



Corporation of the Township of Brock

Staff Report to the Members of Council

From: Wayne Ward

Position: Director Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Title / Subject: Sunderland Town Hall Theatre Stage Extension Proposal

Date of Meeting: April 27, 2026

Report No: 2026-PRF-010

1.0 Issue / Origin

Sunderland Youth Theatre Group is proposing a permanent stage extension in the auditorium of the Sunderland Town Hall.

2.0 Background

The Sunderland Town Hall was constructed in 1906 and contains an auditorium on the second floor. This space is used for many purposes including the annual Lions Club Music Festival, Youth Theatre production, Township fitness classes, Maple Syrup Festival for vendors, rentals for family functions, Christmas parties and concerts.

The theater group has approached the Director Parks, Recreation and Facilities with a proposal to install a permanent stage extension to eliminate the need for the current temporary stage extension to be moved from storage, installed and returned to storage with the assistance of the Sunderland Lions Club. The current stage extension is constructed of wood and is very heavy and cumbersome to move in and out of the building.

The theater group met with the Director Parks, Recreation and Facilities as well as the Chief Building Official on site to discuss their proposal. This meeting allowed for open and frank discussion from all parties and allowed for physical viewing and measuring of the proposed extension to better serve the discussion.

It was noted that due to the building being a public assembly occupancy any of the proposed work would require an architect and an engineer to review and design the proposed extension to ensure the building is able to properly support the additional load and to keep the historical ambience of the auditorium.

The theatre group then provided a formal submission including proposed dimensions of the extension to the Director Parks, Recreation and Facilities to prepare this report for Council.

3.0 Analysis

The proposed changes include removal of the existing front of stage area which previously contained the in-stage lighting. This lighting has been removed several years ago and has been covered with hardwood to closely match the existing stage wood floor.

Larkin Architects who provided the design for the Rose Window and the replacement doors as well as the building condition assessment at the Sunderland Town Hall were contacted to get pricing to consult on this proposal. They also reached out to an engineering firm to provide pricing. This is outlined in the financial portion of this report.

The proposal is to extend the stage outwards a total of 6' and across the front of stage 37'. This would increase the stage area by 222 square feet. This is shown in the proposal document provided by the Sunderland Youth Theatre group included in this report.

By extending the stage there will be reduced seating capacity on the main floor and it has been noted by some users that this would also limit the sightlines of the balcony seating.

In 2025 the youth theater group utilized the auditorium for rehearsals and performances from September 3 through to November 25. This is the typical usage by this group for these purposes. They do have other rentals through the year for auditions and other components of the production. For the 2026 season this user group has this location booked from September 9 through to November 24.

The Sunderland Lions Club Music Festival is the other long-term rental with this space utilized for the month of April. In 2026 the Music Festival runs from April 13 through to April 30.

The use for the Sunderland Maple Syrup Festival is typically the Friday to Sunday of the Festival in April

All other users are sporadic in nature.

Temporary lightweight stage risers are a possible solution as they can be installed relatively easily, stored on site as they typically breakdown for storage and can be configured in several different ways that could allow for options to suit the needs of the theater group. This could also be used in other locations if necessary for other events including Council inaugurations, Public meetings where a panel could be placed higher than floor level to allow the panel to be more easily seen, and I am confident that there could be other uses for this type of solution.

This would allow the Theatre group the space and flexibility that may be beneficial to their needs while maintaining the current stage in its present condition. This would also maintain the occupancy load of the auditorium for other events.

4.0 Related Policies / Procedures

N/A

5.0 Financial / Budget Assessment

The costing from Larkin Architect was provided at approximately \$1,200. This would ensure the criteria for the conservation of historic places in Canada and assess any implications for fire safety and egress including one site visit.

The costing for the engineer was broken down into two phases. Phase one would include an initial site visit to view and measure the existing floor structure, review design intent, load analysis of existing structure including joist span and beam construction, preliminary design review based on findings and a sealed report.

Phase two would include preparation of schematic design sketches including reinforcement of existing structures where required.

Phase one pricing has been supplied at \$3,800 plus HST. Phase two pricing has been supplied at an upset limit of \$6,000. Any items that fall outside of the scope of work indicated would be at a per diem rate of \$200/hr. These costs do not include disbursements or travel kilometres.

During the initial discussions with the Theatre group, it was suggested that these costs would be substantially higher based on historical knowledge of engaging similar professionals.

The Theatre group has indicated that they are committed to the full cost of funding the structural assessment for this proposed extension with the anticipated cost of \$20,000.

The Theatre group has indicated in their proposal letter that the Sunderland Lions Club would likely provide support for this project.

To be clear, the Township has not budgeted for this project and will not be contributing any funding to this project as its will be funded by community partners. The Township will undertake the work required and will be reimbursed for costs. Further, staff will work with the Sunderland Youth Theatre Group to have an undertaking signed that will outline financial commitment to this project (should this project advance).

These costs outlined do not include any construction costs and are only consultant costing to investigate the proposal.

An alternative option of portable staging from a manufacturer who designs, builds and supplies this type of product for similar uses in professional productions as well as trade shows and similar events has been investigated.

A portable stage extension with dimensions of 36' x 6' x 32" including risers, steps, platforms, skirts and storage carts has been quoted at \$24,217.40 plus HST.

5.1 Asset Management

The Sunderland Town Hall is part of the Asset Management Plan and any work that may be undertaken from this proposal would be included as part of this plan.

6.0 Climate Change Impacts

This proposal has no climate impacts as this is only investigative in nature. Should the decision to proceed with a stage extension, if permanent, would likely have no climate change impact as this would be contained within the building envelope.

7.0 Communications

This report is being published on a public agenda and includes the proposal document from the Youth Theater group.

8.0 Conclusion

The Sunderland Youth Theatre group is a consistent renter and occupier of the Sunderland Town Hall and have been providing opportunities to youth to explore theater for 11 seasons.

Although this group does occupy this space for extended periods, they are only one of the user groups who make use of this facility.

This proposal would change the auditorium permanently. This change may affect other renters and users in a manner that is currently unknown.

Consultation of the regular users of this space and public input would allow for fact gathering in a neutral manner to ensure the decision is based on needs of the community and users in general.

9.0 Recommendation

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive report 2026-PRF-010, and

THAT Council endorses this proposal of the stage extension, in principle, with the costs for the architect and engineering reviews, to be funded by the Sunderland Youth Theatre Group; and

THAT Council direct staff to engage with all regular users of the Sunderland Town Hall based on previous rentals from the past two years and engage in a public survey on this proposal, and

THAT Council direct staff to investigate the options of a permanent stage extension as well as portable staging in consultation with the engineering firm to ensure the building can safely manage the proposed installation, and

THAT Staff report back to Council on the findings for final consideration.