
City Council

Notice of Motion

MM28.4	ACTION			Ward: 4
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Amendment to Canadian Stage Licence Agreement in High Park - by Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Gord Perks

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Economic and Community Development Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Gord Perks, recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, in consultation with the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to amend the 2015 Licence Agreement and the 2020 Licence Agreement Extension with the non-profit theatre company Canadian Stage Corporation to facilitate the implementation of Canadian Stage's proposal for a revised program at the amphitheatre in High Park, including an extension of the season from May-September to April-October, including the ability to charge an admission fee for up to 50 percent of the seating capacity, and including any other changes deemed necessary and appropriate by the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, all subject to the final approval of the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

Summary

Canadian Stage, a registered charity, has provided performances in the amphitheatre in High Park since 1983. Over the years, these programs have appeared under various names including the Dream in High Park and Shakespeare in High Park. These programs have been enjoyed by thousands of Torontonians and visitors.

Due to COVID-19 which had devastating effects on the cultural sector, and other trends in the performing arts, Canadian Stage has approached the City with a proposal for a revised High Park program, again titled The Dream in High Park. It would lengthen the season beyond the current performance period, introduce a wider range of artistic offerings including music, dance and original Canadian drama, and include more opportunities for community-based programming. Canadian Stage would partner with other non-profit professional arts organizations, community groups and cultural institutions to provide programming, which will increase access to the venue for a wider range of groups, and showcase a more diverse cultural experience.

The proposed new program would follow any provincial orders and public health guidelines related to COVID-19 in force at the time, and would work with City officials to ensure these guidelines are implemented. As a large outdoor venue, visitors can be safely physically distanced, and the site has controlled ingress and egress. Canadian Stage has also offered to use the stage and other methods such as increased signage to promote environmental protection for High Park's sensitive ecology.

To sustain the program financially and to provide employment for Toronto performance artists, Canadian Stage is proposing to institute online reserved ticket pricing for approximately 50 per cent of the seating capacity (capacity based on any public health guidelines at the time). The other 50 per cent would be available on a pay-what-you-can donation basis, as is the current practice. This strikes a balance between access and economic sustainability. Ticket prices would require the approval of the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

Other programs in High Park require some kind of access fee or entrance fee, including the City-run Colborne Lodge, non-profit operations such as the sports leagues, and commercial operations such as the trackless train. At the Guild Park and Gardens in Scarborough, the non-profit Guild Festival Theatre sells tickets for a portion of the seating capacity for performances at the outdoor stage in the park, to help sustain its operations.

The current licence agreement to use the space was executed in 2015. It was extended in 2020 for a further five-year period. An amendment to the agreement is required to implement this program.

This Motion is urgent in order for the amending agreement to be executed in time for Canadian Stage to make preparations for a 2021 season.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM28.4