

City Council**Notice of Motion**

MM36.19	ACTION			Ward: 13
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Tell Metrolinx Not To Cut-and-Cover Moss Park - by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Paula Fletcher

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Paula Fletcher, recommends that:

1. City Council request Metrolinx, in consultation with the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the Executive Director, Transit Expansion Office, to host a public meeting as soon as possible inviting community organizations including the Garden District Residents Association, Friends of Moss Park, Toronto Community Housing, the local Councillor and other identified stakeholders on the Moss Park station location and construction technique as proposed by Metrolinx, including but not limited to:
 - a. alternative locations considered and reasons for rejection;
 - b. detailed impacts on park use and mitigation strategies; and
 - c. coordination strategy for the Moss Park revitalization.
2. City Council request Metrolinx, in partnership with the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and the Executive Director, Transit Expansion Office to immediately create a working group with community organizations, including the Garden District Residents Association, Friends of Moss Park, Toronto Community Housing, the local Councillor and other stakeholders, advising on community focussed issues, as well as long-term and short-term impacts for the community.

Summary

The John Innes Community Centre and Moss Park Arena located at Sherbourne Street and Queen Street East in the Moss Park greenspace have been long overdue for revitalization. Since 2015, the local councillor and community has been working with The 519 Community Centre (The 519) and Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff on plans to redesign and rebuild the outdated but well-used recreation facilities and parkland.

By the end of 2016, the previous partnership with The 519 and their private donor that originally catalyzed the revitalization efforts was determined by City staff as no longer feasible. The project was stalled until 2019 when City Council adopted the implementation strategy for the new Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan which included recommendations for the replacement of John Innes Community Recreation Centre, Moss Park Arena facade improvements, and park improvements.

Concurrently as City staff work to redesign, and reinvigorate Moss Park to better serve the community, the Province in 2019 announced plans to build the Ontario Line, which essentially replaces the City's long-awaited Relief Line. The technical and construction details were not fast coming from Metrolinx as stations moved and then added and deleted with little detail and no meaningful public consultation.

Eventually, it was revealed that Metrolinx wanted to take over the south half of the park to facilitate staging and the building of the Moss Park station for the Ontario Line. They are using a method of subway construction known as cut-and-cover which will be highly disruptive and destructive to the trees and all landscaping in the park.

The timeline for the Ontario Line Moss Park station construction is expected to cause further multi-year delays to an already overdue recreation project. The timeline for City's project delivery of the community recreation facilities is now pushed out to 2028 and possibly longer.

The Ontario Line construction and staging at Moss Park is expected to temporarily but significantly reduce access to the existing green space, including the baseball diamond and result in permanent loss of large canopy trees along the Queen Street park frontage. The loss of large canopy trees is a major concern and any reduction in green space is worrisome because a majority of area residents, many of whom are vulnerable, living in adjacent buildings and homes will lose access to their only recreational and green space. Undoubtedly, in a city where green space is limited for residents, it is imperative that we preserve our parks to ensure positive public health outcomes such as a reduction of stress, promoting physical activity and filtering out air pollutants.

The local Councillor has asked repeatedly that Metrolinx and City staff consider other sites including shifting the work zone toward the armoury located to the West or using a different construction technique. In addition, Metrolinx was asked to consider incorporating the station into a larger urban revitalization effort with development opportunities outside of the park just across Sherbourne and Queen streets. While adjacent options are limited but still a possibility, Metrolinx continues to move forward with their plans to remove mature trees and build a large staging area inside of the park, because it is the most cost-efficient for them to take over a city park instead of negotiating land use of the armoury with the Federal Government or expropriation of private property to the east and south.

Friends of Moss Park and other community stakeholders have expressed strong opposition to Metrolinx taking over their park and instead ask that construction take place outside of the park. Further to that, building a transit-oriented community development on Queen Street East or Sherbourne Street would make planning sense if the future Moss Park station was incorporated in the new development. The main rationale for establishing the staging area, underground work and station location inside of the Moss Park green space appears to be cost benefits exclusive to Metrolinx. While a presentation deck from Metrolinx summarizing their staging area preference inside Moss Park was provided to the local Councillor, it remains

unclear if other staging areas or station locations have been technically vetted for feasibility. Six months ago, the Councillor's office provided a Terms of Reference to develop working groups for each station in Toronto Centre. To this day, Metrolinx has yet to implement a response to the request for community collaboration. There is an opportunity for meaningful, long-term, and consistent engagement to help build complete communities while supporting transit development in the downtown.

A station on the alternative corners of Sherbourne and Queen incorporated into a development application would help revitalize the street and still permit the park use and much faster build-out of the community recreation centre, arena and parkland. This will uphold accountability and better meet local planning objectives and protect parkland all the while improving collaboration on smarter, more sustainable transit expansion in an undervalued section of the city.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM36.19