

**Municipality of Chatham-Kent**

**Chief Administrative Office**

**Community Culture & Connections**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Audrey Ansell, Director, Community Culture & Connections  
**Date:** October 18, 2023  
**Subject:** Museum Funding - Ongoing

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**Recommendation**

It is recommended that:

1. A stable, annual base budget for Buxton National Historic Site & Museum, Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society – Black Mecca Museum, and the Wallaceburg & District Museum be established at the \$173,440 level (to align with previous Core Grant funding levels) and the decision regarding exact funding source(s) be determined during the 2024–2027 multi-year budget deliberations.
2. The Museums remain independent operations and the Municipality, through the Community Culture & Connections area, offer support by establishing regular and collaborative meetings and work with the museums to establish a performance reporting template that facilitates the identification of goals and objectives and provides an update to Council on progress and achievements.

**Background**

This report responds to the motion voted on at the June 6, 2022 council meeting:

Whereas museums are a vital part of telling the CK story from our history of the Underground Railroad to the settling of all of Chatham-Kent. And whereas these community services align directly with the goals and objectives with the CK 2035 Plan and support our ongoing initiatives in the areas of tourism and culture and are economic drivers in our community. And whereas they must rely on unsecure annual funding, grants, and volunteers to keep these collections of our history available to tourists and the public. I move that administration prepare a report to council by September 12th outlining:

1. The options for all or part of the operations for the Buxton Museum, the Black Mecca Museum and the Wallaceburg & District Museum to become more integrated under a municipal department(s) for resource support and funding purposes.

2. Base budget recommendations coinciding with departmental integration options, including funding options and/or sources to do so;
3. That the options in the report are done in consultation and collaboration with stakeholders.
4. In the meantime, that 2022 funding for the three facilities remain the same as 2021 funding and funded from the same source until the report returns to Council for consideration.

Subsequent to this motion, Council reviewed 2023 funding for the museums at the [August 14, 2023 meeting](#).

Following Council's direction in the June 2022 motion and decision on August 14, 2023, funding for the three museums has been maintained at 2021 levels throughout 2022 and 2023. Funding from the Together CK Core Grant has been capped at \$17,500 for each site (since 2022) with the balance of funds drawn from the Strategic Reserve.

### **Comments**

A museum can be defined as a building in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic or cultural interest and significance are stored and exhibited. Museums collect and conserve both tangible (e.g., artifacts) and intangible (e.g., storytelling) heritage.

The Province of Ontario defines community museums as custodians and interpreters of the province's irreplaceable heritage collections; they create authentic, unique experiences in their communities through connections to historic collections and stories and to Ontarians.

This report considers three community museums in Chatham-Kent; Buxton National Historic Site & Museum, Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society – Black Mecca Museum, and the Wallaceburg & District Museum (“the Museums”) and their activities are outlined below. The three museums are significant contributors to Chatham-Kent’s economic and cultural landscape and to the community’s national and international profile.

#### **Buxton National Historic Site & Museum (Buxton Museum)**

The [Buxton Museum](#) is located in the Elgin Settlement, which is one of the few remaining Black Canadian settlements that has been in existence since the pre-Civil War era. Descendants of the original settlers continue to inhabit the village of North Buxton today and the community remains a vital and active Black Canadian village, which continues to remember and preserve its role and roots in North American Black history and in the history of Canada.

The Buxton Museum’s prime concern is the preservation of material and artifacts of Raleigh, with special emphasis on the history and accomplishments of the original settlers in the Elgin Settlement and their descendants. Among other things, it houses the bed, dresser, diary, and copies of papers belonging to Rev. William King as well as many other articles and papers of historical significance in this community. Buxton is

maintained through grants from the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, admission fees, and donations. The museum also plays an important role in the community's annual Homecoming Celebration, which has been occurring over the Labour Day weekend for 100 years.

- Annual visitor numbers: 5,384 (2019), 9,421 (2023 est)
- Annual Operating Budget – approximate: \$168,000
- Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) received

#### Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society - Black Mecca Museum (CKBHS Museum)

The [CKBHS Museum](#), a registered non-profit that was incorporated in 1994, seeks to gather, preserve and celebrate Chatham-Kent's rich Black history. With its collection of displays, artifacts and archives this Museum, with humble roots has remained dedicated to unveiling the remarkable stories of Chatham-Kent's Black community, from its beginnings in the 1780s, to present day.

