

Deputation regarding Leaside Gardens Sign

I am Ray White and I am the Chair of the Board of the Leaside Memorial Community Gardens . This is a City Council appointed position and appointments correspond to the term of each council. I therefore make my remarks in the context of being a City of Toronto official appointed to represent the views of the community in the management of the Leaside Gardens. Accordingly we have sought and weighed the views of the community and find that this proposal does indeed offer significant public good and community benefits.

The Board is mandated by Council to operate this Facility on a complete cost recovery or break even basis. This is actually a higher standard than operating departments of the City are held to and we know that similar City run facilities continually run large deficits. Stated simply and emphatically this is not an option for the Leaside Gardens Board. This has often been a challenge given the majority of the revenue flows from the fees paid by the user groups in ice rentals. The revenue to be generated by this sign upgrade will impact directly on user fees in a positive way. This Board is responsible for the construction of the first publicly owned ice rink in over 40 years, a significant accomplishment and one for which the Community of Leaside and the board is very proud. Our user groups were highly supportive of the recent expansion project and every effort should be made to keep the ice rental fees in line. Currently Leaside has rates that are the highest in publicly own facilities across Toronto. There are not a lot of additional revenue sources available to the Board and passing up this opportunity would be working at cross purposes to the Board's objectives as dictated by the City. A \$40,000 increase in revenue equates to a reduction of ice rates of over \$11.00 per hour in prime time.

When the expansion drawings were finalized by City staff all 3 user groups were pleased to know there would now be an electronic notice board at the driveway entrance that would allow them to give notice of their upcoming events as well as notices from the Board or City of interest to the general community. Unfortunately the notice board approved and installed by the City with the expansion took well over one year to be approved, was not as large in size or message room, and has been plagued with operational problems. It is completely in order for the user groups to be provided much needed space on the north facing new signboard and is completing what they were initially entitled to.

Landmarking the Gardens was an expansion project oversight, while it is true a sign does exist at the driveway off Southvale the fact of the matter is a majority of patrons travel down Laird Avenue which has now become an important roadway in and out of Leaside. Provincial and National level events are held at the Leaside Gardens, Elite National Olympic figure skating training and Women's Provincial Junior hockey are two events which draw participants, spectators and media from across Canada and Ontario. We now have an opportunity to properly brand and Landmark the Gardens and make this location identifiable and easier for all to find.

The Board discussed at great lengths the pros and cons of the proposed sign, with the highest regard and respect for the community we all live and work in. We undertook an extensive community outreach process. What we found is that there is tremendous and widespread support for this sign in the community, we know that Councillor Burnside has received some 400 letters or petitions in support of this sign. In fact residents at 955 Millwood Rd, directly across from the facility support

this sign, the new Development at 25 Malcolm , Upper House Condo directly opposite the facility has written a letter of support, All Canadian Storage a business directly opposite the sign location has expressed wholehearted support as have many businesses along Laird Drive. Parents of facility users, User groups and the community at large have all expressed support and praise to the Board for pursuing this initiative.

We had questions and concerns about the proposal. For instance, we were concerned about the light level of the sign and possibility that it could be a problem for nearby homes and drivers. What we found out is the sign will have the lowest possible ambient level and that the lights on the advertising side which face a railway overpass must be turned off by 11:00 pm as per city by-laws. This level of light, called NITS level, is so low that one could not read a newspaper underneath the light. Advertising space has also decreased to 350 square feet from the current 400 square feet. The board also would maintain control over the North facing community messaging side of the sign and would turn it off earlier in the evening to allay any concerns the community may have. The North facing side is actually 50% smaller in display than the current Billboard.

As I speak I am reminded that I presently have with me two digital devices, a cell phone and a tablet, the car I drove here in has a 4x6 in dash digital display for GPS, Radio, CD and Engine management functions, my route here on the DVP had me pass several City of Toronto Transportation digital signs that span the width of the expressway providing needed information on traffic flow and other announcements. Clearly the Transportation Department of the City of Toronto does not believe these signs to be a distraction to drivers, quite

the opposite in fact an important and useful source of information. I passed several bus shelters that all had electronically illuminated display advertising, my route along Queen street took me past the huge illuminated TORONTO sign and every street car stop along Queen has a digital display telling us when the next street car will be along. I am sure those that crafted the sign by-law had good reasons to be suspicious of electronically illuminated signs when the by law was crafted but reality is we live in a digital world. In fact Mr. Robert Bader of the sign unit presented information at a public consultation meeting informing us that there is no evidence whatsoever that indicates digital signs are a distraction to drivers. Can you image how archaic and useless the current billboard will be in 10 years time ? Will it even be a viable source of revenue for the Facility operations?

I also would like to address the arguments against the sign as this being Zoned Open Space and Precedent an approval would create. The notion that this zoning is a public open space, a park if you wish lacks both integrity and is misleading, The fact of the matter is the sign is situated in a parking lot and has been a parking lot since 1951 when the facility first opened. With regard to precedent, there is none, this is a site specific application and our partner OUTFRONT Media has pledged not to seek another digital sign in the Leaside Community.

With our user groups, the community and the Leaside Memorial Community Gardens in mind, The Board is excited about this proposal .The revenue and the ability to showcase our community and the Gardens the new sign affords us is an opportunity for us all.

RAYMOND J. WHITE
CHAIR, LEASIDE GARDENS - JUNE 15, 2016