



## **Special Committee of the Whole Report**

### **For the Meeting of January 29, 2024**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** January 24, 2024  
**From:** Susanne Thompson, Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer  
**Subject:** Permissive Exemptions and Grants Comparison

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive this report for information.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is in response to several inquiries from members of Council about permissive property tax exemptions and grants that the City provides and how they compare to other municipalities.

Some of the City's grant programs are competitive application-based programs, some relate to organizations delivering services on behalf of the City, and others are approved by Council either on an ad hoc basis or annually as part of the budget process. The draft 2024 budget includes approximately \$5.8 million for these grant programs.

Attached as Appendix A is a summary comparing the level of permissive tax exemptions and grants provided by 25 BC municipalities in 2022. Municipalities are not consistent in this reporting; therefore, the analysis has attempted to remove those items that would otherwise skew the comparison. Among these municipalities, Victoria provided the most support in the form of permissive tax exemptions and grants in 2022.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide information to Council about the City's grant programs and a comparison of the level of permissive tax exemptions and grants provided by several municipalities in BC.

### **BACKGROUND**

The City provides both permissive tax exemptions and grants to non-profit organizations that operate in Victoria.

The City has an application-based process for permissive tax exemptions and a policy to guide the administration of the program and evaluation of applications. Applications are approved by Council by adopting bylaws. Exemptions are approved on a three-year cycle; however, mid-stream applications are accepted and considered by Council each year.

The City has several grant programs in place, each with its own policy and/or guidelines. Some grants are approved by Council and others are delegated to staff to award using established criteria.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

The City has eight application-based programs as follows:

### **1. Festival Investment Grants**

These grants are intended to nurture outdoor festivals and celebrations held within the City of Victoria, facilitate their growth and ensure their continued success.

Annually, a staff report with recommendations is brought to Council for consideration of approval of individual grants.

The draft 2024 budget is \$350,680.

### **2. Growing in the City Grants**

These grants support urban agriculture programs and activities including community gardening, boulevard gardening, food tree stewardship, and Victoria's seedling and garden material distribution program.

Approval of grants is delegated to staff.

The draft 2024 budget is \$218,850.

### **3. My Great Neighbourhood Grants**

These grants provide funding for initiatives that develop and enhance a sense of community in neighbourhoods. Funding is available in three categories:

- Placemaking
- Community development activities
- Community resiliency

Approval of grants is delegated to staff.

The draft 2024 budget is \$149,000.

### **4. Cultural Infrastructure Grants**

These grants are provided to local not-for-profit organizations that own or operate cultural facilities to assist with purchasing specialized equipment, accessibility or facility upgrades, feasibility and planning studies, and expansion and acquisition of new cultural spaces.

Approval of grants is delegated to staff.

The draft 2024 budget is \$250,000.

5. Victoria Music Strategy

These grants support the objectives in the Victoria Music Strategy and approval of grants is delegated to staff.

The draft 2024 budget is \$150,000.

6. International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) Youth Grants

These grants support and empower Black youth in Victoria by providing opportunities to:

- Create safe spaces to gather
- Support youth-led programs
- Build confidence and self-empowerment
- Help navigate systemic racism
- Create a Black Youth Council
- Learn about education, scholarship and career opportunities

The City's IDPAD Advisory Committee developed this program, administers the application intake process and awards grants annually.

The draft 2024 budget is \$25,000.

7. Strategic Plan Grants

This program was developed to fund projects or programs that support the objectives of the City's Strategic Plan.

Due to the broad scope of the program, an External Grant Review Committee was established to evaluate applications and make recommendations to Council for consideration of approval.

The draft 2024 budget is \$559,170.

8. Housing Reserve Fund Grants

This program provides one-time capital grants to assist in the development and retention of affordable rental housing.

Bi-annually, staff's recommendations are brought to Council for consideration of approval.

There is no annual budget for this program. Instead, grants can be awarded up to the amount available in the Victoria Housing Reserve Fund, which was established for this purpose.

In addition, organizations that operate facilities or programs on behalf of the City are allocated funding as outlined in Appendix B. These are approved by Council each year as part of the budget process. The draft 2024 budget includes \$3,086,780 for these grants.

Furthermore, a listing of "other grants" has been established over time and Council awards those as part of the annual budget process. These are outlined in Appendix C. The draft 2024 budget

includes \$978,840 for these grants.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the comparative analysis using information from the 2022 Annual Reports for each municipality, the City tops this group of municipalities in the level of grant funding and permissive tax exemptions provided. It is important to note that the City of Vancouver operates under the *Vancouver Charter* which provides for statutory exemptions for non-profit/charitable organizations that would require permissive exemptions in other municipalities in BC that operate under the *Community Charter*. Therefore, Vancouver's numbers are lower in this analysis and do not provide a complete comparison. Also, as municipalities are not consistent in this reporting, staff have removed items that would skew the analysis and the footnotes in Appendix A identify those.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanne Thompson  
Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer

## **Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager**

### **List of Attachments**

Appendix A – Comparison of 2022 Permissive Exemptions and Grants

Appendix B – Listing of Direct Award Grants

Appendix C – Listing of Other Grants