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City-School Boards Advisory Committee
c/o Nancy Martins
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

May 27, 2015

Re: Policy Agenda for the City-School Boards Advisory Committee

Dear Members of the City-School Boards Advisory Committee:

We are pleased to see the Province's action on schools with the formation of the Community Hub Framework Advisory Group and the recognition that school sites offer so much more to a community than simply classrooms, but also provide needed community green space and other services.

As part of the creation of a community hubs framework, we would stress the importance of the schoolyards and green space that surround these buildings, many of which perform a critical function as open space and play space not only for schoolchildren, but for the surrounding community. The potential to lose valuable, public green space in our city is concerning. The issue of school closures was included in our recently released report, Making Connections: Planning Parks and Open Space Networks in Urban Neighbourhoods, which can be downloaded at www.parkpeople.ca/makingconnections

Some of the schools declared surplus are in areas that the City of Toronto has identified as low in parkland. As the City noted in a Staff Report from 2014: "The loss of any green space, recreational facility or other community amenity can significantly affect a neighbourhood. The jurisdictional distinction as to whether it is a City-owned park or a school yard playing field is often not particularly important to the affected community."

Therefore, we recommend that:

- The importance of schoolyards as community green space and children and youth play space form a key part of the community hubs framework conversation. We are pleased to see this included as part of City Staff's proposed Community Asset Utilization Rate measure.
- If schools are declared surplus that the Province allow the City of Toronto to purchase school green space at below-market rates so no loss of public green space occurs.

Sincerely,



Dave Harvey
Executive Director, Park People