

**STAFF REPORT  
ACTION REQUIRED****TORONTO and Related 3D Signs**

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| <b>Date:</b>             | April 4, 2016   |
| <b>To:</b>               | Economic Development Committee  |
| <b>From:</b>             | Deputy City Manager & Chief Financial Officer<br>General Manager Economic Development and Culture |
| <b>Wards:</b>            | All   |
| <b>Reference Number:</b> | AFS: 22321  |

**SUMMARY**

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This report provides City Council with information on the plans for the 3D TORONTO Sign at Nathan Phillips Square, including: a maintenance and governance plan; public engagement plan; Commemorative Lighting procedure/criteria; and budget through December 2016. The report also proposes to develop a process for establishing a more permanent solution for the 3D TORONTO Sign at Nathan Phillips Square and addresses options and recommendations for the possibility of a mobile Toronto sign and touring program.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:**

1. City Council adopt the 3D TORONTO Sign legacy plan provided in Appendix A that includes a governance and protocol plan, a Commemorative Lighting program, and rules regarding design aesthetic.
2. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to adopt a strict “no commercial designs” policy that states that the 3D TORONTO Sign at Nathan Phillips Square and the mobile Toronto sign will have no relation to a commercial entity or person.
3. City Council approve one-time adjustment to increase the 2016 Economic Development and Culture Operating Budget by \$150,000, funded from the Major Special Event Reserve Fund, to support the maintenance, governance and public engagement plans, and Commemorative Lighting procedure/criteria for the 3D

TORONTO Sign at Nathan Phillips Square including one temporary position for 6 months, as identified in Appendix A to this report.

4. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to investigate and bring forward a business case for consideration during the 2017 Budget Process for the one-time and ongoing costs of
  - a. the existing 3D TORONTO Sign on Nathan Phillips Square in 2017,
  - b. the process for commissioning and developing a permanent TORONTO Sign to be located at Nathan Phillips Square, and
  - c. the creation, ongoing operation and maintenance of a mobile Toronto sign and seasonal touring program.

## **Financial Impact**

The total costs of the recommended activities for the 3D TORONTO Sign at Nathan Phillips Square and the planning phase for the mobile 3D Toronto Sign for 2016, as described in Appendix A attached to this report is \$150,000. Of this total, \$71,700, will be continuing annually for the life of the sign. One-time costs in 2016 include \$18,000 to install a system to synchronize the lighting of the sign with that of the towers and fountains, \$50,000 for a six month temporary staff position to manage the project and plan future sign developments, and a \$10,300 contingency provision. (Please refer to Appendix A for a detailed breakdown.)

One-time in-year 2016 funding of \$150,000 is available from the Major Special Event Reserve Fund (XR 1218) to fund the maintenance of the sign through the year provide a half-year staff position to provide support and plan future sign options.

A plan to maintain the current sign beyond 2016, with an ongoing funding source, will be required to support a business case for submission for consideration during the 2017 Budget process.

If Council decides to proceed with a permanent TORONTO Sign for Nathan Phillips Square and/or a mobile TORONTO Sign be developed, all one-time and ongoing costs will be presented and documented in a business case for consideration as part of the Division's 2017 and future year Operating Budgets. The current estimate for the mobile Sign described in this report is \$200,000, of which half is estimated to be one-time in nature. Construction of a permanent sign at Nathan Phillips Square is a multi-year project not included in these estimates, which will require further studies to develop a cost estimate.

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

## DECISION HISTORY

As part of the Council approved Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games Showcase Program (July 2013), the 3D TORONTO Sign was created in 2015 as a temporary installation on Nathan Phillips Square.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.EX33.13>

On November 24, 2015, the Economic Development Committee directed the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to explore the possibility of creating and installing one or more of the following 3D Signs: "The 6"; "T.O."; or "T Dot" and to explore private sponsorships to cover the cost of the sign(s).

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-85287.pdf>

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

The 3D TORONTO Sign created for the Toronto 2015 Pan American/Parapan American Games and was installed in July 2015 as a temporary branding and engagement tool for the City and the Games as part of PANAMANIA Live. The installation proved to be wildly popular with locals and visitors alike, both inspiring and highlighting the passionate civic pride that continues to build in Toronto. As of Monday, February 22, over 109 million social media impressions<sup>1</sup> of the 3D TORONTO Sign have been recorded, with 88% of Twitter posts regarding the Sign expressing a positive sentiment. The 3D TORONTO Sign was also featured as a 2015 highlight in several year-end lists published by major Toronto media outlets.

The location was selected so that the backdrop to the Sign would be both an aesthetic and iconic Toronto scene that would assist in branding the city internationally — an interactive postcard/photo opportunity to share online.

Featuring 10-foot-tall, free-standing, illuminated 3D letters, this physical spectacle served as a high-profile photo opportunity that:

- Generated buzz and interest for the event;
- Proliferated the Toronto brand by enticing people to capture and share it across multiple social media platforms;
- Amplified the conversation and attendee experience online for the Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games, PANAMANIA Live, and Toronto itself;
- Encouraged event and city engagement by enabling people to physically interact with a fun and positive element of the Toronto brand; and
- Acted as an additional attraction/destination that brought people to Nathan Phillips Square to experience other activities.

