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2013 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation

Background:

- At its meeting on December 3, 2012, the Budget Committee requested the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to provide a Briefing Note to the Budget Wrap-up on the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation and its work.

History of the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation:

- The Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation (Foundation) is a registered, arm's length charity. Its formal mandate is "to create, preserve, protect, restore and improve public parks, open spaces and natural areas within the City of Toronto for the benefit of the general public". It is able to provide charitable tax receipts, relieving the City of a potential administrative burden.
- The Foundation attracts a donor base that is not possible through City of Toronto's partnership initiatives. Its status allows it to receive federal and provincial grants not available to City of Toronto directly. As an arm's length charity, it also can attract donors who prefer not to directly donate to a government organization. The Foundation also leverages its funds by encouraging 'matching grant' scenarios where community groups are encouraged to conduct their own fund-raising efforts to increase the funds raised for a particular project.
- The Foundation has raised over 2 million in donations, fundraisers and grants between 2002 and 2011. Of this, \$1.5 Million has been directed to the enhancement of Toronto's parks and urban forest. The Foundation currently holds about \$300,000 awaiting disbursement to specific Toronto parks projects.
- The Foundation does not have any staff. Its volunteer Board of Directors is supported by PF&R through the part time efforts of a manager and a support assistant. There is no formal, written relationship between the City and the Foundation.
- It is able to provide charitable tax receipts, relieving the City of a potential administrative burden.
- Since inception, the Foundation has provided grants for a total of over \$260,000 to support volunteer and community organizations actively involved in enhancing Toronto's public parkland and urban forest.

- More than \$400,000 has been directed to tree planting and care in public parks and natural areas including the “See the Forest for the Trees: Help Double Toronto’s Tree Canopy” campaign during Earth Week at the Toronto Green Living Show in 2007 which attracted donations in excess of \$260,000.
- Each year the Foundation hosts a major event, the Green Tie fundraiser, and publishes a desk calendar, the proceeds from both committed to parks and tree planting efforts. Park improvement projects total \$840,000 and have included many high profile partnerships with community groups and organizations such as Lung Cancer Canada, with Canada’s first Lung Cancer Grove was constructed in E. T. Seaton Park, located just south of Eglinton at Leslie.
- The key contribution of the Foundation is to raise funds and act as a trust holder of the funds for community park projects initiated by "Friends of" various parks where it takes multiple years to achieve the funds necessary capital funding for a playground or park refurbishment. Recent projects include Thackeray Park Cricket Pitch, Friends of Flagstaff Park - Flagstaff Park Playground, Embrace Martingrove Park, Stanley Park, Wabash Building Society at Sorauen Park, Douglas B. Ford Park, Queensland Park and Harbour Square Park with Jack Layton Ferry Terminal Community Group. Currently, \$300,000 is being held in trust for park enhancements where community groups are actively engaged in fundraising.
- In 2012, following the tragic fire that claimed part of the play structure at the Jamie Bell Playground in High Park, the Foundation quickly worked with the community to fundraise for the rebuilding of the playground. The Foundation also facilitated efforts to raise funds for the operation of Riverdale Farm, High Park Zoo and Far Enough Farm. 2012 is turning out to be the best year in the history of the Foundation where donations that flow it are in excess of \$0.5 million.

Future Direction:

- The Parks and Environment Committee, in recognition of the past benefits and future potential of the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation in enhancing Toronto's parks and urban forest through donations, requested (PE13.2) that the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report, through the budget committee process, on a transition strategy to support the Foundation through the Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Partnership Office to ensure that Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation becomes viable and self-sufficient to support Toronto's parks and urban forest.
- Parks Foundations in other North American Cities (Calgary, Chicago, Seattle and New York for example) demonstrate the enormous potential of this funding model.
- The Foundation is seeking \$0.250 million in funding to build its organizational capacity and expand current fundraising efforts. The Foundation needs a CFRE accredited fundraiser, fundraising staff and rented office space in order to increase the profile of the Foundation and pursue fundraising projects.

- The proposal was for a start-up grant of \$250,000, with the amount to decline over a 3-5 year period as the Foundation becomes self sufficient. PFR would consult with Foundation on an ongoing basis on emerging City priorities.

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