



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: April 15, 2005
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TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Managing Director of Cultural Services
SUBJECT: 2004 and 2005 Baxter Theatre Rental Grants

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council receive this report from the General Manager of Community Services for INFORMATION.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to review and report back with alternate grant programs or strategies to ensure ongoing access for Vancouver-based arts organizations that are new or occasional users of the Civic Theatres.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

Under a longstanding agreement with the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Foundation's Donald Alexander Baxter Fund has provided funds every year since 1984 towards special Civic Theatre rental grants that are available to Vancouver-based arts organizations that are new or occasional users of the Civic Theatres. The Office of Cultural Affairs administers these grants on behalf of the Foundation.

In accordance with Council's decision of February 7, 1991, Baxter Grants are approved and disbursed at the discretion of the Directors of Cultural Affairs and Finance, in consultation with the Vancouver Foundation. The Office of Cultural Affairs regularly provides City Council with a summary of Baxter Grant allocations.

PURPOSE

This report summarizes the Baxter theatre rental grants approved in 2004 and to date in 2005, expending all remaining funds for this program of support and seeks Council direction to explore alternate programs and strategies to ensure continued access to the Civic Theatres.

BACKGROUND

The Donald Alexander Baxter Fund program was established in 1984 to help not-for-profit performing arts organizations with the costs of renting the three Civic Theatres: the Orpheum, the Vancouver Playhouse and the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. The program was intended for professional or community performing arts organizations that have not been regular users of the Civic Theatres but want to perform in one of the theatres to raise their public profile, expand their audiences, and develop their artistic capacity.

The amount of the annual payment from the Vancouver Foundation into the City's Baxter account was determined by the income that the fund has generated, and by the terms of Mr. Donald Alexander Baxter's will, which stipulates that principal in the fund must be expended.

The Baxter program has augmented the City's own Theatre Rental Grant program, which is available to professional performing arts organizations that have established a pattern of regular (usually annual) performances in the theatres, often with the assistance of the Baxter Grant program in previous years. In 2004, eight of the 16 organizations that received City Theatre Rental Grants for 2004/05 had previously benefited from Baxter Grants.

Baxter Grants have covered some or all of a recipient's theatre rental fee, but not rehearsals or any additional costs. They are limited to a maximum of three grants in any given five-year period. Competitions and events whose main purpose is fundraising for the applicant or a third party are not eligible. (See **Appendix A** for program guidelines.)

DISCUSSION

In 2003 the City received the final payment from the Vancouver Foundation of the remaining funds in the Donald Alexander Baxter Fund. Consequently, no further payments to the City's Baxter account have been made from that time.

2004 Baxter Grants:

In 2004, a balance of \$42,975 was available for the Baxter Theatre Rental Grants Program for 2004. As summarized in **Table 1**, in 2004, nine not-for-profit organizations received Baxter Grants totaling \$24,800.

Table 1
2004 Baxter Grants

Organization	Grant	Performance Date	Theatre
Caravan World Rhythms Society	\$4,350	March 7	Orpheum
Centre Culturel Francophone de Vancouver	\$2,300	April 4	Playhouse
Children's Arts Umbrella Association	\$2,300	May 14	Playhouse
B.C. Chamber Orchestra	\$2,300	May 30	Playhouse
Goh Ballet	\$2,300	June 5	Playhouse
Mandala Arts and Culture Society	\$2,300	June 13	Playhouse
Vancouver Chinese Choir Association	\$4,350	June 19	Orpheum
Flamenco Rosario	\$2,300	June 26	Playhouse
Vancouver Folk Music Festival Society	\$2,300	July 18	Playhouse
TOTAL	\$24,800		

2005 Baxter Grants:

The allocations for 2004 left a final balance of \$18,175 in the City's Baxter account. As summarized in Table 2, four not-for-profit organizations received Baxter Grants totaling \$18,175 for performances in 2005 at the Vancouver Playhouse and Orpheum theatres.

