

Coronation Park Improvements

Date:	September 21, 2011
To:	Parks and Environment Committee
From:	Jim Hart, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	Ward 20 (Trinity-Spadina)
Reference Number:	P:\2011\Cluster A\PFR\PE08-101111-AFS#14596

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on a plan to rejuvenate Coronation Park in time for the 100th anniversary of World War I in 2014, and on the progress of establishing private sector partnerships, which will assist financially with the implementation of the improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. This report be received for information.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications as a result of the receipt of this report beyond what has been approved in the current year's Parks, Forestry and Recreation's operating or capital budgets.

There is a planned Parks, Forestry and Recreation capital project to rehabilitate the existing Coronation Park seawall starting in 2012, subject to Council approval. The project includes two phases:

- Phase 1 - the design and Provincial and Federal permit process are planned for 2012 at a value of \$0.105 million; and,
- Phase 2 - Construction is planned in 2013 at a value of \$1.400 million.

This project is debt funded.

Urban Forestry has identified trees within Coronation Park that will be scheduled for pruning, removal, and replacement. This work is part of Urban Forestry's regular operations for 2012 and 2013; and therefore, no additional funding is required for this work.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation will work with the Coronation Park Steering Committee to establish a list of park improvement priorities. The implementation of any of these capital priorities would be funded by private sector donations. The scope of any future capital improvements to Coronation Park will be dependent on the actual amount of funds raised. If required, a future report will seek Council authority to receive donations for the proposed Coronation Park improvements.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on June 24, 2011, the Parks and Environment Committee considered a letter submitted by Councillor Paul Ainslie, Ward 43 Scarborough East, requesting that the City of Toronto enter into a private public partnership to rejuvenate Coronation Park prior to the 100th anniversary of WWI in 2014. The item was referred to the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report back to the October 11, 2011 meeting of the Parks and Environment Committee.

Parks and Environment Committee – June 24, 2011 – Item PE5.4

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.PE5.4>

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-39021.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Coronation Park is a 6-hectare waterfront park at the foot of the historic Fort York area, located southwest of the Bathurst Street and Lake Shore Boulevard West intersection. The park is an important link in the overall park system for the Fort York and Garrison Common and Central Waterfront areas.

History

The development of the park began in 1935 with the land filling and construction of the seawall along Lake Ontario between Strachan Avenue and Bathurst Street. Conceived during the Depression era, the park site was originally created to provide employment and recreation opportunities for the residents of Toronto. The plan for the park was proposed by Thomas Hobbs and Andrew Gillespie, who were members of the Toronto Ex-Servicemen's Coronation Committee, and F. E. Robson, President of the Toronto Chapter of Men of the Trees. The Men of the Trees was an international organization

founded by Richard St. Barbe Baker, which promoted conservationism and reforestation as a peaceable enterprise in the interwar period.

The park design included a commemorative planting, with a single Royal Oak tree as the park's central focus to celebrate the coronation of King George VI. Surrounding the Royal Oak, was an imperial ring of trees representing parts of the British Empire, including Canada, the British Isles, Australia, New Zealand, India and the Crown Colonies. Beyond this ring, additional groves of maple trees were planted in memory of the many Canadian troops who fought during various wars. In total, 144 trees were donated by the Toronto Chapter of Men of the Trees for the ceremonial planting. A Coronation Park Advisory Committee was established to oversee the park planting.

The mass ceremonial planting occurred on May 12, 1937, Coronation Day. Each tree had a granite stone with a brass plaque identifying each armed forces unit, to be unveiled at a ceremony on August 1, 1938. The plaques were funded by veterans and the Men of the Trees.

On May 22, 1939, a second commemorative planting occurred as part of the Royal visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth along the "Royal Avenue of Remembrance" (now referred to as Remembrance Drive). The planting involved 123 maple trees, representing each Public and Separate School in the city.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of World War II, a bronze memorial designed by John McEwen, was unveiled in the park on November 14, 1995. Dedicated to the Canadians who fought during the war at home and abroad, the memorial features two pairs of gates in the shape of a ship's prow. The openings and vistas formed by their north-south orientation provide entranceways which symbolize the departure of troops and their return home. Two sets of low semi-circular stairs inside this space form an amphitheatre which is highlighted by a large bronze medallion. The Victory Garden surrounds the tall flagpole situated near the sculptural circle.

At the June 24th, 2011 Parks and Environment Committee, Councillor Paul Ainslie (Ward 43 – Scarborough East) submitted a letter requesting that Parks, Forestry and Recreation enter into consultations with the Dominion Institute, Legions, Friends of Fort York and Heritage Toronto to develop a strategy to rejuvenate Coronation Park; and, to work with the Toronto Office of Partnerships to search for a public sector partner to enter into a public private partnership to ready the park for the 100th anniversary of WWI in 2014.

COMMENTS

Current Park Condition

Since the original commemorative park plantings in 1937 and 1938, new trees have been added to the park. Most of the original trees still stand; however, some have been removed and several are in need of pruning. Urban Forestry has completed an inspection of the park, and has identified trees to be pruned, removed and replaced due to health or

safety issues. The bottom limbs of the trees along Remembrance Drive will be pruned for safety and visual clearance. This work falls within Urban Forestry's existing operating budget and will occur in 2012 and 2013. No additional funding is required for this work.

The original layout of the park path system has changed over time. The location of the circular pathway surrounding the King's Oak remains, as well as the path along the seawall; however, other internal park pathways have been moved or sodded over. The original intent of the tree-lined vistas throughout the park has changed with the removal of these pathways. In some areas of the park, new trees were planted near or within the original tree groves. Further investigation will be done by Parks, Forestry and Recreation to determine if it is possible to reinstate the original park paths.

Over time, the commemorative brass plaques that were installed at the base of each tree have been damaged, lost, or situated in the wrong location. An overall strategy to improve historical interpretation for the park should also be considered. In addition, several park furnishings are in poor condition, and need replacement.

Fundraising

The timing of the planned Parks, Forestry and Recreation capital project for the repair of the park's seawall coincides with the centennial of World War I and provides an opportunity to explore partnership opportunities with the private sector. Preliminary consultation with City staff, not-for-profit organizations and foundations is currently underway to determine interest.

A Coronation Park Steering Committee will be established to develop a list, including costs of park improvement priorities and fundraising plan with financial targets. The list of improvements will be ranked, and the scope of work will be based on the ranking of these priorities and the amount of funds raised. If the Committee's fundraising target is not met, it will adjust priorities as funds are available. The Steering Committee will be formed with representation including, but not limited to, the Councillor's office, City staff from Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Toronto Office of Partnerships and Cultural Services, Heritage Toronto, veteran and special interest groups, and the local community.

Once a fundraising target and plan have been established, a future staff report will be brought forward, if required, to authorize the Coronation Park Steering Committee to fundraise and to receive donations for the park.

CONTACT

Anne Marra, Director, Parks Development and Capital Projects, Tel: 416-394-5723; Fax: 416-394-8935; e-mail: amarra@toronto.ca

Leslie Coates, Manager, Special Projects, Parks Development and Capital Projects, Tel: 416-392-1885; Fax: 416-392-3355, e-mail: lcoates@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Jim Hart
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Coronation Park, Original Tree Planting Plan

ATTACHMENT 1 – Coronation Park, Original Tree Planting Plan

