

December 2013

Environment Days during an Election Year

The purpose of this briefing note is to clarify that Environment Days are joint City/Councillor events and to set out how the Policy on the Use of City Resources in an Election, the Constituency Services and Office Budget Policy and the Policy on Donations to Council Member-organized Community Events apply to Environment Days.

Background:

Environment Days

- Environment Days have been organized for more than 20 years and are popular ward events where residents can drop off recycling and other items, pick up containers and compost, visit booths on different environmental initiatives and meet with their ward Councillor to discuss various issues.
- The City provides staff, resources, equipment and pays for venue rentals and all expenses related to the organization of Environment Days. Councillors, as partners in the event, determine the dates, locations, programming as well as provide additional promotional support for the event through their office budgets.
- As Environment Days have been held for more than 20 years, the host role of the Councillor in an election year is consistent with their role as a Member of Council.
- The Integrity Commissioner has determined that Environment Days are joint City/Councillor events.

City Policies which Impact Environment Days in an Election Year

Since the Integrity Commissioner has determined that Environment Days are joint City/Councillor events, the Policy on the Use of City Resources in an Election, the Constituency Services and Office Budget Policy and the Policy on Donations to Council Member-organized Community Events apply to Environment Days as follows:

Policy on Donation to Member-Organized Community Events:

- In July 2008, City Council approved the report from the Integrity Commissioner titled "Issues Arising out of Operation of Members of Council Code of Conduct and Complaint Protocol." Recommendation 12 of the report sets out a Policy on Donations to Council Member-Organized Community Events.
- As joint events, Environment Days are covered by 12 (h)(iv) of the Council Member-Organized Community Events Policy: "The policy does not affect the entitlement of a member of Council to team with the City and its agencies in the staging of community event."

Policy on Use of City Resources during an Election and Constituency Services and Office Budget Policy

- In July 2012, City Council approved the Constituency Services and Office Budget Policy. Section 4.7 of the policy sets out rules on councillor expenses during an election year.

The Policy also states that Councillors cannot use their office budgets for community events or for any advertising or promotion after August 1.

- At the same meeting, City Council also approved a Use of City Resources during an Election policy which sets out the use of City resources during an election year. The policy states that all advertising and promotional materials paid for by City funds cannot name a Member of Council after August 1 in an election year, irrespective of whether the Member of Council is running for re-election or not. **The August 1st cut-off date applies** to Environment Days.

Integrity Commissioner Q & A:

The Integrity Commissioner has provided the following Questions and Answers re Environment Days.

Q. Can a Councillor publicize a Community Environment Day?

A. Yes. These events are supported by City of Toronto staff, publicized by Councillors and have traditionally been “team events.” Councillors are consulted on location, date and whether they wish to have an Environment Day in their ward. As such, these events are covered by 12 (h)(iv) of the Council Member-Organized Community Events Policy and may be publicized by Councillors in a way that reflects the joint nature of the event. Councillor advertising should not include references to any partner or supporting organization that is a lobbyist, a client of a lobbyist or that has a pending planning or related application before the City.

Q. What election year limitations exist on the publication of Community Environment Days?

A. After August 1, 2014 in an election year, Councillors must discontinue expenses for community events, including jointly hosted environment day events with the City of Toronto (4.7 b Councillor Expense Policy). City promotional materials for Environment Days also cannot name the ward Councillors.

Councillors can continue to participate in Community Environment Days held after August 1, 2014. They can have a booth at the Environment Day and have staff at the booth to provide information to event participants or respond to enquiries related to their role as a Councillor. They can have identification on the booth, such as a banner, identifying them as a Councillor. Councillors cannot distribute promotional or campaign materials such as newsletters, flyers, fridge magnets, business cards etc. at the event. Councillors will not be named in promotional materials for Environment Days after August 1, 2014.