

Date: May 2, 2007



**TO:** Board Members – Vancouver Park Board  
**FROM:** General Manager – Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Consultant Award for 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 Stanley Park Hallowe'en Ghost Train and Bright Nights in Stanley Park to Mortal Coil Performance Society for a total fee of \$32,000 plus GST and disbursements 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 of Bright Nights and has continued yearly in that capacity. Over 71,000 people rode the train at the 2006 Bright Nights.

In 1999, the Board introduced a new major event at the Miniature Railway, the Stanley Park Hallowe'en Ghost Train. After the initial year of the Ghost Train, Mortal Coil took over as Artistic Director. Attendance at the 2006 Ghost Train was 41,000.

For each of these two events, the Board pays a consultant's fee to the Artistic Director. In addition, the Board approves a budget for the Artistic Director to manage and 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 soundtrack. The Artistic Director contracts directly with artists, suppliers and others, up to the approved amount of the artistic budget. The Board covers these costs through disbursements on the consultant contract.

## **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 the start of the Ghost Train, staff and Mortal Coil have developed the event together. Mortal Coil’s understanding of the challenges of the environment at the train and the working relationship it has developed with Board’s onsite staff and the event organizers are key elements in making the event the success it has become. The vision, and artistic and administrative management that Mortal Coil provides 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.

### **Bright Nights**

The focus at Bright Nights is on the lights and displays, with some performance. 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 hire, schedule and supervise several performances each night, in addition to arranging for the musicians and many community choirs who come to the event. It also works with artists to create several installations in the train area.

**Contract Fee and Disbursements**

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

|                                                      | <b>Ghost<br/>Train</b> | <b>Bright<br/>Nights</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Artistic Director Fee</b>                         | \$25,000               | \$7,000                  | \$32,000     |
| <b>Disbursements -<br/>Artistic Budget (maximum)</b> | \$90,000               | \$40,000                 | \$130,000    |
| <b>Total</b>                                         | \$115,000              | \$47,000                 | \$162,000    |

The disbursements are for reimbursement of the events' artistic budgets, which are the artistic costs incurred by Mortal Coil on the Board's behalf. The artistic budgets for the two events have yet to be finalised, but should not be greater than the amounts noted above.

These fees and disbursements are funded out of the admission revenues for the two events.

As outdoor events, their gross revenues are influenced by weather conditions, especially in their first two weeks when the trains are generally not running at capacity. 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, with some years showing net revenues and others net deficits. Staff are working on ways to improve net revenues at the Ghost Train, including shortening the event by 4 days and reducing the artistic budget slightly from last year.

**SUMMARY**

Mortal Coil has provided a creative and professional service to these events. Mortal Coil 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 fee and disbursements are reasonable for the scope and nature of the project.

Prepared by:  
Stanley District  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
Vancouver, BC  
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