

## **COUNCIL REPORT**

**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Administration

**Date:** May 17, 2023

**Subject:** Commemorative Bench and Tree Program Review

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Council provides feedback on the proposed amendments to Commemorative Bench and Tree Program Policy 1.16.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Commemorative Bench and Tree Program has seen a rise in recent uptake. A copy of the current policy and application form have been attached for further information. With this increase in interest several questions have arisen with the policy. Staff have outlined these questions and potential solutions in the report below.

#### **Can more than one person donate to a bench?**

Residents have approached the District of Mackenzie (District) asking about having multiple sources of donations to purchase a memorial bench. Staff have spoken with other municipalities, and they allow multiple donations towards a single bench, but only one donation tax receipt is given. Example of a revised application with acknowledgment for only one income tax receipt to be issued shown in Appendix A.

1. Will Council allow for more than one source for the donation towards memorial benches?

#### **Can more than one plaque be on a bench?**

There have been inquiries about having two (or more) plaques on a single bench. In past practice two names have been added to a single name plate and in one instance there were two plaques added to a bench for a husband and wife. Staff have reached out to the City of Prince George team that looks after the memorial bench program, they allow a maximum of two plaques per bench. The following line has been added to the proposed Appendix A "Additional plaques may be purchased at cost plus installation, under the same text parameters".

2. How many plaques per bench will Council allow?

**Are there other items that may be purchased other than a bench or tree?**

Other communities have items such as picnic tables and bike racks available for donation. If it is Councils wish, staff can look at the costs of such amenities and determine how they would be implemented into the program. The current supplier that the District uses to purchase the memorial benches, also has other park/pedestrian/transportation amenities.

3. Does Council wish staff to investigate other amenities for donation?

**Why was there a change from bronze to plastic plaques?**

Bronze plaques increased in cost over the last few years (quote received in 2022 estimated \$600+). The added cost was considered unreasonable by staff to pass onto applicants to pay in addition to the bench, but the increase costs put the program into a deficit. Staff researched other options and provided a plastic replacement (\$60+) that has held up in look and durability for a fraction of the cost. This has allowed the program to remain cost neutral and haven't had to increase fees for applicants.

4. Does Council have any comment on the plaque type?

**Could the base of the benches be increased to include space for a wheelchair?**

At one of the regular committee meetings, staff were approached by the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee regarding the concrete pad surrounding the memorial benches. The Committee would like Council to consider changing the policy to increase the concrete pad size on one side of the bench to allow for wheelchair access. The additional cost of the pad size could be incurred by the District or an additional fee of \$50 could be added to the overall memorial bench fee to accommodate. The Committee also inquired, when reasonable, if there could also be an accessible pathway to the benches when installed.

5. Does Council wish to implement the changes recommended by the Access and Inclusion Committee?

**NEXT STEPS:**

If Council wishes to make adjustments to Policy 1.16, following the discussion during this report, staff would bring forward a draft update for consideration at an upcoming Council meeting.

**BUDGETARY IMPACT:**

If Council chooses to incur the additional \$50 for the increased pad area to make the benches more accessible, this cost will be absorbed in the Public Works budget.

**COUNCIL PRIORITIES:**

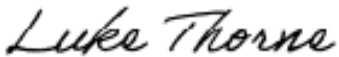
**Community and Social Development**

- Our investment in the municipality's services and infrastructure, our commitment to principles of social equity and well-being, and our belief in the value of resident engagement, creates a healthy community in which everyone feels valued and enjoys a high quality of life.

**Strong Governance and Finances**

- As the municipality's elected governing body, we serve all residents and businesses in the community. We engage residents and stakeholders on important issues and make our decisions through open and transparent processes. We are careful in our use of resources, mindful of the need to maintain programs and services, while also meeting the community's infrastructure needs.

Respectfully Submitted,



Luke Thorne  
Land and Environmental Coordinator



Kerri Borne  
Chief Financial Officer



Approved for Submission to Council