

Fort Edmonton Management Company

COUNCIL MEMBER APPOINTMENT REPORTING

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| Appointment: | Fort Edmonton Management Company |
| Classification: | External Agency - Management |
| Councillor(s): | Councillor Tim Cartmell |
| Reporting Period: | November 1, 2022 - April 30, 2023 |

Mandate

Fort Edmonton Park is operated by the Fort Edmonton Management Company on behalf of the City of Edmonton, which owns the buildings, artifacts and land associated with the attraction.

Background

There has been a relatively long history and evolution of the management of Fort Edmonton Park. Originally built by Rotary, management of the park transitioned to joint management between the City of Edmonton and the Fort Edmonton Park Historical Society. Approximately 10 years ago, the Fort Edmonton Park Management Company was formed to operate the park on behalf of the City. Today there is a rather complex arrangement where the City owns and maintains the park and assets, FEMCo operates the park (with its own employees), and the Historical Society supports capital fundraising programs and provides some volunteer operation support.

Shared priorities and advocacy areas

FEMCo's priorities are to participate, as a major tourist attraction in Edmonton in the destination marketing industry generally. Partnerships with Edmonton's hospitality industry, Tourism Alberta and other similar agencies is a high priority.

FEMCo also intends to continue its relationship with Indigenous partners to more fully represent Edmonton's past, building on the development of the IPE and ultimately expanding the interpretive experience at the Park.

Report on activities, projects, and outcomes

Over the past several years, a combination of park closure due to the major facility upgrade project (which included complete replacement of all underground utilities,

the construction of the Indigenous People's Experience, reconstruction of the Front Entrance and enhancements to the fairgrounds) and Covid related restrictions left the park with a significant operational shortfall. The City provided a short term loan in 2021, and provided an increase to FEMCo's operating allocation in 2022. The operating allocation does not yet cover the Park's operational needs, when the needs of the expanded park are considered.

Nevertheless, FEMCo's goal is to repay that loan and ultimately eliminate the operating subsidy. This will generally be done by leveraging the park's fixed assets to the greatest extent possible outside general museum operating hours.

Following is excerpted from the CEO Report to the FEMCo Board on :

FEMCo achieved both the revised budget and forecast for the year which was a significant accomplishment.

- 2022 audit and year-end complete. Both went very well.
- PrairiesCan funding for the Tourism Relief Fund:
 - Reconciliation of the PrairiesCan Tourism Relief Fund Grant. Submission is being made for reimbursement of the Grand Opening events and DARK 2021 and 2022.
 - The design and development proposals for the new Fort Edmonton APP are being finalized.
 - Press conference with Minister Boissonnault to announce the funding FEMCo received on March 3rd.
- Food and Beverage provider for 2023 and forward (Compass Levy)
 - Contract was officially signed by both parties on January 16th, 2023
 - A Cappella Catering will continue with private events until June 25th
 - Transition of Hangar space (primary operations) will occur for March 1st (A Cappella exiting, Compass entering).
 - Compass will open the outlets for the regular season on May 20th and then proceed with private events as of June 26th.
 - Compass has hired their General Manager for Fort Edmonton Park, Chad Corbett.
 - A transition Committee and Steering Committee have been established to monitor progress and provide feedback to the executive team on the transition weekly.
- participated in the TIAA (Tourism Industry Association of Alberta) Labour Market Focus Group, with Provincial and Federal government members to explore ways to address labor shortages in the Tourism and Hospitality sector. This work will inform the policy

work underway.

