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May 29, 2017

Councillor Mary Margaret McMahon, Chair  
Parks & Environment Committee

**Re: Parks Ambassador Program**

Dear Chair & Committee Members,

The Parks Ambassador Program was established in 2003 to provide a proactive response to concerns relating to homelessness and safety in Toronto Parks. In 2016 the Parks Ambassador Program documented 14,183 community engagements, which represents a record high.

The Parks Ambassador Program has become an integral part of our park management and maintenance system. They are the eyes and ears in our neighbourhood parks. Throughout the year, they work to ensure Toronto parks are accessible and safe. Leveraging outreach and community engagement, the Parks Ambassador Program works with City Divisions, Toronto Police Service, community agencies and local resident associations to achieve the objectives.

Ward 27 is home to some of Toronto's busiest parks. As the opioid crisis in Toronto becomes heightened, the impacts are being felt within the downtown park system. Concerns about safety in our city parks have prompted me to organize regular safety walks in Ward 27 parks. These walks could not have been done without the support of the Parks Ambassador Program staff who have participated in each and every safety walk in many Ward 27 and provide subsequent follow-up actions find collaborative and innovative ways to make our parks, cleaner and safer for everyone.

The Parks Ambassador Program develops an annual report. In the interest of transparency and informed decision-making, this report should be made public for City Council and the public to review.

**Recommendations:**

That the General Manager of Parks, Forestry & Recreation:

1. Provide a presentation on the Parks Ambassador Program to the Parks & Environment Committee at its September 8, 2017 meeting.
2. Report annually to the Parks and Environment Committee on the work of the Parks Ambassador Program.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam  
Ward 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale