sure this historical and cultural resource can be adequately maintained and used.

RECOMMENDATION:

This report is for information purposes only.

AUTHORIZING SIGNATURES:

_____ Cynthia Beach, Commissioner, Sustainability & Growth
_____ Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer

CONSULTATION WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMISSIONERS:

Terry Willing, <i>Community Development Services</i>	N/R
Denis Leger, <i>Corporate Services</i>	
Jim Keech, <i>President and CEO, Utilities Kingston</i>	N/R

(N/R indicates consultation not required)

OPTIONS/DISCUSSION:

At the regular meeting of Kingston City Council held on February 16 and 17, 2010, the following resolution was approved (Clause 1, Report No. 32):

WHEREAS the portrait collection in City Hall has been described as "a very valuable and unique display of early Canadian art"; and,

WHEREAS six of the subjects, namely Thomas Kirkpatrick, Dr James Sampson, John Counter, Overton Gildersleeve, John Creighton and John Gaskin are themselves subject of an entry in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB); and,

WHEREAS the artist of many of the portraits, William Sawyer, is also the subject of a DCB entry; and,

WHEREAS this important historical and cultural resource is largely ignored;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Kingston Municipal Heritage Committee request that staff be directed:

1. To improve public accessibility to the collection in short term with such steps as:
 - a. relocating portraits of important subjects currently hidden from public view to places where they can be more easily seen, and,
 - b. preparing labels for the portraits that describe the importance of both the subject and the artist; and,
 - c. providing the DCB entries to the City Hall tour guides; and,
2. To report not later than April to both the Arts Advisory Committee and the Municipal Heritage Committee on longer term steps that need to be approved for the conservation of the collection, its better display, and appropriate use as an historical and cultural resource of the City of Kingston.

Short Term Progress:

In response to this resolution staff within Cultural Services has been working to address the short term requests made by City Council in a timely manner and within the resources currently available. As much as possible it is hoped that this initial work will be complete in advance of the peak tourist season this summer when City Hall receives the highest number of visitors.

Relocation: Staff are working to devise a plan to move the portraits of Thomas Kirkpatrick, Overton Gildersleeve and John Creighton to locations within City Hall that will make them more accessible and visible to the public. Currently this plan involves relocating the portrait of Thomas Kirkpatrick within the Council Chambers, where it is currently displayed, so that it will no longer be obscured by the screen that has been set up. The plan also involves moving the portraits of Overton Gildersleeve and John Creighton out of the Payment Centre and into the hallway leading to the Tax Centre, a location that places them in closer proximity to City Hall's main entrance and that also makes them accessible without any barriers.

Labels: Cultural Services staff is working to develop a brochure that will highlight the portrait collection and provide an overview of its significance. As part of this plan the brochure will include biographical information about the subjects of the portraits that have been identified in the resolution along with information about the artist William Sawyer and a chronological listing of Kingston mayors. In support of this process staff has met with Dorothy Farr, former Curator of Canadian Historical Art at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, to develop information specific to this collection in order to position it in relation to 19th century

Canadian Art. Once the brochure is complete and in circulation staff will then explore the possibility of installing labels adjacent to the identified portraits using an approach that provides information while respecting the integrity of City Hall as an historic site.

City Hall Tour Guides: All the relevant Dictionary of Canadian Biography entries have been provided to the coordinator of the City Hall tour program to be shared with the volunteer tour guides. This information will form part of the training for the tour program and talking points are also being developed based on the brochure content as well as the input provided by Dorothy Farr.

Long Term Goals:

Beginning in 2009 increased attention has been directed to the civic collection in order to address it in a more comprehensive and strategic way. This includes evaluating the issues of accessibility, conservation, display and use as they relate to this historical and cultural resource. This follows a significant period in which insufficient resources (both staff and financial) have significantly affected the civic collection's basic care, maintenance, management, and condition. Today, the civic collection is being recognized as an important historical and cultural asset and resources are being directed through the Cultural Services department to ensure its care and safe keeping in the form of capital funds and increased staffing. A larger policy project, directed through the Planning and Development Department, is also looking comprehensively at Kingston City Hall National Historic Site and will result in the creation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the site.

In 2009 a part-time curator was assigned responsibility for the civic collection and a Manager, Cultural Services, was also hired to provide support for this work and to manage other cultural and community assets and programs that include the civic collection, public art and monuments located throughout Kingston and the two City-owned museums; the Pump House Steam Museum and MacLachlan Woodworking Museum. The allocation of professional staff as well as an increased emphasis on professional practices is indicative of a significant shift in thinking that makes cultural assets like the civic collection a priority within the City.

Though resources remain limited, progress has been made with regard to completing a full inventory of the civic collection that includes the portrait collection housed within City Hall. To date, a complete inventory of the civic collection has never been done so this work provides an important first step toward determining the scope and condition of the civic condition that will then provide the foundation for the development of policies and procedures that can be used to prioritize conservation issues as well as to guide planning regarding the display and use of this cultural and community resource.

Currently the inventory of the civic collection involves a three-stage process that is expected to take about three years to complete.

