

Parks, Forestry and Recreation Service Levels

Date:	September 3, 2015
To:	Parks and Environment Committee
From:	General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:\2015\Cluster A\PFR\PE05-091815-AFS#21585

SUMMARY

This report responds to a request made by the Parks and Environment Committee at its meeting on June 22, 2015 for staff to report with business cases for proposed service standard changes by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. This report provides information on Recommendations # 1, # 2 and #4, which are listed below.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.PE4.6>).

1. The Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, to report to the September, 2015 Parks and Environment Committee meeting with business cases for meeting the following service standards in 2016:
 - a. Daily Grooming of all swimming beaches;
 - b. Horticultural bed rejuvenation being conducted on a five year cycle;
 - c. Implementation of the Parks Service Plan;
 - d. The protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas and parks from invasive species;
 - e. A 10 year capital plan which would provide for parks sufficiency in all wards;
 - f. Park path clearing in the winter;
 - g. Establishment of five new community gardens per year;
 - h. Twice-yearly inspections and debris removal from ravines and watercourses; and
 - i. Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff review of all development applications that require tree removal or injury prior to those applications being considered by Committee of Adjustment.

2. The Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, to report to the September, 2015 Parks and Environment Committee meeting with a business case setting out the changes necessary to the service standard (including planting and maintenance) which would return the City

to its original tree canopy goal established by City Council in 2008, and the necessary funding to achieve this goal.

4. The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, given the impact on the City's service levels, to report to the September, 2015 Parks and Environment Committee meeting on any agreements or maintenance issues, and a summary of the length and current uses of Hydro 1 corridors in City parks and ravines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. The Parks and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact arising from the recommendation of this report.

The total costs of the proposed service standard changes, excluding Motion 1e, are estimated to require \$16.242 million with a total of 154.3 positions. A summary table is provide below:

Cost Estimates For Initiatives (000's)							
Motion	Business Case	Annual Operating					Capital
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016
1 a.	Daily Grooming of 11 swimming beaches	736.1	736.1	736.1	736.1	736.1	390.0
1 b.	Horticulture Bed Rejuvenation on a Five Year Cycle	4,995.1	4,995.1	4,995.1	4,995.1	4,995.1	1,100.0
1 c.	Parks Plan						
	Parks Plan - Enhanced Maintenance & Quality Management	176.6	240.2	544.2	604.5	604.5	-
	Parks Plan - Horticulture & Urban Agriculture	290.7	618.4	894.8	1,021.1	1,021.1	200.0
	Parks Plan - Improve Natural Environment Trails	160.5	439.6	575.1	1,043.6	1,431.7	-
	Parks Plan - Parks Ranger Program	556.5	1,507.1	1,544.0	1,544.0	1,544.0	180.0
1 d.	Increased Staffing for Invasive Species Protection	1,261.3	1,620.8	1,620.8	1,620.8	1,620.8	250.0
1 f.	Enhanced Winter Maintenance for Parks Path	422.6	931.8	931.8	931.8	931.8	460.0
1 g.	5 New Community Gardens (Included in 1 c.)	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 h.	Inspections and Debris Removal From Ravines and Watercourses	624.2	782.4	782.4	782.4	782.4	150.0
1 i.	Committee Adjustment Review Enhancement	291.7	359.9	370.6	370.6	370.6	-
2	Re-established Service Plan to achieve original tree canopy goal	1,663.7	2,044.4	2,093.6	5,400.0	1,000.0	-
4	Hydro Corridor Agreements	110.0	112.2	114.4	116.7	119.1	-
Gross Expenditures		11,289.1	14,388.1	15,203.0	19,166.8	15,157.2	2,730.0
Total Approved Positions		116.1	138.9	145.7	154.3	154.3	-

These initiatives will all require the acquisition of fleet in 2016 estimated at \$2.730 million.

