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TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS CIVIC WORKS COMMITTEE ON DECEMBER 4, 2017
FROM:	J. M. FLEMING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	VETERANS MEMORIAL PARKWAY COMMUNITY PROGRAM FOR LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS FINAL REPORT

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner regarding the community program for enhancements along the Veterans Memorial Parkway, the following recommendations **BE TAKEN**:

- a) This report satisfying the termination clauses of the agreement with Landscape Ontario, **BE RECEIVED**;
- b) Landscape Ontario **BE THANKED** for their participation in the Veterans Memorial Parkway Community Enhancement Program;
- c) That the volunteers who supported the Program as Executive Committee members, advisors, planting day technical support and the public **BE THANKED** for their efforts to make the Program a success;
- d) That, as per the conditions of the agreement, a request to Landscape Ontario **BE MADE** to transfer the remaining funding in the amount of approximately \$28,000 from the reserve held by Landscape Ontario to the City of London to be utilized to fund the on-going monitoring of new trees along the VMP;
- e) That \$50,000 of the remaining funding in the City's capital account PD1142 set up to support the enhancement of the Veterans Memorial Parkway, **BE UTILIZED** to support the extension of the Veterans Memorial Parkway south of Highway 401 with additional tree planting similar to that done north of Highway 401;
- f) That, in accordance with Section 14.4 (e) of the City's Procurement Policy, "Trees for ..." **BE RETAINED** by the City in the amount of up to \$37,500 of the remaining approved funding in the City's capital account PD1142 to support the administration of a similar Program to enhance portions of Highbury Avenue adjacent to Commissioners Road East, and;
- g) That the balance of the remaining approved funding of \$105,000 in capital account PD1142 for Veterans Memorial Parkway **BE TRANSFERRED** to a new capital account to support the creation of a permanent Vimy Ridge Park in recognition of London's veterans. Noting that the permanent location of this Park will be the subject of a separate report and decision of Council.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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September 12, 2011 BNEC report regarding the revised partnership Agreement with Landscape Ontario for the enhancements of the VMP and also the Planned Fall 2011 Landscape enhancement project details.

PURPOSE

This Report is a requirement of the formal agreement with Landscape Ontario to report back upon completion of the Agreement on the successes of the Veterans Memorial Parkway Community Enhancement Program.

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BACKGROUND

In 2011, Council endorsed an Agreement with Landscape Ontario to lead an enhancement program for the newly named Veterans Memorial Parkway. The enhancement program was based on a concept plan to transform Airport Road into a “parkway” that commemorated our veterans, improved tree cover and enhanced this eastern gateway to the City. The first step in this work in 2009 was supported by an infrastructure grant that saw the installation of the main VMP sign at Highway 401, planting of 450 trees, 3 memorial stone features and a feature that included the provincial flags of the country.

From 2010 - 2017, local Scout and Guide troops assisted with additional planting, and various community groups, service clubs and businesses supported a major flag feature and other enhancements. Three core funding partners have supported the program for many years: Trojan Technologies, 3M and Starlim, ensuring multi-year stability of the Program and setting the example for the many other corporate sponsors who assisted over the 7 years. See the attached summary report for all of the project partners.

As part of the Agreement, Council agreed to fund the administration of the Program through Landscape Ontario to expand on the successful 2009/10 efforts. Council also endorsed an extension of the Agreement into 2017, from the original December 31, 2015 end date. Landscape Ontario engaged the services of an Executive Director for the Program who led an executive committee that oversaw the program.

Additional efforts were made by the City’s Parks Operations team to work cooperatively with Landscape Ontario members to increase normal maintenance activities along the VMP in support of this unique project.

As per the clauses in the termination section of the Agreement, Landscape Ontario has submitted the attached report (Appendix A) which summarizes the success of the Program over its 7 year term. Key points are:

- Almost 3000 trees were planted along the VMP
- Community sponsors contributed over \$300,000 to the project
- Volunteers dedicated close to 15,000 hours of time
- A new planting method and research has been undertaken

In addition, the Executive Director has offered his observations about the administration and operational issues with this unique Program that may assist with future similar planting projects.

This was a unique Program established to permit the community to lead the enhancement projects along the VMP and create a true parkway, improve environmental conditions and to establish a lasting memorial to our Veterans. Please see Appendix B for photos of the project through its seven years of planting. The framework of this Program has been used to set up the Highway of Hope Program along Highway 401, east of Toronto. Many of the same partners and the consultant have joined that Program.

NEXT STEPS

Given the unique planting methods and research undertaken to date to support better tree planting, it is recommended that the City continue to monitor the health of the approximately 3000 trees using the remaining funds (\$28,000) from the VMP Program currently held by Landscape Ontario.

Capital project PD1142 was previously established for the City’s contribution to the VMP enhancement initiative to cover administrative costs of the Program, contribute to a portion of the cost of trees and to pay any consultant fees required to carry out these works within the City’s road allowance. Approximately \$192,500 of approved funding remains in this account and is recommended to be utilized as follows.

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The executive director of the VMP Program has created another not-for-profit organization (Trees for ...) to continue on this unique type of planting program that utilizes community volunteers and corporate partners to plant large caliper trees on public lands. Over the last 7 years, this organization has developed unique skills to lead planting projects and has built up a positive relationship with the community that may support future projects. In accordance with Section 14.4 (e) of the Procurement of Goods and Services Policy, Civic Administration is recommending that the City engage "Trees for ..." to lead a similar project to enhance portions of Highbury Avenue adjacent to Commissioners Road East, utilizing existing approved funding remaining in the VMP enhancement capital account in the amount of up to \$37,500.

In order to build on the enhanced design features of the VMP on the new extension from Highway 401 to Wilton Grove Road, it is recommended that \$50,000 of the approved funding remaining in the VMP enhancement capital account be utilized. Staff will work with Transportation Division to coordinate these plantings with the end of warranty period for the recent VMP road works.

To continue the support of our Veterans, it is also recommended that the balance of the remaining funds in the VMP capital account (approximately \$105,000) be utilized and a new capital account be established to support the creation of a permanent Vimy Ridge Park. As directed by Council, a process has been initiated to select a suitable location for a permanent Vimy Ridge Park and the "necessary budget". A separate report recommending a preferred site will be submitted to the Community & Protective Services Committee in Q1 2018 and will outline any need for enhancements –signage, tree planting, benches, parking, an accessible pathway route, etc. which could be funded from these existing capital funds.

PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY:
A. MACPHERSON, OALA MANAGER ENVIRONMENTAL & PARKS PLANNING
RECOMMENDED BY:
JOHN M. FLEMING, MCIP, RPP MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER

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- Appendix A: Veterans Memorial Parkway Community Program – Summary Report
- Appendix B: Project Photos

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APPENDIX A