



SUBJECT: Amendments to the Heritage Property Tax Rebate By-law to update the rebate payment method

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Community Planning Department

Report Number: PL-65-24

Wards Affected: All

Date to Committee: September 9, 2024

Date to Council: September 17, 2024

Recommendation:

Approve the amendments to the Heritage Property Tax Rebate By-law, as set out in community planning department report PL-65-24; and

Approve enactment of the by-law to amend By-law 61-2016, substantially in the form attached hereto as Appendix A to community planning department report PL-65-24; and

Direct the Director of Community Planning to notify owners of designated heritage properties about the changes to the Heritage Property Tax Rebate By-law.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide a minor amendment to the Heritage Property Tax Rebate By-law, established in 2014, for designated residential properties and expanded in 2021 to designated commercial properties.

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Designing and delivering complete communities
 - Providing the best services and experiences
 - Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
 - Driving organizational performance
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Executive Summary:

The Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program (HPTRP) was established in 2014 by By-law 77-2014 for residential designated properties and was expanded to commercial properties in 2021 through By-law 37-2021. Based on the outcome of a process review, staff are recommending minor amendments to improve the application process and update the by-law payment method, replacing a refund with a rebate on owners' tax accounts to provide efficiencies in the process and reduce confusion for the taxpayers.

Background and Discussion:

On Oct. 15, 2012, Council approved Heritage Burlington's report, "A New Approach to Conserving Burlington's Heritage". One of the report recommendations pertained to the immediate establishment of a Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program (HPTRP) for residential designated properties. An additional recommendation was to investigate a similar program for commercial properties.

In December 2014, Council adopted By-law 77-2014 to formally establish the HPTRP for residential heritage properties at a rebate of 20 per cent of residential property taxes. As planned, the tax rebate for the residential heritage property increased in five per cent increments annually from 20 per cent in 2014 to 40 per cent of the taxes in 2018 for municipal and school purposes levied on the property. In November 2015, By-law 90-2015 was enacted and passed to amend Section 9 of By-law 77-2014 regarding the amount of a Heritage Property Tax Rebate based off MPAC's assessed property value.

In November 2016, By-laws 77-2014 and 90-2015 were repealed and replaced with By-law 61-2016 to allow the program to reach its approved maximum rebate of 40% without yearly Council approval. Staff reported back to Council on the early effectiveness of the program through Report PB-88-16.

In 2021, the HPTRP was expanded to commercial properties through amending By-law 37-2021.

Strategy/process/risk

Proposed revision to the rebate payment method

Community Planning staff, in consultation with the City's Corporate Strategy Team and other relevant departments/divisions, conducted a process review of the Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program.

Staff are implementing a simplified application for users to input information. As well the recommended minor amendment to the by-law would update the payment method to a rebate/reduction on the owners' tax account rather than issuing refunds through

physical cheque distribution. This amendment is similar to the method incorporated in the recent Low-Income Seniors Property Tax Rebate Program. These revisions provide efficiencies, improved customer service, minimal cost reductions and reduced time for property owners to obtain their tax rebate (i.e. eliminates mailing and associated errors). The tax rebate will be applied to the tax account immediately. Further, the rebate/reduction is aligned with the upcoming customer tax portal platform which will introduce self-serve management of property tax accounts in which property owners will be able to see their account balances. As well, it is anticipated that the process improvement would benefit applicants/heritage property owners through an expedited and simplified process with mailed cheques being phased out.

Community Planning staff do not anticipate any risks related to this process change.

Options Considered

Should Council not wish to proceed with updating the payment distribution for the Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program of applying a rebate to the owners' tax accounts, the alternate option is for the program to remain as-is, with manually issuing refund cheques to the Eligible Heritage Property owners. However, staff is of the opinion that the proposed amendment is appropriate as it provides efficiencies as noted previously.

Financial Matters:

Not applicable.

Climate Implications:

Not applicable.

Engagement Matters:

Although there is no legislative requirement for public consultation with the amendment, community planning staff are committed to notifying heritage property owners about the application and payment updates, and what to expect for the applications accepted in Q1 2025.

Conclusion:

The Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program has been successful since establishment in 2014 for eligible residential heritage property owners, and since 2021 for eligible commercial heritage property owners. Staff continue to pursue efficient and effective processes to enhance the program experience and delivery for our residents with the recommended updated payment method.

Respectfully submitted,

Chloe Richer, MCIP, RPP, CAHP
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Appendices:

A. Draft By-law XX-2024

Notifications:

Ministry of Finance
Clerk, Halton Region
Ontario Heritage Trust
Heritage Burlington (c/o Committee Clerk)
Designated Heritage Property Owners

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.