

## **Increasing Engagement in Ravines through Partnerships**

**Date:** May 10, 2021

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee

**From:** General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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In October 2017, City Council adopted the Toronto Ravine Strategy which provides an intentional and coordinated vision and approach to managing this natural resource on an ongoing basis. In 2020, City Council adopted the 10-year implementation plan and directed the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR), in consultation with other divisions, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and other stakeholders, to report back on a number of initiatives that advance engagement in ravines through partnerships. This report responds to that direction with an update on new initiatives since January 2020 that advance partnerships with residents, community groups and other levels of government. Further, a Ravine Strategy Implementation Status Update report is scheduled for Q4 2021.

PFR and partner divisions were able to take significant steps to increase engagement in ravines and advance Ravine Strategy goals and priorities since adoption of the implementation plan in January 2020, including:

- Expansion of the student internship program in 2021, building off a successful pilot in 2020
- Piloting the 'Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas' with Toronto Nature Stewards
- Collaborating across divisions to advance Indigenous businesses opportunities that contribute to ravines and placemaking
- Awaiting confirmation of \$6.2 million in funding from other levels of government for eight projects that will improve access and active use of ravine trail system

Partnership is a guiding principle of the Ravine Strategy and critical to the on-going health of the ravines, the connection of residents to these special spaces and the success of the Strategy. Through student internships, economic opportunities for Indigenous businesses, new stewardship programs and fostering key partnerships to invest in the ravines, implementation of the Ravine Strategy is creating additional and more diverse opportunities for individuals and organizations to contribute to Toronto's ravines in meaningful and sustainable ways.

It is important for youth to be connected to nature and have access to opportunities to explore careers in this field. In 2020, PFR partnered with the TRCA to develop and deliver the pilot Ravine Youth Team, a paid summer internship program to develop job-related and professional skills and learn about career opportunities in ravines. Additional funding in 2021 will allow the expansion of the Ravine Youth Team in the number and length of positions, as well as to pilot a free ravine-focused mentorship and training program with LEAF, based on the successful Young Urban Forest Leaders program.

Indigenous placemaking and placekeeping, including the Indigenous component of the Ravine Strategy, are important steps towards Indigenous self-determination, improved health and community well-being, access to ceremonial space and connection to economic opportunities. PFR and the Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO) have begun to explore the development of economic opportunities for Indigenous businesses that contribute to the goals of Toronto's Ravine Strategy and Indigenous placemaking in Toronto's parklands, in consultation with Economic Development and Culture and Indigenous organizations and communities. A number of potential opportunities have been identified and the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee has provided advice on the organizations to consult with as the City continues to explore these opportunities.

Every year, City programs engage over 3,500 volunteers in ravine stewardship. Yet these programs do not meet the demand and interest for alternative model delivery, and PFR has been requested to consider additional opportunities for volunteer stewardship that cannot be met through existing programs and staff resources. A comprehensive, coordinated approach and system-wide lens is needed to manage unsupervised volunteer stewardship in a way that is equitable, effective, and safe for the City, volunteers and community groups, and the natural environment. A framework that will provide legal and policy direction, as well as the avenues for communications, the City resources available to support these type of volunteer programs, and mechanisms to track overall impacts to ravine health is under development and will be informed by a 2021 pilot of the Toronto Nature Stewards' Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas.

Multiple City Divisions, the TRCA, other partner organizations, along with other levels of government, invest millions annually to address the challenges facing Toronto's ravines. This year the City is investing \$82.5 million in Toronto's Ravine Strategy through \$12.4 million in the 2021 Council Approved Operating Budget for PFR and \$70.1 million in the 2021 Council Approved Capital Budget across a variety of City divisions as well as the TRCA. The City of Toronto is also awaiting confirmation of \$6.2 million from COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure funding stream under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) for various projects which advance the implementation of Toronto's Ravine Strategy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

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

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no direct financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Any future capital and operating funding needs will be addressed as part of future year budget processes for City Council approval.

