

Thank you so much for the opportunity to give you some facts about the Thunder Bay Botanical Conservatory. We appreciate your support through the budget process and we are hoping for your support in the future as you work through the recommendations of the Grant Thornton report in the coming months

## **Facts about the Thunder Bay Centennial Botanical Conservatory**

### **Facts About visitors**

- They are individuals from all age groups, from all income levels, and from many different cultures.
- They are generations of families
- They are people seeking a calming environment or a reprieve from inclement weather
- They are vulnerable individuals with all levels of emotional, mental, and physical abilities; many accompanied by support workers and caregivers
- They are tour groups arranged with conservatory staff leading them and self led groups of university and college students, such as Con College film students. LU Urban Forestry Students, Photography and art groups, U of Minnesota marching band

### **Facts about partnerships**

- The Friends have partnered with the Thunder Bay Master Gardeners, Science North, Eco Superior, Urban Greenscapes, Doors Open Ontario/ Ontario Heritage Trust, and The Greenhouse (music by Matt Migz and local djs).
- The Conservatory offers space to the Thunder Bay Beekeepers Assn and the Thunder Bay Horticulture Society as well as our Friends group

### **Facts About Value**

- The plant collection inside the tropical room has been valued at between 2 and 5 million dollars by horticulture consultants
- while we don't have a dollar amount, there are numerous plants in the cactus room and large amounts of valuable local amethyst
- The conservatory grows plants for city parks and gardens. Without the growing greenhouses, outsourcing would be costly, even if willing private vendors could be found

### **Facts About revenue sources**

- Opening the east wing will provide an opportunity to open space for rental to groups for weddings, birthdays, educational activities, and programs such as yoga and tai chi
- New growing greenhouses could also offer rental space for a variety of purposes
- rentals could be used to reduce operating costs

## **Facts about the benefits of public space**

- there is documented evidence that immersion in nature has health benefits including physical, psychological, and social well being
- exposure to soils and natural environments can help strengthen immune systems, and lower blood pressure and stress levels
- We have a number of research studies that we would be happy to share with anyone interested

## **Facts about Tourism**

- The Conservatory is number 8 on Trip Advisor for Top Attractions in Thunder Bay and number 4 out of 34 in the Nature and Parks category
- In a review of guest books from July 2019 to January 2020 we had visitors from 3 Asian countries, 7 European countries, 4 South American, 2 Middle Eastern Countries as well as Australia, New Zealand, Trinidad, South Africa, Cuba and Mexico. We had visitors from 18 American states, 9 provinces and 1 territory. From outside of our local area we had visitors from 68 Ontario communities
- Dr Richard Benfield, in his book Garden Tourism stated “More people visit gardens in America than go to Disneyland and Disney World combined, and more than visit Las Vegas annually, making garden tourism one of the largest sectors in the tourism market.”
- We believe that if the city was more active in promoting the conservatory as a tourist destination we would see higher numbers, longer stays in our city and more tourism dollars coming in

## **Facts about Education**

- Friends of the Thunder Bay Conservatory offers children and adults experiential learning in our children’s garden and demonstration garden
- Regular educational activities are offered by Thunder Bay Beekeepers Assn, Master Gardeners, and the Friends of the Conservatory, for all ages
- Education includes gardening, composting, learning where our fruits come from, learning about trees and plants, and insects including bees and monarch butterflies,
- Pollinator gardens are grown on the grounds by the Conservatory and by the Thunder Bay Horticulture Society. Both gardens are full of monarch butterflies and bees in the summer

## **Facts about our commitment**

- We are working toward achieving charitable status. That would allow us to fund raise to assist with capital costs and to apply for grants not currently available to the city
- We have more than 2000 followers on our facebook page, many of whom have shared their photos and experiences at the conservatory, and many of whom who have offered to volunteer. In addition, we have very active twitter and instagram accounts.
- Following in the footsteps of the group “Don’t Pave Paradise” who worked to open the conservatory after it was closed for a year in 2012, the Friends group continues to promote the conservatory and its resources to the public and to tourists
- As you are aware, the Canadian Garden Council and the Commissioner of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation have sent letters of support. While we did not solicit their involvement, we are hopeful that they will help us as we move forward

Again, thank you so much for your support