The museum offers walking tours, exhibits, family genealogy, teaching and education and hosts the annual Chatham Coloured All-Stars baseball game. Funding is received from the Municipality of Chatham-Kent and provincial sources and through donations, memberships and fundraising events.

- Annual visitor numbers: 1,100+ (2019), 1,100 (2023 est)
- Annual Operating Budget – approximate: \$83,000
- Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) received

#### Wallaceburg & District Museum (Wallaceburg Museum)

The [Wallaceburg Museum](#) is dedicated to "Preserving the Past for the Future" and draws upon a rich heritage dating from the community's founding as the Baldoon Settlement. The museum showcases 85,000 artifacts charting Wallaceburg's industrial rise and origins in the Dominion Sugar Company, Wallaceburg Brass Company and the Sydenham Glass Company. The museum is operated by the Wallaceburg and District Historical Society Inc., a registered non-profit and charity.

The Wallaceburg Museum operates from a municipally owned facility. Approximately 60% of the museum's revenue is raised through municipal, federal and provincial funds with the remainder raised through private and corporate donations.

- Annual visitor numbers: 6,800 (2019), 3,500<sup>1</sup> (2023 est)
- Annual Operating Budget – approximate: \$165,000
- Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) received

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<sup>1</sup> Note, museum attendance has been impacted by the 2-year closure of the L.O. Stonehouse bridge. Typical attendance during WAMBO is 3,000; the bridge closure has limited museum attendance to 500.

### **Importance of the museums**

The museums support Council's strategic goals in several ways:

1. **Promote Community Safety & Well-Being** - We will promote inclusion and the quality of life for "all ages and stages" in our community with investments and programming in arts, heritage, recreation, social and health services.
  - Collaborate and invest in arts, culture, and heritage
  - Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) & Truth and Reconciliation

The museums preserve important parts of Chatham-Kent's history and educate visitors on unique components of community culture, including Black History, the Underground Railroad, community settlement, the development of industry and the community of Wallaceburg.

- The two Black History museums (Buxton Museum and CKBHS Museum) are a vital part of Chatham-Kent's Black History and Black communities and contribute to Canada's Underground Railroad heritage. The museums are highly respected and valued on national and international stages, contributing to Chatham-Kent's reputation as a welcoming community and enabling the histories of local Black communities to be a year-round feature focus. As an example of the status of the Black History museums and the histories and stories that they present, Buxton Museum hosted a US Ambassador, US Consul General, and an Ambassador from Nigeria and seven tour buses from California in 2023.

Beyond their contribution as museums, the two sites serve as key focal and gathering points for Black communities, acting as community centres that bring the community together to recognize the important history of Black communities thriving in business, education, medicine, sports, literary and cultural arts. These communities were significant in building Chatham-Kent and were significant parts of Canadian History.

- The Wallaceburg Museum celebrates Wallaceburg's strong industrial and glass-making heritage and presents artifacts in various exhibits that help visitors to trace the establishment and evolution of the community. Wallaceburg owes much of its existence to the navigable waterways that have allowed industry to flourish there since the mid-1800s and the museum play a key role in preserving and recounting the important stories of the community. The museum is located within the boundaries of the [Wallaceburg Secondary Plan – South Side](#) that is currently in development and is located in close proximity to the [L.O. Stonehouse Bridge](#) and revival within that area and refurbishment of the bridge will have positive implications for museum foot traffic.

The role that the three museums play in preserving and presenting tangible and intangible heritage is indisputable and the focal point that each museum serves in its respective community is clear.

The museums are also repositories of materials that are used by schools, historians, novelists, genealogists and film producers - all of which bring attention to Chatham Kent, as do presentations made by staff to groups across the continent.

## **2. Grow our Community**

- Implement strategies to attract, retain and expand business and skilled workforce across all sectors

It is important to also consider the three museums as contributors to the Grow our Community goal given their contribution as both businesses and employers, generating economic impact, promoting the community, and offering employment and workforce development opportunities.

