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Any major shifts in direction for the 2023 Canada Day approach will need to be initiated without delay to meet funding timelines and secure contractors and infrastructure. If NFP organizations are to be engaged to lead events, they will require some time to prepare, and City staff will require time to develop processes and a program to support implementation and ensure sufficient funding is contemplated in the City's 2023 financial plan. Additional funding to supplement the FIG program and create a Canada Day focused funding stream will provide more opportunities for a diversity of programming that better reflects what it means to be Canadian in the context of the City of Victoria's neighbourhoods and cultural communities.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an evaluation of the 2022 Canada Day program, seek Council consider approving an additional ongoing \$75,000 to supplement the Festival Investment Grant (FIG) program, create a Canada Day focused FIG stream and continue to provide annual fireworks as part of the Canada Day Celebrations.

BACKGROUND

Canada Day Celebrations in the Inner Harbour have been a fixture on the summer event calendar for half a century. For more than 30 years, the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) produced Folkfest as a way for a variety of groups to come together to share their cultural heritage with the community at-large. Canada Day was programmed as an extension of Folkfest until 2006. The City of Victoria supplied in-kind City services and played the role of sponsor and regulator during this period. In 2006, the City assumed responsibility for Canada Day celebrations.

Over the past 17 years, City staff and one Council member in collaboration with a contracted local event production company produced the event with support from community partners and stakeholders. Each year the City contracts an event production company to help produce the July 1 events and solicit partnerships with public and corporate sponsors to help underwrite production costs. A major component of the funding support comes from the Canadian Heritage's Celebrate Canada Program.

Over the past decade and a half there has been a conscientious effort to shift the culture of the event towards a more inclusive and family-friendly format. Under the stewardship of the City the scope of Canada Day productions has grown. Programming pivoted to a broadcast format in 2020 due to the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, following the discovery of the remains of 215 unmarked graves at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, Council directed staff to put plans for a conventional Canada Day celebration on-hold. The 2022 event was led by a Committee of Council consisting of three City Councillors chaired by the Mayor. The event was moved from the Legislature grounds to Ship Point. New programming elements were introduced alongside many returning elements such as mainstage cultural performances and fireworks.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Canada Day 2022

Planning the 2022 event had a compressed three-month production timeline, and a transition to a new venue, onboarding a new production company, supply chain issues, cost escalation resulting from labour and infrastructure scarcity, and other challenges had to be overcome to deliver expectations of the Committee. Despite challenges, the 2022 Canada Day saw many successes, including:

- The Canada Day committee worked cooperatively with contracted producer, Blue Coast Event Group, to secure funding from corporate sponsors, grants and on-site revenue which included a \$50,000 grant from Canadian Heritage Celebrate Canada program and a new presenting sponsorship with Central Walk.
- July 1 programming started with a canoe protocol followed by Indigenous cultural performances, blessings and a traditional blanket ceremony presented in collaboration by the City and the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.
- Mainstage programming celebrated Canada's cultural diversity with the lineup featuring Vancouver Island and Victoria-based artists as well as Francophone artists such as Quebec artist Joyce N'sana, funded by British Columbia Francophone Affairs.
- The ever-popular fireworks display concluded the daylong program. The fireworks were spectacular and included high and low altitude elements enjoyed by tens of thousands throughout the Inner Harbour and beyond.

Programming

Canada Day celebrations aim to include the broadest possible appeal and community sentiment reflected within a single program. Canada Day means different things to different people and communities, and it the programming needs to ensure that all perspectives are reflected at a single event.

Leveraging and amplifying the City's existing Canada Day budget to establish a grant program that encourages proposals from a variety of community organizations will extend opportunities for communities with different perspectives to host community-led cultural celebrations in a variety of venues and neighbourhoods throughout the City. Not-for-profit (NFP) presenters are in a stronger position to extend their Canada Day programs regionally by leveraging support from neighbouring municipalities to coordinate and amplify their programming reach beyond the City of Victoria.

By maintaining the City's annual \$25,000 Canada Day budget, and the corresponding City service budget, the City maintains the capacity to stage a fireworks display on July 1 consistent in scope with past events. If the City receives a suitable proposal that included a fireworks component, then the City could use its budgeted funding to further supplement the host's Canada Day FIG grant to include support for fireworks.

Funding Model

When Canada Day was produced by ICA, a local non-profit organization, they were able to leverage funding from various levels of senior government including the Canadian Heritage Celebrate Canada grant program. Community-led registered not-for-profits (NFP) have the ability to qualify for regional and senior government grant programs not available to municipalities. Non-profit organizations have greater flexibility when negotiating corporate cash and in-kind sponsorships as well as partnerships with commercial producers and suppliers. These NFP organizations and their partner event producers are better positioned to leverage support from the corporate community,

neighbouring municipalities and are sheltered from the shifting priorities of elected political oversight.

Role of the City of Victoria

The City of Victoria is both a funder and regulator of local events and celebrations. The FIG program and permitting policies are well established and respected as sound and fair processes for locally produced events and festivals. Through the Create Victoria Arts and Cultural Master Plan process, the community articulated the desire for the City to continue to play its role as a funder, regulator and community facilitator and that the role of programming and producing events is best delivered by the local arts community. Furthermore, Create Victoria articulates the need to find new ways of working together (Objective 2.2) and to specifically “re-align its cultural portfolio to identify current tasks or functions that could be served by contracting out, or divesting itself of that responsibility.” Looking strategically at the role of the City in producing the Canada Day and examining how best to support this event in the community is needed after 17 years of producing the event.

