



Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 1:

Improving Oversight of Day-to-Day Maintenance Helps to Ensure City Parks are Beautiful, Clean and Safe

September 30, 2024

Tara Anderson, CPA, CA, CFE, CIA, BAcc
Auditor General

**AUDITOR
GENERAL**

TORONTO

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Background	7
Audit Results	9
A. Leverage Technology and Improve Scheduling, Tracking, and Monitoring Processes	9
A. 1. Some City Crews' Reported Work Locations Did Not Match GPS Vehicle Reports.....	9
A. 2. Incomplete Information and Missing Approvals on Daily Logs	20
B. Strengthen Monitoring and On-site Supervision of Daily Maintenance Activities.....	25
C. Set Performance Expectations and Measure Outcomes.....	28
C. 1. Internal Service Level Standards Are Not Always Met	28
C. 2. Key Performance Indicators Should be Developed and Measured	32
Conclusion.....	34
Audit Objectives, Scope and Methodology	36
Exhibit 1: Parks Service Level Standards.....	39
Appendix 1: Management's Response to the Auditor General's Report Entitled: "Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 1: Improving Oversight of Day-to-Day Maintenance Helps to Ensure City Parks are Beautiful, Clean and Safe"	43

Executive Summary

Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division's mission is to provide safe, beautiful parks

The Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) Division's mission is to improve the quality of life of Toronto's diverse communities by providing safe, beautiful parks; a healthy, expanding urban forest; and high quality, community-focused recreational experiences.

Parks Branch maintains City parks and amenities

The Parks Branch is responsible for ongoing care and maintenance of City-operated parks, including various amenities found in each park. The variety of assets to be maintained and found in each park across the City may include any of the following: trails, benches, picnic areas, sports fields or courts, areas for playground or water play, beaches, a ski hill, outdoor skating areas, parking lots, amphitheatres, designated dogs off-leash areas, lights, washrooms, and lawns or turf areas which may be either natural or synthetic.

Audit is being conducted in two phases

Our audit of parks maintenance operations is being conducted in two phases.

Phase 1 focused on efficiency of daily park maintenance and compliance with service level standards

The objective of this first phase of the audit, which is the subject of this report, focused on the efficiency of daily park maintenance activities, compliance with the established service level standards, and identifying opportunities for improving how the Parks Branch performs day-to-day maintenance to help keep parks beautiful, clean, and safe. In assessing this objective, our audit aimed to answer the following questions:

- Are factors such as classification/size, location, usage (including unintended types of usage) of the park considered when implementing operational maintenance service level standards?
- Are operational maintenance activities assigned and completed in a manner that maximizes crew productivity and achieves service level standards?

The second phase of the audit will review processes related to parks inspections and repairs and maintenance of various amenities in the parks.

Opportunities for continuous improvement

Our audit identified opportunities to:

- A. Leverage technology and improve scheduling, tracking, and monitoring processes
- B. Strengthen monitoring and on-site supervision of daily maintenance activities
- C. Set performance expectations and measure outcomes

A. Leverage Technology and Improve Scheduling, Tracking, and Monitoring Processes

Crews report their activities on daily logs

The Parks Branch uses Daily Activity Sheets (also referred to as daily logs or DAS) to schedule and track the work completed every day. The daily log is the official record of work performed by a crew and also is a key control to monitor the crew's work. It must be accurately completed, signed by the crew leader, and submitted to the designated Foreperson at the end of each day.

Some City crews' reported work locations did not match GPS vehicle reports

We found that daily logs were not always properly completed. Park locations and working times were not always accurately reported on daily logs and did not always match Global Positioning System (GPS) records. In our review of 85 daily logs¹ against available vehicle GPS information, we found:

- 46 per cent of daily logs where GPS indicates crews did not stop at one or more park locations
- 87 per cent of daily logs where crews stopped at one or more City/park locations not recorded in the daily log, where there is no way to determine from the log whether any park maintenance was actually performed at the stop
- 75 per cent of daily logs where GPS indicates the time in/time out at many locations was not accurate

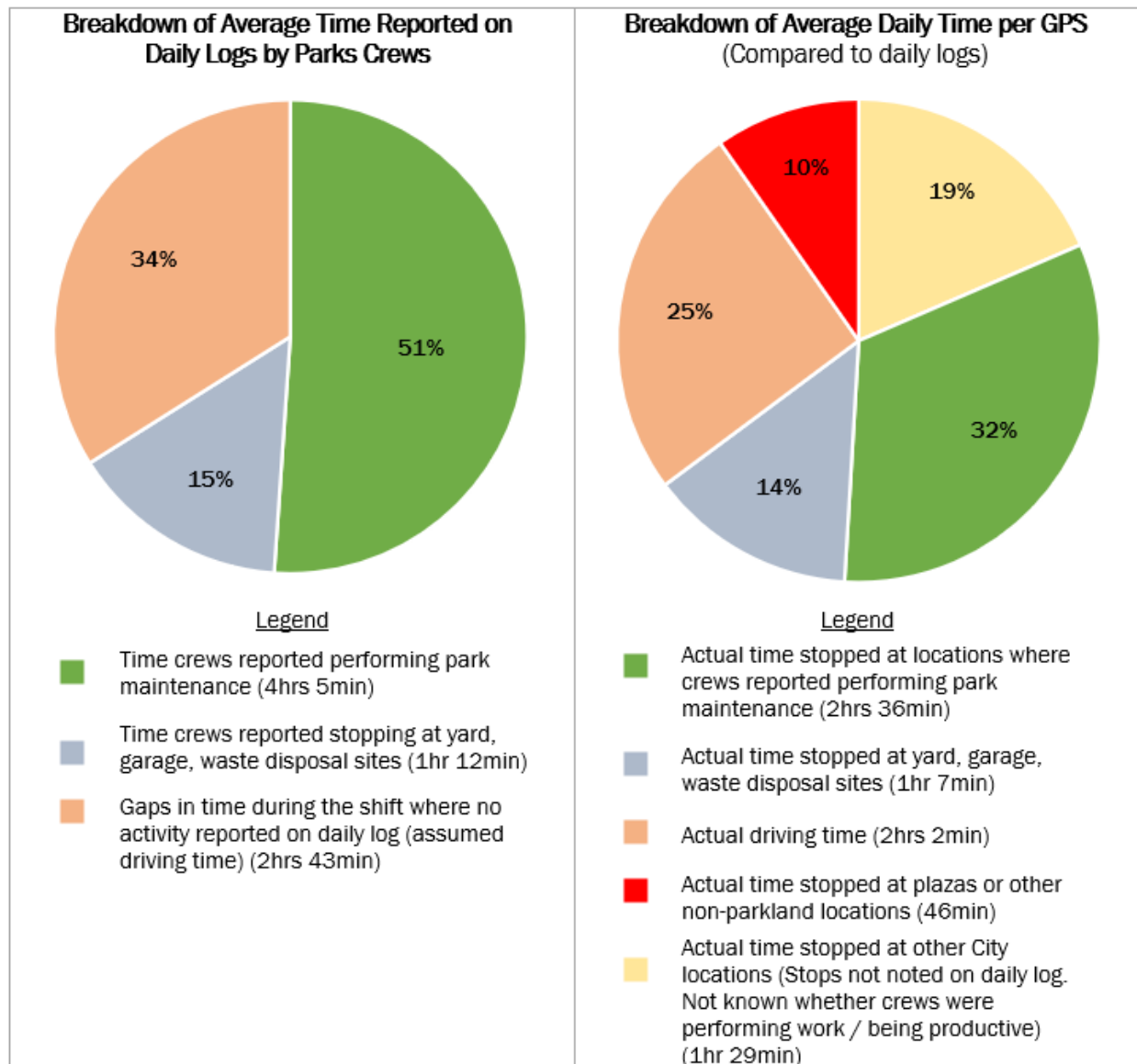
Vehicles stopped at retail establishments, eateries, and other non-parkland locations

Furthermore, in 73 of the 85 (86 per cent) logs we reviewed, the GPS data showed that vehicles stopped at locations that were not parkland, transportation garages, or waste disposal sites. Instead, the stops were near retail establishments (e.g., groceries), eateries, industrial areas, residential addresses, and places of worship. The total time spent at these locations, together with reported running lunches and breaks at other parkland locations, exceeded the allowable 60 minutes per day for lunches and breaks in 30 of the 73 (41 per cent) instances.

¹ Refer to the Audit Objectives, Scope and Methodology section for a description of how our sample was selected.

On average, crews reported spending around 4 hours performing park maintenance. GPS indicates crews spent about 2.5 hours at park locations

On average, crews reported spending just over four hours (51 per cent), within a standard 8-hour shift, performing park maintenance activities on location. However, the GPS information for the vehicles indicate that on average, 2 hours and 36 minutes (32 per cent) was spent at park locations reported on the daily log. This is illustrated in the Figure below:



Not every vehicle is equipped with GPS technology

Installation of GPS on Parks Branch vehicles started in 2022. At the time of this audit, there were 604 vehicles used by Parks Branch. Of these, 192 (32 per cent) City vehicles did not have GPS installed. Without a GPS device installed on a vehicle, management cannot assess the accuracy and completeness of the information in the daily logs completed by City staff.

Incomplete information and missing approvals on some daily logs

We also found that daily logs were not always completed properly by staff and were not always reviewed and approved by the Foreperson or Supervisor. In our review of 564 daily logs across the four districts and the Waterfront², 13 per cent were not signed off and 28 per cent did not indicate what activities were performed at one or more park locations.

Most records were paper based making it difficult to aggregate data for the purpose of analyses and comparison across the districts and for strategic decision making.

Going forward, implementing procedures and processes that leverage GPS and other enabling technologies can help the Parks Branch to improve its scheduling, tracking, and monitoring of maintenance crews.

B. Strengthen Monitoring and On-site Supervision of Daily Maintenance Activities

Maintenance crews operate out of each of the four geographic districts and the Waterfront. Each crew reports to a Supervisor who is responsible for ensuring that maintenance practices conform with policies and procedures and established service level standards.

