



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY  
**STAFF REPORT**

**To:** Council  
**From:** Chief Administrative Officer  
**Subject:** Memorial Program

**File No.:** 6200-05  
**Date:** April 1, 2019

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council options on the future of the dormant memorial bench program.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The administrative impacts of memorial programs are often underestimated. The lifecycle cost of a regular park bench is approximately half of that of a memorial bench, and the associated subsidy benefits a select group of donors. Staff and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission ask Council to consider not reinstating the dormant memorial program.

**CAO RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That based on the March 25, 2019 staff report "Memorial Program", Council adopt OPTION 1 and direct staff to discontinue the existing memorial program.

Respectfully submitted,

David Allen, BES, CLGEM, SCLGM  
Chief Administrative Officer


**BACKGROUND:**

Across North America municipalities have had donor/memorial bench programs for the last 20 to 30 years. The Courtenay's formal memorial bench program was initiated in 1997 with the first bench donated by Stan and Judy Hagen. At that time it was anticipated that the City would be contributing 40% of the cost. The pricing was as follows:

- |                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Park bench - \$480 | Park/boulevard tree - \$180 |
| Street bench \$780 | Tree in a sidewalk - \$420  |

These fees were anticipated to be 60% of the total cost of the bench, pad and plaque including purchase, installation, and 10 years of maintenance. From this we can deduce that the total

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY



**The City of Courtenay Tree Donation Program and Bench Donation Program**

<b>Participant Information</b>	<b>Horticultural Information</b>
Name: _____	Tree Species: _____
Address: _____	Size: _____
Postal Code: _____	Other: _____
Telephone: _____	<b>For Office Use Only</b>
Donation Amount: \$1500.00 + 10% GST	Date of Application: _____
Income tax receipt will be mailed to the above address.	Approval of Inscription: _____
<b>Location of Tree or Bench</b>	Job Order No. _____
_____	Work Order No. _____
_____	Species of Tree or Bench: _____
_____	Tree or Bench Number: _____
_____	Supervisor: _____
_____	Other: _____
_____	Date of Completion: _____

**Plaque Inscription for Bench** \_\_\_\_\_

*called in 2027 for inscription*

Please limit wording to three lines. Wording must be approved by the City of Courtenay prior to ordering plaque. Brass plaque measures approximately 21" high by 12" long.

**Commitment to Maintenance by City**  
All gifts to the City of Courtenay through the Tree Donation Program and Bench Donation Program are accepted on the basis that they will be maintained for 10 years in their original location or in an area near their original location, after which the disposition of the gift is at the sole discretion of the City of Courtenay.

**Limits of Participation**  
Participation in the Tree Donation Program and Bench Donation Program in no way constitutes ownership of the item, the land upon which it is situated or the surrounding lands. The City of Courtenay retains the right to use lands adjacent to these donated items as it deems appropriate. In addition, the City of Courtenay may choose to not accept a gift through the Tree Donation Program and Bench Donation Program at its discretion.

I have read and agree to the above conditions.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: *Oct 3/01*

anticipated cost of a park bench was \$800 over 10 years. This pricing was low but not unlike programs in other jurisdictions.

Each donor received a tax receipt for their participation in the program and was to sign an agreement identifying that the donation was for a 10 year term. The wording on the agreement is as follows:

“All gifts to the City of Courtenay through the Tree Donation Program and Bench Donation Program are accepted on the basis that they will be maintained for 10 years in their original location or in an area near their original location, after which the disposition of the gift is at the sole discretion of the City of Courtenay.”

The Courtenay memorial program was put on hold in 2008. Many other municipalities took similar action based on the expiration of the first benches, increased demand, and identification that the program was subsidized at a much higher rate than originally anticipated. Since then over 100 people have asked to be put on a waiting list in case the Courtenay memorial program is reinstated.