## **EQUITY IMPACT**

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The City of Toronto values social equity and inclusion and aims to improve the quality of life for residents through the provision of a ravine system that is welcoming and accessible.

Even a modest increase in access to good quality greenspace has been proven to improve the health of residents. Evidence suggests that the health benefits of greenspace in areas near vulnerable populations, including those living on low incomes, racialized and Indigenous groups and seniors, are more pronounced.

The City of Toronto is committed to reducing barriers and ensuring equitable, safe access to ravines for all Toronto residents. The City is also committed to incorporating both western and Indigenous knowledge in protecting and reimagining our ravines and will continue to identify opportunities to create authentic and ongoing relationships with Indigenous communities.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on May 5 and 6, 2021, City Council considered EX21.15, Indigenous Inclusion and Consultation in the Toronto Ravines Strategy and Stewardship Manual, and requested the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in consultation with the Director, Indigenous Affairs Office, and other appropriate City staff, to consult with the broader Indigenous community on the implementation of the Toronto Ravine Strategy and review of the Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas, produced by Toronto Nature Stewards.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE21.15>

At its meeting on December 16, 17 and 18, 2020, City Council authorized the City Manager, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, to apply for Federal and Provincial funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream – Local Government Sub-Stream for projects, including \$6.2 million for various projects which advance the implementation of Toronto's Ravine Strategy.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.EX19.2>

At its meeting on November 25, 2020, City Council considered EX18.12, Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas, and requested the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to review the Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas, and after consultation with Manual authors, report back on how this Manual can be implemented as the template for expanding ravine and natural areas stewardship in Toronto without City supervision.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.EX18.12>

At its meeting on September 30, 2020, City Council considered MM24.5, Exploring Indigenous Economic Opportunities in Toronto's Ravines, and requested Director, Indigenous Affairs Office and the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, to report back on the feasibility of developing economic opportunities for Indigenous businesses that contribute to the goals of Toronto's Ravine Strategy and Indigenous placemaking in Toronto's parklands.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.MM24.5>

At its meeting on January 29, 2020, City Council adopted the key next steps to implement the Ravine Strategy over the next ten years and requested the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation report back on the development of a student internship program for youth to engage in restoring Toronto's ravines and natural-areas stewardship programs to deal with invasive species that will permit qualified volunteers to lead volunteer groups without City supervision.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.EX12.1>

At its meeting on October 2, 2017, City Council adopted the Toronto Ravine Strategy.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.EX27.8>

## **COMMENTS**

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The comments section of this report is organized as follows:

1. Background
2. Student internship programs
3. Exploring Indigenous economic opportunities in Toronto's ravines
4. Expanding stewardship in ravines through unsupervised volunteers
5. Interdivisional investment in ravines and ICIP Delivery
6. Next Steps

## **1. Background**

Toronto's ravines are extensive, covering 17 percent of Toronto's land area and reaching across the city and into every ward. They are places where people want to be, house critical grey and green infrastructure, have significant ecological value and contribute significantly to the resilience of the city. However, the immense size and the varied land ownership, management and uses have created significant complexity in managing these wonderful spaces.

In October 2017, City Council adopted the Toronto Ravine Strategy and in January 2020, staff presented a 10-year implementation plan to provide a long-term, system-based approach to protecting and managing the City's immense ravine system. Through a series of 20 actions under five guiding principles: Protect, Invest, Connect, Partner, and Celebrate, the Strategy guides the management of the ravines and ensures the protection of these irreplaceable lands is balanced with their use and enjoyment, so that they continue to bring nature to people and flourish for the next 100 years and beyond.

Long-term protection of Toronto's ravines and natural spaces must involve engaging the public, providing opportunities to learn about the natural environment, and incorporating the perspective of diverse communities into ecological restoration activities. The value of parks and greenspaces and access to nature to mental and physical health is well-recognized and has had increased importance during the Covid-19 pandemic and many stakeholders have expressed their desire to contribute back to these spaces. The connection to ravines is of particular significance for Indigenous communities as putting reconciliation into action begins by providing access to space, land and water which are essential to the well-being of Indigenous people.

