

From: [Ellen Schwartzel](#)
To: [councilmeeting](#)
Subject: My comments for 2020.GL15.14 on September 30, 2020 City Council
Date: September 29, 2020 4:22:33 PM

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the September 30, 2020 City Council meeting on item 2020.GL15.14, Lease and Contract Extensions for City of Toronto Golf Courses

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Toronto Field Naturalists

Sept 28, 2020

To: Mayor and Councillors

Dear Councillor;

Re: Golf Courses or Parklands? Sept. 30 Council item GL15.14

This week Toronto City Council has a rare chance to free up hundreds of acres of badly needed parklands, letting families and the general public enjoy them for the first time. Right now, despite the pandemic and the critical need for more open spaces, the City's five municipal golf courses are reserved for a small group of golfers. This calls for an urgent rethink. The Toronto Field Naturalists ask that you hold off on the imminent contract renewals for golf course operators up for a Council vote on Sept. 30: item GL15.14. Instead, we ask that you consult the public on the best future uses of these public lands, and offer options that reflect our city's most urgent needs.

It would take just a small pinch of vision and leadership to restore these lands to natural habitats; to add native trees and meadows, to open them with walking and cycling trails, and offer neighbourhoods new playing fields, community gardens and other parkland assets.

Even before the pandemic, Torontonians were pressed for green space. The City's Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department highlighted in the 2019 Budget that "Maintaining parkland provision across the City is becoming increasingly difficult in the face of high growth, decreasing availability and increasing cost of land acquisition." Parks are busier than ever, with troubling impacts on ravines and natural areas. Toronto families increasingly live in high rises, and need nearby spaces where kids can enjoy fresh air and nature. In contrast, golfing has been in a long decline in the GTA and across North America.

At a time of unprecedented need for public parkland, Council has a golden opportunity to rethink the role of its municipal golf courses. Council can transform

these lands from underused burdens on the budget to celebrated green assets, enjoyed by all. So please;

- put the contract renewals for golf operations on hold; nobody plays golf over the winter in any case.
- ask Parks, Forestry and Recreation to re-imagine these sites as green spaces with a mix of natural, recreational and community elements.
- consult the public, including local neighbourhoods, on their visions for these underused public lands.

The Toronto Field Naturalists would be delighted to discuss this proposal with you and your staff.

Best Regards,
Jason Ramsay-Brown, *President, TFN*
Ellen Schwartzel, *incoming President, TFN*