

EXPLORATION PLACE – LITTLE PRINCE ENHANCEMENT

DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of the enhancement is to consider an increase in the service agreement with Exploration Place for the operation of the Little Prince train.

On January 8th, 2024, Exploration Place presented to Council as a delegation and provided information as the train's operator:

- A six-ton engine built in 1912
- Repaired in the 1920's and displayed at the railway station until 1969
- Donated by CN to the City in 1971
- Rail laid in Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park in 1975 by volunteers and engine restored
- Operated by volunteers from 1978 – 2007 until train needed refurbishment
- Service Agreement began in 2009 with Exploration Place for operation of train
- The train must comply with Canadian Railroad Operating Regulations as well as the BC Safety Authority's Antique Show Boiler Regulations and requires qualified engineers and conductors to operate the train on the 2.2km of track
- 20,000 passengers a year

The current annual budget for the operation of the train is \$25,000/yr and Exploration Place is advising it can only operate the train one day per week for that amount. Exploration Place has advised Council that their feedback from the public includes requests for the train to operate four days a week, as well as holiday Mondays. There are also requests for locals discounts or free rides.

There were additional requests from Exploration Place involving capital works for a new work shed and storage shed, passenger car refurbishment, as well as a dedicated reserve. These requests will be deferred for future discussions in a subsequent Council meeting.

FINANCIAL COST OF THE ENHANCEMENT:

As the operator of the train, Exploration Place is advising that it will cost an additional **\$75,000** to operate the train four days a week as compared to one day a week. The discussion on January 8th, 2024 suggested that for each day of the week the train operates, it would cost approximately \$25,000. Based on that discussion, Administration believes Council is being asked to set a service level for the operation of the train and has the option to consider anywhere from zero days a week to four days a week and the cost would range from \$0 to \$100,000 per year.

Administration searches for revenue opportunities including but not limited to grants and sponsorships but there is no assurance at the time of this report that there will be any opportunities available to offset the operational expenses of the train.

MEASUREMENT OF SERVICE LEVEL INCREASE:

Increasing the number of days of operation would make the train more available and provide more service to the public.