

Funding for Take it Outside Winter Animation Fund

ISSUE

The WintercityYXE Strategy (Wintercity Strategy) is an intentional effort by the City of Saskatoon (City) and the community to celebrate what makes Saskatoon an inviting, vibrant, safe and prosperous place during the winter months while recognizing the challenges which the winter months present for those who are vulnerable. The year 2020 has provided unique challenges with how we manage winter and will continue into 2021. This report presents an opportunity to provide immediate funding through a new capital project established to support the Take It Outside Winter Animation Fund (Winter Animation Fund), recently presented to Governance and Priorities Committee, as a joint submission from Saskatoon Tourism and the Combined Business Group.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That a new capital project be established for the Take It Outside Winter Animation Fund;
- 2) That the capital project be funded from:
 - a) \$60,000 allocated from Capital Project 2519 WintercityYXE;
 - b) \$165,000 allocated from MEEP reallocation contingency funds; and
 - c) \$25,000 allocated from the 2021 WintercityYXE Recreation Infrastructure Grant; and
- 3) That Administration partner with Tourism Saskatoon, the Combined Business Group and other Community partners to develop an approach to allocating the funding appropriately.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on September 14, 2020, the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services received the Wintercity Strategy for information. The Wintercity Strategy is the culmination of the community and administrative input received through the course of strategy development. The next step in this overall project is to develop a formalized implementation plan in collaboration with community members and key stakeholders.

At its meeting on November 23, 2020, the Governance and Priorities Committee received a presentation from Saskatoon Tourism and the Combined Business Group regarding a plan to help animate Saskatoon this winter in light of the many challenges of COVID-19 (see Appendix 1). At this meeting, the Governance and Priorities Committee made the follow resolution:

“That the Administration report back in time for the 2021 budget deliberations on options to utilize Federal Safe Restart funding or other one-time funding sources to create a one-time \$250,000 Take it Outside Winter Animation fund to support Community Associations, Business Improvement Districts, sports and arts non-profit organizations, ethno cultural community associations, service clubs and other appropriate

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organizations to host COVID-19 safe outdoor activities that get residents outside and active in the months ahead. The three main objectives are to promote health and wellness of residents, to create activities that support local businesses and to create opportunities for safe community connections in a time of relative isolation.

In the development of the report would the administration work with the Community Development Division community consultants as well as Tourism Saskatoon and the Combined Business Group to establish an appropriate but rapid adjudication process to ensure as much coordination and complementarity between our respective organizations and ensure that proposed activities produce measurable outcomes for the community.”

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The Wintercity Strategy identifies objectives related to supporting the winter economy, winter culture and life (including supporting winter activities and events which encourage social activity in winter), and winter design. COVID-19 has created unique challenges and undertaking activities outside has been encouraged in order to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. One example of a COVID-19 safe approach to enjoying winter in 2020-2021 has been the pilot project of allowing parking patios to be in place throughout the winter.

The Winter Animation Fund would provide funding support to community organizations including Community Associations, Business Improvement Districts, sports and arts non-profit organizations, ethno cultural community groups, service clubs, businesses and other appropriate organizations to hold COVID-19 safe events or other winter related items. These are outlined by Tourism Saskatoon and the Combined Business Group in Appendix 1 and will also support the objectives of the Wintercity Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Since 2016, Capital Project 2519 WintercityYXE has received \$685,000 in capital funding through various budget requests. Approximately \$240,000 of the WintercityYXE capital budget is remaining with these funds primarily allocated to developing an implementation plan for the Wintercity Strategy, communications to support the Wintercity Strategy and supporting short-term implementation actions. If approved by City Council, the WintercityYXE capital funding in the amount of up to \$60,000 could be allocated toward the Winter Animation Fund. The overall impacts to the WintercityYXE Project would result in a less comprehensive communications strategy and less funding for other short-term implementation actions.

In 2019, City Council approved \$25,000 within the annual operating budget toward the WintercityYXE Grant program. The Grant program funding from the 2020 Operating Budget has already been allocated for 2020, so is not available to support this current request. If approved by City Council, the 2021 Grant funding of \$25,000 could be allocated to the Winter Animation Fund. The impact would be the foregoing of any grant

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applications or projects being considered for funding in 2021 for the 2021/2022 winter months. The WintercityYXE Grant program would resume taking applications in 2022.

During its meeting on July 27, 2020, while City Council was approving the allocation of capital funds tied to the reallocation pool for the Government of Saskatchewan's Municipal Economic Enhancement Program (MEEP) funding, City Council made the decision to set aside \$329,700 as a contingency fund. Of this amount \$100,000 has already been allocated to the downtown safety pilot project, leaving a balance of \$229,700 in the contingency. Administration is recommending that \$165,000 of this contingency be considered for allocation to the Winter Animation Fund.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Some stakeholders and community members who participated in Wintercity Strategy development and are keen to provide input into the development of the implementation plan for the Wintercity Strategy were not engaged during the discussions regarding the initiatives proposed to be implemented through the allocation of the Winter Animation Fund.

Applications for community events will need to be reviewed to ensure any proposed activities adhere to the current public health orders and Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan.

NEXT STEPS

Take it Outside Winter Animation Fund

Following approval of the recommendations in this report, Administration will partner with Tourism Saskatoon, the Combined Business Group and other community partners to develop an approach to allocating the funding appropriately.

WintercityYXE Strategy

Specific to this Strategy, an implementation plan is being developed which will include engagement with stakeholders and community members. Engagement will take place December 2020 thru January 2021 and the finalized implementation plan is anticipated to be presented to the Standing Policy Committee on Planning Development and Community Services in the first quarter of 2021. While the implementation plan is not yet complete, WintercityYXE will continue to support activities which align with objectives of the Wintercity Strategy, where possible, through the winter season.

APPENDICES

1. WinterYXE Strategy Implementation Partnership Proposal – Tourism Saskatoon

REPORT APPROVAL

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