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Parks and Environment Committee
c/o Carol Kaustinen
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

October 15, 2015

RE: PE7.1 Park Permits Initiatives—Including Review of Permitting Procedures for Park Events

Dear Members of the Parks and Environment Committee:

Park People is very supportive of the new Arts in Parks and Music in Parks no-fee permit categories. Park People's 2014 survey of park friends groups activities found that art and music events were two of the most popular activities. By making these permits free and easy to obtain, the City helps local artists and musicians reach new audiences and animate parks throughout the city. In particular, the one-week turnaround on a permit for a pre-approved location is a much welcomed change from the 8 weeks currently required for a special event permit.

These new categories are a recognition of the importance of local programming in our parks and the benefit they bring to our communities. City Staff should be commended for their creativity and openness in bringing this idea forward and we look forward to partnering with the City to spread the word on these new permits to our network of park enthusiasts, which we know will gladly welcome them.

We have two questions and comments to help clarify this process:

- Are these new permit categories limited to only pre-approved locations or are they available in any park? If so, what is the turnaround for a permit in a non pre-approved location?
- A map or list of pre-approved locations would be welcome. We urge that these locations are spread equally across the city and include sites within Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and lower-income communities.

In a similar vein, Park People is excited to be a partner with the Toronto Arts Foundation on the Arts in the Park initiative that will bring 22 artists to 22 parks outside of the downtown core in 2016. Park People is assisting in identifying parks and local community park groups, sitting on the jury panel, and facilitating interactions between community members and artists. This is a fantastic new program and partnership that will benefit many communities around Toronto that would not normally see this type of programming in their neighbourhoods.

Finally, we look forward to the forthcoming review of the permitting process on a wider-scale, including examining opportunities for speeding up the 8-week timeline for special events. For larger, more logistically challenging events this timeline may make sense, but a shorter timeline for simpler local events would help community groups, such as park friends groups, animate their parks with the community-building activities that build stronger neighbourhoods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Harvey".

Dave Harvey
Executive Director, Park People