Motion 1(e) requesting a 10 year capital plan which would provide for parks sufficiency in all wards would require the acquisition of 832 hectares of land and cannot be estimated at this time.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

The Parks and Environment Committee, at its meeting on June 22, 2015 (Item PE4.6), requested staff to report back on various service levels with business cases to achieve specific standards in 2016, including implementation of the City of Toronto Parks Plan and funding required to return the City to its original tree canopy goal established by City Council in 2008.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewPublishedReport.do?function=getDecisionDocumentReport&meetingId=9752>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Toronto's parks, urban forest and recreation opportunities are essential to the quality of life that residents enjoy. They make the city liveable and vibrant, and provide important environmental and economic benefits. The services provided by Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) are highly valued and delivery of these services at standards that meet public expectations is essential.

The Parks and Environment Committee requested information on a variety of PFR services and resources required to achieve specific service standards/levels. The requests made by the Parks and Environment Committee and addressed in this report relate to feedback received through PFR public consultations in recent years. Many therefore reflect key themes identified in divisional service plans, for example "Maintain Quality Parks" in the *Parks Plan 2013-2017* and "Protection of the Urban Forest and Natural Heritage" in Toronto's *Strategic Forest Management Plan 2012-2022*.

COMMENTS

Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) aims to improve the quality of life of Toronto's diverse communities by providing safe and beautiful parks, an expanding urban forest and high quality recreation experiences. Achieving this mission relies on service level standards that support a consistent level and quality of service across the City. Parks, Forestry and Recreation service standards are living documents that evolve with changes in budget, updates to industry best practices and in response to trends that affect operations such as weather patterns and new recreational activities. Service standards are developed with consideration of existing resources and their achievement relies on many factors, including operating and capital budget funding.

Listed below is a description of current service levels and funding required to achieve the requested standards?

1. Funding required to achieve the following service standards

1(a) Daily Grooming of All Swimming Beaches

\$0.736 million annually

Beach grooming removes pollution such as seaweed, fish, glass, syringes, plastic, cans, wood and other unwanted debris from large areas of sand. The City's designated swimming beaches are currently groomed 3 - 5 times per week by tractors pulling a mechanical grooming attachment.

In order to achieve the standard of daily grooming of all swimming beaches, funding of \$0.736 annually would be required.

1(b) Horticulture Bed Rejuvenation on a Five year Cycle

In order to achieve a five year rejuvenation cycle for all horticulture displays across the City as per Parks and Environment Committee's request 1(b), an additional increase in funds of approximately \$4.995 million annually would be required. Approximately 1,100 of the 5,600 horticultural beds in the parks system would be rejuvenated per year.

1(c) Implementation of the Parks Plan

The *Parks Plan 2013-2017* was approved by Toronto City Council in May 2013. The Parks Plan was developed using information from extensive public consultation and aims to connect people with parks, advance greening and environmental sustainability, improve the quality of parks and strengthen the parks system. Implementation of the Plan is underway for directions that can be achieved with existing operating funding and with capital funds received for improvements to park amenities, social gathering spaces and some natural environment trails.

Implementation of the Parks Plan requires service level enhancements in a variety of areas. Many Parks Plan recommendations require operating budget requests, which continue to be submitted for the Parks Plan annually for consideration as part of the budget process, however given the City's annual budget targets these service enhancements have not been recommended for funding. This impacts on the achievement of the Council-approved Parks Plan. Much progress has been made however some of the plan's goals are not achievable without dedicated increased funding as outlined in the Parks Plan operating budget requests described below.

Urban Park Rangers

\$1.544 million annually, phased in over three years

There are currently no staff positions focused on community relations and engagement within the Parks Branch. The establishment of a city-wide urban park

ranger program is proposed to address needs highlighted by the Parks Plan consultation process. Urban Park Rangers would be the primary point of contact for people wanting to engage with the parks system. They would assist with system navigation, connect people to existing opportunities, facilitate community-led initiatives, build relationships with stakeholders and support park monitoring. These activities would improve customer service and support public involvement in parks.

