

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

June 30, 2006

To: Policy and Finance Committee

From: Gary Welsh, General Manager, Transportation Services

Subject: Hosting the 2007 Walk21 International Conference in Toronto
(All Wards)

Purpose:

To seek Council authority to host, in partnership with Green Communities Canada, the 2007 Walk21 International Conference in Toronto and to approve the City of Toronto's financial contribution to this event.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

The total estimated cost for organizing the 2007 Walk21 International Conference is \$570,000.00 CDN. The conference will be financed from a number of different sources, including delegate registration fees, different levels of government, Green Communities Canada, corporate sponsorship and a contribution from the City of Toronto.

The conference will be organized in partnership with Green Communities Canada, a national charitable organization of over 40 community-based non-profit organizations that deliver innovative environmental programs and services, with a focus on household and community action. Green Communities Canada coordinates the Ontario Active and Safe Routes to School program. City staff and Green Communities Canada have been in contact with representatives from the Federal and Provincial Governments and potential corporate sponsors to explore external funding opportunities.

At its February 1, 2, and 3, 2005 meeting, City Council approved the establishment of an annual Corporate Fund for Hosting Conferences in the amount of \$150,000.00 CDN. This fund was set up to assist the City in hosting and organizing conferences of international significance.

It is recommended that the City of Toronto, as the host city, provide financial support for the 2007 Walk21 Conference in the amount of \$107,000.00 CDN. The required funding, in the amount of \$107,000.00 CDN, will be provided in 2007 from the Corporate Fund for Hosting Conferences, subject to the 2007 budget approval process.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial impact statement.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) City Council approve hosting the 2007 Walk21 International Conference in Toronto;
- (2) the total financial contribution from the City of Toronto to organize and host the 2007 Walk21 International Conference not exceed \$107,000.00 CDN, to be funded from the Corporate Fund for Hosting Conferences, subject to the 2007 budget approval process;
- (3) the General Manager, Transportation Services be authorized to consult with other levels of government and the private sector to seek funding support for the 2007 Walk21 International Conference; and
- (4) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

Green Communities Canada approached Transportation Services in late 2005, with a proposal to bring the Walk21 International Conference to Toronto in 2007. Following discussions with Transportation Services staff and Green Communities Canada, the International Management Committee for Walk21 offered the City of Toronto the opportunity to host the conference in the fall of 2007. In the past two months, Transportation Services staff and Green Communities Canada have been working closely together to develop proposed conference themes, budgets, funding sources, possible venues and other initial planning requirements.

Overview of Walk21

Walk21 is an annual conference whose aim is to bring together professionals, (planners, designers, engineers, researchers, health experts), politicians and advocates to share their experience in supporting and encouraging walking in the 21st century.

The Walk21 International Conference series was established in 2000 with the vision:

“To support, encourage and inspire professionals to evolve the best policies and implement the best initiatives, which create and promote environments where people choose to walk as an indicator of liveable communities”

The objectives of Walk21 are to respond to the growing demand for a partnership of the world’s policy makers, researchers, campaigners and practitioners to:

- Confirm the importance of walking issues at political and policy levels;

- Provide an international platform for an inclusive discussion;
- Acknowledge the research, practice and promotion undertaken so far and to highlight best practices; and
- Identify the need for future research and opportunities for funding future networking.

The following cities have hosted previous Walk21 conferences:

Year	Host City
2000	London, England
2001	Perth, Australia
2002	San Sebastian, Spain
2003	Portland, U.S.A.
2004	Copenhagen, Denmark
2005	Zurich, Switzerland
2006	Melbourne, Australia

Walk21 is expected to attract about 400 pedestrian planning experts from around the world. As host city, Toronto's many successful pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods and public places will be showcased during the conference. Walk21 also provides a unique opportunity to learn from international experts as we develop a Pedestrian Plan for Toronto.

The 2007 Toronto Walk21 Conference theme and program will focus on developing pedestrian plans for different sized cities. The Toronto Walk21 program will be an integral component of the public consultation for the Pedestrian Plan. A series of workshops and public forums in the months before the conference will engage a wide cross-section of staff and Toronto citizens to provide input on the developing Pedestrian Plan. The consultation process will culminate in the October 2007 Walk21 conference with visiting international pedestrian experts contributing to Toronto's Pedestrian Plan.

Comments:

Host Responsibilities

As the host of the 2007 Walk21 International Conference, the City of Toronto is expected to assume the following responsibilities:

- (a) set up a management structure for conference planning and implementation;
- (b) assist in the program development for the conference;
- (c) attend the 2006 Walk21 conference in Melbourne, Australia to promote the 2007 Walk21 conference in Toronto;
- (d) host a welcoming reception at Toronto City Hall;
- (e) organize local walking tours to introduce visiting delegates to Toronto's diverse neighbourhoods;
- (f) provide staff and volunteers who can assist with various conference duties; and
- (g) provide a financial contribution to the conference.

Conference Management Structure

The 2007 Toronto Walk21 conference will be organized by the City, in partnership with Green Communities Canada. The Toronto conference management team will be comprised of staff representing Transportation Services, Support Services, City Planning, Public Health and Parks, Forestry and Recreation. A full-time conference coordinator will be retained for 16 months, from September 2006 to December 31, 2007 to manage the day-to-day preparations for the conference, the pre-conference workshops and forums and the post-conference wrap-up. The conference coordinator will be funded by the Corporate Fund for Hosting Conferences and Transportation Services and housed in the Public Consultation and Outreach Unit of Support Services.

Benefits

There are a number of benefits associated with hosting the Walk21 Conference. Most importantly, the conference and pre-conference activities will provide the City with a unique opportunity to engage international pedestrian planning experts to provide input on the City's emerging Toronto Pedestrian Plan. The conference also will generate media and public attention on the City's draft Pedestrian Plan and provide opportunities for public input on the Plan's development.

Financial Arrangements

The total estimated cost for the 2007 Walk21 International Conference is \$570,000.00 CDN, based on an anticipated attendance of 400 delegates. The budget is comprised of conference management, facilities rental, registration services, promotion and marketing, retention of speakers, audio/visual services, local walking tours, hospitality, insurance and communication with the International Steering Committee. It is expected that a portion of these costs will be covered by registration fees of an estimated \$260,000.00 CDN. The remaining \$310,000.00 CDN will be covered by financial contributions from the Federal and Provincial Governments, Green Communities Canada, corporate sponsors and the host City.

It is recommended that the City of Toronto, as the host city, provide financial support for the Walk21 Conference in the amount of \$107,000.00 CDN from the Corporate Fund for Hosting Conferences, subject to the 2007 budget approval process. The City funding will finance some of the up-front costs associated with planning the event, including: production of promotional materials; participation in the 2007 Melbourne Walk21 conference, retention of a conference coordinator; provision of Metro Hall meeting space; hosting the opening reception; and communicating with the International Management Committee for Walk21.

Next Steps

The City of Toronto will have to confirm its commitment to host the 2007 Walk21 International Conference by the end of July 2006. If confirmed, the City of Toronto is expected to present a comprehensive overview of the 2007 Toronto Walk21 Conference themes and programs,

conference dates and registration information at the October 2006 Walk21 Conference in Melbourne, Australia.

Conclusions:

Hosting the 2007 Walk21 International Conference in Toronto will provide a unique opportunity to engage international pedestrian planning experts in the development of the Toronto Pedestrian Plan. The conference and pre-conference activities also will generate considerable attention on the Pedestrian Plan and encourage a broad cross-section of Toronto citizens and communities to get involved in the Plan's development.

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