Table 2
2005 Baxter Grants

Organization	Grant	Performance Date	Theatre
Lions Gate Chorus	\$4,500	January 22	Orpheum
Children's Arts Umbrella Association	\$4,600	May 13 & 14	Playhouse
Goh Ballet	\$4,600	June 16 & 17	Playhouse
United Scottish Cultural Society	\$4,475	July 5	Orpheum
TOTAL	\$18,175		

Future Funding:

While the Donald Alexander Baxter Fund has provided access to the Civic theatres for 20 years, the fund is now depleted. Staff believe that affordable access to high quality performance venues is a critical issue for community. Staff is therefore proposing to review and report back with alternate programs and/or strategies to ensure ongoing access to the Civic Theatres.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2005 allocations leave no remaining balance in the City's Baxter account. Staff note that without a replacement Baxter Fund program, Civic Theatres rentals will be reduced by an equivalent amount.

CONCLUSION

Now that the balance in the City's Baxter account has been expended, the Baxter Theatre Rental Grant program has ended. Since its inception in 1984 the Donald Alexander Baxter rental grant program provided 172 grants to 70 professional and amateur performing arts organizations, mostly for music and dance activities. The program was successful in attracting new groups every year, many groups from distinct communities with growing audiences and a desire to present events in well-equipped and centrally located theatres. At the same time Baxter Grants played an important developmental role for 20 years, helping a number of organizations to become regular users of the Civic Theatres, and eligible for the ongoing support through the City's Theatre Rental Grants. The conclusion of the Baxter Grant program will leave a gap in support to the performing arts sector, and especially to emerging groups aiming to build audiences.

Staff are investigating medium and longer-term funding solutions for a replacement program to assist Vancouver not-for-profit organizations who wish to build audiences, increase profile and develop artistically through performing in professional venues.

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Baxter Grants for Civic Theatre Rental

What is the Baxter Theatre Rental Grant Program?

This special grant program was set up by the Vancouver Foundation and the City of Vancouver to provide financial assistance to non-profit arts organizations that occasionally perform in a Civic Theatre (the Orpheum, Vancouver Playhouse, or Queen Elizabeth Theatre). The Foundation finances this program through the Donald Alexander Baxter Fund, which is administered by the City's Office of Cultural Affairs.

What are the program's goals?

The Civic Theatres Department, which operates the three City-owned theatres, sets one rental rate for all users. No discounts are provided.

The Baxter Grant Program is intended to make the Civic Theatres affordable for small and medium-sized arts organizations that use these venues from time to time. It seeks to support groups that can benefit from the experience of performing in a centrally located and well-equipped theatre, contributing to their artistic development, increasing their profiles, and helping them expand their audiences.

Who can apply?

To qualify, an applicant must be:

- a registered non-profit society
- a professional or amateur performing arts organization
- based and active in the city of Vancouver
- able to promote its events to a city-wide audience

Not all organizations meeting the above requirements will automatically receive a grant. The grants are subject to the availability of funds and to the evaluation described here.

Who doesn't qualify for a Baxter Grant?

In addition to groups that don't meet the above criteria, the following are also ineligible:

- non-profit arts organizations that perform annually in the Civic Theatres and currently receive a civic Theatre Rental Grant
- competitions, and events whose prime purpose is fundraising for the applicant or a third party

How are applications evaluated?

Baxter grant requests are reviewed by staff from the Office of Cultural Affairs, who consider whether the applicant and activity:

- meet the eligibility criteria
- demonstrate financial need
- address the goals of the Baxter Grant Program, as described here

All applicants should complete the relevant application form, provide documents requested, and supply accurate financial information.

What costs are covered by a Baxter Grant?

The grant covers some or all of a recipient's theatre rental fee for performances in the Orpheum, Vancouver Playhouse or Queen Elizabeth Theatre. They do not fund rehearsals, or any additional costs (for example: stage crew wages, special set-up charges, GST, surcharges, or insurance).

How many grants can an organization receive?

Baxter grants are limited to one a year, and to a maximum of three grants over a period of five years.

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