



The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie

COUNCIL REPORT

February 24, 2025

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council

AUTHOR: Travis Anderson, Director Tourism & Community
Development

DEPARTMENT: Community Development and Enterprise Services

RE: Transfer of Tourism operating funds to Tourism Sault Ste.
Marie – Wishart Park Recreational Bridge

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Council permission to enter into a funding agreement with Tourism Sault Ste. Marie (TSSM) so that funds from the approved 2024 City's tourism operating budget can be allocated towards the construction and installation of a recreational bridge in Wishart Park.

Background

Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, in collaboration with the city, is enhancing Wishart Park by adding outdoor recreation play equipment, interpretative signage, boardwalks for wildlife viewing, and a recreation bridge and multi-use path.

Outdoor adventure and trails are proven destination drivers that align with Destination Canada's and Destination Ontario's priorities. Furthermore, the enhancements to Wishart Park align with TSSM's strategic plan, which identifies this outdoor adventure as a competitive advantage and has set an aspirational goal of being Ontario's premier urban outdoor adventure capital. Creating a linear connection between Hiawatha Highlands and our downtown/waterfront is key to achieving this goal, as is the construction and installation of a recreational bridge crossing the Root River.

Once installed, the bridge will allow cycle tourists, hikers, and other trail users staying at local hotels and other accommodations to access Hiawatha Highlands from anywhere in the community. The connection increases the appeal of our outdoor recreation assets, as visitors can participate in all the amenities the community offers without using a car. The project is expected to increase the duration of stays and visitor spending in the community.

On March 18, 2024, staff requested that \$250,000 of the City's share of the MAT be allocated to support the construction of a recreational bridge in Wishart Park. Council approved the request through the following resolution:

Resolved that the report of the Director of Tourism and Community Development dated March 18, 2024, be received and that Council approve the use of the \$497,796 (City share of Tourism funds) towards the following initiatives.

- *\$11,150 to support the hiring of a Tourism Event Coordinator for 9 months in 2024 and ongoing approval for the term of the agreement with TSSM.*
- *\$250,000 to support the construction of a recreational bridge crossing that will allow for the connection of Hiawatha Highlands to the Hub Trail on Third Line;*
- *\$236,646 for future investment in Downtown/Waterfront Improvements/Activation.*

Analysis

TSSM, with the support of staff, advanced the design, procurement, and fabrication of the bridge in 2024. The bridge arrived at Wishart Park in January 2025 and is slated to be installed in early March. TSSM has incurred costs associated with its construction, and further costs will follow its installation.

A funding agreement between the City and TSSM will be entered before any funds are transferred. Furthermore, funds will be released on a reimbursable basis to ensure they are utilized specifically for the construction and installation of the bridge.

Financial Implications

No new funds are needed.

The funds requested were approved as part of the 2024 Tourism Operating budget, specifically to support TSSM with the construction and installation of the bridge in Wishart Park.

Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact

This item supports the Corporate Strategic Plans Focus Area:

- Community Development and Partnership focus on Maximizing Economic Development & Investment with the commitment to maintain financial viability.
- Community Development- Develop partnerships with key stakeholders and reconciliation.

There are no climate change impacts associated with this report.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

The relevant By-law 2025-37 is listed under item 12 of the Agenda and will be read with all by-laws under that item.

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Respectfully submitted,

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