**DISCUSSION:**

Memorial programs were initiated with the optimistic but unrealistic view that the community was getting a free bench in exchange for a public memorial. Over the last 30 years it has become clear that the expectations attached to a memorial bench have caused the soft costs to rise far beyond the quoted ‘purchase price’ due to program administration and increasing requests for service. A memorial bench program has an unintended and inevitable higher service level than other similar services due to the personal expectations of donors for maintenance and upkeep of their specific asset. To some, these assets are used in place of a tomb stone and therefore seen as sacred. In contrast, some park users comment that the presence of public memorials add morbidity to public space and don’t add value to the experience for the common users.

Since the program’s inception, more residents are being cremated, thereby placing additional strain on memorial programs. Family members look for a public place to remember loved ones and commonly prefer settings outside of a cemetery with the vast majority of local inquiries requesting the Courtenay Airpark. 30 years ago only 62.3% of deaths in BC resulted in cremation. The BC cremation rate rose to 82% in 2011. However the statistic for Courtenay is 94.6% preferring cremation. (see appendix 1)

If the program were active and advertised, the demand would be expected to far exceed the available spaces. Many municipalities have parks with an excessive number of memorial benches in part to satisfy demand for memorials rather than the need for park benches. In Courtenay, limits were placed on memorial benches at the Air Park recognizing that if demand determined the location, the Air Park would have benches far exceeding actual need.

There is a general expectation by participants that memorials are maintained in perpetuity. The existing benches in Courtenay were installed under 10 year terms with the majority now expired. Since contracts



**Daughter condemns \$2,000 extra for mom's memorial park bench in Sooke**

KEVIN GRIFFIN Updated: December 10, 2017



may only have been witnessed by the signatory, other family members may not be fully informed of this contract term. In Courtenay there are 325 memorial items, most of which have expired contracts. Other municipalities have tried to resolve these completed contracts by removing the plaque and making the space available to other participants. There has been substantial backlash in other jurisdictions where poorly executed. Staff recommend that separate consideration is given to the existing memorials and addressed through future policy.

Although memorial programs are very common, Council is asked to consider if a public memorial outside of a cemetery is actually a core service to the citizenship of Courtenay. Effective City services benefit a large number of citizens or serve marginalized populations. If a service does not meet this threshold, it should be a full cost recovery service. In this model, the value of the service is calculated and pricing is established to fully recover the cost of participation. In most municipalities the value of participation is calculated considering the following factors:

**Memorial Bench Valuation:**

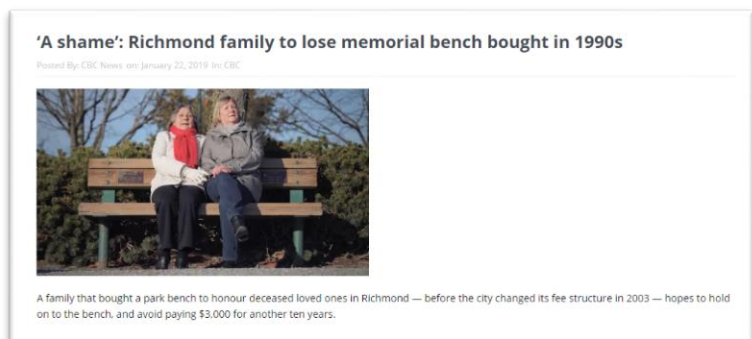
<i>Build/Install Concrete Pad</i>	
Labour	240
Materials	300
Installation of bench	80
Purchase of bench	1250
Plaque engraving	300
<i>Maintenance (10 yrs)</i>	
Pressure washing	400
Graffiti Removal	400
Administration fee	30
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>



Although this methodology is common, it fails to acknowledge the cost of the administration of the program itself. This includes bench/plaque replacements, removal of flowers/plantings, advertising, brochures, front desk meetings with the clients, point of sale, financial administration including receipting, record keeping and the ongoing service requests from the client. These costs are estimated at an additional \$500 per bench over a 10 year term.

