

Public Engagement Report on Viking Park released by Icelandic Festival of Manitoba

Major donor recognition opportunities are available in Viking Park for 2018

(Gimli, MB February 7, 2018) A report that summarizes the community feedback's regarding Viking Park is now available on the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba website at www.icelandicfestival.com. The report compiles information gathered last fall at the community consultation meeting, through surveys and via social media.

"We extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who took the time to either attend an information session or fill out the survey," says Grant Stefanson, Co-Chair of the Viking Park Campaign. "We also extend our sincere appreciation to D.J. Sigmundson and William Barlow for compiling the comprehensive report."

"We are very pleased to see that 92 per cent of the survey respondents are either very satisfied or satisfied with Viking Park," says Co-Chair Kathi Thorarinson Neal. Also, "many respondents feel strongly about connecting pathways and better shoreline maintenance. The Public Engagement report will be an important tool as we continue to consult and plan for the next phase."

Five remaining **settlement markers, garden recognition** and **pathway stones** are all available to complete the development of the first phase of the Viking Park. The Festival will install all garden components from donations placed after March 15, 2017 in Spring of 2018. We encourage interested people to get their donations and pledges in to ensure recognition can be completed for installation before the 2018 Icelandic Festival. Our 2018 deadline will be May 15. Potential donors are encouraged to visit the Festival website or to contact the Cabinet members or the festival office for more details.

Backgrounder

On August 9, 2017, the Government of Canada and Government of Manitoba announced funding for 42 infrastructure projects in 37 communities under the federal government's Small Communities Fund each contributing over \$10 million toward the estimated \$34.6 million in total project costs. Among the wide-range of projects receiving funding under this program is the Viking Park project which is being built surrounding the Viking Statue.

The Viking Park project includes accessible bike lanes, pathways, landscaping and other beautification measures of the area in the town of Gimli that will help generate economic activity and boost regional development. Canada and Manitoba have each generously contributed \$300,000 toward the \$1,000,000 total project cost with the remaining \$400,000 to be raised by the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba. The Icelandic Festival of Manitoba partnered with the RM of Gimli and the Betel Home Foundation in 2014 to begin a project to create a park surrounding the Viking Statue.

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For Further information please contact

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Summary Report of Public Engagement Viking Park Fact Sheet

- 1) The report summarizes the results of the consultation produced from a variety of public engagement platforms in the fall of 2017.
- 2) Input was gathered from Gimli citizens, people with Gimli and/or Icelandic roots who live outside of the community and visitors.
- 3) People want Phase Two of Viking Park to integrate with a comprehensive plan for the waterfront area.
- 4) The community is in favour of the Icelandic Festival proceeding with Phase Two, but is split on whether the 'theme' for Phase Two should be 'Lake Winnipeg' or nothing at all – and simply be a park.
- 5) The Community hopes Phase Two will include a waterfront path to the main pier, around the hill, across the Yacht Club property, through the parking lot to the Rotary Fountain.
- 6) The Icelandic Festival continues to gather feedback in order to prepare plans for Phase Two, and continues to value and encourage feedback from the community.

Viking Park Fact Sheet

- 1) The Viking Statue was erected in 1967 during Canada's 100th year of confederation. In honour of Canada's 150th birthday, Viking Park opened on August 5, 2017.
- 2) A visit to the park provides a diverse, accessible and memorable visitor experience to 200,000 locals and tourists who come to see the Viking and view the inland sea every year.
- 3) The pathways around the park are paved with stones inscribed with commemorative messages and greetings from people in the community who donated to making this dream a reality.
- 4) Students at local schools contributed stones with special inscriptions that celebrate Canada's 150th and, in many cases, acknowledge their Icelandic, First Nations or Metis ancestry.
- 5) The pathways take visitors through three different gardens filled with indigenous plants, grasses and flowers – the Troll Storm Garden, the Elf Garden, and the Breakwater Garden – designed by HTFC Planning & Design. The park also highlights the unique culture and history of Gimli, as well as different elements of Norse mythology.
- 6) Troll-like faces carved into stone around the garden pay tribute to the Norse legend in which trolls turn to stone if they are touched by sunshine. Tiny elf houses are placed along the pathways to provide shelter for the elves, who are highly regarded in Icelandic culture.

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