All three sites attract thousands of patrons and visitors every year, including schools, from within Chatham-Kent through various programming and camp activities. The sites also serve as a draw for national and international tourists who then generate economic impact across Chatham-Kent by spending in local restaurant, hotels and businesses. The contribution of cultural assets to developing the Chatham-Kent visitor economy are outlined in the [2015 Chatham-Kent Tourism Destination Management Plan](#), with the Black History sites noted as Tier 1 unique experiences.

## **Funding**

Chatham-Kent is home to a number of museums, heritage houses and historical societies. See Attachment A - CK Museums and Heritage/Historical Societies.

Some of the museums are municipally owned and operated, others are independent not-for-profits that may receive varying amounts of support (financial and/or in-kind) from the municipality and/or other funding sources.

The Municipality has provided operational funding to Buxton National Historic Site & Museum, Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society – Black Mecca, and the Wallaceburg & District Museum ("the museums") for many years through the Community Partnership Fund (now TogetherCK) - Core Grants framework and the museums relied on it to maintain their operations.

On March 7, 2022, Council approved [new funding rules for the TogetherCK Core Grant](#). Funding Limits were introduced specifying:

- "Applicants can request 50% of a project expenses up to a maximum of \$25,000" and
- "Previous projects that would qualify for this grant include but are not limited to: Blenheim Youth Centre, Buxton Historical Society, Wallaceburg & District Historical Society, Centre communautaire de CK La Girouette, and the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society."

As a result of the new funding rules, grant reductions and limits were introduced, commencing in the 2022–2025 funding cycle, directly impacting the three museums.

The Community Partnership Fund / TogetherCK – Core Grant Funding Profile for the museums is outlined in Attachment B - Grant Funding and Municipal Supports – Museums.

### Implications of funding cuts

The change to the granted amounts for the 2022–2025 TogetherCK Core Grant funding cycle and the \$17,500 annual funding cap approved presents negative and serious financial implications for the museums.

The museums have variously described the impact as “drastic” and “catastrophic.”

The two Black history sites have stated that they “...would have to shutter within the next 24-36 months without the continuation of their current funding from the municipality.”

The potential implications of funding cuts include:

- Staffing cuts - to already small teams
- Loss of volunteers
- Reduced opening hours
- Museum closures
- Loss of community focal points

The current planned reduction in funding through the TogetherCK grant risks destabilizing all three museums at this time.

### Museums' attempts to find/generate additional funding

The TogetherCK Core Grant funds have primarily been used to fund museum operations, including paying staff to administer each location's programs and operations. The TogetherCK Core Grant is one of very few grants that can be applied to cover operational expenses.

All three sites actively pursue grant funding and revenue generation opportunities. Examples of grant funding;

- [Community Museums Operating Grant](#) (CMOG) is a provincial grant that is received by all three sites to fund operations, but in a relatively small amount.
- Many grants, including the Ontario Trillium Foundation, that the sites apply for are project-specific and can not be applied to fund operations.
- Canada Summer Jobs Grants – offers help to hire summer students, although Buxton and Black Mecca noted cuts in funding in 2023 resulting in fewer summer students hired.

Examples of promotional/fund raising/revenue generation activities;

- Events

- CKBHS Field of Honour: The Chatham Coloured All-Stars Charity Baseball Game
  - CKBHS Annual Conference
  - Buxton Annual Homecoming Celebrations
  - Wings Over Wallaceburg
- Annual conferences – CKBHS and Buxton
- Summer camps
- Guided tours
- Donations
- Memberships
- Merchandise sales

### **Funding options**

Funding options are outlined in the Financial Implications section of this report.

### **Integration Options**

All three museums expressed a desire to remain independent but recognize the benefits of longstanding and ongoing collaboration with the Municipality and with each other. Supports identified by the museums as beneficial to ongoing development and sustainability include;

- Networking and collaboration among all (municipal and non-municipal) museums.
- Exhibition supports with help to change artifacts.
- Climate-controlled storage of artifacts.

Currently the Municipality of Chatham-Kent provides a range of grant supports to the museums: See Attachment B - Grant Funding and Municipal Supports - Museums.

