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City commissions action plan to capitalize on growing cultural tourism trend

In an effort to increase the role arts and cultural tourism plays in the local tourism economy and capitalize on growing number of travellers interested in holidays that include arts, culture and heritage opportunities, the City has retained a consulting firm to develop the Penticton Arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.

“Globally, arts and culture tourism is growing by about 15 per cent annually,” said Director of Special Projects Barry Reid. “By developing and implementing an Arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy, Penticton will be well-positioned to benefit from this growth.”

The City received a \$168,358 grant from the province’s Local Government Program Services Secretariat to develop the strategy and for the implementation of the resulting recommendations, said Reid. Chemistry Consulting has been contracted to develop the strategy. The City applied for the grant recognizing that cultural tourism – travel directed toward experiencing the arts, heritage and special character of a place – could play a valuable role in increasing year-round tourism and attracting “high-value” visitors who stay longer, spend more and return more frequently than other visitors. The World Tourism Organization estimates that cultural tourism accounts for 37 per cent of travel. In addition to the business cultural tourism generates for local artists, venues, hotels and restaurants, cultural resources play a significant role in residents’ quality of life.

The strategy will be developed over the next four months with the support of the Cultural Strategy Steering Committee – a sub-committee of the Parks, Recreation & Culture Advisory Committee. The consulting team will meet with arts, culture and tourism representatives, review background information, tour venues and create a database framework for an arts and cultural tourism inventory. Workshops and other sessions will be held to solicit public input.

“Combined, the information collected will be used to identify and prioritize key opportunities,” said Reid. “The strategy will be used to guide future arts and cultural investment decisions.”

The strategy will make recommendations for improvements to local facilities, new facilities and equipment and support to volunteers needed in order to host additional cultural events. After strategy development, the about-\$100,000 remaining from the grant will be used to implement its recommendations.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact Director of Special Projects Barry Reid at 809-5379 or Chemistry principal Frank Bourree at (250) 382-3303 ext 208.