The Parks Plan business case for the Urban Parks Rangers Program requests initial funding of \$0.557 million in year one, reaching \$1.544 million over three years. The program is phased in over three years to include 12 frontline Urban Park Rangers to interface with the public and two Community Engagement Officers to develop, implement and evaluate community engagement strategies and initiatives from a broader policy and planning perspective.

Enhanced Maintenance and Quality Management

\$0.604 million annually, phased in over four years

There is currently no enhanced evening and weekend park monitoring and maintenance in summer months when park use levels are highest. Given the extremely high levels of use at high demand parks, this creates challenges for consistent achievement of maintenance standards.

The Parks Plan business case requests funding of \$0.177 million in year one, reaching \$0.604 million over four years, for increased evening and weekend park maintenance and monitoring over a 12 week summer period to address increased maintenance requirements in high demand park spaces. Roving crews would do basic maintenance and monitor parks to identify issues and priorities and report and manage problems. This would result in more consistent achievement of service standards.

Improve Natural Environment Trails

\$1.432 million annually, phased in over five years

The Parks Plan recommends improving natural environment trails as sites for recreation, education, active transportation and environmental protection. This would be implemented through the PFR *Natural Environment Trail Strategy* which outlines requirements for increased resources for future planning, design and management of natural surface (dirt) trails in natural area parkland and ravine ecosystems to ensure the protection, restoration and enhancement of natural areas, while offering safe recreational opportunities and improved access to users.

PFR currently manages 23 kilometres of 300 kilometres of inventoried natural environment trails in the City of Toronto. The Parks Plan business case requests funding of \$0.161 million in year one, reaching \$1.432 million over five years for a program to restore and enhance the 277 kilometres of unmanaged natural environment trails. The service level would increase by approximately 50 kilometres of newly restored and sustainable trails each year, with ongoing maintenance.

Horticulture and Urban Agriculture

Combined funding of \$1.021 million annually, phased in over four years

The Parks Plan sets out directions for horticulture and urban agriculture and puts forward a joint funding request for both. The Parks Plan business case requests combined funding of \$0.291 million in year one, reaching \$1.021 million over four years.

The description and costs for each component of this joint request are provided separately below.

Horticulture

\$0.600 million annually, phased in over four years

Currently most horticulture beds receive spring and fall clean ups and are weeded/pruned 2-3 times per season. Plant replacement and bed rejuvenation are based on available funding, capital projects and community demand, with many beds in need of rejuvenation. A 2012 budget reduction of \$0.600 million for the City's 88 "WOW" gardens eliminated dedicated funds for these highlight gardens. Limited funding, bed condition and changing weather patterns make it challenging to achieve the standard of rejuvenating beds every seven years and consistently meet maintenance standards.

The horticulture component of the Parks Plan business case requests \$0.600 million, phased in over four years to rejuvenate 44 high profile beds per year, re-establish a five year rejuvenation cycle for "WOW" gardens, deliver enhanced maintenance to 75 additional gardens annually and implement a Gardener 3 apprenticeship program with Horticultural Colleges.

Urban Agriculture

\$0.421 M annually, building up over four years

The Urban Agriculture program currently establishes four new community gardens per year and operates 64 gardens in 30 wards of the city. The program is building up to approximately two gardens per ward. Once this coverage is achieved the program would emphasize public education, maintenance and renewal of the garden inventory. The program delivers 26 workshops, creates one community horticulture site per year, supports 13 allotment gardens and delivers program support to 20 Children's Eco Program sites once per year. No funds are available to improve community gardens.

The urban agriculture component of the Parks Plan business case requests \$0.421 million, phased in over four years to address the demand for education, garden repair and program support.

The Parks and Environment Committee's request 1(b) seeks the funds required to build five new community gardens per year. The existing Parks Plan business case achieves that goal with a significantly accelerated rate of new garden creation

scheduled as of 2019. With adequate funding, this could be accelerated to begin as early as 2016 in order to achieve the goal of 5 new gardens per year more quickly.

