

I thank the chair of the Heritage Burlington Advisory Committee and all of its members for this opportunity to delegate tonight.

I would like to express my appreciation to the City for providing the Heritage Tax Rebate. It is certainly a meaningful amount of money to receive back and shows appreciation of the additional expense that comes with owning and maintaining a heritage property.

The process used to administer this program that takes place each year can at best be described as cumbersome and antiquated. The same information is each year collected via the rebate application form (name, address, tax role number, heritage bylaw number etc.). Additionally, the heritage property owner is required execute each year the same covenant by which the owner agrees and commits to maintain the property to the City's requirements.

Apart from the obvious benefit of reducing the annual tax burden, for me at least and I believe for other beneficiaries, the heritage tax rebate acts as a savings account which matures in July or thereabouts each year. Each year I get the benefit of an in-hand amount of over \$2,000. That amount comes in very handy to help manage annual house maintenance costs such as outside painting, deck staining which arise in the spring and summer seasons, It is a most welcome annual lump sum to receive.

The staff report being considered by this committee tonight and on the agenda for counsel next week as a consent item has been produced by staff with a sole goal of improving delivery of the program. That is a great goal to seek. In the report there's a section entitled engagement. Under that section staff commits to engage with Heritage property owners to advise them of the changes to be implemented in the method of payment of the rebate. It is extremely noticeable that staff have not engaged in any way with heritage property owners prior to writing its report. It

came to its conclusions and it wrote its report in a vacuum. This report is not primarily for the benefit of the heritage property owner but for the benefit of City staff.

It is my contention receiving the rebate in the form of a credit to the heritage property owner's tax account will not be welcomed by the heritage property owners.

I asked you to look at it this way. Imagine you're an employee and your employer is going to give you a bonus. Let's say that bonus is \$1,200 after tax.

I contend receiving \$1,200 in your bank account allows you more flexibility to make some purchases you might otherwise not be able to make than by receiving \$100 every month. That \$100 per month likely will just disappear and be absorbed into everyday expenses.

I pay my tax bill each year through the City provided monthly payment plan. So for me at least the City already has all my banking details. There's absolutely no reason why the city could not pay the rebate back through electronic transfer to the same financial institution account from which it takes my monthly tax installment payment. Absolutely no reason at all. If the City does not have banking details for a heritage property owner it certainly can acquire that information from the property owner.

It would seem that staff have had a very narrow thought process when it comes to how to make the payment of the rebate more efficient. It certainly needs to be more efficient. When my tax amount changes my tax my tax bill reflects that within a matter of a week or so. Why it takes five months to process the rebate each year which pretty much has no process moving parts from one year to the next is incomprehensible.

I note the staff report does not in any meaningful way enunciate what improvements will be made to reduce substantially the five month time period it takes to get to the present cheque issuance position in the process. The issuance of a physical cheque has minimal effect on the overall efficiency of the management of the program.

I also wish to ask why staff did not seek input and advice on this matter from this committee. Surely that should have been one of the first things staff should

have done. This would seem to be another instance of staff treating this committee with disdain and expecting a rubber stamp approval.

I ask this committee to be more than a rubber stamp.

I respectfully request this committee pass a resolution on this matter whereby the committee requests Council

- remove the item from the consent section of its agenda for the September 17th, 2024 council meeting, and
- return the report to staff for its further consideration, and
- direct staff to engage with heritage property owners and this committee to:-
 - seek input on process improvements, and
 - seek input on how the rebate be paid, and
- rewrite its report, taking into account the feedback from heritage property owners on the process,

including alternative rebate payment methods.

and

- resubmit its report to Council by January 1st, 2025

that clearly and transparently describes what

procedural improvements will be made to

improve efficiency, including the method of

payment of the rebate, and what the expected

reduced timeframe will be for the entire process.