Partnership is a guiding principle of the Ravine Strategy and critical to the on-going health of the ravines, the connection of residents to these special spaces and the success of the Strategy. Actions 14 and 16 speak to building partnership opportunities to expand the City's Community Stewardship Program and establishing a framework to support further opportunities to engage volunteer groups, such as 'Friends of' groups, in ravine stewardship. Unleashing the energy and resources required to achieve sustained impact for the ravines requires that the City work collectively across diverse sectors including business, other public institutions, non-profit organizations, community groups, Indigenous groups, residents and community volunteers. Through student internships, economic opportunities for Indigenous businesses, new stewardship programs and fostering key partnerships to invest in the ravines, implementation of the Ravine Strategy is creating additional and more diverse opportunities for individuals and organizations to contribute to these spaces in meaningful and sustainable ways.

## **2. Student internship programs**

Engaging youth in Toronto's ravine systems is critical to the present and future health of the ravines. Urban parks and natural areas have long played a vital role in community-based programs for young people. Internships are an important part of any employability training program—they introduce youth to a range of skills that will support their future, allow youth to translate classroom learning into practical experience, improve employability, and whenever possible lead to long-term employment.

Recognizing these important connections, PFR partnered with the TRCA in 2020 to develop and deliver the pilot Ravine Youth Team paid summer internship program to engage youth in restoring Toronto's ravines. The program aims to provide not only opportunities to learn about the ravines but also to develop job-related and professional development skills and learn about career opportunities in ravines and the natural environment, including with the City of Toronto and the TRCA. The program was designed to provide access and exposure to a variety of possible work, roles, jobs and career paths within the industry, as well as a sense of network, support, direction and other soft-skills to build participants' resumes and future career opportunities.

In 2020, the Ravine Youth Team provided six post-secondary students with paid employment for five weeks in July and August. The youth participated in litter clean-ups, invasive species management, planting, maintenance of newly planted sites, and ecological monitoring. A total of 4.46 hectares of ravine land was improved through direct work and contributions of the Ravine Youth Team. Through a post-program survey, all participants in the 2020 Ravine Youth Team indicated that they were very satisfied with the program and felt that the skills and knowledge provided had increased their chances of employment within the environmental field. Further, they indicated that their confidence in employment in the sector had increased.

Through pilot program review with the intent of improving and addressing equity barriers for the 2021 program, PFR and TRCA staff noted a few key areas for improvement. Firstly, there was an identified need to increase access to and awareness of the program to youth in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and members of equity-seeking groups. Secondly, it was identified that a program longer in duration will expose participants to a wider variety in the work, networking and professional development opportunities and for each experience to be more in-depth.

In 2021, the City and TRCA will continue to partner on the Ravine Youth Team. Additional funding in the 2021 Council Approved Operating Budget for PFR and the reallocation of funding transferred to the TRCA from the Menno-Reesor Restoration Project will allow the program to expand by increasing the number of positions to 12; increasing the number of employment roles available from only crew positions in 2020, to crew and crew leads in 2021; and increasing the total number of weeks available per position to eleven weeks per crew lead and nine weeks per crew member. As well, PFR and TRCA will work with our divisional partners in Social Development and Finance Administration (SDFA) and Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) to leverage existing programs and networks to promote the opportunities to youth in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and equity-seeking groups. The length of the program job posting will also be increased in 2021 to providing more time for targeted promotion and to allow ample time for application preparation and submission.

A new program, to be offered in partnership with LEAF, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting urban forests, this fall, will provide an additional opportunity to engage youth. This free ravine-focussed mentorship and training program, based on the successful Young Urban Forest Leaders program, will provide 20 youth with tangible skills, the chance to build connections in their communities, mentorship from LEAF staff, as well as guest lectures and networking opportunities with ravine leaders and experts

through virtual training sessions, and through outdoor, hands-on ravine engagement (Covid-19 regulations permitting). This program will seek to support Toronto youth from underrepresented groups within arboriculture and urban forestry, including but not limited to women, non-binary people, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, LGBTQ+ people and racialized individuals and will prioritize the selection of youth from Neighborhood Improvement Areas.

