



Subject: West Street Hydro Lines Project

To: Council

From: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Report Number: 2023-214

Meeting Date: December 12, 2023

Recommendation:

That Office of the Chief Administrative Officer Report 2023-214 be received; and

That the Director of Public Works be directed to proceed with the relocation of the West Street hydro lines with service drops for streetlights, as outlined in Option 3.

Purpose:

This report proposes solutions to public safety issues brought forward by the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) during the 2023 Canal Days Marine Heritage Festival regarding the hydro lines on West Street. The report proposes that the hydro lines be relocated and buried where electricity is required.

Background:

On the first day of the 2023 Canal Days Marine Heritage Festival (Canal Days), the ESA identified a potential public safety issue created by placing food trucks and vendors beneath the overhead hydro and utility lines that border the Welland Canal on West Street. The height of vendor displays and food trucks—many of which have tall signage and vents on their roofs—do not provide enough clearance to satisfy the requirements of the ESA. At the time of their inspection, the ESA did not provide an explanation as to why this safety issue had not been flagged in any of the previous years when food trucks and vendors occupied West Street. During Canal Days, the local electricity utility provider, Canadian Niagara Power (CNP), was able to employ a temporary solution that mitigated the safety concern and allowed Canal Days to continue. Going forward, the ESA has identified that nothing greater than 10 feet (approximately 3 metres) tall will be permitted beneath the hydro lines on West Street.

Discussion:

The ESA, which is the authority having jurisdiction over electrical work in Ontario and a regulator of CNP, have stated that sections of the *Electrical Distribution Safety Regulation* require a distance of 3 to 4.8 metres (9.8 to 15.8 feet) vertical clearance between a structure and the hydro lines. This requirement impacts not only Canal Days and any other event, but also the delivery and transport trucks (which can be up to 4 metres or 13.6 feet tall) that need access to West Street. CNP has shared that they are planning upgrades in the West Street area and would contribute funds to the relocation of the hydro lines.

In bringing forward the recommendation of this report, staff considered the following:

1. Moving Canal Days activities off West Street

Under such a scenario, a complete reconfiguration of the Canal Days layout would be necessary, which may fundamentally change the Canal Days experience for attendees, vendors, and Port Colborne businesses. Food trucks and other tall vendor displays would have no choice but to be redistributed among the feeder streets (e.g., Clarence Street, Catharine Street, Kent Street, Victoria Street, and Adelaide Street) or the opposite side of West Street. In both cases, this change would not only obstruct storefronts and residences but also create servicing challenges with connections to electrical outlets and water. Furthermore, access to power on West Street is especially limited. Running wires on the ground and over sidewalks—from the hydro poles to electrical panels to food trucks and vendors—has been a past practice that should not be relied upon anymore.

2. Working with CNP to have taller hydro poles

CNP offered one solution that would involve replacing the existing wood poles on West Street with new concrete poles that are taller and more durable during extreme weather events.

3. Relocating the hydro lines with service drops for streetlights

CNP presented a second solution that would include relocating the high-voltage lines and transformers currently on the wood poles along West Street. Additionally, installations would be buried and dropped to service streetlights and any new electrical outlets. Recognizing that there is a design component to this solution, the majority of the work would occur after Canal Days 2024 (August 2-4, 2024). CNP has indicated that, upon receiving confirmation from the City that the work would go ahead, and subject to their inspection, they are willing to work with the ESA to allow Canal Days 2024 to continue on West Street on a one-time exception basis.

West Street provides a core competitive advantage to the City from both a lifestyle and economic development and tourism point-of-view. The relocation of the hydro lines represents a major improvement that rectifies more than just the Canal Days safety issue but would also benefit the downtown economy on which West Street businesses rely and open opportunities for future beautification efforts along West Street. The design process would allow staff to account for adding new electrical outlets that can be strategically placed along West Street, reduce the annual costs spent on electrical contractors during Canal Days, alleviate the risks and hazards associated with running wires on the ground and over sidewalks, and give groups like the Downtown Business Improvement Area opportunities to activate the Promenade with displays and interactive activities to draw more residents and visitors to the City's core.

