

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

Toronto City Hall  
100 Queen St. W., Toronto  
Attn: City Clerk & Toronto City Council

**RE: IE27.6 Review of City of Toronto Golf Courses**

Dear Mayor Tory and City Councillors,

In October of 2020, after strong public support from community members and organizations like ours, City Council voted to launch a review of five City-operated golf courses and consult with the public about how these parklands are used. This review was an important opportunity for the City to hear from residents, and reimagine how public green space can serve the greatest public good. This consultation happened during an ongoing pandemic that has shown how critical green space is for wellbeing, and that access among residents is not equal and part of deep inequities in our city.

The City heard important ideas and perspectives from community members during the public consultations, which included local and city-wide virtual meetings, an Indigenous Leaders and Communities Focus Group, stakeholder focus groups, interviews and an online survey with more than 6000 submissions. Communities put forward ideas and shared perspectives about how the golf courses could best serve community priorities - such as Indigenous placekeeping, food growing, trail access, and natural area restoration.

The report outlines City Staff recommendations for future use of the golf course lands, which includes maintaining golf course operations at all five courses, expanding additional alternative and complementary uses for all of the golf course parklands and launching a master planning process for Dentonia Park. This master planning process would have allowed for deeper community engagement in shaping the parklands to serve local priorities. However, the Infrastructure and Environment Committee voted to not move ahead with this master planning process. This is an opportunity to reconsider this decision and undertake a meaningful process with residents to plan how Dentonia Park's green space can be shared to benefit the local community.

It is important that you listen to the feedback from the consultation in a manner that is open and fair. We are calling on you to broaden the vision for these parklands beyond just golf operations, and ensure that this significant public resource is serving the public good. Simply upholding the status quo is out of step with the pressing and evolving

needs of our city and communities. We urge you to bring forward a plan for these lands that is equitable, responsive to community priorities, ecologically responsible, and lives up to the commitments that you have made to Toronto residents.

**On February 2nd, when City Council considers the results of the Review of City of Toronto Golf Courses and votes on next steps, we urge you to adopt the following recommendations.**

- **Listen to and collaborate with Indigenous rights holders in decision-making for the parklands.** Adopt the feedback already put forward by Indigenous community members (including the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee) about the five golf course sites including recommendations for Indigenous placekeeping (IEC recommendation 12), historical acknowledgement, and protecting and restoring the land. Work with Indigenous community members to develop plans for Indigenous-led uses of the land for each of the five sites. Uphold Toronto's commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people and establish a distinct process to engage Indigenous rights holders in decision-making about these lands.
- **Expand alternative uses to reflect the priorities and needs expressed by local communities for each of the five sites.** Engage local communities in a meaningful process to develop plans for new and enhanced uses such as trail access, food growing, and natural area restoration. Initiate a master planning process for all of the city-owned golf parklands, starting with Dentonia, to create more equitable access to green space in these neighbourhoods and to better serve local priorities.
- **Uphold City commitments to social equity and ensure plans for the parklands advance important priorities.** The City has made important commitments to address profound inequities in our city, including the Black Food Sovereignty Plan, the Toronto Food Charter, and the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy. The five parklands under review represent an important opportunity to apply and integrate these commitments and plans into land use planning.
- **Use data collection to inform equitable land use policies.** The City does not currently have a mechanism to know who is using the courses and where they live (tracking rounds of golf is insufficient). As such, report back annually on the data capture and survey plan (recommendation 6) which includes income, race, gender, neighbourhood, and other demographic and equity metrics, and how this data is being used for future decision-making at city golf lands.

- **Advance climate and biodiversity goals and responsible environmental stewardship in these parklands.** Adopt best environmental practices and standards for golf course grounds and operations, phasing out the use of harmful substances such as pesticides, and minimizing water and energy use. Ensure the natural infrastructure provided by these parklands is optimized to strengthen climate resilience, such as offering flood protection and cooling and providing a respite for local residents during heat waves. Maximize natural area restoration; naturalized golf lands can also be a vital stopover habitat for migratory bird species.
  
- **Establish a multi-stakeholder steering committee that will promote equitable public participation in planning for these parklands.** Rather than establishing a City Golf Steering Committee (recommendation 16), work with civil society organizations, local groups, and other stakeholders, to establish a steering committee structure that will provide guidance to the City on how to enable more equitable access to green space in Toronto, and advise on how to facilitate meaningful participation by residents – especially local equity-deserving communities – in planning for year-round, multi-use options at the five sites.

The decision on these five parklands represents an important opportunity to consider how sharing public space and resources can contribute to building a more caring and equitable city where people can thrive. Thank you for your consideration.

**Sincerely,**

Afri-Can FoodBasket  
Black Environmental Initiative  
Design Climate Action  
FoodShare  
Greenpeace Canada  
Progress Toronto  
Social Planning Toronto  
South Asian Women's Rights Organization  
Sundance Harvest  
Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA)  
Toronto Field Naturalists  
Toronto Youth Food Policy Council  
Toronto Urban Growers  
Walk Toronto