

Date: September 20, 2024

To: **Mayor and Council.**

Name and title: Andy Beesley, Director of Civic Facilities and Events

Subject: Future of Mr. PG

Attachment(s): None

Recommendation(s):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated September 20th 2024, from the Director, Civic Facilities and Events titled “Future of Mr. PG”.

Purpose:

To provide Council with information on the proposed future of Mr. PG.

Background:

The idea for Mr. PG originated with Harold Moffat in the late 1950s. He believed that Prince George needed a mascot, who could promote the forest industry and represent the city. Moffat approached Hans Roine, a local Rotarian and sawmill owner, with the idea. By 1960, the first Mr. PG was created: five feet tall and made entirely of wood, he stood outside the former Simon Fraser Hotel on Quebec Street.

Mr. PG was an instant hit, leading the City to build a larger 11.6-metre (38-foot) version atop a parade float for the 1961 Elks May Day Parade. Mr. PG went on the road, winning first place in the Kelowna Regatta parade and second prize in the Pacific National Exhibition parade. Mr. PG gained national recognition when he appeared in the 1963 Grey Cup Parade in Vancouver.

Mr. PG was eventually placed on permanent display in front of the Chamber of Commerce, which was located at the corner of George Street and 1st Avenue. In 1970, he was moved to the intersection of Highways 16 and 97. In 1983, the old wooden version was replaced with the current 8.14 metre tall metal and fiberglass Mr. PG. In 2012, Mr PG moved to his current location when the Visitor Information Centre was relocated.

In the past, to be showcased to visitors, Mr. PG had a permanent place in close proximity to the Chamber of Commerce or the Tourism Prince George Visitor Information Centre.

Discussion:

Mr. PG is a City asset and a registered trademark of the City of Prince George, with huge popularity. Increased development on the corner of Highways 16 and 97 has made it difficult for residents and visitors to gain safe access to him. It is also becoming increasingly challenging for staff to promote him, provide adequate maintenance, and set up flags and lights as requested. With these concerns, staff began to look at several locations where Mr. PG would be easily accessible with an attractive

background to enable residents and visitors to take pictures with him to showcase Prince George.

In July, an internal working group from relevant departments was brought together to work collectively and explore different options. Focusing on Council's strategic plan of *promoting presence and use of local assets and amenities in a way that aligns with growth goals*, the internal working group narrowed down some options. In September, an internal/external working group was formed to provide input and feedback for Administration to take into consideration.

The internal working group consisted of Planning and Development, Civic Operations and Civic Facilities and Events. The internal/external working group consisted of (internally) Planning and Development, Civic Operations, Communications, Civic Facilities and Events (Project Delivery and Event Services) along with Tourism Prince George, Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Prince George.

The overall consensus is to align Mr. PG with the Visitor Information Centre again. With the PG Conference and Civic Centre, PG Public Library, and Two Rivers Art Gallery, along with the new Tourism Container Market coming soon in Canada Games Plaza, we are creating an aesthetic space that will help create a vibrant civic core. Mr. PG will be located in a space that is safe and easy to access, providing an attractive backdrop for photo opportunities which will give him – and the City – maximum exposure. Directional signage starting at the corner of Highway 97 and Highway 16 will be a priority within the plan and will guide visitors straight to Mr. PG. With many local restaurants and small businesses in the area, directing people to visit Mr. PG will also encourage people to stay longer to dine and shop in our City, driving an increase of revenue back to our local economy.

The next steps are:

1. Project plan – determine the current structural integrity of Mr. PG, assess proposed locations, develop the project plan, and estimate budget
2. Funding options – research available grants and partnership funding, determine if any capital funding requests will be needed
3. Communications strategy – create a strategy to promote Mr. PG as a City attraction

Strategic Priorities:

Council's strategic plan:

- Market Prince George as a place to invest, live, and visit - promote presence and use of local assets and amenities in a way that aligns with growth goals.
- Maximize the quality of life for all residents - create a vibrant civic core
- Build a strong, resilient, and diverse economy for Prince George - identify and support the development of catalysts that enable and expedite the diversification of the economy.
- Focus on meaningful communication and relationship development to advance shared priorities – build and maintain the relationships necessary to ensure coordinated efforts.

Summary and conclusion:

Administration is currently working on a plan to relocate Mr. PG in order to promote him as a City attraction and bring visitors to a location that also supports local businesses and restaurants. Administration will communicate plans as they are finalized.

Respectfully submitted:

Andy Beesley, Director of Civic Facilities and Events

Prepared by Debbie Heywood, Manager, Event Services

Approved:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2024/10/07