Based on input gathered during Create Victoria strategic planning process, the City’s role as funder is a key component of a successful community-led model. Staff propose including a Canada Day funding stream as part of the FIG program to support community-led Canada Day celebrations that provide an opportunity for diverse groups to express and share what Canada means to them. This could include a variety of events held on Canada Day, including such things as neighbourhood-scale events, such as a block party, to a larger community-wide celebration downtown.

Current levels of City service in-kind support for Canada Day should be maintained and provided as an extension to any future cash grants awarded. These essential services are allocated through the City’s existing special event permitting policies and processes and are applied to support the provision of clean and safe public venues for Canada Day and other NFP led low-barrier public events hosted throughout Victoria.

The addition of a Canada Day grant stream to the FIG program will provide increased opportunities for a diversity of community-led programming that better reflects what it means to be Canadian in the context of the City of Victoria’s neighbourhoods and cultural communities. A separate earlier fall intake is recommended for the Canada Day FIG stream to better align with Canadian Heritage’s grant timeline and to give successful applicants an early start on planning and sponsorship recruitment. Terms of reference and guidelines for a new Canada Day grant stream within the existing FIG program will need to be drafted and approved by Council prior to implementation.

In addition to the City’s existing annual budget for Canada Day fireworks, a \$75,000 increase to the FIG program’s annual budget will ensure capacity exists for the City to support more than one community initiative annually.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1: That Council receive this report that provides an evaluation of the 2022 Canada Day program and a recommendation to transition to community-led celebrations. Consider approving additional ongoing funding of \$75,000 as part of the 2023 Financial Planning process to supplement the Festival Investment Grant program and create a Canada Day focused funding stream. Maintain the \$25,000 Canada Day budget, previously approved through Financial Plan, and direct staff to use this funding to continue to facilitate a July 1 fireworks production. (Recommended)

The addition of a Canada Day grant stream to the FIG program will provide more opportunities for a diversity of programming that better reflects what it means to be Canadian in the context of the City of Victoria’s neighbourhoods and cultural communities. It is anticipated that City staff resource

required for the first two years of transition would be consistent with past iterations, but these staff resource commitments would reduce over time through this community-led delivery model, freeing up staff time to implement more Create Victoria and Victoria Music Strategy action items.

Option 2 - Status Quo – City-led celebration

Staff continue to work with Council and a contracted event producer to plan and execute an annual Canada Day celebration in the Inner Harbour similar to past iterations. Staff to apply for relevant grants and funding including Canadian Heritage funding.

This option may require increased funding due to sector wide cost escalations and the evolving nature of related City service supports required to support a major event production. Without a significant shift in the scope of programming a new larger venue may be required.

Option 3 - Reduce scope of City-led celebration

Council to identify aspects of programming to modify or exclude from future celebrations to reduce the scope of Canada Day.

Reductions to the scope of City-led Canada Day programming may not result in a proportionate reduction in police resource impacts because private gatherings could still impact the number of calls for police service throughout the city's parks, beaches, neighbourhoods, and liquor serving establishments.

Accessibility Impact Statement

The Canada Day celebration and FIG policy and guidelines align with key principles of the City's Accessibility Framework of Inclusion, Diversity, Respect, Collaboration, and Adaptability.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

Strategic Objective: Reconciliation and Indigenous Relations

Strategic Objective: Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City

Strategic Objective: Strong, Liveable Neighbourhoods

Impacts to Financial Plan

The proposed annual funding to supplement the Festival Investment Grant program and create a Canada Day focused funding stream will require an additional \$75,000 from either new assessed revenue or another ongoing funding source such as a property tax increase in the 2023 Financial Plan.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The proposed recommendation is consistent and supports the following Official Community Plan directions under Chapter 16 Arts and Culture:

16.8 Continue to foster community-led arts and culture programs that engage local residents, organizations and business owners.

16.23 Continue to support and enable local, non-profit groups to host festivals, celebrations and special events through services, incentives and regulations.

16.21 Continue to permit festivals, celebrations and special events in public spaces, such as streets, parking lots, plazas, civic squares and other open space.

CONCLUSIONS

The City of Victoria is both a funder and regulator of local events and celebrations. The FIG program is well established and respected as sound and fair processes for locally produced events and festivals. Through the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan engagement process, arts groups and community members alike expressed the desire for the City to maintain its primary functions as funder, regulator, and community facilitator, and that the role of programming and producing events is best delivered by the local arts community.

The addition of a Canada Day grant stream to the FIG program will provide more opportunities for a diversity of programming that better reflects what it means to be Canadian in the context of the City of Victoria's neighbourhoods and cultural communities. Community-led celebrations have been successful in other jurisdictions across Canada. The implementation of a new FIG grant stream that transitions Victoria's Canada Day celebration from a City-led event to a community-led model is an appropriate approach for future Canada Day celebrations.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.