Moving forward, the Municipality can offer support by establishing regular and collaborative meetings through the Community Culture & Connections area that seek to identify and find solutions to ongoing needs and work with the museums to establish a performance reporting template that facilitates the identification of goals and objectives and provides an update to Council on progress and achievements.

### **Examples of the types of support provided to community-run museums**

- The Region of Waterloo offers a Key Cultural Institutions Grant. Key Cultural Institutions are defined as “large institutions that contribute to the social and economic prosperity of the Waterloo Region, creating employment opportunities for artists, attracting visitors and stimulating creative thought and activity.” The grant aims to provide stable funding to institutions deemed to represent a significant asset and to play an important role in the Region’s ecology.

- Elgin County provides annual funding to the St. Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre and generally provides in-kind support and curatorial assistance to local museums, but no direct funding.
- Haldimand County provides a variety of grants (Community Improvement Program/Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Program) and marketing/program development supports to not-for-profits, including community museums.
- The counties of Brant and Lambton offer community grants to museums.

The basis of the Waterloo approach (i.e., to consider community assets as key cultural institutions) can be considered in a Chatham-Kent context as it recognises the key role played by the museums covered in this RTC. The three museums covered in this report are key contributors to Chatham-Kent's cultural landscape, contribute to the economy, serve as visitor attractions and help to build community culture and connections. Offering stable base funding to the museums and moving away from a grant model will help them to sustain their operations and will allow them to focus on contributing to the community's museum and cultural landscape.

### **Council Term Priorities**

This report supports the following Council Term Priorities:

			
<b>Deliver Excellent Service</b>	<b>Promote Safety &amp; Well-Being</b>	<b>Grow Our Community</b>	<b>Ensure Environmental Sustainability</b>
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### **Consultation**

An onsite meeting with each museum was held in June 2023. The meetings included each museum's Executive Director/Office Manager as well as a board representative at the CKBHS Museum and Wallaceburg Museum.

The museums reviewed and support the recommendations in this report.

Various Municipal areas, including DEIJ, Facilities, Legal, Budget, Arts + Culture and Tourism provided input and information to help compile this report and the General Manager, FBITT/CFO was consulted on the funding recommendations.



### **Communication**

The approved recommendations and next steps will be communicated directly with the Executive Director/Office Manager at each museum.

### **Financial Implications**

Funding from the TogetherCK Core Grant has been capped at \$17,500 for each site (since 2022). Following Council's direction in the June 2022 motion and the August 14, 2023 decision, funding for the three museums has been maintained at 2021 levels throughout 2022 and 2023 with \$17,500 for each site from the TogetherCK Core Grant and the balance of funds from the Strategic Reserve for a total funding budget of \$173,440.

Administration discussed ongoing funding needs with the museums and then considered a range of funding options. In view of the current and ongoing funding needs outlined by each museum and the implications of funding cuts, administration recommends that base budget funding for the three museums be established and that the combined funding be maintained at the \$173,440 level, to align with the previous Core Grant funding level in order to provide ongoing, stable funding.

<b>Museum</b>	<b>Ongoing Base Budget Recommendation (Maintain at Core Grant funding level)</b>
Buxton Museum	\$72,250
Wallaceburg Museum	\$66,190
CKBHS Museum	\$35,000
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$173,440</b>

For consideration during the multi-year budget deliberations, it is suggested that the base funding for the museums be achieved by:

- Reallocation from the TogetherCK base budget in the sum of \$52,500 (\$17,500 to each museum)
- Balance of new tax-based funding in the sum of \$120,940

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Reviewed by: Michael Duben, B.A., LLB, Chief Administrative Officer

Consulted and confirmed the content of the consultation section of the report by:

Gord Quinton MBA, CPA, CGA, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer

Attachment(s):

Attachment A - CK Museums and Heritage/Historical Societies

Attachment B - Grant Funding and Municipal Supports - Museums

C: Shannon Prince / Michelle Robbins, Buxton National Historic Site & Museum

Samantha Meredith / Dorothy Wright-Wallace, Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society

Jill VanZelst / Leesa Ervin / Dennis Marek – Wallaceburg & District Museum