

# DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

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**Title:** Ove Arup Pedestrian Bridge, Bowring Park - Heritage Designation

**Date Prepared:** April 6, 2020

**Report To:** Regular Meeting of Council

**Councillor and Role:** Councillor Maggie Burton, Planning & Development

**Ward:** Ward 5

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**Decision/Direction Required: To seek approval to designate the Cantilever (Ove Arup) Pedestrian Bridge, located at 100 Bowring Parking Road, as a Heritage Structure.**

**Discussion – Background and Current Status:**

At the October 21, 2019 Regular Council meeting, Council directed: *“That the Cantilever Bridge in Bowring Park, architecturally designed by world renowned engineer Ove Arup, be referred to Built Heritage Experts Panel (BHEP) and the Bowring Park Foundation for consideration for designation as a Heritage structure.”*

The Cantilever Bridge is located within Bowring Park, is within the Open Space District of the St. John's Municipal Plan and is zoned Open Space (O). Bowring Park was established in 1914 by the Bowring Brothers and presented to the City in 1924. It underwent redevelopment and expansion in the 1950s. In 1958, the City commissioned Montreal architecture firm, van Ginkel Associates, to work on a new development plan that included active and passive uses with new amenities such as: a swimming pool, boating pond, playground, tennis courts, pedestrian bridge and road bridge. As funding became available from the Canadian National Railway (CNR), the van Ginkels, along with the United Kingdom firm of Ove Arup as the structural engineering consultant, designed and constructed the pedestrian and road bridges to cross the railroad tracks running south of the original park.

The bridge is a graceful concrete bridge which arches over the former railway track. It is cantilever style, meaning it is anchored on only one end. The other end hovers slightly above the ground with stairs extending outwards. The bridge creates a connection between the low terrain at the south of the park to the higher terrain within the original park. The CNR shut down its Newfoundland operations in 1988 and the railway tracks were removed. Today, the pedestrian bridge crosses the Newfoundland T'Railway Provincial Park walking trail.

While the Cantilever Bridge is a unique, noteworthy structure, the prominence of its architect and its engineer add to its significance as a cultural landmark. Structural engineer Ove Nyquist Arup (1895-1988), born in England to Danish and Norwegian parents, was one of the world's foremost architectural structural engineers. He played a significant part in the design of the Mulberry temporary harbours developed to offload cargo on the beaches during the World War

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# ST. JOHN'S

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Two D-Day landings and was the design engineer for the Sydney Opera House, completed in 1973 in Australia. He founded the Arup Group, an international engineering firm.

The bridge's architect, Blanche Lemco van Ginkel (family birth name Lemco, 1923) of van Ginkel Associates, is a Canadian architect, city planner and educator. Lemco van Ginkel is recognized for combining urban planning with her architectural skills, with a focus on modernist design using bold and unadorned elements. This is evident in the Cantilever Pedestrian Bridge. She is the first woman to head a faculty of architecture in Canada, and her credits include planning Expo '67, planning the urban design of Midtown Manhattan, and spearheading the preservation of Old Montreal.

As per Council's directive, the Designation Criteria Review was referred to the BHEP. The BHEP recommended the following:

*That given the international recognition of Sir Ove Arup, who has received such honour as British Knighthood as well as the historic value of the structure, the Panel strongly recommends that Council proceed with the designation of Cantilever Bridge at Bowring Park with a further recommendation that a story board be constructed that will articulate its heritage significance.*

At a subsequent BHEP Meeting, the Panel also asked that the City recognize van Ginkel Associates in the Statement of Significance for their contributions to developing the bridge.

Staff have met with the Bowring Park Foundation and other City departments prior to bringing a recommendation to Council. The Bowring Park Foundation is in favour of the heritage designation but note that they would not be able to contribute any funds. The City engaged a consultant to inspect the bridge and have identified some areas in need of repairs, which are planned to be included in the current or a future City Bridge Rehabilitation Program. The handrail needs to be replaced and there are some areas of concrete cracking and delamination. Should Council decide to designate the bridge, it is recommended that the repairs be completed in a manner which respects the architecture of the bridge and restores/replicates the original design. This would include additional assessment that have not been included in the current budget for the Bridge Rehab Program. As it is often difficult to match new concrete with existing when doing repairs, it is recommended to seek the advice of a heritage professional with experience in restoring concrete structures. A qualified heritage professional would also be able to advise on repairs to the handrail. The City has had discussions with Heritage NL to identify suitable professionals.

#### Provincial Designation

The Cantilever Bridge could also be put forward for provincial designation as a Registered Heritage Structure. If provincially designated, the City would be bound to conserve the historic integrity of the structure through an agreement with Heritage NL. Provincial designation could increase the profile of the bridge, as designated structures receive a plaque and are listed on Heritage NL's website, as well as the Canadian Inventory of Historic Places.

If provincially designated, the City could apply for the restoration grant program which can cover up to 30% of the cost of restoring the bridge to a maximum of \$30,000. If it was then

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restored, the City would be eligible for maintenance funding. To receive a grant, the City would have to sign a legal agreement with Heritage NL preventing inappropriate alteration, demolition, and so on, to protect the structure over the long term.

Council may direct staff to pursue provincial heritage designation.

**Key Considerations/Implications:**

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Maintenance operations and repairs to the Cantilever Bridge are required. Additional heritage restoration studies may be required if the structure is designated.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: Heritage NL, Bowring Park Foundation, Arup Group, and various City departments.
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans: *A Sustainable City* – Plan for land use and preserve and enhance the natural and built environment where we live.
4. Legal or Policy Implications: Should the designation proceed, the Legal Department will be asked to write a Heritage Designation By-law for the Cantilever Bridge at 100 Bowring Park Road for Council's consideration.
5. Privacy Implications: Not applicable.
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Should the designation proceed, the designation and history of this structure could be promoted at a later date.
7. Human Resource Implications: Not applicable.
8. Procurement Implications: Not applicable.
9. Information Technology Implications: Not applicable.
10. Other Implications: Not applicable.

**Recommendation:**

That Council designate the Cantilever Pedestrian Bridge in Bowring Park as a Heritage Structure and direct Legal to prepare a Designation By-law for consideration.

Further, that once municipally designated, Council direct staff to apply for Provincial heritage designation.

Further, that staff seek the advice of a qualified restoration professional prior to proceeding with repairs to the Cantilever Pedestrian Bridge.

Prepared by: Ann-Marie Cashin, MCIP, Planning III – Urban Design & Heritage

Approved by:

**Report Approval Details**

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| Document Title:      | Ove Arup Pedestrian Bridge, Bowring Park - Heritage Designation.docx |
| Attachments:         | - 100 Bowring Park Road - Attachments.pdf                            |
| Final Approval Date: | Apr 8, 2020  |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Ken O'Brien - Apr 8, 2020 - 2:34 PM**

**Jason Sinyard - Apr 8, 2020 - 3:20 PM**