



January 18, 2022

City of Prince George
Attention: His Worship Mayor Lyn Hall and Council
1100 Patricia Blvd.
Prince George, BC V2L 3V9

Re: Festival of Trees 2021

Dear Mayor and Council:

We are writing to you today in the hope of gaining support for a small ask. In the 28 years that the Spirit of the North Healthcare Foundation has been hosting the Festival of Trees as an annual signature fundraiser we have attempted to hold a first class event that brought together the fabric of the community in a celebration that would kick off the holiday season. This has always been a highlight for the community, its' volunteers and a significant investment by the Foundation.

Limping along through 2020, the Festival of Trees-Reimagined was difficult to say the least. It was costly as well, but we were still able to pull something together in a way that embodied everything we had hoped for, safely, but at a distance. We were also successful with it and our year end fundraising campaign to fund a dedicated molecular diagnostic lab, which afforded testing for all viral illnesses – not the least of it was COVID-19, right here at home at UHNBC, instead of being sent south.

Not knowing what 2021 would bring we moved forward in early January, which is when we start the year long planning, with every hope that this past Festival of Trees would return to what we all have come to know and celebrate. Sadly, with restriction after restriction, plans A,B,C – and more, we were able to host an event, which was more in line with our traditional Festival of Trees. For the community and our volunteers it was everything it should have been. For the participants we endured unrealistic limitations of numbers attending, which truly hampered our ability to secure the funds needed to hold the event within reasonable costs. For the community we chose not to charge an increase in ticket sales, however our supplier's costs had in fact gone up. None the least of it was the costs we pay to be at the Prince George Conference and Civic Centre. You will note the attached invoice which is about 2/3 of what we pay most years due to reduced numbers of attendees at events, but the core costs of the facility remain constant. Additionally we incurred significant costs in security due to vaccination passport verification and clientele hovering near the Plaza.

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We must say that pulling an event together in that space when it had been for the most part shut down for the better part of 18 months was a concern. The Team pulled together though and we were extremely satisfied with the efforts by the staff, some returning and some brand new, who assisted with carrying out the event that we had hoped it would be. There were moments that were stellar and moments of learning for sure.

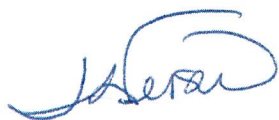
Our campaign and year-end donations did come in that surpassed our expectations for the Regional Cardiac Care Centre and we are hopeful to see this service take shape soon. In an effort to offset low attendance revenue and increased costs, we had applied to the Provincial Government Fairs, Festival, and Events grant. This would have seen assistance for \$84,000 come in to help us out. Sadly we were notified that we were not successful. This was extremely disappointing. It came with no explanation which is unfortunate as we felt that something as ingrained into the community as the Festival of Trees was a perfect fit for the intent of the Grant.

We are submitting today our cheque that pays for all but \$10,000 of the final bill from the Civic Centre for \$105,852.42. Along with this, we are asking for a one time forgiveness grant of \$10,000 that will help offset the operational costs for the Festival of Trees 2021. As a charitable entity it is not appropriate to take donated dollars for the fund a need item (Cardiac Care) and offset it to the cost of fundraising. Our opportunity for revenue came up short this year for a variety of reasons and in keeping our other suppliers whole, we felt that this was a request worth making. We have never asked for concessions ever in the past.

For 28 years we have paid top dollar to the Civic Centre for the use of their facilities. We have worked harmoniously with the Civic Staff in most years to even engage in a civic light up and day of community celebration. The last two years have exhausted any operational funding that we have for the Festival beyond the items we are funding in healthcare for the greater good and we are hopeful that you will consider this request.

Thank you so much for this consideration. We can be reached for any further conversation.

Sincerely,



Judy Neiser, CEO
Spirit of the North Healthcare Foundation



Darcy Bryant,
Board Chair

Cc: Spirit Board