

Summary of The Needs Assessment Project Survey

By the Rideau Heritage Network

BACKGROUND

This survey was designed to provide a snapshot of the current state of municipal involvement in heritage conservation activities and to gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities afforded by heritage conservation along the Rideau Canal Corridor.

2005 saw the release of the *Provincial Policy Statement (2005)* along with the adoption of revisions to the *Ontario Heritage Act*. These documents give the Province of Ontario and municipalities a greater ability to protect heritage in Ontario. Municipalities must now revisit their policies and practices to ensure they are consistent with new requirements and to take full advantage of the new provisions available to them.

The specific objectives of the survey were to:

- Profile the general activities and awareness of heritage conservation in each municipality;
- Identify the challenges municipalities are facing;
- Use the information above to inform the activities of the Rideau Heritage Network and the overall work plan.

Copies of the survey were distributed to 12 municipalities along the Rideau Canal Corridor in June 2006, and 10 completed surveys (83%) were returned between July and August 2006. Some of the surveys were directed to municipal or heritage planners, the others were sent to the chairperson of municipal heritage committees or local historical societies.

OVERVIEW

In general, the municipalities are seeking to act more proactively. However, municipal heritage conservation capacity varies among the participating municipalities.

In terms of essential legislative framework, every municipality has adopted policies in their official plans to address heritage conservation. However, some municipalities' policies are more strongly worded and specific than the others'.

Most of the municipalities have undertaken designation of individual properties under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

In addition, most municipalities have self-guided walking and/or driving tours as a way to promote the local heritage and local tourism.

City of Kingston
City of Ottawa
Town of Perth
Town of Smiths Falls
Township of
Drummond/ North
Elmsley
Township of
Montague
Township of Rideau
Lakes
Township of South
Frontenac
Village of Merrickville -
Wolford
Village of Westport

CHALLENGES

The survey found that the municipalities face significant challenges:

1. Half of the responded municipalities have not established a Municipal Heritage Committee to advise their respective councils on cultural heritage related issues;
2. Most of the municipalities use limited instruments to regulate, direct, and promote heritage conservation. Some of them simply rely on their official plan rather than employing more specific tools, such as design guidelines, heritage strategies, municipal cultural plans, conservation easement agreements, or the Canadian Register of Historic Places;
3. Archaeology has not been fully recognized and incorporated into heritage conservation. Only one out of the 10 respondents has a municipal inventory of registered archaeological sites;
4. There is an insufficient financial commitment to heritage conservation from the municipalities. Only one out of the ten municipalities has established a Heritage Property Tax Relief program and only two of them have a grant or loan program for heritage properties;
5. There is low political awareness and support for municipal cultural heritage programs among municipal council. Half of the respondents indicated that the municipal councillors are minimally aware of heritage conservation policies and practices;
6. The survey results suggest that the municipalities mostly focus on individual heritage property protection/ designation and pay less attention to the comprehensive historic setting preservation, as eight out of the 10 respondents have no designated heritage conservation district;
7. There are internal communication gaps between municipal heritage committees and municipal staff*. Some of the municipal heritage committees indicated that they are not sufficiently informed to answer some of the survey questions.

OPPORTUNITIES

In light of the challenges mentioned above, the municipalities surveyed have expressed their interest in cooperating with federal and provincial governments to work on municipal heritage conservation.

1. All the respondents indicated that they would like to consult with the Ministry of Culture on municipal heritage conservation issues;
2. All of the respondents have heard of the Rideau Heritage Network and most of them have participated in activities organized by the network. Interest to attend future activities was expressed by all respondents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Who should do these things? Are these all things the Rideau Heritage Network should do...?

1. Encourage the establishment of municipal heritage committees through the provision of information resources via slideshow presentations at public meetings; the establishment of an online library; promotion of *Your Community, Your Heritage, Your Committee*; a booklet within the Ministry of Culture's Ontario Heritage Toolkit; and examples of successful municipal heritage committees.
2. Encourage/assist with the development of heritage specific policies, particularly secondary plan, interim control bylaws, community improvement plans, design guidelines and heritage strategies through an online resource centre; workshops; and examples from other municipalities.
3. Promote awareness of archaeology as a heritage resource which must be conserved;
4. Encourage/help promote financial incentives that municipalities may undertake to preserve/conservate their heritage resources by providing information and examples from other municipalities regarding program costs; payment methods; successful/unsuccessful programs and why; and overall outcomes of financial programs.
5. Encourage the municipalities to involve their councillors in municipal cultural heritage programs by suggesting they invite councillors to sit in on meetings, attend workshops/conferences with them, and attend walking tours.
6. Encourage/assist municipalities to inventory and assess their potential heritage resources, particularly as a collective, comprehensive historic setting through the provision of information resources via slideshow presentations at public meetings; the establishment of an online library; and examples from successful municipalities.
7. The Rideau Heritage Network should provide the municipalities including municipal councils, staff and municipal heritage committees, with more networking, seminars and conference opportunities.

THANK YOU

The Rideau Heritage Network would like to thank all the respondents that generously devoted their time to complete the survey.

Note: Suggestions on the survey

1. This initial survey needs to be further developed and refined.
2. Face-to-face interviews (or telephone interviews) should be considered to complete the questionnaire in order to explain the document and ask questions beyond the questionnaire promptly.
3. It is suggested that such a survey be conducted at a regular interval in order to get updated information on the current status.