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To: Toronto and East York Community Council
Re: City initiated rezoning of the First Parliament Site

Background:

The properties located at 265 Front St., 271 Front St and 25 Berkeley St. are the sites where the First Parliament Buildings for the Province of Ontario, then Upper Canada, were constructed in 1796. The location of these buildings, which were burned by the Americans during the War of 1812, reconstructed in 1819 and then accidentally burned in 1824, is of provincial and national significance. An archaeological investigation conducted in 2000 found remains of these buildings during excavations.

It is intended to recognize the First Parliament site in a way that properly respects its significance in the history of Canada and the province. The City is currently preparing for commemoration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812. The First Parliament Site, as an integral component of that history, should be included in those events. A 2002 study commissioned by the City and Province in consultation with community stakeholders proposed options for the commemoration of the site that included interpretation facilities, open green space, public amenities, or a combination of these.

Presently, the First Parliament site falls within a Reinvestment (RA) zoning area. A more appropriate zoning designation as Parks (G) will provide a better basis for implementation of an appropriate treatment of the site.

Recommendation:

1. City Council authorize Community Planning staff to undertake a City initiated rezoning of the First Parliament site (lands bounded by Front Street East, Parliament Street, Berkeley Street and Parliament Square Park) with the intent to change the zoning from Reinvestment Area (RA) to Parks (G); that this rezoning permit a portion of the site to be used for public facilities that could include parkland, a heritage interpretive centre, a public library, underground parking, concession and café; and that a report on this rezoning be submitted to the Toronto and East York Community Council by the second quarter of 2011.