1(d) Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas and parks from invasive species

\$1.621 million annually, phased in over two years

There are 18 Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) in the City with 68 additional areas proposed through Official Plan amendments. Most are in natural parklands, which can overlap with general use parkland. Urban Forestry currently has three crews for natural area management/invasive species control, primarily in ravines and naturalized areas.

In order to achieve this request, funding of \$1.261 in year one is required, building up to \$1.621 million over two years. This request would double the numbers of crews, and increase the service level, meaning that the Parks Branch could manage some invasive species in high visibility and high use areas not currently managed for invasive species.

1(e) A 10 year capital plan to provide for parks sufficiency in all wards

Toronto has a large and diverse parks systems comprised of over 1,500 parks totalling more than 8,000 hectares of City-owned and/or operated parkland. Parkland accounts for 12.7% of the land area in Toronto, however, the *2013 Ontario Municipal CAO's Benchmarking Initiative {OMBI} Performance Measurement Report* found that the amount of parkland per capita is the lowest among the municipalities who participate in Parks Services reporting for OMBI.

There are a number of ways to assess "parks sufficiency". The City of Toronto's *Parkland Acquisition Strategic Directions Report* (2001) measured the amount of local parkland per 1,000 people using Local Parkland Assessment Cells (LPACs). LPAC information is included in the [City of Toronto Official Plan](#), Map 8b. 'Local' parks provide neighbourhood level facilities within a reasonable walking distance and exclude some natural areas and City-wide park amenities.

The LPAC data was analyzed to identify the amount of Local Parkland required to raise parkland provision to 0.78 ha per 1,000 people across the City. This measurement is not a standard for parkland provision, rather it indicates that the area would fall within the median LPAC quintile. The acquisition of 832 hectares of local parkland would be required to increase provision to 0.78 hectares per 1,000 people. Based on the diversity of real estate value across the City it is difficult to accurately predict what the acquisition costs would be.

In addition, the development of new parks requires capital funds for acquisition as well as park development, remediation (if brownfields), and ongoing state-of-good-repair. Operating funding to maintain new parks and additional staff resources to manage park development and acquisition projects would be required.

Ensuring equitable access to parkland across the City is an important goal in the Parks Plan. Over the next two years PFR will be participating in development of key policies to guide parks system enhancement, including the TOcore study with City Planning, Parkland Acquisition Strategy and Facilities Master Plan. Staff will update City Council on these initiatives as they progress and will report back with recommendations generated through these initiatives.

1(f) Park path clearing in the winter

\$0.932 million annually, phased in over two years

The current standard for park path clearing is to clear snow 24 hours following a snowfall of 8 or more centimetres for main park pathways that are hard surface, lit at night and provide a linkages between schools, transit, winter park amenities and/or arterial roads. This standard has not yet been fully harmonized across the City due to some historical practices. Challenges include limited resources that do not provide leeway for equipment breakdown, and extreme weather.

In order to harmonize and meet these service levels across the City, funding building up to \$0.932 over two years. This would increase the number of seasonal staff focused on pathway clearance and safety by 21 positions over two years.

1(g) Establishment of five new community gardens per year

Included above as part of horticulture section of 1(c).

1(h) Twice-yearly inspection and debris removal from ravines and watercourses

\$0.782 million annually, phased in over two years

Ravines are currently inspected once per year with debris and homeless encampment removal, infrastructure maintenance and other work done based on inspection findings. An annual bridge audit is now required, diverting resources available for other work. Inspection and work is conducted by two crews with support from additional seasonal Parks staff, and largely done in summer months. Pressures on ravines through recreational use, severe weather events, illegal dumping and other issues are increasing and an interdivisional Ravine Strategy is currently being developed.

In order to achieve this request, funding of \$0.624 million is required in year one, building up to \$0.782 million over two years to double the number of permanent ravine crews. Crews would inspect ravines twice per year, follow through on identified work, support bridge inspections and remove debris that can cause water to build up against, and damage bridges and other infrastructure.

1(i) Review of all development applications that require tree removal or injury prior to consideration by Committee of Adjustment

\$0.371 million annually

Currently Urban Forestry completes 3,400 Committee of Adjustment application reviews per year, which involve a site inspection and provision of general comments to the Committee of Adjustment with respect to tree removals and/or tree injuries.