Bench installation and lifecycle costs:  
 Memorial program = \$3,500  
 Regular bench = \$1,870  
*Note: A key consideration in the calculation of these costs is the expected service levels associated with these 2 scenarios.*

If the service was priced at \$3,500 to be full cost recovery, there is \$1,870 in value to the community at large while \$1,630 in additional value to the donor family. Memorial bench programs seldom have staff dedicated to the service. The demands of the program bring office staff from their core responsibilities and field staff from regular maintenance resulting in lowered levels of service for core operations. For example, park and street benches are usually installed in a timing that fits the work plan of a crew. Normally with a memorial program the timing of bench installations is on the basis of customer orders and associated service level expectations. The demand-based nature of this work tends to be less efficient and therefore more costly.



Typically the true costs are not reflected in the program fees. If the full value of the program were included in the cost of participation in the program, the pricing would appear to be an unfair burden on mourners. Many municipalities are increasing the cost of a memorial programs to reduce the burden on taxpayers that would be unwilling to bear this subsidy.

The price of participation in a memorial bench program varies substantially between municipalities. The Courtenay program was \$1,100 in 2008. If this price doubled to \$2,200 it would be close to the median of other municipal programs, but only 63% of the true costs. (see appendix 2)

Staff estimate that during the first year of reinstatement there could be a demand of over 100 benches and the years there after to level out closer to 30 benches annually. Provision would need to be made to satisfy this demand on staff capacity.

Council is regularly faced with the public desire to memorialize prominent citizens or the victims of tragic circumstances. If this is a priority for Council, a well-resourced program will be needed to provide clarity on memorial options.

A well designed memorial program can address efficiencies, limit available space to reasonable annual quantities and ensure that the memorial placement serves the community needs. However, dedicated staff resources, and clear program parameters are needed.

If reinitiated, a new program would involve the following elements:

**Program Component**

**Departments Involved\***

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| - A program policy with pricing and appropriate promotion        | RCS, LS, Communications |
| - Clarity on the contractual term of participation               | RCS, LS                 |
| - Contact with those on waitlist                                 | RCS                     |
| - A mapped listing of available memorial locations               | RCS, GIS, PWS           |
| - Coordinated installation of assets and plaques                 | RCS, PWS                |
| - Systems for tracking and maintaining contact with participants | RCS                     |
| - Renew available bench locations annually                       | RCS, PWS                |

\*RCS = Recreation and Cultural Service, LS= Legislative Services, PWS= Public Works Services, GIS=Geographic Information Systems



Key to a sustainable program is to establish the program service level through policy. One effective way to accomplish this is to clearly outline the number of memorial locations that will be available annually and when installations will occur.

Alternatives should be developed to satisfy community memorial requests. These alternatives may include:

**Gifts program:**

Through this program service clubs and individuals may gift cash or products to the City. The donor would be receipted for their donation. Common examples of gifts are, playgrounds, in-kind labour, signage, public art, lighting, trail improvements, facility equipment, room upgrades, etc. A gifts program should always be accompanied with a recognition policy that stipulates that the scale of

recognition is proportional to the size of the gift. All recognition should also have an expiry date specified.

A memorial wall, garden or other centralized opportunities for memorial. It is ideal if these are in a pleasant location and yet not on a main thoroughfare.

Cemetery recognition:

The Courtenay and District Cemetery currently offers various memorial options to clientele. This includes memorial walls, plaques, headstones, etc. The list of product options could be expanded at the cemetery.

Referrals to partners:

The City keeps a list of community partners that offer memorial options. These include cultural partners, adjacent municipalities, private gardens, businesses, institutions, etc.

Since the current memorial program is dormant and outdated, Council is at a crossroads. Staff and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission recommend discontinuing the service.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Discontinuing the service will not require an additional budget allocation.