- On February 23, NAIT invited three members of our team to participate in the inaugural three-day JR Shaw School of Business Winter City Case Competition. Myself, Neil Cramer, CORE Programs Manager; and Katie Thaller, Operations Team Lead, represented Fort Edmonton Park in the one-day judging.
 - FEMCo provided a business case and three problems for the student groups to solve; onsite parking, customer flow, and improved utilization of the front plaza.
 - In exchange for our judging expertise, FEMCo will receive the final business cases from each group as well as have the opportunity to have a variety of students experience Fort Edmonton Park, many noting this was their first time seeing our unique site. JR Shaw School of Business Competition
- Collaborated with ExploreEdmonton, Edmonton Events, The City of Edmonton, Berlin Communications, CBC, and the JUNOS Host Committee to open up the Indigenous Peoples Experience to visitors coming to Edmonton for the 2023 JUNO Awards.
- Connect Now, Explore Later, campaign will launch for the month of March.
 - All event attendees who attend a private event in March will be given a general admission ticket to be used in the Summer 2023 general admission season.
- Wagon rides have been successful in the months of January and February.
 - January dates sold out providing \$7183 in ticket revenue.
 - February had additional dates added due to popularity and are almost sold out, providing \$8996 in ticket revenue.
 - The wagon rides are beneficial to the Animal Welfare department by helping to maintain the horses' health and fitness throughout the year.
 - Teams worked together to create an overall experience for guests with hot chocolate, purchased beverage options, blankets, and fire pits.
- Extending the hours of operation for the IPE, Sat/Sun March 11/12 to encourage visitors, artists, and crew in town for the 2023 Junos to experience this space.

- Endless Adventure, a virtual choose-your-own-adventure experience, developed in partnership with Explore Edmonton has performed beyond expectation.
 - In 2022 the project was viewed 5665 times and watched for a total of 18,109 minutes - this equates to an average watch time of 3.20 minutes.
- FEMCo staff participated in Indigenous Tourism Alberta's full-day Cultural Awareness workshops hosted at Fort Edmonton Park.
 - The focus of the workshop was to help non-Indigenous stakeholders and tourism operators understand the history and cultural diversity of Indigenous communities in Alberta.

Upcoming events and milestones

Excerpted from the CEO Report to the FEMCo Board on Mar 23, 2023 :

- BBQ packages for 2023 are ready to launch.
 - Summer 2022 Corporate BBQs brought in approx \$300,000.00 in total revenue.These run while the Park is open to the public and has little to no implications on the Park.
- Paranormal Tours has launched a brand new tour and updated program for March 1st.
 - The projected fill rate is over 80% with a net profit margin of 48%.
- 8 casual staff have been hired for the role of Experience Guide to support products such as Paranormal Tours, DARK, etc., and to lead on-site coordination for film bookings.
- A series of procedures and processes around film bookings on-site has been developed to ensure maximum efficiency and a high level of client satisfaction.
- A micro campaign promoting filming at Fort Edmonton Park was launched. The intent is to lean into the digital hype surrounding the successful premiere of HBOs "The Last of

Us” pilot episode (filmed in the Alberta region) which reached more than 10 million viewers across its first two days of streaming.

- Several digital campaigns have been successfully launched.
 - This includes 5 ticketed experiences, generating over 75K in online ticket sales since December 2022.
- FEMCo remains committed to incorporating diversity and inclusivity on a year-round, consistent basis.
 - Part of that commitment includes celebrating the legacy that is Black History in Alberta & the Edmonton region by participating in Black History Month amplifying Black voices, stories, and events in our community digitally.
- Collaboration with the Soaring/Inspire Indigenous Youth Conference, a conference held to encourage Indigenous youth to finish high school and explore post-secondary options.
 - This partnership will provide access to the IPE to all conference attendees.
- FEMCo and The Fort Edmonton Park Foundation are collaborating on an ongoing initiative in partnership with the Edmonton Food Bank.
 - The launch of the 'All Aboard Campaign' aims to fill up the iconic 1919 Baldwin Steam train with the collection of surplus and donated food items as well as toiletries and warm outerwear in order to distribute to vulnerable Edmontonians.

Evaluation

It is recommended that Council consider increasing the Operating allocation to FEMCo for the next few years. This would allow FEMCo to advance the development of additional programming more quickly, which would in turn bring additional revenue streams on faster and allow FEMCo to reduce its allocation sooner.