On-site supervision/monitoring activities are inconsistent

We found that on-site supervision and monitoring of day-to-day parks maintenance activities, and related records, varies greatly between the Supervisors and across the districts.

Areas where guidelines are needed

Supervisors and Forepersons receive training on various topics including expectations for their role, documentation requirements, and use of digital tools. However, there are no specific operational policies or guidelines that provide direction to Park Branch Supervisors on matters such as:

- what Supervisors are expected to review with respect to maintenance operations
- how often Supervisors should be conducting parks visits/inspections

² The Parks Branch organizes its staff through a geographic, district-based operating model. The parks are divided across four districts and the Waterfront covering 29 local areas.

- what supporting documentation and records must be retained to demonstrate supervisory reviews
- what Supervisors should be documenting, communicating, and following up on, when non-compliance with service level standards and/or policies and procedures is identified

Going forward, Parks Branch should continue to strengthen supervision, on-site monitoring, and quality assurance processes over park maintenance activities.

C. Set Performance Expectations and Measure Outcomes

Service level standards set out the expected frequency of park maintenance activities

The Parks Branch performs a wide range of regular maintenance activities, including the upkeep and care of grass / turf, pathways, washrooms, and much more. Service level standards setting out the expected frequency of activities were established in 2012 and updated in 2022. It does not appear that these service level standards have been benchmarked against other municipalities.

Service level standards are not always met

Some Supervisors advised that the service level standards were not always met due to inclement weather, equipment breakdowns, and/or absenteeism or vacancies. Based on our review of a sample of daily logs from June and August 2023, we found that the service level standards were not consistently achieved, including weekly/bi-weekly litter picking, grass mowing, edging and trimming, daily splash pad/wading pool maintenance, and daily washroom maintenance.

Reliable data is needed to measure performance

The manual, paper-based processes and poor quality of available data pose a significant challenge to collecting and analyzing information in a meaningful way.

Key performance indicators should be developed and measured

The Parks Branch has not established key performance indicators to measure the achievement of the existing service level standards. Measuring performance will enable management to identify opportunities to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness and areas where service improvements are needed.

Conclusion

City parks are places where the public come together to build community, play, and interact with nature. The Parks Branch plays an important role in maintaining these community spaces and ensuring that parks are beautiful, clean, and safe and meet the needs of communities.

During this audit, we observed that the Parks Branch does not regularly monitor whether its service level standards are achieved. While management and staff have indicated that the Parks Branch considers factors such as classification/size, location, usage (including unintended types of usage) of the park when implementing operational maintenance service level standards, because of the manual, paper-based records and limitations in the quality and reliability of information captured, we were unable to readily determine how consistently minimum services levels were met or exceeded. We identified that service level standards were not consistently met for some parks in the sample we selected. Consequently, our audit highlights that there are opportunities for the Parks Branch to develop the necessary processes to periodically measure and report service level performance and to identify and address gaps between service level expectations and actual performance.

We also observed discrepancies between maintenance activities reported on the daily logs and GPS records. Consequently, our audit highlights opportunities to implement monitoring and accountability processes and strengthen supervision to improve crew productivity to consistently achieve service level standards across all City parks.

In our view, implementing the nine recommendations contained in this report will enable the Parks Branch to improve its procedures and processes for conducting parks maintenance activities.

Background

PFR's mission is to provide safe, beautiful parks

The Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) Division's mission is to improve the quality of life of Toronto's diverse communities by providing safe, beautiful parks; a healthy, expanding urban forest; and high quality, community-focused recreational experiences. The focus of this audit is on the City's parks.

1,500 parks in the City

Toronto's parks come in all shapes and sizes. They are located throughout communities and neighbourhoods, ravines, and along the waterfront. The City's parkland and ravine system cover 13 per cent of the total land area of the City, which includes over 1,500 parks and encompasses over 8,000 hectares of land.³

Parks Branch maintains City parks and amenities

The Parks Branch is responsible for ongoing care and maintenance of City-operated parks, including various amenities found in each park. The variety of assets to be maintained and found in each park across the City may include any of the following: trails, benches, picnic areas, sports fields or courts, areas for playground or water play, beaches, a ski hill, outdoor skating areas, parking lots, amphitheatres, designated dogs off-leash areas, lights, washrooms, and lawns or turf areas which may be either natural or synthetic.

Seasonal staff hired during peak periods

The majority of maintenance activities are conducted by Parks Branch staff. Much of the ongoing maintenance of City parkland is conducted on a seasonal basis. The Parks Branch has a large seasonal workforce employed during the peak maintenance periods (April to October).

Park Operations are district based

The Division organizes its staff through a geographic, district-based operating model. The parks are divided across four districts and the Waterfront covering 29 local areas. Planning and scheduling of routine maintenance is the responsibility of the district Supervisors. Over the course of the day, crews often travel to multiple parks to perform maintenance work. Some larger parks have dedicated on-site staff to service the park.

³ [Parkland Strategy – Growing Toronto Parkland \(Final Report, November 2019\)](#) adopted by Council on November 26, 2019.

Maintenance service level standards

The Parks Branch has established service level standards for operations and maintenance of parks. The service level standards set out requirements for keeping parks clean and safe. They specify what needs to be done, when, and how often. The current standards address activities such as lawn or turf and general amenities maintenance, litter picking, washroom cleaning and stocking, graffiti removal, baseball diamond and beach grooming, and many others. The service level standards reviewed as part of this audit are summarized in **Exhibit 1**.

2024 operating budget

The Parks Branch 2024 operating budget⁴ is over \$190 million (gross), with \$57.5 million dedicated to general summer parkland maintenance as summarized in **Table 1**. The Parks Branch workforce includes permanent and temporary seasonal staff, and ranges from about 700 staff in the winter season to over 1,300 staff in the spring/summer season.

Table 1: 2024 Operating Budget Dedicated to General Summer Parkland Maintenance and Winter Operations

	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Parkland Maintenance – General Summer (Gross Expenditures)	\$53.7M	\$57.9M	\$57.5M
Parkland Maintenance – General Summer (Net Expenditures)	\$47.4M	\$50.6M	\$53.0M
Winter Operations (Gross Expenditures)	\$17.4M	\$17.6M	\$18.8M
Winter Operations (Net Expenditures)	\$17.3M	\$17.6M	\$17.4M

Source: Provided by Parks, Forestry and Recreation excluding program areas not in audit scope (e.g. horticulture).

⁴ <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/97b1-2024-Public-Book-PFR-V1.pdf>

Audit Results

A. Leverage Technology and Improve Scheduling, Tracking, and Monitoring Processes

Park maintenance is performed by City staff

Parks maintenance work is mainly performed by City crews. This involves turf maintenance, litter pick-up, washroom cleaning, graffiti removal, playground inspection, keeping assets in good repair, and much more. Some crews travel to different parks throughout their shift to perform maintenance activities, while larger parks have dedicated staff on site. Management advised that approximately 76 per cent of staff positions are mobile and perform various maintenance activities in multiple parks; about 24 per cent are dedicated to specific sites.

Daily logs must be completed by staff and approved by a Foreperson

The Parks Branch uses Daily Activity Sheets (also referred to as DAS or daily logs) to schedule and track the work completed every day. At the beginning of each shift, Forepersons meet with their crews at City yards to provide special instructions and review the assigned routes and maintenance work. At the end of each shift, Leadhands or daily work leads must submit the completed daily log to their Foreperson for review and approval.

Daily logs are used to monitor crews' daily tasks

The daily log is the official record of work performed by a crew. It must be accurately completed, signed by the crew leader, and submitted to the designated Foreperson at the yard at the end of each day. The daily log is a key control to monitor crews' work.

A. 1. Some City Crews' Reported Work Locations Did Not Match GPS Vehicle Reports

GPS data is not used to monitor crew's activities

At the time of our audit, Parks Branch was not using Global Positioning System (GPS) data to regularly monitor crews' activities. Management advised that going forward, as part of implementing a robust quality assurance and accountability program, policies and procedures related to the use of GPS are in the process of being developed and implemented.

Crews are not always accurately reporting locations and working time

We reviewed a sample of 85 daily logs with available GPS data⁵ from 13 wards/areas across four districts and the Waterfront and found that the locations and working times reported by parks maintenance crews did not always match the GPS records. Specifically, when reviewing the GPS records against daily logs, we noted that:

- For 39 of 85 (46 per cent) logs, crews did not stop at one or more park location recorded in the daily log
- For 74 of 85 (87 per cent) logs, crews stopped at one or more City/park locations not recorded in the daily log, where there is no way to determine from the log whether any park maintenance was actually performed at the stop
- For 64 of 85 (75 per cent) logs, the working times (time in/time out) at many locations recorded in the daily log was not accurate

Vehicles stopped at retail establishments, eateries, and other non-parkland locations

Furthermore, in 73 of the 85 (86 per cent) logs we reviewed, the GPS data showed that vehicles stopped at locations that were not parkland, transportation garages, or waste disposal sites. Instead, the stops were near retail establishments (e.g., groceries), eateries, industrial areas, residential addresses, and places of worship. The total time spent at these locations, together with reported running lunches and breaks at other parkland locations, exceeded the allowable 60 minutes per day for lunches and breaks in 30 of the 73 (41 per cent) instances.

While the Parks Branch has established procedures related to running lunches and rest breaks, a refresher training will help to ensure staff understand the procedures and what is expected of them.

The three examples that follow demonstrate vehicles going to locations that were not recorded in the daily logs and parking near locations that appear to be non-work related like eateries, plazas, and other commercial or industrial areas. The extent of exceptions identified in other daily logs varied in frequency and magnitude.

⁵ Refer to the Audit Objectives, Scope and Methodology section for a further description of how our sample was selected.