Reinstituting the program will require just over \$100,000 additional budget in various departments. The first 2 years will require more funds than the subsequent years. Year 1 will include program development, communication with participants and waitlist, and mapping of available donations. Year 2 would be the first year of implementation (relieving the pent-up demand). Departmental increases are as follows:

Department	Year 1		Year 2		Ongoing	
	Hours	Budget	Hours	Budget	Hours	Budget
Recreation & Cultural Services (Administration)	1,000	0	500	0	500	0
Public Works Services (Installation & Maintenance)	200	100,000	200	100,000	200	100,000
Legislative Services (Policy, GIS & Communications)	35	2,000	21	1,000	14	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,235</b>	<b>102,000</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>101,000</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>100,000</b>

**ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

The administration of the memorial program is coordinated through the Recreation and Cultural Services Department. This includes, point of contact and point of sale with participants, program and policy development. The purchase, installation and maintenance of assets resides with the Public Works Department. The Legislative Services Department oversees policy, GIS and corporate public communication. The implications to staff capacity are noted above.

**ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS:**

The lifecycle costs of memorial assets are substantially increased based on customer driven service level expectations as noted above. The discontinuation of this program will not negatively impact the available seating or tree planting services offered to the community.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**

**We focus on organizational and governance excellence**

- Support and encourage initiatives to improve efficiencies
- Recognize staff capacity is a finite resource and support staff training and development
- Communicate appropriately with our community in all decisions we make
- Responsibly provide services at levels which the people we serve are willing to pay
- Focus on asset management for sustainable service delivery

- **AREA OF CONTROL:** The policy, works and programming matters that fall within Council's jurisdictional authority to act
- ▲ **AREA OF INFLUENCE:** Matters that fall within shared or agreed jurisdiction between Council and another government or party
- **AREA OF CONCERN:** Matters of interest that are outside Council's jurisdictional authority to act

**OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN REFERENCE:**

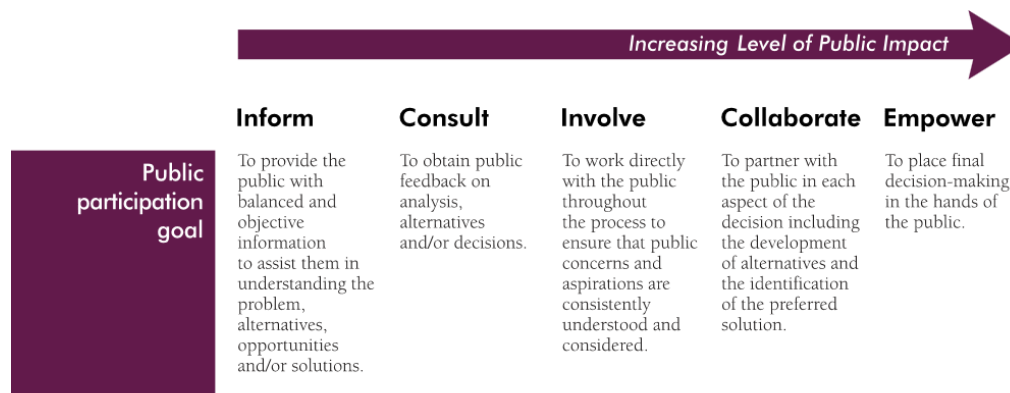
No specific reference

**REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY REFERENCE:**

No specific reference

**CITIZEN/PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Staff have **consulted** with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission in the development of this report as identified in the *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation*.



**OPTIONS:**

1. Council direct staff to formally discontinue the existing memorial program
2. Council direct staff to formally discontinue the existing memorial program; and  
Direct staff to create centralized locations for public memorials
3. Council direct staff to create a new memorial program based on sustainable service levels
4. Council refer this item back to staff for further consideration
5. Council takes no action on this matter at this time.

