



Corporate NO: R190

Report COUNCIL DATE: July 24, 2000

REGULAR

TO: Mayor & Council **DATE: July 18, 2000**

FROM: General Manager, **FILE: 3504-001**
Parks, Recreation and Culture

SUBJECT: Surrey Children's Festival

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council receives this report for information.
2. That Council provide direction regarding Options 1 and 2 of this report.

BACKGROUND

In 1999 City Council requested the creation of a Surrey Children's Festival and identified this event to be an official activity within Surrey's "Millennium Magic" celebrations for 2000. The Surrey Children's Festival is an arts based event designed "to explore the themes of cultural sharing and cultural democracy while honouring play and inspiring the creative imagination of each child in Surrey." Planning for this event began in April 1999 with a combined Community Steering Committee and Parks, Recreation and Culture staff committee.

DISCUSSION

The Surrey Children's Festival (SCF) occurred on June 9 and 10, 2000 at Bear Creek Park and the adjacent Surrey Arts Centre Theatre. The SCF ran for a total of thirteen hours and included a variety show, held on the evening of June 9. Over 7,000 people participated in this event.

The venue had three ticketed stages offering 24 performances, one community "free" stage, two parades, nine free activity tents, and on-site chalk drawing, face painting and roving performers. As well, the Surrey RCMP and Fire Department provided on-site public interaction with equipment; helicopters, police motorcycles, cruisers and a mounted officer. Volunteers were an integral part of the planning and success of the Surrey Children's Festival. In total there were 225 volunteers for the event who provided 1555 hours of volunteer

service.

Public Survey Results

A public survey was included in all SCF event programs and completed surveys were returned on site. Completed surveys representing a 7% response rate. The survey gathered feedback on marketing, event expectations and satisfaction, the future of the event and its organization. Most people were "inspired" to attend the SCF due to the prompting of their children and their own love for festivals and children's events in particular. Respondents wrote of their awareness of the Vancouver Children's Festival and its activities. Many commented on their pleasure with not driving into Vancouver to attend this event. A total of 88% of respondents were favourably impressed with the first SCF of which 66% replied that the event was better than they had expected. Negative responses were based in people wanting "more" activities, longer hours of operation and performances.

Overall, people spoke favourably of virtually everything including the friendly, sharing atmosphere on site. However, an overwhelming majority of persons disliked the weather and the conditions of the wet grass and mud. Food services were also a concern; the public identified an interest in more ethnic foods, more choice and healthy choices along with lower prices were requested.

Every respondent (100%) in the survey said "yes" to the event being held annually. A total of 48% directly and indirectly identified wanting the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department to organize the event. A total of 10% identified the community as the future organizers, if regular funding was provided by the municipality. The remaining responses were left blank.

The majority of the public gained awareness of the event from the professional print media with 53% responding to local newspaper information. Circulation through the Surrey school system resulted in a 27% primary awareness for the event.

Costs

The total gross budget for the SCF is \$159,600, including in-kind support and staff time. City Council and the Millennium Committee provided \$45,000; the Province provided a grant of \$18,000; corporate, private and in-kind sponsorship had a value of \$62,000; and, ticket sales and merchandizing resulted in \$16,600. Unfortunately, notice that the Federal grant of \$18,000 was not approved did not occur until April, 2000. Civic staff were able to recover \$13,800 of the Federal shortfall in spite of the difficulty in making significant changes to the event due to contractual obligations established six months prior. The event's final budget operated with a deficit of \$4,200.

Options for Consideration by Council

Organization and planning of the Surrey Children's Festival - 2000 began in April 1999. Planning for this event is a year round, on-going process requiring immediate direction if Council wishes to ensure a successful follow up festival in 2001 and beyond. This organizational model is practised by event organizers internationally. Professional children's performers work on an international circuit which requires a minimum of a ten month to two year advance commitment through contracting to the event; the determination of festival dates occurs on an inter-provincial basis. This creates opportunities to cost-share on talent and ensures optimum results and non-competition for technical, performer and sponsorship support. Corporate, private and foundation sponsorship for festivals requires a minimum of eight months to secure commitment.

Option 1 - Children's Festival in 2001

A civic operating budget in the range of \$92,000 be confirmed as soon as possible consisting of \$12,000 in 2000 and \$80,000 in 2001. This will allow the SCF Steering Committee and staff to begin contractual commitments to professional performers, sponsors and suppliers **for a SCF in 2001**. The \$80,000 for 2001 is equivalent to the three one-time grants identified in the 1999 budget and will allow a Children's Festival of the same scope to occur.

Option 2 - Children's Festival in 2002

An Issue Paper be prepared for Council's consideration in the 2001 Budget process **for an event to occur in 2002**. It will assume that the level of cash sponsorship will be at least the same level as was achieved this year. However, organizers of the SCF are aware that several key suppliers provided extremely generous support that may not be available at the same level in the future. The support from these suppliers for 2000 was due to the "first time" nature of the event, and their wish to make the Surrey Children's Festival an annual event in this community.

CONCLUSION

The Surrey Children's Festival was well received by those in attendance. Over the 13 hours of the Festival, the event was attended by over 7,000 people. Sponsors, partners, volunteers and Surrey School District No. 36 were very important to the success of this event. The public were made aware of the Festival through the professional media, school system and positive word of mouth.

The Children's Festival met and surpassed expectations with the free events and roving performers on site being extremely popular. There is a clear market in the City of Surrey for a children's based event that appeals directly to the age group of 4 - 11. As well, the community expresses a love for festivals which are located in their own city. There is unanimous response from those surveyed that this event should occur annually.

Don Hunter, General Manager
Parks, Recreation and Culture