Staff will provide an update on both of these student internship programs through the Q4 Ravine Strategy Implementation Status Update and steps taken to continue to develop and refine these programs, to explore new partnerships and opportunities in 2021, to reach underserved communities, and to diversify connection to employment opportunities and pathways to employment across the sector.

### **3. Exploring Indigenous economic opportunities in Toronto's ravines**

Toronto's ravine system provides significant placemaking opportunities to reflect the integral connection that continues today between Indigenous communities and Toronto's natural spaces and waterways. Putting reconciliation into action begins by providing access to space, land and water which are essential to the well-being of Indigenous People. Indigenous placemaking and placekeeping, including the Indigenous component of the Ravine Strategy, are important steps towards Indigenous self-determination, improved health and community well-being, access to ceremonial space and connection to economic opportunities. PFR, the City's Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO) and the City's Economic Development & Culture (EDC) division have been working together to explore these opportunities, including a presentation to the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC).

On April 16, 2021, staff from PFR and IAO presented to the AAAC to solicit input and feedback on implementation of the Ravine Strategy and the feasibility of developing economic opportunities for Indigenous business that can support the ravines and placemaking. The Committee was supportive of the initiative, provided meaningful advice on the organizations to consult with as the City continues to explore opportunities, and on May 5, 2021 City Council adopted their recommendation to request PFR, in consultation with the IAO, and other appropriate City staff, consult with the broader Indigenous community on the implementation of the Toronto Ravine Strategy.

PFR, as the primary City division responsible for managing the approximately 5,700 hectares of parkland located in ravines, can support ravine-related business development opportunities through in-kind support, grants and the purchasing of goods and services. The IAO, working with various partners, is also well placed to identify, advocate for and help advance Indigenous employment opportunities connected to Toronto's ravine system. Finally, various programs (in place or under development) offered or supported by EDC can be leveraged to offer ravine-linked business start-up or expansion opportunities for Indigenous-led businesses. EDC's existing small business development grant programs and advisory services, and the Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ICIE) - scheduled to open in 2023 - stand out in this regard.

## **Opportunities for Indigenous vendors**

A number of potential opportunities for Indigenous businesses that contribute to the goals of the Ravine Strategy and placemaking in parklands have been identified for work currently put out to third-party vendors through purchases and grants, including:

- Professional services to support parkland planning and management, such as park master planning, landscape design and community consultation
- Resource production, such as plant nursery stock for horticulture and restoration
- Engagement and teaching opportunities, including bringing Indigenous ways of knowing and being to existing programs such as PFR's Community Stewardship Program, the Ravine Youth Team or through new programs. Activities could include virtual teaching, guided walks and hands-on stewardship.

## **Grant Programs**

Another opportunity is support through grant funding, including for ravine art projects. The City of Toronto has previously funded and continues to support the work of Indigenous artists through partnerships. For example, ArtworxTO: Toronto's Year of Public Art 2021-2022 has committed to advancing reconciliation in Toronto through Indigenous placemaking by creating new opportunities for Indigenous artists. This includes creating new skills development and leadership opportunities for Indigenous artists, curators and art consultants in the field of public art, and engaging Indigenous communities to identify sites of significance, including ravines and parklands, for Indigenous public art projects.

PFR has experience supporting organizations and community groups through a grant making approach to support the City's tree canopy goals. The Community Planting and Stewardship Grant and the Greening Partnership Grant, administered by Urban Forestry, supports non-profit organizations within Toronto and partnerships with public school boards, hospitals, colleges, universities, and non-profit housing providers that will increase canopy cover through tree planting and stewardship on private land. This approach could be adapted to support Indigenous organizations.

