

DATE: February 5, 1998

**SUBJECT: STANLEY PARK CHRISTMAS TRAIN AND CHILDREN'S  
FARMYARD - ACQUISITION OF NEW LIGHTS DISPLAY**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- A. THAT the Board accept the transfer of clear title to a Christmas Lights Display presently located at 13766 63a Avenue in Surrey, B.C. from the B.C. Professional Firefighters' Association Burn Fund for the nominal consideration of \$1.00.
- B. THAT the Board transfer a share of admission fees, as outlined in this report, from the Christmas Train and Children's Farmyard to the City and, subject to receiving the necessary City Council approval, the City shall in turn transfer this amount to the Burn Fund as a grant.
- C. THAT the Board enter into a five year operating agreement, effective July 1, 1998 with the City of Vancouver, the B.C. Professional Firefighters' Association Burn Fund and CUPE local 1004 with all terms and conditions subject to the approval of the General Manager and Director of Legal Services.
- D. THAT no legal rights shall be created by the passage of the above resolutions and none shall arise hereafter except by the signing of the contemplated document.
- E. THAT the Board approve the expenditure of \$19,000 from the Corporate Sponsorship account to be used for upgrading the electrical service at the Children's Farmyard and that it be repaid after the Christmas season.
- F. THAT the Board approve the revised 1998 fee structure for the Stanley Park Christmas Train and Children's Farmyard Lights Display as outlined in this report.

**POLICY**

The Board may not make grants. Subsection 206(a) of the Vancouver Charter permits City Council, by resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of all its members, to provide for the making of money grants to any charitable institution.

**BACKGROUND**

The Stanley Park Christmas Train has been operating since 1980 and in

recent years has attracted approximately 50,000 -60,000 visitors with a festival-like atmosphere of lights and music. The event has become a Christmas tradition for many Lower Mainland families.

## **DISCUSSION**

At the beginning of December staff were approached by representatives of the B.C. Professional Firefighters Association Burn Fund who were seeking potential sites after 1997 for the "Winter Wonderland", a private Christmas Lights Display located in Surrey at 13766 63a Avenue. The owners had decided that the display, which attracted approximately 100,000 people a year, had become too large an event to continue at their home.

The Winter Wonderland Display has been operated as a non-profit fund-raising event for the past 10 years and has raised over \$600,000 for the Vancouver General Hospital Burn Unit. In 1997 it raised over \$100,000. The present owners wish to sell the display but prefer that it be purchased by an organization who would keep it in its entirety, on view to the public, and that the Burn Unit continue to benefit from the proceeds.

The Firefighters Association have agreed in principle to purchase the display if the Board will combine it with their own display at the Stanley Park Miniature Train. One of the requirements in order to maximize fund-raising efforts is to provide professional firefighters to volunteer their time to set up and take down the display each year. The Association will also help promote the event.

Staff were immediately interested in this proposal as the Miniature Train Display is in need of change and improvements in order to attract a new audience while keeping the experience fresh for previous visitors. The Children' s Farmyard also has the capacity to accommodate displays and be a major Christmas attraction in its own right. The Winter Wonderland Display would thus be a tremendous addition for the Board and would result in increased attendance and revenues. At the same time the Board would be participating in a worthwhile fund-raiser for a local Vancouver charity.

The following issues have been discussed in connection with this proposal:

### **1. CUPE 1004 Approval**

CUPE 1004 members presently put up and take down the display in Stanley Park and it is not intended to change this arrangement in the future. Approximately 1300 auxiliary hours are budgeted for this work.

CUPE 1004 have agreed in principle to allow volunteer firefighters to put up and take down the Winter Wonderland Display as long as their members maintain the display during the length of the event. This would involve checking and replacing light bulbs on a daily basis.

### **2. Admission Fees**

The 1998 fee schedule for admission to the Miniature Train or Children' s

Farmyard, approved by the Board on November 24, 1997 is as follows:

Adult (19-64) \$2.30  
 Youth (13- 18) \$1.75  
 Senior (65+) \$1.20  
 Child (2-12) \$1.15  
 Family \$4.60

The vast majority of admission fees fall under the **family** category which is classified as 1-2 adults of the same household and their children under 19 years of age.

The admission fees for the Children' s Farmyard are the same as those of the train. In 1997 there was a family special rate of \$8.10 to visit both attractions and a "Christmas Cracker" special of \$15.00 to also visit the lights display at VanDusen Gardens.

The attendance and revenue during the 1996 and 1997 Christmas season (December 5, 1997 - January 4, 1998) were as follows:

|                        | <b>Miniature Train</b> | <b>Children's Farmyard</b> | <b>Total</b>    |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>1996 Attendance</b> | 40,555                 | 7,135                      | 47,690          |
| <b>Revenue</b>         | <b>\$51,967</b>        | <b>\$9,389</b>             | <b>\$61,356</b> |
| <b>1997 Attendance</b> | 51,323                 | 13,079                     | 64,402          |
| <b>Revenue</b>         | <b>\$61,790</b>        | <b>\$12,977</b>            | <b>\$74,767</b> |

It should be noted that in the two years only 22% of the people who went on the train also visited the Farmyard and that in 1996 this event was severely hampered by a significant snowfall.