Example 1: Crew Did Not Stop at Five of Eight Park Locations Reported on Their Daily Logs

We reviewed locations and times reported on a crew's daily log against the GPS report for the vehicle noted on the daily log and found that the information on the daily log did not match the GPS data. According to the GPS, the crew vehicle **did not stop at five of eight park locations** reported on the daily log. Instead, the vehicle was **parked at a plaza for about 2 hours and 35 minutes** and **returned to the yard approximately 3 hours before the end of the shift**. In addition, of the three parks that were visited by the crew, less time was spent at each location than was indicated on the daily log, and the 'time in/time out' was not accurately recorded by the crew.

Figure 1 below illustrates the route recorded in the daily log (in yellow, stops 1-8 plus yard) compared to the route registered in the GPS (in blue, stops A-D plus yard). The plaza (in blue, stop A) where the vehicle stopped for over 2.5 hours can be viewed in **Figure 2**.

Figure 1: Comparison of the Route Recorded in the Daily Log to the Route Registered in GPS

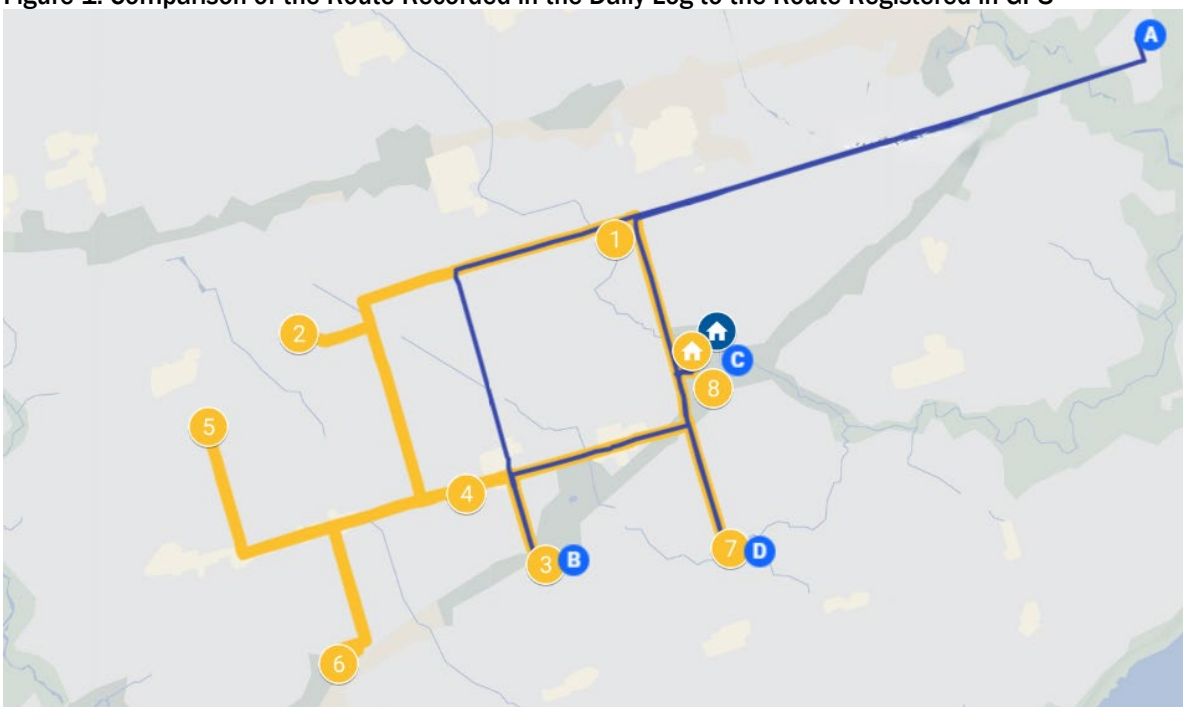


Figure 2: Google Streetview Images of Plaza Stop Location (In front and back: Stop B in Figure 1)



Example 2: Crew Regularly Stopped at Plazas and Other Non-City Locations

By reviewing a crew's daily logs for an entire 40-hour work week against the GPS report for the vehicle noted on the logs, we found that the **crew stopped for more than 10.5 hours (over 25 per cent of the work week) at plazas and non-City locations**, for an average of 2 hours and 6 minutes each day. The GPS data shows that the crew was only at the park locations they reported on the daily logs for about 11.5 hours (48 per cent) of the 24 hours that the crew reported they were performing parks maintenance.

On the first day of the work week, **the crew did not stop at any of the five parkland locations that they reported working at for over 4.5 hours** on their daily log. **Figure 3** below, illustrates the route recorded in the log (**in yellow, stops 1-5 plus yard**) compared to the route registered in the GPS (**in blue, stops A-E plus yard**). Examples of the non-City locations (**in blue, stop A, D, E**) where the vehicle stopped are shown in **Figure 4**. Furthermore, the crew stopped at two park locations (**in blue, stops B and C**) for a period of about 1.75 hours that were not recorded on the daily log and it is unknown if any maintenance activities took place.

For the rest of the week, the crew stopped at all locations reported on their daily logs (except one) but for much shorter periods of time than reported. For example, on the second day, the crew stopped at all six park locations reported on their daily log. They reported spending 5 hours and 10 minutes working in the parks; however, according to the GPS, they stopped for a total of about 2 hours and 38 minutes at the parks and stopped for about 2 hours and 34 minutes at plazas and non-City locations. On the third day, the crew stopped at all three park locations reported on their daily log. They reported spending 5 hours and 15 minutes working in the parks; however, according to the GPS, they stopped for a total of about 3 hours and 20 minutes at the parks and stopped for about 1 hour and 9 minutes at plazas and non-City locations.

Figure 3: Comparison of the Route Recorded in the Daily Log to the Route Registered in GPS

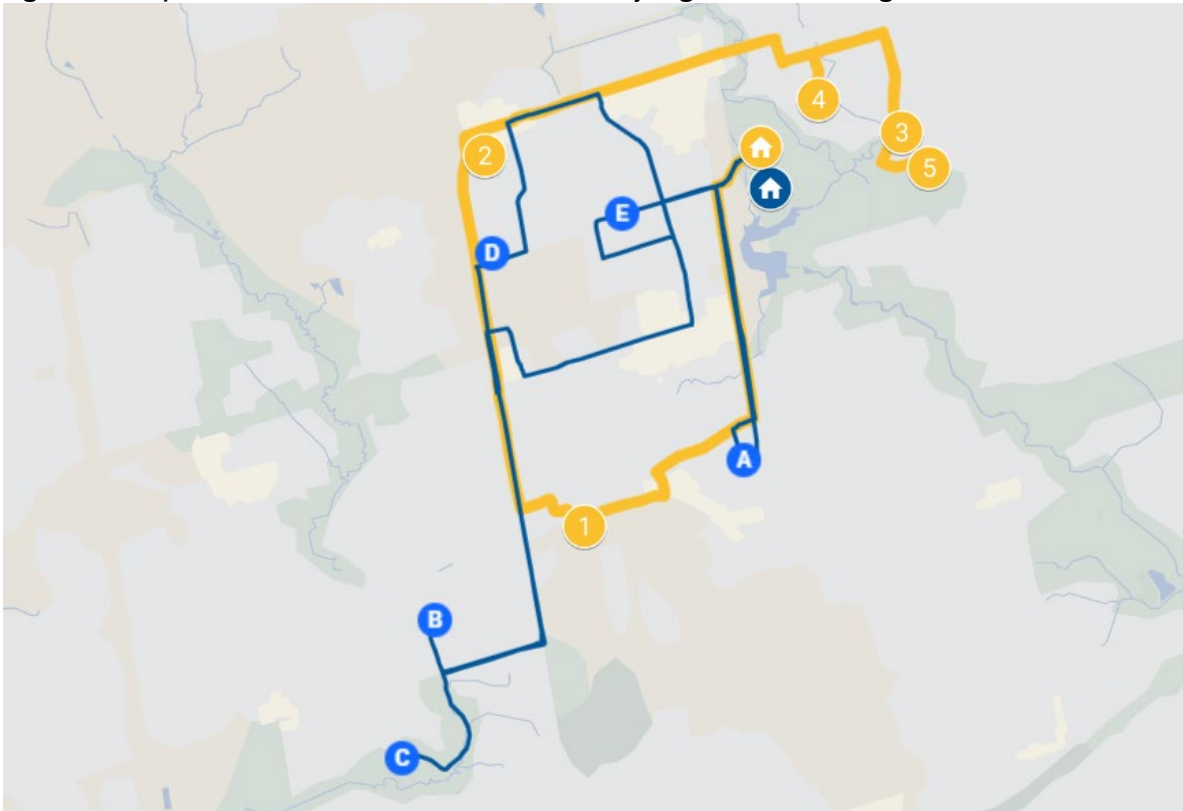
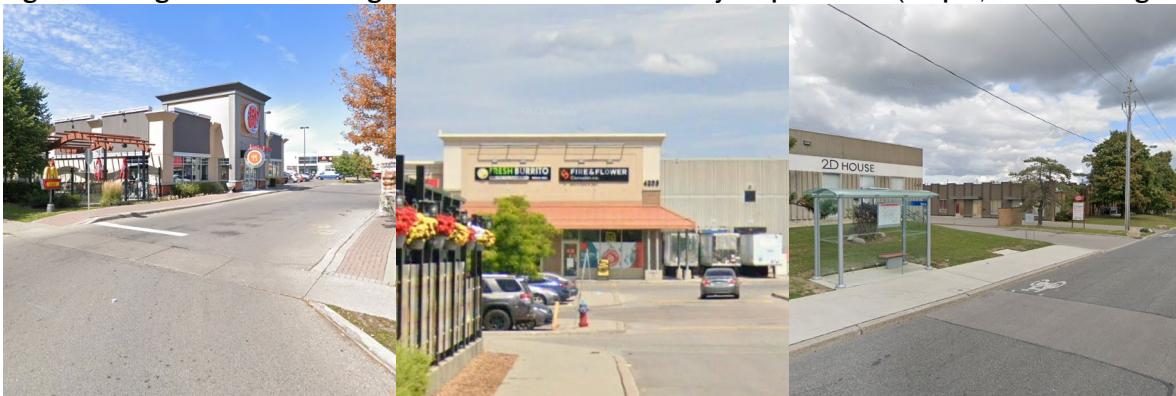


Figure 4: Google Streetview Images of Plaza and Other Non-City Stop Location (Stop A, D and E in Figure 3)



Picture on *Left*: Stops at the same plaza every day of the week (**Figure 3, Stop A in blue**)

Picture in *Middle*: Different plaza stop (**Figure 3, Stop D in blue**)

Picture on *Right*: Stops at another non-City location every day of the week (**Figure 3, Stop E in blue**)

Example 3: Crew Did Not Stop at One or More Locations on Four of Five Days During the Week

When we reviewed the daily logs for a washroom/splash pad maintenance crew for a week, we found that for **four of five days, the crew did not stop at one or more reported locations** for splash pad maintenance and/or stopped only once (instead of twice) a shift for one or more washroom locations reported on the logs. Parks Branch was unable to locate and provide the crew's daily log for the fifth day of the work week. **Table 2** below illustrates the number of stops recorded in the daily logs compared to the number of stops registered in the GPS.