## **Internship and pre-apprenticeship programs**

Opportunities to support internship and pre-apprenticeship programs, focussing on Indigenous students, for professions that undertake work in ravines, such as natural area management or landscape architecture, are also feasible for the City of Toronto to pursue. An example of this type of program, the Arborist Pre-Apprenticeship Program at Humber College is a tuition-free program funded by the Government of Ontario where the formal training program is followed with an 8-12 week paid work placement in the industry. These pre-apprenticeship programs are designed to support potential apprentices who may need job readiness skills and trade readiness experience to gain employment as apprentices.

PFR has supported this kind of initiative through grant funding in 2018 and 2019 for Nikibii Dawadonna Giigwag (NDG), an Indigenous Youth Program that weaves together Elder-led cultural teachings with landscape architecture, design and environmental conservation field work. An employment, mentorship, and pathway to postsecondary

education program at the University of Toronto Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, this program is culturally and spiritually grounded, interdisciplinary, experiential, community engaged, and responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. In 2019, eight youth and two graduate students were employed full-time in this program in the summer through partnerships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations.

### **Working with Indigenous stakeholders to inform further opportunities**

While further consultation and planning is required, PFR, IAO and EDC are in a position to facilitate and promote Ravine Strategy related and enabled employment and business development opportunities to Indigenous residents and business owners. Through 2021, staff will continue to consult and work with the broader Indigenous community on implementation of the Ravine Strategy and to explore economic opportunities by connecting the work that contribute to the goals of the Toronto Ravine Strategy and Indigenous placemaking in the City of Toronto's parklands with existing and upcoming vehicles for the development of Indigenous business opportunities. An update on advancement of these initiatives will be provided in Q4 in the Ravine Strategy Implementation Status Update report.

### **4. Expanding stewardship in ravines through unsupervised volunteers**

PFR engages over 3,500 volunteers in over 200 events through Urban Forestry's Parkland Naturalization Program annually (with the exception of 2020, which was impacted by in-person event cancellations in accordance with provincial and municipal COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines). In 2019 alone, these programs contributed to the planting of over 15,000 native trees and shrubs, over 3000 native herbaceous plants and managed approximately 65 hectares of ravine parkland. The Parkland Naturalization Program, started in the 1990s, aims to:

- expand Toronto's tree canopy and natural areas through planting native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants;
- enhance Toronto's natural areas through activities like mulching, removing invasive species, and litter collection; and
- foster environmental awareness and respect for Toronto's natural areas by engaging citizens in hands-on activities.

The Community Stewardship Program, a component of the Parkland Naturalization Program and a flagship example of volunteer engagement in the ravines, provides long-term stewardship opportunities for teams of volunteers that meet in select natural areas on a weekly basis to learn hands-on stewardship techniques, such as removal of invasive species, under the supervision of Forestry staff. In 2019, the Community Stewardship Program facilitated teams at 7 sites across the city, engaging with 271 volunteers, over 142 sessions and workshops. This equated to 3829 volunteer hours contributing to hands-on stewardship and improvement in Toronto's ravines.

While these existing programs are extremely successful, there is demand and interest for alternative model delivery, and PFR has been requested to consider additional opportunities for volunteer stewardship that cannot be met through existing programs and staff resources. Ravine stakeholders have expressed concerns that there are insufficient resources to improve the health of the ravines at scale, especially given the pressures of climate change, invasive species, and recreation impact that Toronto's

ravines are facing. Staff are undertaking two initiatives to address this interest: the development of an unsupervised volunteer framework and a pilot program of the 'Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas' written by the Toronto Nature Stewards (TNS).

### **City-wide unsupervised volunteer framework**

New stewardship opportunities for communities and groups, such those where volunteers are not directly supervised by City or TRCA staff, have the potential to bring additional opportunities to residents, including to underserved communities. They may also allow more community group input into what activities and locations receive volunteer stewardship and for different programs to be developed that can meet the needs and interests of different individuals or groups and different sites. Ultimately, new stewardship opportunities have the potential to lead to the improved health of the ravines.