This represents an average 90% inspection rate of the total applications. The current service standard is inspection/screening of all development applications circulated to Urban Forestry and circulation of a memorandum outlining general conditions of approval for properties where protected trees have been identified. It does not include a review of plans or notice circulated with development applications or the provision of tree impact information to the Committee of Adjustment.

In order to achieve this request, funding of \$0.292 million in year one is required, building up to \$0.371 million over three years for three Assistant Planners and one Support Assistant. The proposed service standard would improve the frequency of plan and notice review. Tree impacts would be identified and when warranted Urban Forestry would request deferral or outline objections. The new standard would also allow for specific conditions of approval and should reduce timeframes for Urban Forestry clearance issuance.

2. Changes necessary to the service standard (including planting and maintenance) which would return the City to its original tree canopy goal established by City Council in 2008, and the necessary funding to achieve this goal

In 2009, an eight year financing plan was implemented to sustain and expand the urban forest and in particular, increase the tree canopy to between 30-40% by the year 2050. The eight year financial plan was designed to bring Urban Forestry's Gross Operating Budget to the necessary level by 2016; allowing Urban Forestry to maintain and protect current assets, as well as plant at sufficient levels in order to meet the desired canopy objectives.

In 2012, City Council adopted the report, "[*Core Service Review – Revising the Timeframe to Achieve the City's Tree Canopy Goals*](#)" which included approval of the Urban Forestry Consolidated Funding Plan to extend the implementation time frame for the Urban Forestry Service Plan by seven years from 2016 to 2023, in order to divert funds for Emerald Ash Borer management.

In order to return to the original tree canopy goal established by City Council in 2008 additional funding of \$13.7 million between 2016 - 2023 would be required. This would require Urban Forestry to accelerate the implementation time frame for the Urban Forestry Service Plan to achieve full funding by 2019. As a result of the increased investment, total work orders would increase by approximately 40,000 for tree maintenance and 9,000 for tree planting between 2016-2019. This is in addition to the 77,000 increase in tree maintenance work orders and 14,000 increase in tree plantings between 2016-2019 as part of the Revised Service Plan.

4. Use of Hydro One corridors in City parks and ravines

\$0.119 million

There are currently approximately 60 Hydro sites comprising approximately 760 acres on one Master Agreement between Hydro One and the City being utilized by PFR as recreational space. Approximately \$465,000 (\$385,000.00 dedicated to the

master agreement) was paid by the City in 2014 for license fees associated with the master agreement and a few other stand-alone agreements for Hydro One parcels.

The current use of hydro corridors includes garden plots, recreation areas, bike paths, pedestrian walkways, trails and dogs off leash areas. The Master Agreement expires on December 31, 2015 with a further 5 year term commencing January 1, 2016. PFR has requested that five additional locations be added to the Master Agreement and is currently working through the process with Hydro One, for an estimated annual cost of \$0.119 million.

For new sites Environmental and Archeological Site Assessments must be undertaken at a cost of \$10,000- \$20,000 per assessment. Depending on results, further Environmental Site Assessment may be required at additional cost. If required, clean-up and remediation can add to the cost also. Assessment is also required for placement of amenities due to health concerns about electromagnetic field exposure, particularly for children.

Any increase in parkland through acquisition or lease requires an accompanying increase in associated operational funding for ongoing maintenance. The hydro parcels are maintained based on the standard for that specific amenity.

Conclusion

Parks Plan business cases have been submitted annually by Parks, Forestry and Recreation for consideration in the budget process. Much progress has been made on implementing the Parks Plan, however some of the plan's initiatives are not achievable without dedicated increased operating funding as outlined in this report. Receipt of these funds would enable full implementation and address some of the requests described in this report. Business cases have been developed for the requested changes in service standards by the Parks and Environment Committee, however these have not been submitted for consideration in the budget process by Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

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SIGNATURE

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