Report 2023-181 (Rural Economic Development Program – Amending Agreement; September 12, 2023) regarding the West Street Renewal Project noted that staff continue to believe in the importance of refreshing the street's aesthetic appeal, maintaining its unique character, and giving Port Colborne's waterfront new vitality—all of which are supported by the various grant programs contributing to West Street's renewal.

Internal Consultations:

Internal consultations have included Public Works, Economic Development & Tourism Services (including Events), and Financial Services as part of a joint effort to seek solutions to the issue identified by the ESA, reevaluate the Canal Days layout, liaise with CNP as the public utility provider, and identify the potential to redistribute allocated grant funds towards this project. Staff also conferred with the Canal Days Committee regarding addressing the safety issue by moving Canal Days activities entirely off West Street.

Financial Implications:

The project cost for option 2—taller (concrete) hydro poles—is estimated at \$1,100,000 (inclusive of contingency), of which \$136,000 could be funded by CNP. This cost does not include improvements to lighting or additional poles. Given the taller poles would have only a minor effect on beautification and street functionality, the grants identified in option 3 would not be available. The City would have to fund the remaining \$964,000 through reserves.

The project cost for option 3, being the recommended project, is estimated at \$2,176,000 (inclusive of contingency). This estimated cost includes relocating West

Street's hydro lines to Catharine Street and replacing the streetlights with decorative and other lights where warranted.

The funding model for the recommended project uses grant funds as follows.

Project Cost	\$2,176,000	
Canadian Niagara Power (CNP)	<u>\$546,000</u>	\$1,630,000
Grant – Canada Community-Building Fund	\$509,845	
Grant – Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF)	\$497,675	
Grant – Strategic Priorities Infrastructure Fund (SPIF)	\$441,630	
Grant – Rural Economic Development (RED)	<u>\$180,850</u>	\$1,630,000
		<u>\$ –</u>
CCRF – FedDev Ontario; SPIF – Ministry of Infrastructure; RED – Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)		

Any road or sidewalk repair required during the project would be funded through the City's road and sidewalk budgets.

Staff highlight that the CCRF, SPIF, and RED grants were previously allocated to other "West Street Renewal" capital projects. Should Council proceed with the project recommended in this report, the following adjustments to previously approved capital projects will be required:

Project #	Project	Approved Budget	Reduction	Adjusted Budget	Spend To Date	Available Funds
22C-PW-B13	A.13 Waterfront Centre	\$1,145,500	\$497,675	\$647,825	\$254,224	\$393,601
22C-PW-R23	West Street Streetscaping	\$437,150	\$437,150	\$ –	\$ –	\$ –
22C-PW-R24	Wayfinding	\$130,000	\$74,670	\$55,330	\$ –	\$55,330
						\$448,931

Project #22C-PW-R23 would be closed out with a budget of zero.

Staff have consulted the funding administrators at the provincial and federal levels about using portions of the approved grants on this project. The funding administrators are supportive, seeing as these capital upgrades and improvements to West Street fall within the scope of the originally proposed projects.

Importantly, staff also note that the CCRF grant must be spent by February 29, 2024.

Public Engagement:

Should Council proceed with option 3, as recommended in this report, the project would be added to Let's Connect, Port Colborne—the City's new online community engagement platform.

Because the project requires design, construction is not anticipated until after Canal Days 2024. Staff will use the time before then to consult with residents and businesses located on and near West Street and Catharine Street that could be affected by the project. Few or several adjoining streets—determined at CNP's discretion—may need to have new overhead and underground circuits added as a result of relocating some of West Street's lines and transformers.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillars of the strategic plan:

- Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
- Economic Prosperity
- Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure

Conclusion:

West Street provides a core competitive advantage to the City of Port Colborne. Arising out of the need to address a public safety issue brought forward by the ESA, this report proposes that the hydro lines on West Street be relocated and buried where electricity is required. The proposed project serves as an opportunity to resolve West Street's limitations to delivery and transport truck access, hosting annual events such as Canal Days, and clears the way for future beautification projects to enhance the area's crucial role in attracting community and visitor activity.

Conclusion:

- A. Pictures of West Street hydro lines

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.