



RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER

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STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: July 23, 2024 **REPORT:** 24-080
FROM: Community Engagement and **FILE:** 4710-20
Cultural Services
SUBJECT: FUNDING SOURCE FOR INVICTUS GAMES VANCOUVER WHISTLER 2025

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Community Engagement and Cultural Services be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council direct staff to use the Municipal and Regional District Tax reserve to support the Festival Events and Animation (FE&A) team's investment in the Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025; and

That Council direct staff to bring forward a budget amendment to adjust the "Five-Year Financial Plan 2024- 2028 Bylaw No. 2424, 2024" to reflect the amount and the source of funds for the FE&A program investment.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's direction on the source of funds that will enable the Festival Events and Animation (FE&A) team of the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) to provide financial support in this calendar year in preparation for the Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 (Invictus Games).

Information Report Administrative Report

DISCUSSION

Background

The Invictus Games will be held between February 8 and 16, 2025, in both Vancouver and Whistler. The Invictus Games were founded by Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex to support the recovery of wounded, injured and sick international military service personnel through sport. The term Invictus means unconquered and embodies the fighting spirit of the participating athletes, as well as their motivation to move on with their lives, to gain a new place in life and to not let themselves be defined by the trauma they have suffered.

For the first time, the Invictus Games will include adaptive winter sports like alpine skiing, Nordic skiing, skeleton and curling, placing Whistler and its winter facilities in the limelight. The Government of

Canada and the Province of British Columbia are founding partners of these games and have each committed \$15 million in support of the Invictus Games and Vancouver Sport Hosting has contributed \$500,000.

Each September and November the FE&A team puts out a request for proposals for third party event producers who wish to access the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) funding to support their events. The FE&A team is allotted a certain amount of MRDT funds each year in the annual budget to support third party produced events that support tourism in Whistler. The funding decisions for 2024 were made in November 2023.

The Invictus Games organization approached the RMOW with a funding ask earlier this year. The MRDT funding for third party events has been allotted for this year, and Invictus would like to receive the funds, if possible, prior to the end of 2024 as their event occurs early in 2025.

Analysis

The goals of the FE&A team are to align with Whistler's OCP, Council Strategic Priorities, and Tourism Whistler Strategic Priorities. This team also seeks to deliver significant benefits to Whistler with value-added programs that enhance experiences for visitors and residents, with programming that supports need periods and encourages longer stays and mid-week visits. Further, FE&A helps deliver social benefits with programming that contributes to a sense of pride and belonging by showcasing Whistler's authentic experiences and core products including outdoor sport and recreation, the arts, natural history, heritage and entertainment. Lastly, as a recipient of MRDT funds the FE&A team has a goal to support the Province of BC achieve its tourism related goals.

The Invictus Games align with these goals by contributing economically with value-added programs that enhance experiences and create lasting memories for visitors and residents, and by encouraging longer stays and mid-week visits. Also, because the Invictus Games brings together service personnel from around the world who all have inspiring stories of resilience and recovery, the event will contribute socially by engaging visitors and residents in a meaningful way that builds understanding, connection, pride and belonging. In addition, this event enables the RMOW and our resort partners to better understand and work to improve the accessibility of the resort for people with both visible and invisible disabilities.

FE&A staff have worked through their usual investment assessment process that includes input from many resort partners, as well as internal staff, to evaluate the appropriate level of funding. Using this assessment process, staff recommend providing \$240,000, as requested by the Invictus Games. This funding would be used to support unique, fun, accessible and interactive village animation featuring relaxing viewing zones, music and dance, sport themed activities and local arts and heritage themed activities.

In addition to the financial investment, RMOW staff will also contribute in-kind support before and during the Invictus Games to help ensure the Whistler events are a success and that the community and visitors can enjoy the experience together. This will be in the form of pre-event planning and coordination as well as operational and logistical support to ensure the entire event is seamlessly integrated into the day-to-day operations of the resort.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

The “Five-Year Financial Plan 2024-2028 Bylaw No. 2424, 2024” (Five-Year Financial Plan) was adopted on [January 23, 2024](#).