Prepared by:



Dave Snider *BCSLA*

Director of Recreation and Cultural Services

Attachments:

1. Method of Disposition by Decedent's Local Health Area of Residence
2. Memorial Bench Pricing Comparison

Appendix 1

**Vital Statistics Information Box**

METHOD OF DISPOSITION BY DECEDENT'S LOCAL HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE						
BRITISH COLUMBIA, 2011						
Local Health Area	Burial		Cremation		Other	Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
001 Fernie	18	18.9	77	81.1	-	95
002 Cranbrook	23	11.5	175	87.5	2	200
003 Kimberley	5	6.1	77	93.9	-	82
004 Windermere	6	8.1	68	91.9	-	74
005 Creston	40	25.2	119	74.8	-	159
006 Kootenay Lake	1	2.7	36	97.3	-	37
007 Nelson	38	20.7	143	77.7	3	184
009 Castlegar	40	31.0	88	68.2	1	129
010 Arrow Lakes	9	13.8	56	86.2	-	65
011 Trail	23	12.4	160	86.5	2	185
012 Grand Forks	28	25.7	81	74.3	-	109
013 Kettle Valley	1	3.1	31	96.9	-	32
014 Southern Okanagan	40	15.2	224	84.8	-	264
015 Penticton	61	11.8	456	88.2	-	517
016 Keremeos	9	15.3	50	84.7	-	59
017 Princeton	-	0.0	64	100.0	-	64
018 Golden	6	15.0	34	85.0	-	40
019 Revelstoke	10	15.4	55	84.6	-	65
020 Salmon Arm	55	18.0	251	82.0	-	306
021 Armstrong-Spallumcheen	10	13.9	62	86.1	-	72
022 Vernon	93	14.4	550	85.3	2	645
023 Central Okanagan	201	13.1	1,323	86.5	6	1,530
024 Kamloops	95	10.3	811	88.0	16	922
025 100 Mile House	15	11.6	114	88.4	-	129
026 North Thompson	3	10.7	25	89.3	-	28
027 Cariboo-Chilcotin	38	22.5	131	77.5	-	169
028 Quesnel	29	14.1	174	84.9	2	205
029 Lillooet	9	22.5	30	75.0	1	40
030 South Cariboo	11	15.9	58	84.1	-	69
031 Merritt	22	21.2	81	77.9	1	104
032 Hope	15	16.0	79	84.0	-	94
033 Chilliwack	126	18.3	560	81.2	4	690
034 Abbotsford	239	25.2	702	74.1	6	947
035 Langley	127	12.8	856	86.6	6	989
037 Delta	84	11.9	614	87.2	6	704
038 Richmond	216	23.4	692	75.1	14	922
040 New Westminster	72	15.6	387	83.6	4	463
041 Burnaby	325	24.7	958	72.9	31	1,314
042 Maple Ridge	60	9.9	542	89.7	2	604
043 Coquitlam	175	17.4	817	81.1	15	1,007
044 North Vancouver	115	14.4	676	84.4	10	801
045 West Vancouver-Bowen Is.	56	12.7	383	86.7	3	442
046 Sunshine Coast	23	8.2	258	91.8	-	281
047 Powell River	23	11.8	170	87.2	2	195
048 Howe Sound	18	14.4	107	85.6	-	125
049 Bella Coola Valley	9	60.0	6	40.0	-	15
050 Queen Charlotte	17	42.5	23	57.5	-	40
051 Snow Country	1	-	5	83.3	-	6
052 Prince Rupert	32	36.0	56	62.9	1	89
053 Upper Skeena	12	38.7	19	61.3	-	31
054 Smithers	33	26.6	91	73.4	-	124
055 Burns Lake/Eutsuk	20	39.2	30	58.8	1	51
056 Nechako	40	36.7	69	63.3	-	109
057 Prince George	101	17.6	473	82.3	1	575
059 Peace River South	42	19.7	171	80.3	-	213
060 Peace River North	38	25.9	109	74.1	-	147
061 Greater Victoria	251	11.8	1,852	87.4	17	2,120
062 Sooke	34	8.8	350	90.7	2	386
063 Saanich	65	9.4	618	89.6	7	690
064 Gulf Islands	8	5.8	130	94.2	-	138
065 Cowichan	66	13.9	409	85.9	1	476
066 Lake Cowichan	4	8.9	41	91.1	-	45
067 Ladysmith	23	10.5	197	89.5	-	220
068 Nanaimo	91	9.4	869	90.2	3	963
069 Qualicum	25	4.6	515	95.0	2	542
070 Alberni	48	14.0	294	86.0	-	342
071 Courtenay	30	5.2	546	94.6	1	577
072 Campbell River	16	4.8	319	94.9	1	336
075 Mission	41	13.9	253	86.1	-	294
076 Agassiz-Harrison	16	19.5	66	80.5	-	82
077 Summerland	17	11.0	137	89.0	-	154
078 Enderby	14	17.9	64	82.1	-	78
080 Kitimat	27	32.5	56	67.5	-	83
081 Fort Nelson	7	30.4	16	69.6	-	23
083 Central Coast	7	77.8	2	22.2	-	9
084 Vancouver Island West	1	16.7	5	83.3	-	6
085 Vancouver Island North	22	25.9	62	72.9	1	85
087 Stikine	2	50.0	2	50.0	-	4
088 Terrace	38	26.4	106	73.6	-	144
092 Nisga'a	6	60.0	4	40.0	-	10
094 Telegraph Creek	4	100.0	-	0.0	-	4
161 Vancouver - City Centre	126	19.4	519	79.7	6	651
162 Vancouver - Dwntrwn E.Side	140	28.0	357	71.4	3	500
163 Vancouver - North East	243	43.8	295	53.2	17	555
164 Vancouver - Westside	172	24.5	522	74.5	7	701
165 Vancouver - Midtown	135	34.7	240	61.7	14	389
166 Vancouver - South	261	31.8	546	66.4	15	822
201 Surrey	328	17.7	1,513	81.5	16	1,857
202 South Surrey/White Rock	133	14.4	789	85.2	4	926
<b>PROVINCIAL TOTAL</b>	<b>5,362</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>26,155</b>	<b>82.3</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>31,776</b>

Note: Total includes residents with unknown LHA.



## Appendix 2

**Memorial bench pricing comparison:**

<b>City</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1. Colwood	1,000	5 years	
2. Metckosin	1,986	10 years	
3. Port Coquitlam	1,500 – 2,500	10 years	
4. Richmond	3,000	10 years	
5. Surrey	2,500 – 3,500	20 years	
6. Vancouver	4,000	10 years	
7. Esquimalt	3,000	20 years	
8. New York City	10,000	30 years	
9. BC Parks	3,000	10 years	
10. Oak Bay	3,000	15 years	may not be active
11. District of Sooke	2,000	10 years	
12. Whistler	3,000	15 years	Tribute program
13. Sidney	3,000	10 years	
14. Saanich	2,920	10 years	



## Public Feedback Summary on the April 2019, Staff Report “Memorial Program”

At the April 1, 2019 Council meeting, Council resolved the following:

*“That Council postpone consideration of the March 25th, 2019 staff report “Memorial Program”, until the May 6th or 21st, 2019 regular Council meeting in order to provide the public an opportunity to forward thoughts related to the memorial program to staff and Council for consideration.”*

Staff received feedback by email. Based on a review of the Council meeting video, a summary of public responses to the April 1, 2019 staff report - memorial bench options is provided below:

- Two e-mail respondents misunderstood that the cancellation of the memorial program meant there would be no benches in parks. Staff cleared up this misunderstanding. Benches would still be available in parks.
- One e-mail respondent asked that staff consider a neighbourhood park walk of achievement whereas local area residents could be memorialized in the park.
- One suggestion volunteers look after the memorial benches.
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee responded with a question if there would be considerations to expand the existing cemetery memorial options currently available.