



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Agreement between the City of Toronto and Toronto Star Newspapers Limited

Date:	January 21, 2009
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	Brenda Patterson, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to request City Council authority to enter into an agreement for a one (1) year term commencing February 26, 2009, between the City of Toronto and Toronto Star Newspapers Limited.

This agreement, once approved, will provide for the distribution of free Toronto Star daily newspapers at community centers and arenas operated by the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division. The agreement will provide the additional benefit of promotional opportunities for Parks, Forestry and Recreation services through space in the Toronto Star in an effort to increase awareness and usage of services available to the public. This provides a benefit to both parties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manger of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division recommends that she be delegated authority to enter into an agreement with Toronto Star Newspapers Limited for a one (1) year term, commencing February 26, 2009, to distribute Toronto Star Newspapers in Parks, Forestry and Recreation community centres and arenas, and to coordinate free promotional space in the Toronto Star, all in a form and content satisfactory to the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the City Solicitor.

Implementation Points

Toronto Star daily newspapers would be distributed to a total of one hundred and sixty-six (166) facilities. The rollout would take place over a two (2) week period. The first

two (2) weeks of distribution at the facilities would be a test period to establish appropriate distribution volumes and determine community receptiveness and suitability of the program at the facility.

Toronto Star Newspapers Limited would provide racks for the newspapers and coordinate delivery of newspapers to each facility. City of Toronto staff would manage the newspapers at the facility.

The newspaper distribution would be sponsored through Toronto Star Newspaper Limited, who would recognize sponsors on the newspaper rack where one is in place. Sponsors would be approved by the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

Financial Impact

There are no direct financial implications.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The proposed agreement will benefit the community, the City of Toronto, and Toronto Star Newspapers Limited.

The City of Toronto benefits from increased awareness, attendance and participation in Parks, Forestry and Recreation programs, services and events. This benefit is generated through the incentive of having free newspapers available at facilities and is supplemented by promotional opportunities in the Toronto Star daily newspaper. The additional promotion would include a four (4) page pullout section dedicated to Parks, Forestry and Recreation editorial content both in the spring and again in the fall of 2009. The estimated value of the additional promotion is \$300,000.00 if the City were to acquire it without benefit of this agreement.

Toronto Star Newspapers Limited benefits from increased newspaper circulation and access to a novel distribution channel. This access will be non-exclusive.

A pilot distribution of newspapers at eight (8) community centres in November 2008 was well received by the community, and staff feedback indicated that free newspapers in community centres, and arenas is perceived as a community benefit. Feedback also indicated that community members spent longer times at facilities and returned regularly to read the paper. This fulfils the mutual objective of the City of Toronto and Toronto Star Newspapers Limited to increase usage and traffic in City of Toronto parks and recreation facilities.

COMMENTS

The Toronto Star daily newspaper is currently being distributed through Toronto Public Libraries and the Toronto District School Board. The agreement proposed in this report offers the opportunity to extend this benefit to a broader community through community

centres and arenas operated by the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division.

In a 2003 report to the Board of Health, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health pointed to municipal services, including Parks and Recreation, as a key component in addressing an existing 'epidemic of physical inactivity' in Toronto. The 2004 Parks and Recreation strategic plan, *Our Common Grounds*, takes action by calling for a twenty percent increase in the City's population enrolled in programs and a twenty percent increase in the number of Torontonians who are physically active by the year 2020. A fundamental requirement to achieve these objectives is increasing awareness of, and creating incentives for Torontonians to visit and utilize Parks, Forestry and Recreation facilities and programs. This proposal contributes to both of those objectives.

In the Agenda for Prosperity, the Toronto Mayor's Economic Competitiveness Advisory Committee states, "increasing awareness about Toronto and its attributes is a prerequisite for economic growth and investment attraction." It further states that we must "work cooperatively with partners [...] to articulate messages that communicate Toronto's unique assets and more aggressively and creatively deliver it to targeted audiences."

The Toronto Star is Canada's largest daily newspaper with an average weekday circulation of 361,050 in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (ABC Audit Reports for 12 months ending September 30, 2006 as cited in torontostar.com, 2009). By offering the opportunity for the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division to tell its story in this major Toronto daily newspaper, the proposed agreement offers an unprecedented and otherwise unavailable opportunity to promote the successes and the many creative and innovative contributions that a City of Toronto division brings to the health, vibrancy, and positive image of the City. (For details of references noted above, see Attachment 1).

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SIGNATURE

Brenda Patterson
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