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the high-level direction of the RMOW to help shape community progress during this term of Council. The Strategic Plan contains four priority areas with various associated initiatives that support them. This section identifies how this report links to the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Priorities

Housing

Expedite the delivery of and longer-term planning for employee housing

Climate Action

Mobilize municipal resources toward the implementation of the Big Moves Climate Action Plan

Community Engagement

Strive to connect locals to each other and to the RMOW

Smart Tourism

Preserve and protect Whistler’s unique culture, natural assets and infrastructure

Not Applicable

Aligns with core municipal work that falls outside the strategic priorities but improves, maintains, updates and/or protects existing and essential community infrastructure or programs

Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

Chapter 8 of the OCP is focused on the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of the Community. Goals within this Chapter are to strengthen opportunities for social cohesion and connectedness for residents and visitors by providing opportunities for residents to connect with each other during municipal initiatives and events. Under Goal 8.4 which focuses on strengthening a culture of inclusion and diversity, it encourages the RMOW to support activities and events where community members and visitors can learn about and enjoy experiences with other cultures, as well as opportunities to be welcoming, inclusive and supportive of all ages, genders, gender identities, abilities, cultures and religions at community events and activities. The Invictus Games events and their animation activities in the village will enhance the local and visitor experience as they celebrate the resilience and achievements of the Invictus Games athletes from all over the world.

The Invictus Games has also worked closely with the Four Host First Nations to ensure they are involved in the event in a meaningful and impactful way. This commitment to working together aligns with many goals and objectives of the OCP.

Chapter 6 of the OCP addresses Economic Viability and includes the statement: “The municipality is committed to being fiscally responsible and at the same time must continue to invest in infrastructure, amenities and services, which are integral to the authentic Whistler Mountain experience.”

The direction requested by staff aims to deliver the funding to the Invictus Games in a fiscally responsible fashion that uses MRDT reserve and therefore does not impact the Whistler rate payer. Amendments to the Five-Year Financial Plan are a key mechanism by which the RMOW ensures that the community remains current on the state of financial affairs in a transparent fashion.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The Five-Year Financial Plan sets the budget for the next five years and is prepared annually. It can be revised at any time by bylaw and is proposed to be revised to reflect these changes.

The proposed change affects Schedule B (Project Summary) of the Five-Year Financial Plan by adding a project that will draw on MRDT reserves. The budget for the project will be \$240,000 in 2024. The change would be captured in a future budget amendment should Council support the recommended motions.

Staff are recommending MRDT as the source of the funds, given its clear alignment with MRDT objectives of promoting the tourist experience in Whistler. This investment is important to support not only the FE&A goals of the RMOW, but also our accessibility goals and our mandate to support the provincial government's tourism goals.

LÍLWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lílwat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for unceded land planning; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy.

The Invictus Games has been working with the Four Host First Nations of Lilwat7úl (Lílwat), x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh). Through their work the Invictus Games has committed to engaging with each Nation, addressing Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and respecting Indigenous protocols in all aspects of the Games. The organizing committee for the Invictus Games will ensure that the Four Host First Nations languages, traditions, protocols and cultures are meaningfully acknowledged, respected and represented in the planning, staging and hosting of the Games.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

SUMMARY

Staff are seeking direction to allocate funding in 2024 for the Invictus Games to be held in Vancouver and Whistler from February 8 to 16, 2025 from the MRDT reserve and direction to bring forward a budget amendment to reflect this adjustment in the 2024 budget. The proposed investment in the Invictus Games aligns with the goals of the FE&A program and aligns with the tourism goals of the

Province of BC. The funding is required in the 2024 budget year to enable the Invictus Games organizing committee to spend funds in advance of the new year.

SIGN-OFFS

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