Coupled with the opportunities identified, there are factors that must be addressed in developing a new model for stewardship with unsupervised volunteers, such as provincial legislation and municipal bylaws, risk and liability, and employee and labour relations. From an ecological perspective, best practices for tree planting and invasive species management requires a holistic approach and investment and activity over a number of years. Clear processes and channels of communications are required between groups and with the public, for instance to deal with multiple groups with different objectives wanting to undertake activities in the same site, or where capital work on infrastructure is planned. An equity and geographic lens on the distribution of City resources is required to ensure that resources support efforts across the ravine system including opportunities for underserved communities. It is also important to recognize that while volunteers may not be directly supervised by City staff in this model, staff resources and potentially other resources such as plant material, supplies and tools, may be required.

A comprehensive, coordinated approach and system-wide lens is needed to manage unsupervised volunteer stewardship in a way that is equitable, effective, and safe for the City, volunteers and community groups, and the natural environment. PFR is leading the development of a framework for unsupervised volunteer stewardship in Toronto's ravines that will provide legal and policy direction, including clarity on what stewardship activities volunteers can undertake and best practices for these activities, as well as the avenues for communications, the City resources available to support these type of volunteer programs, and how activities will be monitored to track overall impacts to ravine health and invasive species populations, and ensure community groups stay on task.

Input from a wide range of ravine advocates and stakeholders is crucial to inform this unsupervised volunteer framework. With the support of a third party facilitator, PFR hosted its first stakeholder engagement session in April 2021, to solicit input and feedback on the types of activities the City should support and the kinds of resources the City should provide for unsupervised volunteer stewardship in ravines. Invitees included 28 groups, covering a range of ravines, communities and types of

organizations across the city, who have participated in or expressed interest in ravine stewardship. See Appendix A for a full list of invitees.

Using the feedback provided, a draft framework will be developed. A second stakeholder engagement session will be hosted to review the draft framework to ensure it will meet the needs of the groups interested in undertaking unsupervised stewardship in Toronto's ravines.

### **Pilot for 'Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas'**

In December 2020, a Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas, developed by the community organization Toronto Nature Stewards and interns from the University of Toronto's Masters of Forest Conservation program, along with input from more than 30 experienced stewards, academics and industry experts, was brought forward to City Council. PFR was directed to review the manual as a template for expanding ravine and natural areas stewardship in Toronto. This review found there is common ground between the objectives and the proposed activities of the Manual with the goals and principles of the Ravine Strategy, as well as some areas that will require further discussion in order to fully operationalize the Manual.

To advance the common ground between the Manual and the priorities of the Ravine Strategy, PFR is currently working with TNS to develop a pilot program that will test and operationalize components of the Manual, with plans to launch in spring/summer 2021, in accordance with provincial and municipal COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines. The pilot will inform the development of the framework to support unsupervised volunteer stewardship in Toronto's ravines, including the number of stewards projected to be needed and how will they be managed to ensure a distribution across the ravine network. At the time of writing this report, PFR and TNS have identified site locations and activities, and are finalizing a clarification of roles and responsibilities, health and safety protocols and the key performance indicators that will measure pilot program success to inform both the Manual and the city-wide unsupervised volunteer framework. Launching the Toronto Nature Stewards' pilot of the 'Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas' is a priority this year, pending COVID-19 regulations. TNS will monitor key performance indicators for the pilot and report back to PFR in the fall.

The combined information received through evaluation of the pilot and input from a comprehensive group of ravine advocates and stakeholders will inform the framework to support unsupervised volunteer stewardship in Toronto's ravines and ensure its ongoing success. An update on the framework will be included in the Q4 2021 Ravine Strategy Implementation Status Update report.

