

Connie Surerus, President
North Peace Cultural Society
10015 - 100 Avenue
Fort St. John, BC
V1J 1Y7

June 22, 2021

Dear Connie,

RE: North Peace Cultural Centre

In response to your recent correspondence, you've raised several points that must be clarified.

As you have indicated, we were involved in a series of discussions centred around the potential renewal of the Management Agreement for the Cultural Center. As you have also been aware, throughout our discussions, we had numerous concerns which were relayed to you at every meeting. These concerns centred around many issues but included:

- There was little visible content being created and that from a review of your website, Facebook and an online search there was no evidence of any programming taking place. Your board acknowledged that the communication strategy was lacking but felt it could be improved.
- As required by the contract, your staff were not engaging with our staff to create and plan events. Further, there was an unwillingness to plan or commit to providing programming. You acknowledged that your board had been ineffective in performance managing your staff.
- Most of your facility rentals were rentals to groups that had nothing to do with arts and culture. The bulk of your revenue appeared to come from these non-arts and culture-related rentals. You indicated that this was to create a revenue stream to offset the costs of facility rentals by nonprofits. With that said, we have had repeated conversations with members of the Arts and Culture community who question these rates and indicated that a 20% discount to the commercial rate remains unaffordable.
- Occupational Health and Safety had not been prioritized. Despite the safety-sensitive nature of the Center, in many areas, such as fall hazards, this regulatory requirement was not being met.
- Our concerns that you were alienating and developing poor relationships with essential community stakeholders such as various arts and cultural organizations and the Library. For instance, the Library had reported to us that their safety-sensitive requests for support were ignored. These included such requests as AED defibrillators and safety doors to prevent the public from accessing staff-only areas. This despite the challenges and concerns that have arisen in managing high-risk

clients. We were told that building maintenance issues such as leaking toilets were ignored and that they were treated with disrespect. Indeed we have had to invest recently in maintenance which should have been the Society's responsibility under our agreement.

- During our negotiations and conversations, I asked for supporting documentation to assist my review. On one case, you provided the requested information after a one-month delay on the morning of our meeting, making review impossible. During our meeting on May 5, 2021, you committed to providing the requested information the following Monday; it has yet to be received. Worth noting that this request was merely to provide a list of those groups who were satisfied with the status quo because, as I advised you, there had been several people coming forward to talk about the challenges. You have made a public comment that this request was still being actioned by your staff and not yet available. It is hard to imagine that a list of user groups could be such a large administrative undertaking.
- In your email, you have alluded that the Center sees nearly 100,000 visitors a year. With that said, it is the Library that brings in the lion's share of these visitors, and of course, it is the Library whose very existence is threatened by the revenue your organization is extracting from them.
- An examination of the robust content and programming in Dawson Creek through the KPAC shows how much can be achieved in the cultural space even during COVID-19 times. In my review of their website, I saw music lessons in many disciplines, online workshops, displays and programming, even a beading class which was incredibly popular. A review of your website shows virtually nothing planned or recent.

This is not the first time that the Cultural Center management approach has come under scrutiny. You will recall in 2015, although this precedes my time with the city, there were numerous deficiencies identified with the facility's management under the Society.

To summarize, the agreement that bound us both ended in November 2020. Conversations around renewal have revealed substantial concerns around program delivery, management of the facility, and the facility's use to support what are apparently commercial interests outside the scope of our agreement.

Finally, I want to bring your attention to a particularly disturbing issue which has arisen following our announcement. We received a call from a former concession staff person who advised us that she had been cheated out of gratuities collected on her behalf by the Society. She explained that since at least 2018 and possibly earlier, catered events through the Centre had been charged gratuities. Staff who worked these events were never made aware that gratuities had been collected on these events. Presumably, those who paid such gratuities would have expected that they flow through to the staff. We were advised that only inadvertently was it discovered by the kitchen staff that gratuities were collected. We have since been led to believe that the collection of these gratuities was at first denied, then there was a refusal to pay them. Although one staff member was successful in recovering these funds, we have been advised that others were never fairly compensated for the gratuities collected on their behalf.

As you are aware, organizations acting on behalf of the city are accountable to high ethical standards, and if, in fact, gratuities were collected and not turned over to the staff, this would be a gross breach of ethical principles. In accordance with the record-keeping terms of the Cultural Services Agreement which expired in late 2020, please provide copies of catering receipts that clearly indicate gratuities collected. Please also

provide shift schedules for workers and a reconciliation that establishes that those gratuities were fairly disbursed.

Fundamentally this is a city-owned building. It operates on behalf of the city. The city is dissatisfied with the quality of management. In the last quarterly meeting, you spoke of the fact that negotiations and conversations had reached a standstill. We share this view. In a fiscal climate where we are challenged on value for money and quality of service delivery, we can no longer in good conscience defend the continuation of this agreement.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Milo MacDonald". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Milo MacDonald
Chief Administrative Officer