Table 2: Number of Stops Recorded in the Daily Logs Compared to the Number of Stops Registered in GPS

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri
No. of locations with splash pad maintenance reported in the daily logs	7	5	7	<i>Parks Branch unable to locate/ provide daily log</i>	5
No. of splash pad maintenance locations registered in GPS	3	4	5		0
<i>No. of locations where no stops registered in GPS</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>		<i>5</i>
No. of washrooms maintenance stops reported in the daily logs	9	8	9		7
No. of washrooms maintenance stops registered in GPS	7	6	6		7
<i>No. of locations where no stops registered in GPS</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>		<i>0</i>

When comparing the daily logs to the GPS, the total amount of time spent at parks was within a half hour; however, the **actual time spent at individual work locations varied significantly from what was reported** and according to the GPS the crew did not stop at some of the reported work locations.

For example, on Monday, the crew reported 16 stops totaling about 4 hours and 20 minutes to complete park maintenance activities. In comparison, the GPS shows that the crew actually made 10 stops for a total of 4 hours and 5 minutes. Furthermore,

- One of the stops was reported to be 14 minutes for washroom maintenance; however, the GPS registered a stop for 1 hour and 42 minutes.
- There were six reported locations totaling 1 hour and 23 minutes where the crew did not stop to perform maintenance, according to the GPS (**in yellow, stops 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13** in **Figure 5** below). Instead, the crew stopped at a plaza for 51 minutes (**in blue, stop G** in **Figure 6** below). (*Note: Stops at plaza/non-city locations for the other days of the week were found but they totaled 15 minutes or less per day*).

Figure 5 below, illustrates the route recorded in the daily log (**in yellow, stops 1-16, plus yard**) and the route registered in the GPS (**in blue, stops A-L, plus yard**). See **Figure 6** below for the examples of the non-city locations where the vehicle stopped (**in blue, stop G**).

The image consists of two side-by-side photographs of a Home Depot store. The left photograph shows the exterior of the store, which has a grey roof and a red sign that says 'HOME DEPOT'. A red SUV is parked in the parking lot in front of the store. The right photograph shows a Home Depot delivery truck parked in the parking lot. The truck is orange and white with 'THE HOME DEPOT' and 'Your Moving Destination' written on its side. A person is standing next to the truck, and a shopping cart is visible. The background shows the store building and other vehicles in the parking lot.

Overall Analyses of Time Spent Working at Reported Parkland Locations

Timing on daily logs and GPS reports often did not match

Overall, based on the sample of daily logs and GPS reports we reviewed, for crews that travel to multiple parks to perform maintenance service, the amount of time spent directly working on park maintenance activities as reported on crews' daily logs was often not aligned with the timing captured by the GPS.

Crews reported working on parks maintenance for 4 hours within the standard 8-hour shift, on average

As summarized in **Figure 7a**, based on our review of 68 daily logs⁶, crews reported spending just over 4 hours (51 per cent), on average within a standard 8-hour shift, on location performing park maintenance activities. Crews reported spending 1 hour and 12 minutes (15 per cent) on other duties at the yard/garage or waste disposal. On average, there were 2 hours and 43 minutes (34 per cent) where there were gaps in time that had no location noted⁷.

GPS indicates crews spent 2 hours and 36 minutes per day, on average, on parks maintenance activities

In comparison, as summarized in **Figure 7b**, GPS information for the vehicles indicate that, on average, 2 hours and 36 minutes (32 per cent) within a standard 8-hour shift was spent at park locations reported on the daily log, 1 hour and 7 minutes (14 per cent) was spent on other duties reported on the log, and 2 hours and 2 minutes (25 per cent) was spent driving between locations. For the remainder of the shift, the crews spent, on average, 1 hour and 29 minutes (19 per cent) at other City locations not recorded on the daily log⁸ (where it is unknown whether or not crews were performing ad-hoc work / being productive) and 46 minutes (10 per cent) at non-city locations.

⁶ The 68 daily logs reviewed are a subset of the selected sample of 85 daily logs. We excluded 17 daily logs from our analyses because the vehicles noted on the daily logs were wide area mowers. The turf cutting machines are constantly at work, therefore the driving time would include the productive work time and driving to/from locations. Productive time for regular crews is when vehicles are stopped.

⁷ It is assumed that gaps in time between reported locations include travel/driving time. While breaks/lunches may be included within the gaps in time between locations, at maintenance locations, or at the yard, this was not always determinable because crews did not consistently follow Parks Branch procedures for recording lunch/break times on the daily logs.

⁸ Parks Branch daily log procedures require crews to report any ad-hoc work and any changes to expected maintenance (e.g., emergencies) on daily logs. No notes were included on the daily logs to indicate the reason for stops at unrecorded City locations.

Figure 7a: Breakdown of Average Time Reported on Daily Logs by Parks Crews

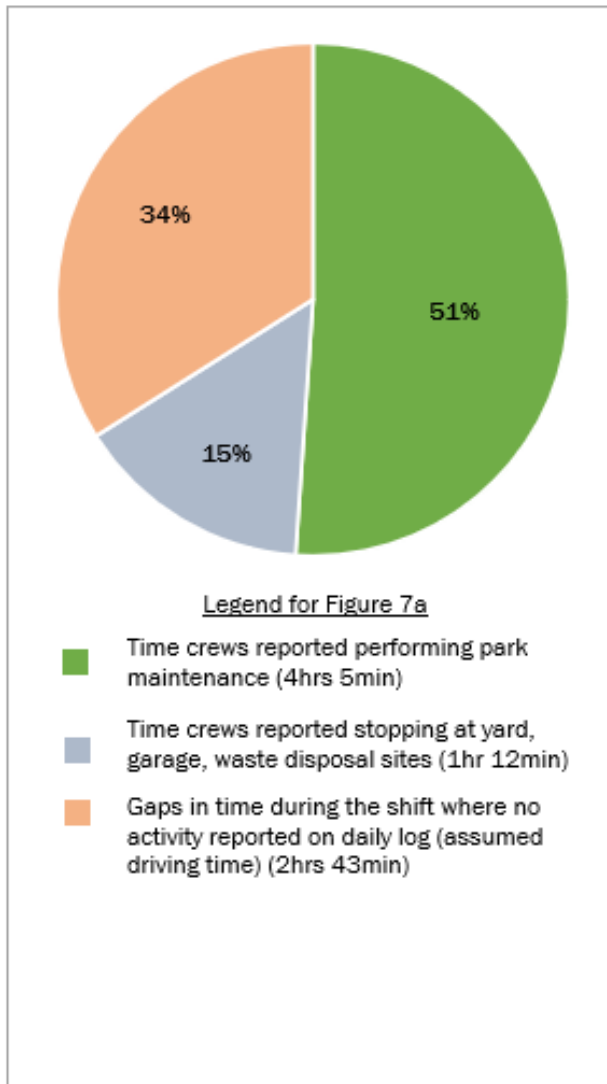
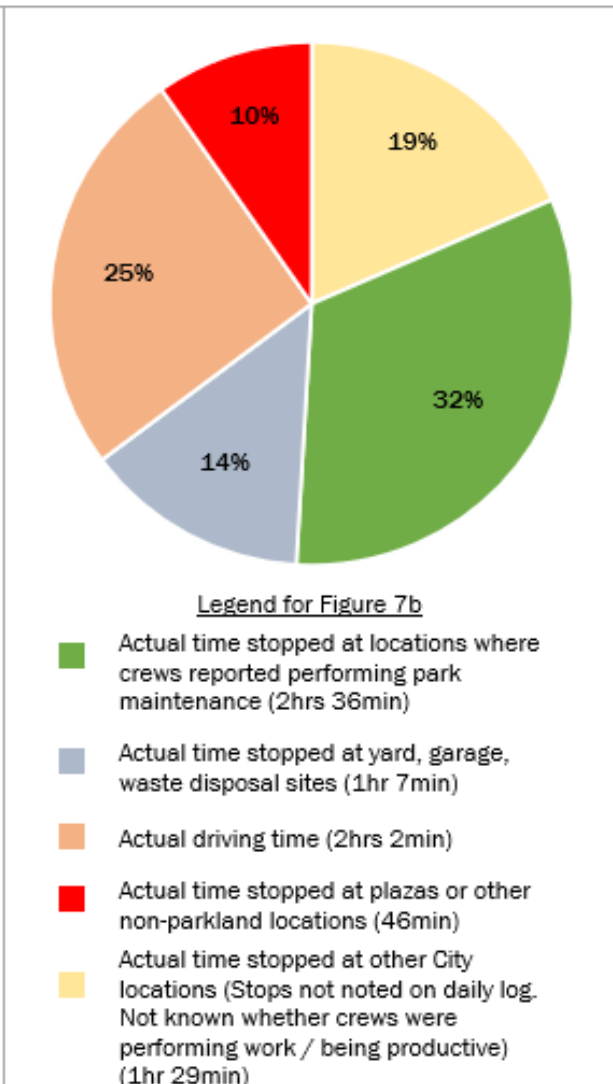


Figure 7b: Breakdown of Average Daily Time per GPS (Compared to Daily Logs)



GPS procedures and processes are being developed

Management advised that procedures and processes are currently being developed by the Parks Branch to use GPS for increased monitoring and accountability. The unions were notified in April 2022 that the Division would be installing and implementing a GPS device on its vehicles to improve staff safety, customer service, and the protection of City Fleet assets and property.

Not Every Vehicle is Equipped with GPS Technology

Installation of GPS on Parks Branch vehicles started in 2022

GPS data can help management identify areas where productivity and efficiencies can be gained. In 2019, the Auditor General recommended the Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) division consider installing GPS on vehicles used by Urban Forestry staff for tree maintenance activities⁹. The Division made the decision to install GPS on all vehicles used by PFR staff, not just the Urban Forestry Branch. In 2022, the Parks Branch began installing GPS on vehicles used by parks maintenance crews.

Not all Parks Branch vehicles are equipped with GPS

Through our interviews with General Supervisors and Supervisors, as well as reviews of daily logs, we found that not every vehicle has been equipped with a GPS system. The Parks Branch has over 600 vehicles, of which 457 are City owned and 147 are rental vehicles. Management advised that all vehicles have been outfitted with GPS, with the exception of 192 (32 per cent) City vehicles that have been identified as past their life cycle and are due for replacement.

Without a GPS device installed on a vehicle, management cannot assess the accuracy and completeness of the information in the daily logs completed by City staff.

Recommendations:

- 1. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, to fully utilize the Global Positioning System technology available, to improve parks maintenance crew productivity and to help plan, assign and monitor work by:**
 - a. maximizing the amount of time spent actively working on parks maintenance activities (i.e., grass cutting, washroom cleaning, litter picking, etc.)**
 - b. reducing the time spent on supporting activities where possible (i.e., driving, time spent at the yard, etc.)**
 - c. minimizing non-productive time (i.e., idle time, unreported stops and breaks, etc.)**

⁹ [Review of Urban Forestry: Ensuring Value for Money for Tree Maintenance Services \(Full Report Linked\)](#)

- 2. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division to reinforce clear guidelines and allowances for acceptable stop times, break times, and the valid operational reasons for taking these stops and breaks.**
- 3. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to:**
 - a. implement monitoring and accountability procedures that include a regular review of a sample of parks maintenance crews' Daily Activity Sheets (DAS) together with the Global Positioning System (GPS) reports to verify that crews accurately record information (including locations, activities, and times) on their DAS**
 - b. review additional DAS and GPS reports where issues are noted to determine whether further follow-up is needed to ascertain the accuracy and reliability of work reported on the DAS**
- 4. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation in collaboration with the General Manager, Fleet Services to ensure that Global Positioning System devices are installed onto all vehicles used by the Parks Branch.**

A. 2. Incomplete Information and Missing Approvals on Daily Logs

Each crew is expected to complete a daily log of their activities

The Parks Branch requires each crew to complete a daily log and submit it to the Foreperson for review at the end of the day. This sheet is the official record of all job duties assigned to and completed by a Parks crew each day. Crews are expected to record¹⁰:

- time in / time out for each work location
- tasks completed at each location – if tasks are incomplete or if a location does not require any work, crews must make note(s) on the daily log
- breaks and lunch time in / time out
- changes to the planned daily rotation (if applicable)
- any unusual events (e.g., ad-hoc maintenance activities added during a shift), changes in weather conditions, issues or Work Order requests


A Foreperson is expected to review and sign the daily log

The Foreperson¹¹ is required to review and sign the completed daily log and, if needed, request clarification from the Leadhand or daily work lead to confirm the information recorded in the log. **Figure 8** is an example from the Parks Branch procedures manual on how daily logs are expected to be completed.

¹⁰ The current Parks Branch procedure manual does not require staff to record driving time. It is assumed that any gaps in reported times is driving time.

¹¹ In practice, the daily log may be signed by a Foreperson or their Supervisor.

Figure 8: Example of How to Complete a Daily Log (Excerpted from Parks Branch Procedures Manual)



Parks Branch Daily Activity Sheets | Field Crews

Date 05/20/2021		Supervisor Jim Smith		District TEY		Crew Turf 1												
Vehicle & Equipment		Staff Name	Position	Additional Information		Weather												
Vehicle #	123456	John Smith	Leadhand			AM sun and cloud mix feels like 15 PM Thunderstorms, 250C, feels like 28												
Radio #	416-123-4567	Lucy Abidine	PHW 3															
Equipment # Trimmers	PS12345	Frank Oates	PHW 3															
Equipment # Mowers	9876543 (OF)																	
Equipment # Blower																		
Instructions from Supervisor				Breaks and Lunch		Time In	Time Out											
RETURN TO YARD AT 12:00 FOR TRAINING				AM Break		9:30	9:45											
				Lunch		11:15	11:45											
				PM Break		1:30	1:45											
				Activities (place check mark beside completed activity)														
Work Location		Time In	Time Out	501 - CVOR/Circle Check	502 - Equipment Maint.	506 - Public Relations	507 - Training/Meeting	106 - Illegal Dumping clean	109 - Litter Picking	113 - Playground	115 - Special Events/Permits	302 - Mowing	304 - Trimming					Notes to Supervisor ✓
Booth Yard 50 Booth Ave		7:00	7:30	✓														
Phin Park 115 Condor Ave		7:45	8:30						✓			✓	✓					✓
Kempton Howard Park 150 Blake St (including Keswick Lane)		8:45	9:15						✓									✓
Matty Eckler Playground 953 Gerard St E		9:45	11:15			✓		✓	✓			✓						✓
Booth Yard 50 Booth Ave		12:00	3:00				✓											

Notes to Foreperson/Supervisor

Broken bench at ~~Phin Park~~ by the south entrance - board missing in the seatback.

At ~~Kempton Howard Park~~ a person was yelling and running towards us, north half of the park still has to be cleaned.

At Matty Eckler Playground, member of the public upset and taking photos of us removing broken toys. Spoke to the person and explained the toys are a safety hazard. Person said they will call Councillor.

John Smith

Completed By (crew member)

Approved By (Foreperson or Supervisor signature)

Approved Date

Source: Excerpted from Parks Branch Daily Activity Sheets procedure, Appendix B: Using Daily Activity Sheets

Daily logs were not always properly completed

Despite the Parks Branch requirement for completing, reviewing, and approving daily logs, we found many instances where the logs were not properly completed. Specifically, our review of 564 daily logs from 13 wards/area across the four districts and the Waterfront, found:

- 156 of 564 (28 per cent) logs did not indicate which maintenance activities were completed at one or more park locations
- 262 of 564 (46 per cent) logs did not note either the time in / time out from a work location or the shift start /end time and location
- 73 of 564 (13 per cent) logs were not signed off by a Foreperson or Supervisor

Travel time, breaks, and lunch were not recorded consistently

Under the relevant collective agreements, the City crews are entitled to two 15-minute breaks and one 30-minute paid running lunch¹² in an 8-hour shift. Current procedures require crews to record the time in and time out for each location. We found that travel time, breaks, and/or running lunches were not consistently recorded on daily logs. For example, for:

- 37 of 564 (7 per cent) logs, travel (driving) time was included as part of maintenance activity time at a park location. For most daily logs, travel time was not recorded at all
- 107 of 564 (19 per cent) logs, breaks and/or running lunch times were not recorded
- 12 of 564 (2 per cent) logs, more than 60 minutes of lunch/break time was recorded¹³

Impact of Manual, Paper-Based Recordkeeping

Most records are paper based

Currently, Parks Branch uses manual, paper-based processes to record all job duties assigned and completed. In addition, as noted earlier, daily logs were often not properly completed by the crew lead. As such, it is difficult to aggregate data for the purposes of analyses and comparison across the districts and for strategic decision making.

¹² A running lunch is a paid half hour lunch period where an employee is required to remain at a job site or work location, ready and available to work should the operation require it.

¹³ This is over and above any discrepancies in locations and times identified through GPS, such as time spent at unreported non-parkland locations, as discussed in **Section A.1.**

Digital daily logs were also not always properly completed

In 2023, Parks Branch piloted a digital daily log recording process. Based on our review of a small sample of digital daily logs, we found similar issues that were observed with the paper logs. For example, digital daily logs were missing the start/end of shift time and breaks and lunch times were not consistently recorded.

The daily log serves as the proof of work performed by the crew. Regardless of the format of the daily log (paper or electronic), it must be accurately completed, signed by the crew leader, and submitted to the Foreperson at the end of each day.

Management advised that as part of the full scale roll out of the digital daily logs process, there will be quality assurance processes built into the system to ensure staff are using the tool correctly and consistently.

Parks Branch should provide staff with training and support

It is important to provide staff with the necessary training, support, and tools, to ensure a smooth transition to digital daily logs and successful adoption of the technology-enabled processes.

Parks Branch should continue to digitalize and modernize its processes

The Parks Branch should continue its work to digitalize and modernize its processes. Data collected through digital daily logs can be used as a management tool to assess the achievement of service level standards, identify performance trends, improve efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance activities, and distribute resources based on needs.

Recommendations:

- 5. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to provide additional training and ensure staff are consistently following the Division's operational policies and procedures and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for completing the Daily Activity Sheets.**
- 6. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, to require supervisory staff to conduct thorough reviews of Daily Activity Sheets to ensure crews are properly documenting their daily activities including locations, time in and out for each location, lunch/break times, tasks completed at each location, and travel time.**

7. **City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, in collaboration with the Chief Technology Officer, to digitalize and modernize processes, adopting technology-enabled tools to:**
 - a. **improve tracking, recordkeeping and monitoring of daily maintenance activities**
 - b. **support the Parks Branch's ability to collect and analyze data to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the parks' maintenance operations**

B. Strengthen Monitoring and On-site Supervision of Daily Maintenance Activities

The Parks Branch is responsible for providing maintenance services to all City parks and related amenities. Parks are separated into four geographic districts and the Waterfront, with maintenance crews operating out of each. Supervisors advised that maintenance staff generally follow a schedule and/or route, but there is variability in the frequency, duration, and type of tasks, based on seasonality and public use.

Supervisors oversee the work of maintenance crews

Supervisors also advised parks maintenance staff are deployed in various ways depending on their experience and position. Different crews may visit the same park to perform different maintenance work. For example, there may be different crews for washroom cleaning and turf maintenance. Each crew reports to a Supervisor who is responsible for ensuring that maintenance practices conform with policies and procedures and established service level standards.

External consultant recommended a review and rebalancing of the span of control of Supervisors

A November 2022 report by an external consultant engaged by the Division indicated that Supervisors are required to complete tasks that may fall outside of their direct responsibilities, and some report having a span of control that is too large, reducing their focus time on core tasks. The external consultant noted that in the Parks Branch, there is a lack of consistency across the Supervisors in terms of both the number of parks and the total park area size within each Supervisor's purview, resulting in discrepancies across Supervisors in terms of the span of their oversight.

Management advised that the span of control review is underway to have the right mix of Supervisors to front line staff and distribution of responsibilities

It is important that the Parks Branch be able to provide in-the-field support to staff by having the right mix of Supervisors to front line staff. This is particularly important with the large seasonal workforce, many of whom are new, and may need more coaching and guidance on processes and actions. The external consultant recommended that the Parks Branch undertake a review and rebalance the span of control of the Supervisors to help ensure there is an appropriate distribution of work and allow Supervisors to focus on core tasks. Management advised that the span of control review and process for redistribution of Managers and Supervisors' responsibilities¹⁴ within the Parks Branch is underway and will be implemented in a phased approach beginning in Q2 2025. Ongoing impacts will be considered through future operating budget submissions, where budget approvals are required.

Review of the semi-annual parks inspections process will be included in Phase 2 of our audit

General Supervisors and Supervisors are responsible for completing parks inspections twice a year. They use the Parks Maintenance Inspection tool (PMIT) to enter and track the inspection results. Management also advised that they are in the process of implementing a process called PMIT light. This will include weekly parks visits by Supervisors to ensure the maintenance work has been completed and the service level standards are met. Currently no formal policy or procedures on the PMIT and PMIT light inspection processes exist. Our observations with respect to the PMIT inspections and PMIT light process will be included in the second phase of our audit.

On-site supervision / monitoring activities vary between Supervisors and across districts

Our interviews with Supervisors indicate that on-site supervision and monitoring of parks maintenance activities varies greatly between the Supervisors and across the districts. Some Supervisors said that they visit parks as much as possible, others try to visit parks daily or weekly. As an example, different Supervisors advised:

- *"I get out to the parks as much as I can. I aim for every day but that's not always possible"*
- *"I try to go out onsite on a weekly basis. Lately there hasn't been as much time for me to do."*

From our interviews, we noted some Supervisors review daily logs and conduct bi-annual parks inspections using the PMIT tool, while others delegate it to the Foreperson. Records of the nature and extent of supervision and monitoring activities are inconsistent.

¹⁴ Management advised that some district and business unit portfolio changes may be necessary to ensure appropriate distribution of responsibilities amongst operational Managers, as span of control and responsibilities imbalances are often related to changes in operational scope (i.e., adding park assets) and must be carefully reviewed and adjusted.

Management we interviewed also advised that the high workload (administrative tasks) limits Supervisors from more onsite monitoring/ supervision.

Areas where guidelines are needed

Supervisors and Forepersons receive training on various topics including expectations for their role, documentation requirements, and usage of digital tools. However, during our audit, we found there were no specific operational policies or guidelines that provide direction to Park Branch Supervisors on matters such as:

- what Supervisors are expected to review with respect to maintenance operations
- how often Supervisors should be conducting parks visits/inspections
- what supporting documentation and records must be recorded and retained to demonstrate supervisory reviews
- what Supervisors should be documenting, communicating, and following up on, where non-compliance with service level standards and/or policies and procedures is identified during parks visits and/or PMIT inspections

Strengthening the guidance available for Supervisors and Forepersons will help ensure the reviews of maintenance activities are conducted in a fair and consistent manner.

Recommendation:

- 8. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, to strengthen supervision, monitoring and quality assurance processes over park maintenance activities by:**
 - a. establishing clearer guidelines for Supervisors for what should be observed when conducting on-site monitoring / review of completed parks maintenance activities**
 - b. providing periodic training to Supervisors on guidelines and good practices for conducting on-site monitoring**
 - c. ensuring on-site monitoring and observation are conducted on a surprise basis at different times of a workday for crews at work locations being reviewed**
 - d. summarizing and analyzing results from quality assurance reviews to identify trends or themes that indicate where more guidance, training, and supervision of crews may be warranted**

C. Set Performance Expectations and Measure Outcomes

C. 1. Internal Service Level Standards Are Not Always Met

Parks Branch performs a range of maintenance activities

The Parks Branch performs a wide range of regular maintenance activities. These activities include the upkeep and care of grass / turf, athletic fields, pathways, park washrooms, playgrounds, and much more on a year-round and/or seasonal basis.

Supervisors consider park usage when determining the need for a higher level of maintenance

In 2012, the Parks Branch developed a set of service level standards. These standards identify the minimum acceptable level of maintenance to ensure the safety and well-being of park patrons, and to meet the public's expectations of maintaining quality park facilities.

The Parks Branch reviewed and updated the service level standards in 2022. Management advised that the standards were updated by an internal committee based on input from staff, with consideration of existing resources. Their achievement relies on many factors, including operating and capital budget funding. Additionally, District Managers and Supervisors consider factors such as parks classification/size, location, and usage, in determining whether certain parks need a higher level of maintenance than set out in the service level standards.

There is a value in comparing the City's service level standards with other municipalities

In 2022, when the service level standards were reviewed and updated, the Division did not benchmark its maintenance services against other municipalities; however, management advised that many of the Parks Branch service level standards meet or exceed the standards of other municipalities. Management could not confirm if benchmarking was carried out when the service level standards were developed in 2012. Although we recognize that the City is unique because of its size, there is still value in comparing service level standards and performance results to other municipalities for continuous improvement.

Park Branch staff indicated it is sometimes challenging to meet service level standards

Our interviews with some Supervisors and Forepersons indicated that the Parks Branch is not always meeting the service level standards due to weather, equipment breakdowns, and/or absenteeism or vacancies. As an example, some staff stated:

- *"It can be challenging to meet standards with resources we have"*
- *"We try to meet the standards and we typically meet the standards 75-80 per cent of the time"*
- *"Our standard to meet is a visit once a week (e.g., turf crews). In practice, in spring, I use the bar of every 6-10 days because of equipment breakdowns and vacancies"*

Service level standards were not consistently achieved

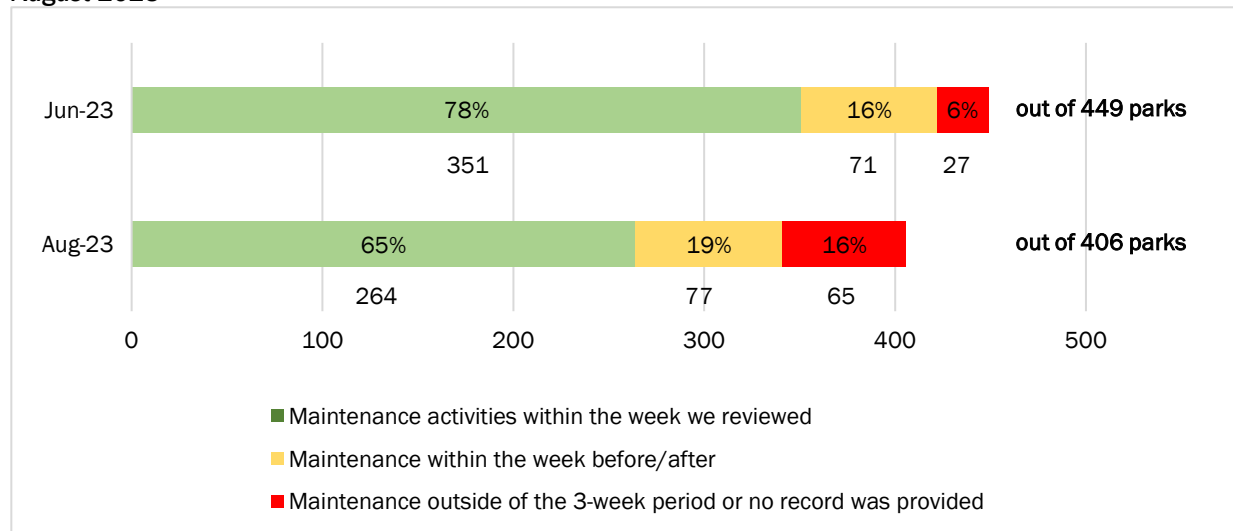
Additionally, based on our analyses of a sample of 564 daily logs from June and August 2023, we found that the Parks Branch is not consistently achieving its service level standards. The standards we reviewed, included:

- weekly/biweekly litter picking, grass mowing, edging, and trimming
- daily splash pad/wading pool maintenance
- daily washroom maintenance

The service level standards are further described in **Exhibit 1**.

Figures 9, 10 and 11 provide further details of our observations. The green bars indicate the number of parks in our sample where the service level standards were met, the yellow bars indicate the number of parks where the standards were partially met, and the red bars indicate the number of parks where the standards were not met, based on information reported in the daily logs.¹⁵

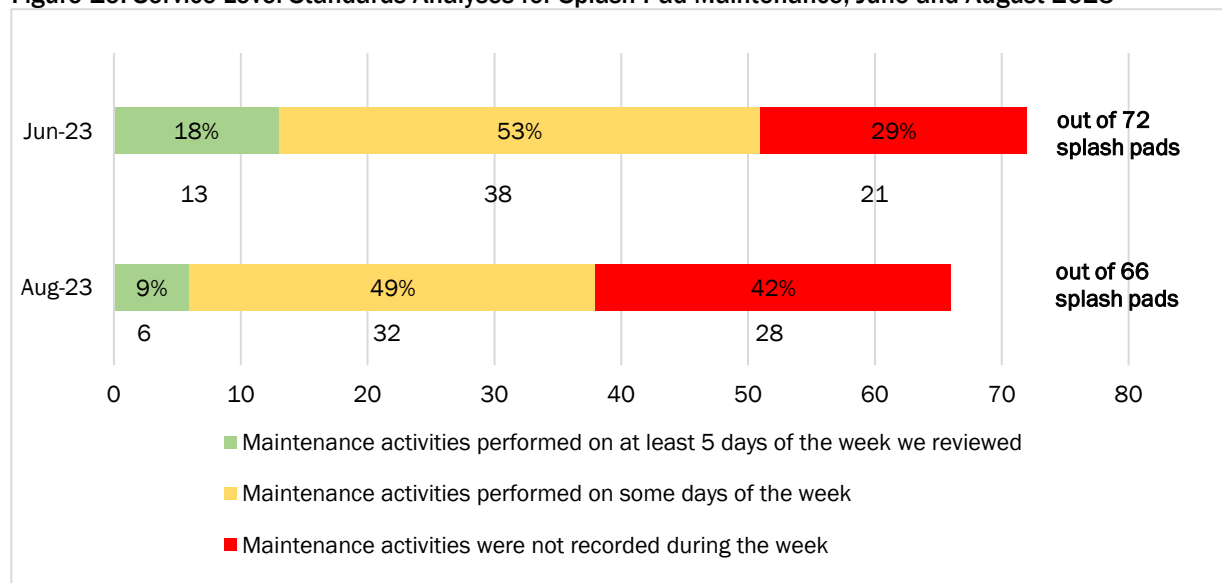
Figure 9: Service Level Standards Analyses for Litter Picking, Grass Mowing/Edging Trimming¹⁶, June and August 2023



¹⁵ Our analyses excludes parks that were under construction / not operational, and parks maintained by a third-party / contractor. This includes 28 of 477 parks (6 per cent) in our sample from June 2023, and 25 of 431 parks (6 per cent) in our sample from August 2023.

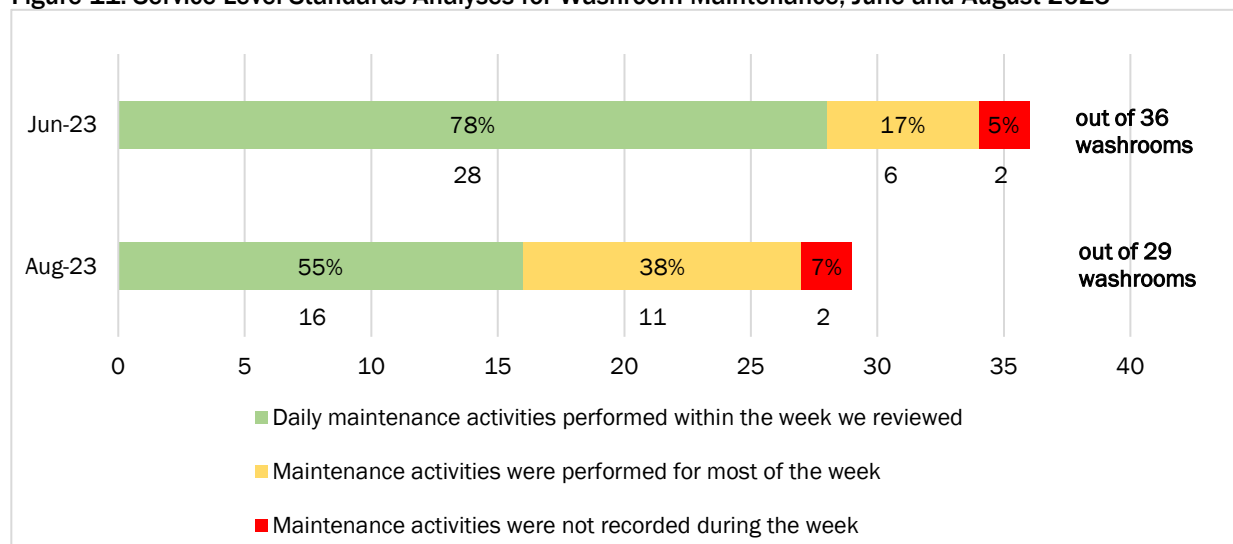
¹⁶ Parks Branch does not have a centralized listing identifying which parks receive higher levels of service. Therefore, we reviewed all parks in our sample against the “generally maintained” service standards. There is evidence that some parks received a higher level of service. Refer to Exhibit 1, for further details on the service level standards.

Figure 10: Service Level Standards Analyses for Splash Pad Maintenance, June and August 2023



Note: Management advised that some crews may not be properly identifying in the daily logs that they performed daily maintenance and inspections of splash pads while completing other maintenance activities at the park (e.g., staff may record that they visited the park and completed litter picking activities but did not separately check off that they also maintained/inspected splash pads).

Figure 11: Service Level Standards Analyses for Washroom Maintenance, June and August 2023



Service level standards should be updated, when required

Periodically revisiting and refining service level standards, and updating them when required, is key to ensuring the expectations of Toronto residents and visitors continue to be met, while operating within the resource and funding constraints of the City.

C. 2. Key Performance Indicators Should be Developed and Measured

Compliance with service level standards is not measured

While Parks Branch has established service level standards for park maintenance operations, the Branch currently does not measure compliance or achievement of those targets. It is important to measure performance to:

- assess the reasonableness of the established service level standards given resource and budget constraints
- establish a robust monitoring and reporting mechanism to support the effectiveness and efficiency of operations, and
- identify and address areas where service improvements are needed

Reliable data is needed to measure performance

Based on its current manual, paper-based processes, it is difficult for the Parks Branch to collect and analyze information in a meaningful way. As noted in **Section A**, maintenance activities are manually recorded in daily logs which are often not properly completed by staff. This presents a significant challenge to the Division's ability to analyze and verify the achievement of service level standards. Going forward, the Parks Branch needs to improve the quality and reliability of data to be able to leverage the data to identify opportunities to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Expedite the roll-out of digital daily logs and ensure their proper completion

The full-scale roll-out of digital daily logs will help. However, as noted in **Section A.2**, we found similar issues with the quality and reliability of information input during the pilot of the digital daily logs, as were observed with the paper logs. To address this, the Parks Branch needs to reinforce to staff the importance of adhering to the daily log procedures and ensuring accuracy and completeness of recorded information (regardless of the paper or digital format of daily logs used).

Parks Branch to develop KPIs

Management advised that they also will be developing more performance measures that will enable the Parks Branch to track trends over time by branch/area/district performance. These new key performance indicators (KPIs) will help identify areas that are performing well, and those that need improvement. Some KPIs that are being considered include:

- Percentage of daily logs reviews with deficiencies
- Average monthly kilometrage
- Average time the fleet leaves & returns to yard
- Average travel time between locations
- Average number of stops per day/week
- Average stop duration
- Average time spent in a geographical location (i.e. yard or work location)

Collecting and analyzing data, and improving metrics tracking and reporting, will help the Parks Branch measure its progress with the established maintenance service level standards and leverage data for strategic decision making.

Recommendation:

9. **City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, to:**
 - a. review the current service level standards to ensure they are realistic and reasonable, taking into account the budget and resource constraints of the City and benchmarking against service level standards being delivered by other relevant jurisdictions
 - b. create and maintain a standardized service level for each park classification
 - c. develop key performance indicators to measure the achievement of the existing service level standards
 - d. develop the necessary processes to periodically measure and report service level performance and to identify and address gaps between service level expectations and actual performance

Conclusion

City parks are places where the public come together to build community, play, and interact with nature. The Parks Branch plays an important role in maintaining these community spaces and ensuring that parks are beautiful, clean, and safe and meet the needs of communities.

During this audit, we observed that the Parks Branch does not regularly monitor whether its service level standards are achieved. While management and staff have indicated that the Parks Branch considers factors such as classification/size, location, usage (including unintended types of usage) of the park when implementing operational maintenance service level standards, because of the manual, paper-based records and limitations in the quality and reliability of information captured, we were unable to readily determine how consistently minimum services levels were met or exceeded. We identified that service level standards were not consistently met for some parks in the sample we selected. Consequently, our audit highlights that there are opportunities for the Parks Branch to develop the necessary processes to periodically measure and report service level performance and to identify and address gaps between service level expectations and actual performance.

We also observed discrepancies between maintenance activities reported on the daily logs and GPS records. Consequently, our audit highlights opportunities to implement monitoring and accountability processes and strengthen supervision to improve crew productivity to consistently achieve service level standards across all City parks.

Nine recommendations to improve operational efficiency, monitoring and reporting of service level standards

In our view, implementing the nine recommendations contained in this report will enable the Parks Branch to improve its procedures and processes for conducting parks maintenance activities. In particular, the recommendations identify opportunities to improve parks crew productivity, supervision of maintenance activities, and measuring the achievement of service level standards by:

- installing GPS technology on all vehicles and effectively using GPS for increased accountability
- improving accuracy and completeness of daily logs
- strengthening internal procedures and providing training for both Supervisors and staff
- adopting technology-enabled tools to improve collection and analyses of data

**Thank you to
management and staff**

We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the cooperation and assistance we received from the management and staff of the Parks Branch.

