

Vehicle Parking in Marilyn Bell Park

Date:	June 10, 2013
To:	Parks and Environment Committee
From:	General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	Ward 14 – Parkdale - High Park
Reference Number:	P:\2013\Cluster A\PFR\PE21-062413-AFS #17689

SUMMARY

This report seeks Council approval to end the practice of allowing vehicle parking in Marilyn Bell Park during the 18-day annual event at Canadian National Exhibition (CNE). In 2000, Toronto City Council approved the use of Marilyn Bell Park and Battery Park for temporary parking in exchange for a contribution from the CNE to the Parkland Acquisition Reserve Fund. The park has since undergone substantial improvements, which include tree planting and the relocation of the Martin Goodman Trail. In May 2012, Parks, Forestry and Recreation notified the CNE of its intention to end the practice of allowing vehicle parking in Marilyn Bell Park, starting in 2013. This intention is consistent with the Division's approach to confining vehicle parking in all parks to designated parking lots.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council, effective immediately, end the CNE's use of Marilyn Bell Park for temporary permitted parking.

Financial Impact

Parks, Forestry and Recreation receives roughly \$23,500 per year (an average of the last five years) from allowing temporary parking in Marilyn Bell Park. An end to this practice would mean forgoing the revenue that goes toward the Tree Advocacy Program.

Year	Net CNE profit from parking in Marilyn Bell & Battery Parks	Paid to PFR (23% of net profits)
2008	\$131,357	\$30,212
2009	\$122,696	\$28,220
2010	\$51,752	\$11,903
2011	\$138,903	\$31,948
2012	\$67,552	\$15,537
Total	\$512,260	\$117,820
Average	\$102,452	\$23,564

Projected revenue for 2013 would be closer to 2012 than previous years due to the reduction of permitted parking spaces from historical levels. The agreement provides for the CNE to pay for the cost of turf repairs.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on April 22, 2013, the Parks and Environment Committee requested the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report to the June 24, 2013 Parks and Environment Committee meeting with a recommended resolution to the issue of parking in Marilyn Bell Park.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.PE20.9>

At its meeting on August 1, 2, 3, and 4, 2000, Toronto City Council approved the use of Marilyn Bell Park and Battery Park for temporary parking in exchange for a contribution from the CNE to the Tree Advocacy Program.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2000/agendas/council/cc/cc000801/pof10rpt/cl025.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The City of Toronto, through Parks, Forestry and Recreation, has a long-standing relationship with the Canadian National Exhibition Association (CNEA) to allow parking in waterfront parks during the annual summer festival.

In August 2000, Toronto City Council approved a report titled "CNEA Contributions to the Parkland Acquisition Reserve Fund" recommending:

1. For 2001 and beyond, that the City's Parks and Recreation Division charge a rental fee to the CNEA at 23 percent of the net profit earned from its use of Marilyn Bell and Battery Parks for parking purposes;

2. CNEA continue to pay all costs associated with site preparation, parking operations and reparation of parkland at the conclusion of the annual 18-day event; and that,
3. The funds received from the rental, for 2001 and beyond, be contributed to the Tree Advocacy Program;

A further motion required that no contribution to the City be delivered for years when the consolidated financial performance of Exhibition Place failed to meet budget.

Since that agreement, Marilyn Bell Park has undergone a major revitalization. The new design rerouted the waterfront Martin Goodman Trail. Temporary parking access cuts directly across the heavily used trail, which remains open while the park is used for parking.

For the reasons stated below, the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, sent a letter to the General Manager of the CNEA on May 15, 2012, strongly encouraging the CNEA to come up with vehicle parking arrangements that do not include Marilyn Bell Park for the 2013 festival.

The CNEA is interested in continuing to use the park for parking. They have suggested that a new agreement could include a revised payment structure.

COMMENTS

Parks, Forestry and Recreation has a long-standing relationship with the CNEA based on mutual support. Prior to amalgamation, Metro Toronto and the CNEA shared use of the Marilyn Bell Park. The park was created in the mid 1950's as part of Lakeshore Boulevard's construction by filling in an area that used to be part of Lake Ontario. Since that time, the CNEA has used the park during the annual fair to stage events such as the Canadian International Air Show. From inception, the park has also been available to the CNEA for vehicle parking as an off-site parking lot, to augment on-site parking during peak periods of the fair.

In addition to Marilyn Bell Park, the CNEA has used other parkland in Exhibition Place's vicinity for parking purposes during the annual fair. The CNEA used Coronation Park until Parks, Forestry and Recreation rebuilt the park's baseball facilities in 1992, and installed a new irrigation system. The CNEA also used Battery Park for parking until its redevelopment in 2007. The CNEA also used the eastern section of Gore Park until the construction of Fort York Boulevard. The elimination of parking in these three parks reduced the CNEA's previous overflow parking capacity by approximately 3,000 spaces. These reductions happened gradually over a number of years. The CNEA did not object to the removal of vehicle parking in these areas because of its willingness to cooperate with Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

Similarly, the CNEA agreed to reduce the space for vehicle parking in Marilyn Bell Park in 2012 from approximately 2,200 to 800 vehicles. For almost 30 years, the CNEA has

taken care to reduce adverse impacts resulting from its parking activities, including not parking under tree drip lines, and not allowing car parking when the ground is soft. Moreover, the CNEA encourages visitors to use public transit, cycle and walk to the event.