Stage One (Targeted completion date: December 2010)

In 2009 work on the inventory began under the supervision of the part-time curator and involving the support of students who worked on this project together through the summer and fall. The focus of this first stage of work is City Hall and the civic collections it houses and the emphasis was on information gathering, documentation and stabilization. In 2010 students have again been hired to continue and complete this work that will also result in the identification and prioritization of the most urgent conservation work that needs to be completed in order to safeguard selected artifacts and artworks within the collection. This stage of the process also involves the development of an interim Collections Management Policy that will provide the basis for the articulation of an official Collections Management Policy to be approved by City Council once the inventory is complete. Currently this work is being paid for using capital funds and also requires the development of a provisional three year capital budget in order for the work to continue.

Stage Two (2011, budget permitting)

Once the civic collection in City Hall has been inventoried it will then be necessary to inventory other aspects of the civic collection housed in City-owned buildings across Kingston, including the Frontenac County Court House and other historic and administrative buildings where items may be on display and/or stored. At this time it will also be necessary to inventory all aspects of the civic collection that are sited outside, including public art and monuments. As in Stage One it will be necessary to complete the same process of information gathering, documentation and stabilization in relation to public art and monuments. Conservation work will also need to be prioritized within the context of a broad based conservation strategy for the civic collection as a whole. Work on a Public Art and Monuments Policy will also begin along with work on the official Collections Management Policy.

Stage Three (2012, budget permitting)

The focus of Stage Three will be more thorough research on the civic collection, including research related to provenance in order to clarify issues associated with legal ownership. It will also be necessary during Stage Three to determine and finalize values associated with the civic collection for insurance purposes. Work will also begin on the development of an Interpretation and Exhibition Policy related to the civic collection as a way to activate this cultural and community asset in order to make it more accessible and meaningful for Kingston residents as well as visitors to the area. With regard to the Interpretation and Exhibition Policy it will be important to ensure that it aligns with other policy documents that may impact the civic collection, including the Cultural Heritage Management Plan for Kingston City Hall.

Policy Framework:

Any work being done on the civic collection right now needs to be considered in relation to a series of policy documents that are currently being developed or that have been identified as needing to be developed, including the following:

- Cultural Heritage Management Plan for Kingston City Hall National Historic Site (2010), Planning & Development
- Kingston Community Cultural Policy Plan (2010), Cultural Services
- Public Art and Monument Policy (2011-2012), Cultural Services

These policy documents will definitely impact the civic collection, its maintenance and use and it will also be crucial to ensure that they align with the official Collections Management policy that is expected to address the following concerns:

- Mission/Mandate for the civic collection
- Acquisitions
- Use/Maintenance
- Administration
- Conservation
- Loans
- De-Accessioning/Disposal

Governance:

Currently the civic collection is being managed by staff within Cultural Services who have the expertise to complete the work required at this time. Moving forward it is anticipated that it may prove necessary to implement a new governance structure to oversee the civic collection, especially as it relates to issues such as acquisitions, conservation and de-accessioning and disposal. The need for such a governance structure is expected to be addressed as part of the Kingston Community Cultural Policy Plan that is being submitted for approval in 2010.

Resources Required:

In order to improve public accessibility to the civic collection, and the portrait collection in particular, a number of steps are being taken in the short term. While feasible, these initial steps do put a strain on the existing resources that are modest. In order to ensure the long term accessibility, conservation, display and use of the civic collection it will be necessary to ensure that a consistent and reliable level of staffing and support is in place. In terms of allocating resources it has been identified that the following will be necessary to make sure this historical and cultural resource has a future once the inventory has been completed:

- A shift from capital funding to the establishment of an on-going operating budget for the civic collection;
- Hiring a full-time Curator for the City of Kingston to oversee the care and use of the civic collection;
- Budget for seasonal staff support and consultation as needed;
- Access to collection appropriate materials and resources;
- Adequate space for collection handling, prep and storage (both on-site and off-site);
- A sustainable conservation and maintenance plan;
- Resources to support the on-going interpretation and display of the civic collection.

As indicated by the resolution this same information was shared with the Arts Advisory Committee in the form of a verbal report at their regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday April 8, 2010. The information was recorded as part of the minutes for the meeting and are available as part of the public record.

EXISTING POLICY/BY LAW:

N/A

NOTICE PROVISIONS:

N/A

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

While much of the civic collection, including the portrait collection, is housed in City Hall it is not necessarily accessible due to the design and configuration of the building itself. In the short term steps are being taken to relocate the portraits that have been identified to locations that will improve both visual and physical access. Moving forward it will be necessary to give the issue of access greater attention, especially within the context of the Interpretation and Exhibition Policy as it is developed. As part of that process the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee will be consulted to ensure that access to the civic collection is improved and that its presentation, where appropriate, conforms to approved standards and requirements.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Currently work related to the civic collection is being funded through Cultural Services' capital budget. Funds are in place until the end of 2010 and additional funds will need to be requested for 2011 and 2012 to ensure that work on the civic collection inventory can be completed as proposed. At the same time operating funds will also need to be requested beginning in 2011 so that the civic collection can be adequately maintained and made available on an on-going basis. These funds will need to be in place to ensure a consistent and reliable level of staffing and support for the civic collection to make sure the necessary resources are in place to manage the collection and make it accessible to and meaningful for the public.

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EXHIBITS ATTACHED:

N/A