



Toronto Civic Employees' Union, Local 416

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LOCAL 416

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April 22, 2013

Dear Norm Kelly,
Chair of the Parks & Environmental Committee, and Council

Hello;

I would like to start by introducing myself, my name is Paul Lepage, I am a employee of the City of Toronto working within the Parks Division and have been since 1977, I am currently performing the duties of a A/R Leadhand Horticulture. I like my job, beautifying the City within the landscape of its parks is something that I am proud of and take great pride in, I can't think of anything else that I would want to do. I am also a member of Toronto Civic Employees Union, CUPE Local 416, and currently am the Vice Unit Chair of the Parks Unit.

The importance of Toronto's parks and recreation programmes is unassailable. Viewed from any perspective, an effective and engaging parks and recreation programme is critical to a growing and thriving City. The ripple effect of parks and recreation can result in positive outcomes to all aspects of society including improved health and lower crime. This sentiment is echoed in the Parks Plan before the committee.

Our members work in the many parks and recreation locations in all aspects of the Divisions operations all year round. Often it is the work of the members of Local 416 which keeps the rinks, parks and sporting venues operational in all types of weather, Local 416 members like me take great pride in the work they do. On many occasions, Local 416 members work alongside the hundreds of volunteers, which make a tremendous contribution to the Division and thus the City by the work they do in stewardship and naturalization programmes. The labours of both groups can be seen by all across the City.

Local 416 members, however, do have concerns about the direction of some components in the Plan before the committee. Our concerns focus on a few key areas:

- Members want their Union, Local 416 to be included. Local 416 is not opposed to the use of volunteers and residents. We would welcome a process where the City would engage with Local 416 about the usage of volunteers so that the usage of volunteers is undertaken in a manner that is open and transparent under agreed to terms and conditions and respectful to the City, it's workers and the citizens of Toronto, so that all parties to the City's programming can benefit from additional resources. Our members just want to be included in the process.
- On the recommendations found in section two, we submit this should be a concrete process, where the Local has input.

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- The use of volunteers and other engaged residents should be complimentary to the services provided by our members so we can have the most effective levels of service.

Conversely, we would like to echo the concerns of the Report in addressing that more resources and people are “important for engagement” and that sponsorship may put public spaces at risk. The former point is familiar one as aspects of services have been cut away by this administration and others. The latter point however, is also important to the Local – it would be unfortunate if our Parks and their users were utilized as another venue for advertising and corporate messages.

The aforementioned directions could have unintended consequences. The most effective and equal way to fund city services is universally. Hugh Mackenzie and Richard Shillington (in *Canada's Quiet Bargain*, CCPA 2007) pegged the ‘social wage’, or the annual value of public services per person, at \$17,000 a year per person, or 60% of the average income. Recreation and culture made up \$436 of that ‘wage’. Allowing a further development of programming and/or funding to be delivered by the private sector or donations could lead to furthering inequality and creating the conditions for have and have not areas. This situation is all together too prevalent in the City already.

The City of Toronto has taken many progressive steps in evolving programming throughout the City to meet community needs. Community Recreation in conjunction with other services has proved to not only meet the needs of the communities it serves, but to be one of the most effective measures to both save money and move families out of the margins. It is a strength of this Plan to move to action on making our parks and recreation more accessible and to better consider the needs of newcomers to the City.

We are well-aware of the situation that the City purports to face regarding budget pressures. Local 416 is more interested in discussing solutions to create an improved society for the next generation, which brings us to the conclusion that we need to focus on those. Our members are interested in working towards a more inclusive and robust parks and recreation programme. We need to ensure however, that we do this together for the benefit of all effected, which includes the workers and the residents of Toronto.

Thank you.

On Behalf of Local 416
Paul Lepage, Unit Vice Chair Parks