### **5. Interdivisional investment in ravines and ICIP Delivery**

Multiple City divisions, TRCA, other partner organizations, along with other levels of government, invest to address the challenges facing Toronto's ravines. This year the City is investing \$82.5 million in Toronto's Ravine Strategy through \$12.4 million in the 2021 Council Approved Operating Budget for PFR and \$70.1 million in the 2021 Council Approved Capital Budget across a variety of City divisions including PFR, Transportation Services and Toronto Water as well as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. This high-level estimate of investment supports park

enhancements; storm damage repair and reconstruction of ravine parks; multi-use trail, cycling, pedestrian and public realm improvements; bridge state-of-good-repair work; watercourse erosion mitigation projects and channel stabilization to protect watermains and sewers and other assets.

In October 2020, the Province of Ontario announced the launch of the federal-provincial \$1.05 billion COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure funding stream under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP). The purpose of this funding stream is to build or renovate health and safety related projects in long-term care (\$100 million), education (\$700 million) and local governments (\$250 million). For this program, the federal government will contribute up to 80% of eligible project costs for municipal projects and the Province will contribute the remaining 20%. Projects must start no later than September 30, 2021 and must be substantially completed by December 31, 2021. Toronto's allocation under the Local Government Sub-Stream is \$24,266,076.

On December 16, 2020, City Council authorized the City Manager to apply for funding for through this ICIP funding stream. Eight projects with a value of \$6.2 million that will advance implementation of Toronto's Ravine Strategy were included as part of the City's submission. These projects will improve access to ravines, as well as supporting ecological restoration, include trail and access improvements, new wayfinding and wetland restoration in various ravines across the city. At the time of writing this report, the City of Toronto is waiting for announcement of funding confirmation.

## **6. Next Steps**

This report outlines the key actions taken to strategically advance engagement in ravines through partnerships as a significant step in implementation of Toronto's Ravine Strategy. Student internships, economic opportunities for Indigenous businesses, new stewardship programs and partnering to invest in the ravines support the implementation of the Strategy, in particular the guiding principle 'Partner'.

Staff will continue to advance these initiatives through 2021, along with other actions that support the Partner principle, such as the establishment of the Ravine Strategy Leadership Table of influential, passionate philanthropists, non-profit and foundation leaders that will support the development of the Ravine Campaign and generate the bold ideas necessary to unlock philanthropic support for the Ravine Strategy.

Staff will report back in Q4 with a Ravine Strategy Implementation Status Update on advancement of the Ravine Strategy using appropriate metrics. The first of these three-year updates will include an update on the Leadership Table and pathway for Indigenous representation, actions necessary to seek increased fines related to dumping in ravines and an ecological integrity framework, as well an update on the outcomes of the 2021 accomplishments towards these initiatives to increase engagement in ravines through partnerships through student internships, economic opportunities for Indigenous businesses, new stewardship programs and fostering key partnerships to invest in the ravines.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Janie Romoff  
General Manager  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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### **Attachment A:**

Groups invited to participate in stakeholder engagement on framework for unsupervised volunteers in ravine stewardship

## **Attachment A – Groups invited to participate in stakeholder engagement on framework for unsupervised volunteers in ravine stewardship**

- Chinese Canadian Environmental Organization
- Community Stewardship Program at Nordheimer Ravine
- Community Stewardship Program at Humber Bay Butterfly Habitat
- Don't Mess with the Don
- Evergreen
- Forest Valley Outdoor Education Centre
- Friends of the Don East
- Friends of Glen Stewart Ravine
- Friends of the Rouge Watershed
- Friends of Thorncliffe Park / Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee
- High Park Nature Centre
- High Park Stewards
- Friends of Sam Smith (FOSS)
- Humber Arboretum
- Indigenous Land Stewardship Circle
- LEAF
- Park People
- Scarlettwood–Humber River & Raymore Park inTO the Ravines Community Champion
- Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Toronto-York
- Taiaiaiko'n Historical Preservation Society
- Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve
- Toronto Botanical Gardens
- Toronto Field Naturalists
- Toronto Nature Stewards
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority