



## AMHERST TOWN COUNCIL

RFD# (leave this I'll fill it in later)

Date: March 25, 2019

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**TO:** Mayor Kogon and Members of Amherst Town Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Andrew Fisher, Manager of Planning & Strategic Initiatives

**DATE:** March 25, 2019

**SUBJECT:** 134 East Victoria Street – Amherst Courthouse – Addition of Accessibility Ramp

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**ORIGIN:** The Province of Nova Scotia intends to alter the Provincial Courthouse building to make it barrier-free. This will include the installation of an exterior accessibility ramp on the north side entrance facing Victoria Square, and installation of an elevator within the existing building footprint.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY:** As a designated heritage property, the exterior ramp constitutes a substantial alteration, which under the NS Heritage Act requires review by the Heritage Advisory Committee.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Council approve the addition of an accessibility ramp as proposed, and as recommended by the Heritage Advisory Committee.

**BACKGROUND:** The Provincial Courthouse building is a Municipally Registered Heritage property. Given the heritage value of the building and its prominence in the downtown adjacent to Victoria Square, any alterations to the building exterior could be considered substantial. The NS Department of Justice hired an architectural firm to develop ramp construction options that maximized its functionality while minimizing the visual impact on the building and Victoria Square. A review team that included representatives from the design team, Department of Justice, Cumberland County (the property owners), and Town Staff (Planning and Recreation) considered various ramp options, and the attached design was determined to be the best option.

The preferred option includes construction of the ramp off the side of the existing north entrance. The stone materials used will be chosen to match, as closely as possible, the existing building. The ramp is cantilevered out from the building main wall so as to not create a void space between the ramp and the building. While not within the mandate of the Heritage Advisory Committee, landscaping, lighting, and other features with the Square will be reinstated as part of the project.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:** None

**SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPLICATIONS:** This proposal will provide for barrier-free access to the Provincial Courthouse building for members of the public of all abilities.



**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The Planning Advisory Committee acts as the Heritage Advisory Committee. A meeting open to the public was held on March 11, 2019 on this matter with no public in attendance.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS:** None

**ALTERNATIVES:** Council could reject the proposal; however, this option is not recommended. The Province does not legally require municipal approval. Also, the benefits of making a public building accessible are significant.

**ATTACHMENTS:** 20190304 Staff Report, Option 1 Design

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Report prepared by: Andrew Fisher, Manager of Planning & Strategic Initiatives  
Report and Financial approved by: