

**Date:** October 1, 2024

**To:** **Mayor and Council.**

**Name and title:** Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations

**Subject:** Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park Playground Renewal

**Attachment(s):** Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park Playground Conceptual Design

## Recommendation(s):

That Council RECEIVES for information the report titled "Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park Playground Renewal" dated October 1, 2024, from the Director of Civic Operations.

## Purpose:

To present Council with information on the capital renewal project to replace the existing playground at Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park (LTMP) and outline the process required to efficiently replace the play structures in the least impactful and in a timely fashion.

## Strategic Priorities:

The proposed Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park Playground Renewal capital project supports the myPG goals of Sustainable Infrastructure and Organizational excellence.

## Background:

Prince George parks are delivered through a Parks and Open Space system that provides classifications and standards for developed parks. The Council adopted Park Strategy from 2016 evaluated 109 park spaces and divided them in to six (6) classifications:

- Major Parks – are the premier parks in the city and include Rainbow, Connaught and LTMP.
- Athletic Parks – that accommodate sport groups with athletic facilities like Carrie Jane Gray.
- Nature Parks – that provide access to significant natural areas like Cottonwood Island.
- Downtown Parks – with public spaces or plazas in the downtown core like Veteran's Plaza.
- Community Parks – serving each of the five (5) community areas like the Hart or West Bowl.
- Neighbourhood Parks – serving residents within localized neighbourhood areas.

Condition assessments were conducted to better understand what we have, how they measure up to today's standards, and how they meet emerging community demands.

Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park is the crown jewel of park and open space in Prince George, attracting tens of thousands of residents and tourists annually. A significant number of resources are required to not only maintain and operate the park, but also to keep up with the growing demands for upgrades and enhancements. Investment in aging park infrastructure has been a priority over the

past decade. In addition to annual amenity upgrades (benches, tables, trees, signage etc.), recent examples of larger renewal projects at LTMP include:

- 2012 – A new public washroom building was constructed along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave.
- 2016 – 424 metres of asphalt trail resurface work
- 2017 – The picnic shelter was replaced with a brand-new pavilion.
- 2017 – 52 metres of asphalt trail resurface work.
- 2020 – Construction of 5 sidewalk ramps for better accessibility into the park.
- 2024 – The main washroom building beside pavilion and playground was renovated.

The Rotary Playground at LTMP was installed in 2000, and unfortunately has reached the end of its useful life. The wooden structure does not meet current play area design standards for accessibility and is generally in poor condition. A playground safety audit in 2021 recommended that reinvestment is necessary and should be a top priority for the City of Prince George.

In April of 2024 the City of Prince George began phase one of the LTMP Playground Renewal Project by selecting a playground company to work with. City staff have enjoyed working with Canadian Recreation Solutions to design a playground (design attached) that is 100% representative of the unique geography and diverse culture of Prince George.

#### Discussion:

Phase two of the LTMP Playground Renewal Project is scheduled for construction in 2025, including a complete archaeological impact assessment report. The entirety of the Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park is a protected archaeological site that requires archaeological monitoring and site mitigation obligations under the Heritage Conservation Act. Considering the high archaeological sensitivity and cultural value of the area, innovative approaches will be employed to minimize earthwork and unnecessary disturbances. Electromagnetic (EM) and ground penetrating radar (GPR) will be used to survey the area currently in use as a playground to provide a more inclusive picture of potential subsurface targets. Geophysical data interpretations may be attained with a greater degree of confidence in areas that are undisturbed and in favourable soil conditions. The consultant must have unobstructed access to the project area, including the removal of all existing play equipment, fall protection and mulch layers. This work is scheduled for this fall and will accommodate the seasonal reduction in use at the park/playground. Administration is providing this information prior to the 2025 budget deliberations for council consideration as committing to playground removal to support investigatory works will leave LTMP with no play structures. Administration prefers the approach of removal and assessment prior to the capital construction year as performing the archaeological works in the spring of 2025 would likely increase wait times for equipment delivery and installation while having LTMP without a playground facility during peak season.

#### Financial Considerations:

The capital project for the playground renewal at Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park is estimated to require \$3,000,000 in funding.

**Summary and conclusion:**

The playground at Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park is in poor condition and no longer meets the requirements or expectations for the City of Prince George's premiere destination park. A new custom design has been created that will deliver an engaging and inclusive playground experience while honouring the many icons and landmarks that have shaped Prince George. (See attached preliminary design concepts) The archaeological assessment requires the removal of the existing playground to maximize effectiveness of the electromagnetic (EM) and ground penetrating radar (GPR). Once the old playground has been removed to support its capital renewal, there really is no turning back as the need for a playground at the park is essential. The scale and time required for Canadian Recreation Solutions to deliver on this project in 2025 requires the City of Prince George to consider a preliminary funding commitment, earlier than the normal Capital Expenditure Plan approval process through Finance & Audit in December and Council in January/February. At the completion of an archaeological assessment, depending on the findings, there is still potential that the project timelines may be impacted. Administration will bring back a brief update report on the results of the assessment once complete.

**Respectfully submitted:**

Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations

Prepared by S. LeBrun, Manager Parks and Solid Waste

**Approved:**

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2024/10/07