Due to its popularity, the 3D TORONTO Sign will remain on display in Nathan Phillips Square until at least December 31, 2016, while a more permanent solution is assessed. The Sign's continued presence on the Square has created an opportunity to further

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<sup>1</sup> Ditto Labs

leverage the positive momentum and civic pride generated by the legacy of the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games.

Originally intended to be a temporary project, a detailed succession plan was not developed beyond the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. The proposed current plan (see Appendix A) will enable the Sign to remain on-site in optimal condition, utilizing its full communications potential — thereby maximizing further engagement and branding opportunities throughout 2016.

In order to maintain the 3D TORONTO Sign in its present location in a manner that positively and effectively represents/brands the city, governance guidelines need to be formalized, and appropriate staff and fiscal resources need to be allocated. Budget and staffing considerations should include the Sign's ongoing physical, electrical and aesthetic maintenance. Consideration should also be given to occasionally "refreshing" the aesthetic and light programming (including vinyl wraps) in a way that continues to delight and engage citizens, while aligning with community interests.

The Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC) will request one-time in-year funding of \$150,000 to support the following activities:

- a. \$100,000 for upkeep and Commemorative Lighting Program for the 3D TORONTO Sign in Nathan Phillips Square; and
- b. \$50,000 for a temporary staff resource to develop and implement the above programs and assess options for both a mobile Toronto sign and a more permanent sign for Nathan Phillips Square.

## COMMENTS

The proposed 3D TORONTO Sign legacy plan (see Appendix A) was designed to meet the following objectives:

1. **Establish procedures for all Sign logistics.** Formally solidify responsibilities for all aspects of the Sign's physical and electrical management and maintenance, including:
  - a. Roles and responsibilities for an interdivisional approach and utilizing the Nathan Phillips Square Advisory Committee for advisory purposes; and
  - b. **Sign location on Nathan Phillips Square.** The plan suggests that the Sign should remain situated at the Northwest corner of the Reflecting Pool, aligned between the towers of City Hall at all times, and moved only in extenuating circumstances. In the event that it is deemed necessary for the Sign to be moved for an internally organized program, the costs of that move will need to be absorbed by the program. In the event that an external event requests that the Sign be moved, the City will have the right to deny or approve the request, and all moving cost should be charged back to the external party.
2. **Maintenance.** Unit 11 Inc., the fabricator of the Sign, on retainer until December 2016 to maintain the Sign and provide up to four vinyl wraps for the sides of the letters in 2016. Costs associated with the maintenance, weatherproofing, animation,

and moving of the existing 3D TORONTO Sign on Nathan Phillips Square are estimated at \$100,000 in 2016.

3. **Register the 3D TORONTO Sign as an Official Mark.** In order to both protect the integrity of the 3D TORONTO Sign and to control how it is represented in the public domain, it will be registered as a legally recognized Official Mark. EDC staff are currently engaged in this process with City Legal.
4. **Foster ongoing public engagement.** Encourage increased connection/civic pride to create a population of invested Toronto ambassadors, and maintain the public's interest by developing/executing a programming and promotional plan that maximizes opportunities to align the Sign with timely, rotating community interests.
5. **Permanent Sign for Nathan Phillips Square.** With refurbishments and ongoing upkeep, the current 3D TORONTO Sign at Nathan Phillips Square's life span is estimated at three-to five-years. Over the next three years a permanent Sign will be installed and a long-term maintenance solution will be explored and implemented. The Economic Development and Culture Division will manage requests for commemorative lighting of the current — and any future — Sign through an application process available on its website.
6. **Construction of a Mobile Toronto Sign**  
Given the success of the current 3D TORONTO Sign, staff were directed to consider options for creating a mobile Toronto sign. Creating a mobile Toronto Sign could continue to foster engagement in the spirit of the original Sign, while offering extended reach to foster further pride in residence beyond the downtown core. In order to establish a recommendation around the development of a mobile Toronto Sign, the following pros and cons were considered:

Pros:

- The creation of an additional sign that can travel to other areas of the city could help to expand community engagement and nurture increased civic pride in residents beyond the downtown core.
- A mobile Toronto sign would draw attention to other areas of the city.
- An additional sign could result in more photos, and thus more sharing, which will further amplify the reach of the Toronto brand.
- A mobile Toronto sign could enhance the animation of Toronto special events.
- Launch could be aligned with Canada 150 celebrations.

Cons:

- A major element of the appeal of the current 3D TORONTO Sign at Nathan Phillips Square is its scale and uniqueness. In order to make a mobile version, the scale would need to be significantly reduced, and therefore would not have the same visual impact.
- The more structures that the City adds to the landscape, the more diluted the experience could become, thus lessening the impact for all future iterations.

- A new mobile Toronto Sign would need to differentiate itself from the existing one — therefore requiring a new design.
- Additional resources would be required to manage the maintenance and logistics of a mobile Toronto sign and associated touring program.

In order to extend the impact to other areas of the City, an additional sign(s) is required for the following reasons:

- The current 3D TORONTO Sign is too expensive to move.
- Moving the current Sign would disappoint tourist/residents who come to Nathan Phillips Square expecting to see the original 3D TORONTO Sign.

