

Date: April 16, 2008



**TO:** Board Members – Vancouver Park Board  
**FROM:** General Manager – Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Consultant Award for 2008 Ghost Train and Bright Nights in Stanley Park Events

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## RECOMMENDATION

- A. *THAT the Board award the consultant's contract for Artistic Director of the 2008 Stanley Park Hallowe'en Ghost Train and Bright Nights in Stanley Park to Mortal Coil Performance Society for a total fee of \$22,000 plus GST and disbursements of a maximum of \$132,000 plus GST, as set out in this report.***
- B. *THAT no legal rights shall arise hereby, and none shall arise until execution of the contemplated contract. The Board may rescind this resolution at any time up to the execution of the contemplated contract.***

## POLICY

Consultants' contracts over \$30,000 must be approved by the Board.

## BACKGROUND

Since 1998, the Board, in partnership with the BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn Fund, has presented the "Bright Nights in Stanley Park" event at the Miniature Railway each December. In 2000, Mortal Coil Performance Society was contracted as Artistic Director and has continued annually in that capacity. Over 96,000 people rode the train at the 2007 Bright Nights event.

In 1999, the Board introduced a new major event at the Miniature Railway, the Stanley Park Hallowe'en Ghost Train. In its second year, Mortal Coil took over as Artistic Director. Attendance at the 2006 Ghost Train was 41,000. The 2007 Ghost Train was cancelled due to the civic labour disruption.

For each of these two events, the Board pays a consulting fee to the Artistic Director. In addition, the Board approves an artistic budget for the Artistic Director to manage and use to pay for the creative and artistic elements of the event. This includes all aspects of hiring, directing, scheduling and paying the performers, production and technical management and creation of costumes, installations, visuals and sound. The Artistic Director contracts directly with artists, suppliers and others, up to the approved amount of the artistic budget and the Board reimburses the Artistic Director for these costs.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Mortal Coil Performance Society**

In its own words, “Mortal Coil is a non-profit Vancouver performance company dedicated to creating imaginative theatre and spectacle through the use of stilts, masks and fantastic costuming. The company performs in theatres, at festivals and at site-specific events locally, nationally and internationally. The company also empowers communities to celebrate their creativity through classes, workshops and lecture / demonstrations for professional performers, educators, the general public and at risk street youth”.

Mortal Coil works with a large pool of local performers, musicians, technicians, production specialists and artists and involves many of them in these train events.

### **Ghost Train**

Each year the event management team, consisting of staff, an Event Manager and the Artistic Director, agree on a theme, which the Artistic Director then develops into the final production. To-date, the Ghost Train has had such diverse themes as Scary Fairy Tales, Shakespeare’s Plays, Space Aliens, Day of the Dead and B Horror Movies.

Since its start, staff and Mortal Coil have developed the Ghost train together. Mortal Coil’s understanding of the challenges of the environment at the train and the working relationship it has developed with the Board’s on-site staff are key elements in making the event the success it has become. The vision, and artistic and administrative management provided by Mortal Coil ensures that the event is unique, artistic and successful. In prior years, Mortal Coil has mentored theatre and dance students and street-involved youth at the Ghost Train.

During the civic labour disruption in 2007, exempt staff continued with planning for the Ghost Train, in the hope that it would be resolved in time to allow the event to go ahead. In mid-September, all work on the production was halted and by late September, when it became clear that there would be insufficient time to allow for set up and promotion, the 2007 Ghost Train was cancelled. Many of the sets and costumes were unfinished when work stopped and they were put into storage in that condition.

The 2008 Ghost Train will be the same “Pirate” theme as the cancelled 2007 event. There will be savings in the 2008 Artistic Director fee and budget, estimated at a total of \$25,000, due to work done in 2007 which will not have to be repeated in 2008.

### **Bright Nights**

The focus at Bright Nights is on the lights and displays, with some performance elements. As a result, the Artistic Director’s role at this event is less than at the Ghost Train. The Artistic Director works with the event organizers to create, schedule and supervise several performances each night, in addition to arranging for Santa, musicians and many

community choirs who come to the event. The Artistic Director also works with artists to create installations in the train area.

### **Contract Fee and Disbursements**

The amounts to be paid to Mortal Coil pursuant to this contract are:

	<b><u>Ghost Train</u></b>	<b><u>Bright Nights</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
<b>Artistic Director Fee</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>	<b>\$22,000</b>
<b>Disbursements - Artistic Budget (max.)</b>	<b>\$70,000</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$85,000</b>	<b>\$47,000</b>	<b>\$132,000</b>

The disbursements are for reimbursement of the artistic costs incurred by Mortal Coil on the Board's behalf. The artistic budgets for the two events have yet to be finalized. They will be close to, but no greater than, the amounts noted above.

These fees and disbursements are funded out of admission revenues for the two events. As outdoor events, the gross revenues from the Ghost Train and Bright Nights are influenced by weather conditions. Net revenues to the Board from the Bright Nights event have typically been between \$50,000 and \$100,000. The Ghost Train's results are generally closer to breakeven. Staff are working on improving net revenues at the Ghost Train. The event has been shortened by 3 days. In addition, a \$0.55 increase in the admission prices which was approved for 2007 will now go into effect this year (2008 prices are \$9 adult, \$5.50 discount). The final artistic budget will be reviewed closely to ensure that it is appropriate, but without compromising the quality of the event.

### **SUMMARY**

Mortal Coil has provided a creative and professional service to these events. It has the resources, the vision and the ability to work to enhance the artistic experience for visitors. This appointment is recommended by staff. The proposed fees and disbursements are reasonable for the scope and nature of the project.

Prepared by:

Stanley District  
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