

Pilot Skate Exchange Program and Skate Lending at City-operated Rinks - Update

Date: May 9, 2019

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to Council direction that Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) report back to the Economic and Community Development Committee on the results of the pilot skate exchange program that was approved by City Council at its meeting of July 23, 2018 and any new approaches to skate lending.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation operated a total of six pilot skate exchange programs during the 2018/2019 winter skate season. Over 500 people participated in the skate exchange, with over 60 per cent of participants receiving a free pair of skates. The division also leveraged new partnerships at select outdoor artificial ice rinks for implementing four skate lending activations. Both the skate lending and the skate exchange initiatives were well received and well attended.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation will deliver the Skate Exchange program during the 2019/2020 season and will pursue ongoing partnership funding to continue skate lending.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Economic and Community Development Committee receive the report from the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of this report.

During the 2018-2019 Winter season, PFR held six skate exchange events. These pilot events were delivered with existing resources.

Following the results of the 2018/2019 pilot, PFR will hold five skate exchange events around the city during the 2019/2020 season in coordination with local Councillors. These events can be accommodated within the 2019 Council Approved Operating Budget. Skate lending, which was made possible by partnership funding, provided participants temporary access to skates and access to outdoor leisure skating.

Skate lending is not a funded service level in the 2019 Parks, Forestry and Recreation Council Approved Operating Budget. If sponsorship and partnership funding is secured for the 2019/2020 winter season, skate lending will be planned and implemented.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on July 23, 2018, through Item CD30.1, City Council directed the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to:

1. Implement 1 pilot skate exchange event per district in conjunction with local Councillors with priority given to Neighbourhood Improvement Areas;
2. Formalize the skate lending program piloted at Regent Park in 2018 to allow community groups to provide skate lending at community events using equipment provided by the City and that potential partnerships be investigated and required funding be considered as part of the 2019 operating budget submission;
3. Report back on the results of the pilot skate exchange program, the one-off skate lending program and any other new approaches to enhance skate lending and exchange by the second quarter of 2019.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.CD30.1>

COMMENTS

Skate Exchange program

Parks, Forestry and Recreation operates 63 outdoor artificial ice rinks (AIR) functioning between 12 to 16 weeks each year, during the outdoor skate season. Programming includes supervised leisure skate and shinny hockey as well as permit opportunities. In the 2018/2019 skate season, there were over 650,000 visits to the City's outdoor rinks.

As directed by Council, PFR piloted a skate exchange event in each of the five districts between January and March 2019. An additional event was offered at Greenwood Rink, 150 Greenwood Ave, in the Toronto East York district (ward 14), one of the city's best-

known destination outdoor rinks. The pilot events were very successful, with over 500 participants engaged at the six locations.

District	Location	Ward
Scarborough	Don Montgomery Community Centre 2467 Eglinton Ave East	20
North York	Mel Lastman Square 5100 Yonge St	18
Etobicoke/ York	Sunnydale Acres Rink 50 Amoro Dr	1
West Toronto/ York	Alexandra Park/ Harry Gairey Rink 275 Bathurst St	10
Toronto/ East York	Regent Park Athletic Grounds 480 Shuter St	13

Prior to the start of the 2018/2019 skate season, PFR received 90 pairs of skates from a private donation through the Hockey in the Neighbourhood initiative. Over the course of the six skate exchange pilot events, an additional 343 pairs were donated for a total of 433 pairs of donated skates. Of those, 332 pairs were distributed directly to participants at the events. The remaining skates will be used at next season's skate exchange events. In preparation for future skate exchanges, donation locations will be identified and promoted to receive skates in advance of events.

The pilot events leveraged local community partners to help promote the exchange and to assist with event activations including programming and food. Staff assisted with sizing, lacing and checking skates for their usability.

The pilot events were successful, with an average attendance of 90 participants at each skate exchange event. To gather timely feedback, participants were given a written survey to complete at the events. More than 275 participants returned surveys. From the completed surveys: 21 per cent had never skated before and 20 per cent intended to use the skates the day of the event. All skate recipients, through the exchange, inquired about either skate lessons and/or leisure skate times. Further, responses indicated that the majority of participants heard about the events through social media, local flyers, and through word of mouth. Comments to staff at the exchanges revealed that many of the recipients were newcomers to Canada and were welcoming of the

opportunity to try skating, but didn't have skates. The opportunity to receive donated skates reduced the barrier for participation.

Skate Lending program

Skate lending was implemented at the following four outdoor rinks over four weekends:

- West Mall AIR - February 9/10
- Regent Park AIR – February 16/17/18
- McCowan District Park – February 23/24
- Mel Lastman Square – March 2/3

In total, 387 participants borrowed skates over the four pilot events. The largest, one day utilization of skate lending was at Regent Park AIR on Family Day, February 18th with 175 participants borrowing skates. The financial expense to transport and provide necessary maintenance to skates and the staffing costs required to facilitate lending was offset by partnership funding. In the absence of such funding, PFR does not have the capacity to sustain skate lending outside of Wallace Emmerson, Dufferin Grove and Campbell AIRs where a skate lending inventory currently exists and the service is offered.

PFR will continue to deliver skate exchanges annually, geographically distributed across the city, with five planned each season. PFR will seek partners interested in funding and collaborating on skate lending in advance of the 2019/2020 ice season.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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