It is envisaged that different components of the new lights display will be featured on the train journey, at the Farmyard and at the line-up to the train station. It is proposed to increase the admission fees to a level that takes into account the added value of the improved attractions. It is also proposed to make the Farmyard more attractive to visitors by having a less expensive combination fee.

It is recommended that the Board approve the revised rates for the Christmas season as follows:

**SPECIAL**

| <b><u>Train or Farmyard</u></b> |               | <b><u>Train and Farmyard</u></b> |                |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Adult</b>                    | <b>\$3.50</b> | <b>Adult</b>                     | <b>\$5.00</b>  |
| <b>Youth</b>                    | <b>\$2.50</b> | <b>Youth</b>                     | <b>\$3.50</b>  |
| <b>Senior/Child</b>             | <b>\$1.75</b> | <b>Senior/Child</b>              | <b>\$2.50</b>  |
| <b>Family</b>                   | <b>\$7.00</b> | <b>Family</b>                    | <b>\$10.00</b> |

These fees are still competitive with other Christmas Events. For example, the Festival of Lights at VanDusen Gardens charges \$5.00 per adult, \$2.50 for a senior or youth and \$10.00 per family.

### **3. Shared revenue with the B.C. Professional Firefighters Association.**

It is proposed that the Firefighters will be allowed to carry out an opening night fund-raising event and keep 100% of the net proceeds. They would be responsible for marketing and managing the event.

In addition, the Firefighters have requested that cash donation bins be located at the exit to the train and visitors have the opportunity of donating to the Burn Unit if they so wish. These will be strictly voluntary donations and no pressure will be applied to ask people to donate. These bins will be administered and emptied each day by the Firefighters.

Finally, it is proposed that the Firefighters receive an amount from each admission fee to go directly to the Burn Unit. The following amounts are recommended for five year term of the agreement and have been agreed to by the Firefighters:

| <b><u>Train or Farmyard</u></b> |               | <b><u>Train and Farmyard</u></b> |               |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Adult</b>                    | <b>\$0.50</b> | <b>Adult</b>                     | <b>\$0.75</b> |
| <b>Youth</b>                    | <b>\$0.30</b> | <b>Youth</b>                     | <b>\$0.45</b> |
| <b>Senior/Child</b>             | <b>\$0.25</b> | <b>Senior/Child</b>              | <b>\$0.35</b> |
| <b>Family</b>                   | <b>\$1.00</b> | <b>Family</b>                    | <b>\$1.50</b> |

Since according to the Vancouver Charter only City Council (by two-thirds majority) can make a grant to a charitable institution, and the Firefighters Association have stated that these amounts will be donated to the Burn Unit at Vancouver General Hospital, the Board must request Council to approve this resolution.

### **4. Increased electrical capacity**

The cost of increasing the electrical capacity in the Children' s Farmyard in order to accommodate the new lights display has been estimated to be \$19,000. It is recommended that the source of financing be taken from the Corporate Sponsorship Fund account which presently has a balance of \$189,000, and be repaid after the event is over.

Staff are in the process of preparing some recommended criteria for the use of annual corporate sponsorship monies and this will be coming to the Board in the near future. One of the criteria is to utilize this account to fund one-time expenses that will support revenue-generating activities and that the money be repaid from the new or improved activity.

The electrical upgrade for the new lights display is a good example of how this sponsorship account can benefit new revenue-generating projects.

**Other attractions at Christmas to complement the Lights Display**

Staff have begun investigating other attractions that will complement the Christmas Lights display in the former Lower Zoo area in order to add to the visitor' s experience. The following features are being considered at this time:

- **Street entertainers and buskers at the train line-up**
- **Lights and food services at the Stanley Park Pavilion** (Agreed to in principle by our lessee, Pavilion Enterprises Ltd)
- **Christmas entertainment at the Malkin Bowl**

(To be coordinated by our Arts & Multiculturalism staff)

- Christmas entertainment inside and outside the Aquarium

(Agreed to in principle by Aquarium staff)

Preliminary discussions have also taken place with one of the Board' s corporate sponsors about funding a canopy that would be erected during the winter season to cover the path from the train station to the parking lot. This would enable visitors to line up for the train without getting wet and greatly enhance the overall experience of the new attractions.

**Attendance & Revenue projections**

Due to the special pricing for the combination tickets to the train and the farmyard it is anticipated that most people will now visit both attractions.

The following projections are net of the contribution to the Firefighters Association Burn Fund which is estimated to be \$25,865. Other incremental expenses such as electrical consumption, improved signage and promotion are estimated to be \$5,000.

|                           | <b>ATTENDANCE</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| <b>TRAIN AND FARMYARD</b> | <b>57,000</b>     | <b>\$132,750</b> |
| <b>TRAIN OR FARMYARD</b>  | <b>10,300</b>     | <b>\$ 17,160</b> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>67,300</b>     | <b>\$149,910</b> |

## **JUSTIFICATION**

The Christmas Lights display at the Stanley Park Train is in need of revitalization. The acquisition of the new displays will enable the Board to include the Children' s Farmyard in the visitor' s experience at a moderate increase in cost.

Transferring a share of the admission fees to the B.C. Professional Firefighters' Association Burn Fund will result in the Board, with the City' s approval, assisting a local Vancouver charity and increasing their own revenues at the same time.

Increasing the attractions around the train and farmyard and including our own lessees' participation will add a dimension to the event not previously envisaged.

Prepared by:  
Administration & Revenue Services Division  
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P.J.