This report, however, recommends an end to the use of the green space in Marilyn Bell Park for parking. This could result in estimated foregone parking revenues of approximately \$15,000 to Parks, Forestry and Recreation due to the reduction of permitted parking spaces from historical levels. The recommendation supports four goals: maintaining consistent policy, avoiding the risk of injury, preventing damage to parks and trees, and conveying the value and appropriate use of parks.

First, parking vehicles in parks contravenes City by-laws regarding parking on parkland. On a policy level, it contradicts the direction in the recently approved Parks Plan, and Parks, Forestry and Recreation's efforts to maintain consistent approaches across the City. Second, parking requires vehicle circulation, which conflicts with users of the Martin Goodman Trail and poses a safety risk. Third, vehicle parking near trees and on turf causes significant long-term damage. Fourth, parks are a scarce and valued resource, intended for outdoor leisure such as picnics, physical activity and nature preservation. Using parks for parking conveys that the City does not value this precious resource.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation has received comments from the public concerned about obstructions to the Martin Goodman Trail, as well as reduced access and damage to the Marilyn Bell Park from vehicle parking.

Maintaining consistent parks policy across the City

Vehicle parking in park green spaces is an inappropriate use that has been eliminated in all other City parks. The parks by-law, chapter 608-27 of Toronto's Municipal Code, prohibits the parking of a vehicle in a park, except in areas designated for parking, such as signed parking lots. Municipal Licensing and Standards, the Toronto Parking Authority and Toronto Police Services strictly enforce this by-law across the City. The by-law also prohibits parking in designated paved lots, except to support park uses. Users of the temporary vehicle parking in Marilyn Bell Park generally use it to access the CNE, not the Toronto parks system.

Illegal parking in Toronto's parks system has been increasing over the last five years. In 2012, the City issued 6,423 tickets for illegal parking in parks, up from 4,870 in 2008. This marks a 29.3 per cent increase, or an average annual increase of 5.9 per cent. Allowing vehicle parking in Marilyn Bell Park is incompatible with efforts to enforce the parks by-law and enhance the parks system.

Allowing parking in the green spaces of parks is also not consistent with the recently approved Parks Plan, which summarizes the role that parks have in providing outdoor leisure and recreation, and as places for residents to interact with nature. It also describes the ecological services parks provide, such as oxygen production and storm water

storage. Parking on the green space in a park does not create a vibrant, welcoming, safe and sustainable park, and it does not preserve and promote nature.

Avoiding the risk of injury

The 56 kilometre, multi-use Martin Goodman Trail is heavily used throughout the year, and especially in the summer. It connects Toronto's waterfront parks, passing through Marilyn Bell Park and linking it with Budapest Park to the west and Battery Park to the east. As part of Marilyn Bell Park's revitalization in 2006 and 2007, Parks, Forestry and Recreation redirected the trail to better connect with adjacent parks, and to improve the user experience. The entrance to temporary vehicle parking in Marilyn Bell Park intersects with the Martin Goodman Trail, interrupting the intended use of the trail, and causing the risk of injury to pedestrians, cyclists and other trail users.

Preventing damage to the park and trees

Driving and parking cars through green spaces leads to soil compaction, poor turf quality, and stunted tree growth. Marilyn Bell Park endures severely compacted soil because of vehicle circulation and parking. Repairing the damage caused by vehicles is resource intensive, taking more staff time and more significant use of heavy machinery than would otherwise be necessary. In the fall of 2012, Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff spent 40 hours aerating, fertilizing and overseeding in Marilyn Bell Park, at a cost of \$4,029 for staff and materials.

Soil compaction also leads to slower growth, decline, injury and death of trees. Soil compaction near trees or their drip lines reduces the ability for roots to get air and water. Signs of tree degradation become slowly noticeable over time.

In November 2012, Parks, Forestry and Recreation planted 37 new trees in Marilyn Bell Park's central open area. The trees will enhance the enjoyment of the park by providing shade, as well as help achieve the City's tree canopy targets. Vehicle circulation and parking in that area will make it very difficult for those trees to survive.

Conveying the value and appropriate use of parks

Torontonians value their parks and consider them a limited resource. There is high and increasing demand for a variety of appropriate park uses, such as passive leisure, recreation and nature preservation. Using green spaces in parks for vehicle parking, especially in a high-profile waterfront park, erodes the perception that this limited resource is appropriately used. Cities with waterfronts around the world hold their waterfront parks as particularly important. This is because they are widely cherished, and because of their significant contributions to the image and economy of those cities. Yet, in Toronto, illegal parking in other waterfront parks such as Coronation Park and Battery Park has increased in recent years during the CNE. This is due, in part, to the perception that if parking is allowed in some of Toronto's waterfront parks, then it is tolerated elsewhere.

Part of the high and increasing demand for park use stems from Toronto's growing population. The neighbourhoods closest to Marilyn Bell Park have grown in population between 2006 and 2011, with an additional 6,665 residents living in the neighbourhoods within a 15-minute walk from the park. This is a 16 per cent increase. The local community is one of Marilyn Bell Park's most important user groups; yet, as a waterfront park, Marilyn Bell Park receives visitors from the entire region and from around the world. Parking vehicles in Toronto's limited parks and on the waterfront is an inappropriate use of Toronto's limited green space resource.

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SIGNATURE

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