



Corporate Report

NO: R132

COUNCIL DATE: JUNE 11, 2007

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council

DATE: June 11, 2007

FROM: General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture

FILE: 1850-01

SUBJECT: Young People's Opera Society of BC

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation & Culture Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Authorize a City contribution of \$20,000 from the Council Initiative Fund to support a Young People's Opera Society Legacy in Surrey.

INTENT

The intent of this report is to provide background for Council on the Young People's Opera Society of British Columbia and the Society's request to receive financial support to assist in the development of their program in Surrey.

BACKGROUND

The Young People's Opera Society of BC was formed in 2005 and is the only organization in Canada developing an opera company for youth. To date, they have received funding from 2010 Legacies - ArtsNow (\$10,000), the Arts Council of Surrey (\$10,000), Surrey Firefighters Association (\$5,000), individual donors (\$5,000) and the Knights of Columbus (\$1,000).

The Society has developed a four-pillar plan for the advancement of the Society. The Plan includes the following:

1. Introduce Children's Opera to Surrey with the presentation of the original work, *The King Who Wouldn't Sing*, and to follow up with a children's opera production every year.
2. Establish an opera company in Surrey by 2010 that teaches voice and performance classes to children and young people and to mentor them in the learning of stages of production, direction and management.
3. Open an accredited opera school in Surrey by 2016.
4. Spearhead the building of the Surrey Opera House.

The inaugural production, *The King Who Wouldn't Sing*, is opening at the Surrey Arts Centre July 4-8, 2007. The City, through the Surrey Arts Centre has been supporting the development of this production on an in-kind services basis by offering space for auditions and co-presenting this first production. This support is consistent with many of the strategies outlined in Surrey's Cultural Strategic Plan and it helps to achieve increased utilization of the theatres in the Summer months. This is the first initiative of a ten-year plan to engage adults and children in the experience of opera, train new voices, develop confidence in young performers, and build new partnerships and artistic collaborations. The production will be staffed with the collaboration of professional artists, community groups and youth. It will be a performance that reflects and engages the diverse interests and skills of the community, many of whom come from countries in which music plays a major role in cultural life.

The Society has partnered with other non-profit groups in the City such as: Surrey Youth Orchestra, the Youth Arts Council, the Arts Council, and the BC Girls' Choir.

The Society has future plans to develop an original Children's opera entitled *Spirit Moon* to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the colonization of British Columbia in 2008. The Society plans to collaborate with the Kla-how-eya Aboriginal Cultural Centre on this production.

For 2009, the Society intends to adapt and produce an existing work with a vision to then begin the development of an original work for 2010. The 2010 Olympic Project will reflect and promote the values espoused by the Olympic and Paralympics Games. Grant application through *ArtsNow* will be pursued to assist with this production.

FINANCIAL REQUEST

The proposal for financial support from Barbara Gould, Executive Director and Patricia Dahlquist, Artistic Director is attached as Appendix 1. The Society has requested an immediate grant of \$30,000 to meet their budget requirements for 2007 and a second request for \$10,000 in 2008 to assist in the development of the original opera for the 2010 legacy presentation.

CONCLUSION

The Young People's Opera Society of BC was established in 2005, based in Surrey it is the only organization developing an opera company for children in Canada. This unique Society has ambitious plans to create opportunities for original productions, teach voice and performance classes to children and young people and mentor them in the learning of stage production, direction and management. To date the Society has been self funded as well as successfully secured grant money 2010 Legacies - ArtsNow, the Arts Council of Surrey, Surrey Firefighters Association, individual donors, and the Knights of Columbus.

This proposal is an example of Surrey's growing artistic community, demonstrating the rich cultural diversity and talent in the City. The Young People's Opera Society of BC is committed to the development of an opera company in Surrey and has secured financial contributions from various sources to advance their long-term goals. Assisting the Society at this critical point in its development will enable them to continue to operate the organization and ensure they are well positioned to advance future legacy projects such as the 150th anniversary of BC production *Spirit Moon*, and future projects for 2010. It is recommended that Council support this project by authorizing an allocation of \$20,000 from the Council Initiative fund toward the Young Peoples Opera Society of BC. Currently, the balance in this fund is \$209,221.

Parks, Recreation and Culture staff will work with the Society to encourage them to continue to apply for grant opportunities from various sources to assist with their future productions and program development. Given their strong focus on partnerships with groups such as the Klahow-eya Aboriginal Cultural Centre, they are well positioned to secure future provincial and legacy grants relative to the Provincial and 2010 priorities.

Laurie Cavan,
General Manager
Parks, Recreation and Culture