#### Considerations for "TORONTO," "The 6," "T Dot," and "T.O." Mobile Signs

As recommended, in order to maintain an authentic relationship with the public and to elicit a sincere sense of civic pride, no commercial interests or agendas should be imposed via the core structure of a public city moniker, including the 3D TORONTO Sign.

##### Mini "TORONTO"

- A mini version would be too similar to the current 3D TORONTO Sign and would dilute its uniqueness.
- A mini version of the current Sign would be too costly to build and maintain.
- The Sign requires more space to display than other options considered.

##### "The 6"

- "The 6" was a nickname for Toronto coined by hip hop artist Drake and is used to market his albums.
- A 3D sign utilizing "The 6" was created and branded by Virgin Radio for the NBA All-Star Weekend in February 2016.

##### "T Dot"

- The "T Dot"— popularized by Toronto rappers — is now considered a dated term.
- The term is now used by several businesses throughout the city — from an auto body shop, to an apparel company, to a gymnastics academy.

##### "T.O."

- T.O. is the most common colloquial term for the city, and offers a knowing nod to locals (as the nickname T.O. is much lesser known internationally).
- Condensing the Sign into two letters is sufficiently different from the current Sign, cost-effective, and mobile.

Using any trendy term runs the risk of becoming irrelevant once the next phrase or idiom becomes popular. Newer, trending terms could be incorporated into temporary elements of the design — such as vinyl wraps. This allows for design flexibility and extends the longevity and cultural relevancy of the Sign. Based on the above assessment, EDC supports the creation of a single travelling mobile Toronto Sign to be introduced the summer of 2017, strategically dovetailing with Canada 150 Celebrations and generating another wave of public engagement. Rollout of programming elements associated with the current Sign will continue throughout 2016 to maintain public and media interest.

Creating a mobile Toronto sign and planning/executing an associated touring program will be a significant undertaking that would require financial and staff resources. Beyond construction of the structure, consideration would need to be given to transportation, labour, scheduling, storage, programming coordination, insurance, security, and indefinite maintenance.

The mobile Toronto sign and touring program could entail the following:

- A single mobile Toronto sign representing the City's well-known short-form "T.O."
- Timely and/or trendy messaging incorporated into temporary design elements (i.e. a removable vinyl wrap).
- A touring program could be implemented for the summer months, allowing the mobile T.O. sign to travel to dozens of festivals, events and destinations across the city. During the winter months, the mobile T.O. sign would be moved less frequently.
- Estimated costs for the mobile Sign:
  - Construction (design, materials, lighting, and labour): \$100,000 one time
  - Maintenance, insurance, and touring logistics (equipment and labour for transportation, set-up, and strike): \$100,000 annual

## **Staff Resources in 2016**

A temporary staff resource is required to develop, implement and project manage all elements of 3D TORONTO Sign animation/engagement tactics, the Commemorative Lighting program, the development of the new proposed mobile T.O. sign and touring program listed above. Total cost is \$50,000 in 2016.

## **Private Sponsorships**

This report recommends that the City adopt a strict "No commercial designs" policy for the 3D TORONTO Sign at Nathan Phillips Square and for a mobile T.O. sign if produced. The existing 3D TORONTO Sign has become an iconic symbol of the city, and the perception of it being "for sale" could detrimentally impact its ability to generate positive public sentiment in the long-term. Staff recommend keeping any Sign that reflects the city free from corporate promotion (such as lighting the sign in recognizable corporate colours or advertising content on the vinyl wraps). To maintain an authentic relationship with the public and to evoke a sincere sense of civic pride, no commercial interests or agendas should be imposed via a physical, public city moniker. If a corporation or a commercially-oriented individual wishes to make a "donation" for the public good — without expectation of increased public profile — that is acceptable (i.e. integrating a significant civic, festival, or community event motif into the design of the vinyl wrap).

## **Development of Permanent Sign on Nathan Phillips Square**

With ongoing refurbishments and maintenance, as planned for in Appendix A, the current 3D TORONTO Sign's life span is estimated at three-to five-years.

If there is a desire to create a long-term, permanent sign, it has been recommended that an interdivisional working group be established to determine the best process by which to develop a permanent solution. Significant consultation will be required in order to measure the desire and feasibility for a permanent 3D TORONTO Sign at Nathan Phillips Square. In order to move ahead, a proposal will need to be developed and formally approved as a Capital Project. At a minimum, it will be three years before a new permanent sign can come to fruition. In general, the City's process for commissioning large works of public art is approximately three years.

The creation of a permanent 3D TORONTO Sign will have budgetary and infrastructure implications and should be initiated through the usual city channels for capital investments of this nature.

## **CONCLUSION**

The success of the 3D TORONTO Sign greatly surpassed expectations for generating buzz and interest for the Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. It continues to compel visitors and locals to capture and share its image across multiple social media platforms. Continuing its presence on Nathan Phillips Square will engage many more people while strengthening the Toronto brand.

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## **SIGNATURE**

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A: 3D TORONTO Sign Legacy Plan