Audit Objectives, Scope and Methodology

Auditor General's Work Plan included a review of parks operations

The Auditor General's 2023 Work Plan¹⁷ included an operational review of how the Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) Division manages and maintains over 1,500 parks in the City of Toronto.

Our audit of parks maintenance operations is being conducted in two phases. The first phase, which is the subject of this report, focused on the efficiency of daily park maintenance activities, compliance with the established service level standards, and identifying opportunities for improving how the Parks Branch performs day-to-day maintenance to help keep parks beautiful, clean, and safe. The second phase will review the processes related to parks inspections and repairs and maintenance of various amenities in parks.

Audit Objectives

The audit aimed to answer the following questions:

- Are factors such as classification/size, location, usage (including unintended types of usage) of the park considered when implementing operational maintenance service level standards?
- Are operational maintenance activities assigned and completed in a manner that maximizes crew productivity and achieves service level standards?

Scope

This first phase of the audit focused on parks maintenance activities conducted in 2023. A sample of Daily Activity Sheets (referred to as DAS or daily logs) were selected for review covering:

- the week of June 12, 2023 covering 477 parks in eight wards across the four districts and one area of the Waterfront
- the week of August 28, 2023 covering 431 parks in eight wards/areas across the four districts

¹⁷ [Auditor General's Office 2023 Work Plan \(toronto.ca\)](https://www.auditorgeneral.ca/2023-work-plan)

Areas not covered within the scope of this audit

Areas not covered within the scope of this audit include: horticultural and greenhouse activities; winter maintenance activities; Toronto Island, beach, and farm operations; golf course maintenance activities; specific turf maintenance for sport fields, baseball diamonds, and stadiums; and the Parks Ambassador Program (encampments) within the Park Branch.

Methodology

Our audit methodology included the following:

- Conducting site visits and ride along with crews
- Reviewing relevant Parks Branch operational policies and procedures
- Interviewing 21 Parks General Supervisors, Supervisors, Forepersons, and other Parks staff
- Reviewing and analyzing 564 daily logs from 13 wards/areas across the four districts and the waterfront, including:
 - Assessing accuracy and completeness of information and appropriate evidence of approval on the daily logs
 - Assessing recorded maintenance activities against relevant service level standards. The service level standards reviewed as part of this audit are summarized in **Exhibit 1**
 - Comparing locations and timing reported on a sample of 85 daily logs to GPS reports covering all 31 City-owned vehicles identified in our overall sample of daily logs where the GPS information was available at the time of our audit
- Reviewing Google Streetview images for certain locations in GPS reports where it appears that vehicles stopped at non-City locations
- Other procedures deemed relevant

Limitations

Our findings and conclusions were based on the information and data available at the time of the audit. Our review of daily log records was limited to records and information retained and provided by the districts. The daily logs were often incomplete and/or contained inaccurate information impacting the reliability of the data.

We were unable to perform the same comparative analyses on every crew in scope because GPS was not installed on some Parks Branch vehicles during the period of time we reviewed.

Our review of service level standards was limited to generally maintained service level standards because Parks Branch does not have a centralized listing identifying which parks receive a higher level of service.

Compliance with generally accepted government auditing standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Exhibit 1: Parks Service Level Standards

The Parks Branch has an extensive set of service level standards for operations and maintenance of parks. The standards we reviewed in this audit are summarized below. The level of service may also depend on the season and whether a park location has dedicated staff on site. The Parks Branch also has service level standards for other activities such as winter operations (salting, shoveling), turf maintenance (for sport fields, baseball diamonds, stadiums, and other spaces), beach operations, horticulture, and activities for other amenities that were not covered in this audit. Our audit reviewed general parkland maintenance and litter picking (to a “generally maintained” service level), splash / spray pad maintenance, and washroom maintenance.

General Parkland Maintenance

For general parkland, turf maintenance is a core service activity. Highly maintained service level standards are expected to be provided to larger parks and parks that are considered high profile with more usage and visibility. The level of service may also depend on the season and whether a park location has dedicated staff on site. Service level standards used by Parks Branch for watering, aerating, fertilizing, and inspections of turf are not listed below. Parks Branch does not have a centralized listing identifying which parks receive higher levels of service. Our audit reviewed general parkland maintenance for all parks in our sample against the “generally maintained” service level.

SERVICE LEVEL	ACTIVITY	SEASON	FREQUENCY	DUTIES/ NOTES
HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Edging, Mowing, Trimming and Blowing	Spring to Fall	1 to 2 x per week, or as required so as to never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade at any one time throughout the season, where there is dedicated staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Core business and major impact on turf health - Cut to height of 3" - Sharp blades - Clippings mulched - Pick-up and remove all litter and debris from turf areas prior to mowing
HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Litter Picking	Spring to Fall	1 x per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pick-up and remove all litter and debris from turf areas - Report graffiti, vandalism or hazards immediately
GENERALLY MAINTAINED	Edging, Mowing, Trimming and Blowing	Spring/Peak	1 x per week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pick-up and remove all litter and debris from turf areas prior to mowing - Cut to height of 3"
GENERALLY MAINTAINED	Edging, Mowing, Trimming and Blowing	Summer	1 x per every 2 weeks during the semi-dormancy period as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pick-up and remove all litter and debris from turf areas prior to mowing - Cut to height of 3"
GENERALLY MAINTAINED	Edging, Mowing, Trimming and Blowing	Fall	1 x per every 9 days or as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pick-up and remove all litter and debris from turf areas prior to mowing - Cut to height of 3"

Infrastructure and Amenities (Litter Picking and Removal of Debris) within Parks

Litter picking and the removal of debris is a core activity completed on various infrastructure and amenities located within parks. The service level standards related to these activities are detailed below¹⁸:

ASSET	SERVICE LEVEL	ACTIVITY	SEASON	FREQUENCY	DUTIES/ NOTES
- Splash/ Spray Pad - Wading Pool - Shade Structure - Picnic Sites	HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Litter Picking	Summer	Daily	- Pick up and removal of litter and debris
- Shade Structure	GENERALLY MAINTAINED	Litter Picking	Spring/ Fall	Weekly	- Pick up and removal of litter and debris
- Picnic Sites	GENERALLY MAINTAINED	Litter Picking	Spring/ Fall	Weekly/ As required	- Pick up and removal of litter and debris
- Pathways - Sidewalks - Recreational Trail - Allotment Gardens - BMX Bike Area - Community Gardens - Off Leash Areas (Dogs) - Outdoor Fitness Equipment Area - Outdoor Ovens - Play Spaces - Skateboard Area - Sport Pad	GENERALLY MAINTAINED	Litter Picking	Spring to Fall	Weekly	- Pick up and removal of litter and debris (including branches) - Yard waste removal for gardens

¹⁸ The service level standards for splash pads does not include any repairs (e.g. leaking, broken) as that is out of scope for general maintenance.

Splash Pads and Wading Pools

Additional maintenance activities for splash pads and wading pools are included below:

ASSET	SERVICE LEVEL	ACTIVITY	SEASON	FREQUENCY	DUTIES/ NOTES
- Splash/ Spray Pad - Wading Pool	HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Maintenance	Summer	Daily	- Visual inspection at each visit by Leadhand, report any issues or Work Orders needed - Inspect for any hazards, make them safe ASAP - Initiate Work Order for repairs - Graffiti removal within 10 business, unless content falls under Hate Activity Policy in which case removal within 24 hours

There are also additional service level standards for the annual opening and closing of assets; and biannual inspections that are not captured above and were not specifically tested during the audit.

Washroom Maintenance

There are different service level standards due in part to the closure of some washrooms in the winter. The service level standards related to these assets are detailed below:

ASSET	SERVICE LEVEL	ACTIVITY	SEASON	FREQUENCY	DUTIES/ NOTES
WASHROOM – Seasonal/ Year Round	HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Daily Open	Spring to Fall / Year Round	Daily	- Unlock washroom for the day
WASHROOM – Seasonal/ Year Round	HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Daily Close	Spring to Fall / Year Round	Daily	- Lock washroom for the day
WASHROOM – Seasonal/ Year Round	HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Clean	Spring and Fall/ Spring, Fall and Winter	Daily	Clean daily, frequency is determined by Supervisor according to amenity usage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • Sinks • Counter • Urinals • Mirror • Floors • Showers
	ENHANCED HIGHLY MAINTAINED		Summer	2- 3x day	
WASHROOM – Seasonal/ Year Round	HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Fill	Spring and Fall/ Spring, Fall and Winter	Daily	Fill daily, frequency is determined by Supervisor according to amenity usage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soap Dispenser
	ENHANCED HIGHLY MAINTAINED		Summer	2- 3x day	
WASHROOM – Seasonal/ Year Round	HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Empty	Spring and Fall/ Spring, Fall and Winter	Daily	Empty daily, frequency is determined by Supervisor according to amenity usage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Receptacles
	ENHANCED HIGHLY MAINTAINED		Summer	2- 3x day	
WASHROOM – Seasonal/ Year Round	HIGHLY MAINTAINED	Stock	Spring and Fall/ Spring, Fall and Winter	Daily	Stock daily, frequency is determined by Supervisor according to amenity usage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet Paper • Paper Towel
	ENHANCED HIGHLY MAINTAINED		Summer	2- 3x day	

There are also additional service level standards for the annual opening and closing of seasonal assets, biannual inspections. and monthly/weekly cleaning duties that are not captured above and were not specifically tested during the audit.

Appendix 1: Management's Response to the Auditor General's Report Entitled: "Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 1: Improving Oversight of Day-to-Day Maintenance Helps to Ensure City Parks are Beautiful, Clean and Safe"

Recommendation 1: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, to fully utilize the Global Positioning System technology available, to improve parks maintenance crew productivity and to help plan, assign and monitor work by:

- a. maximizing the amount of time spent actively working on parks maintenance activities (i.e., grass cutting, washroom cleaning, litter picking, etc.)
- b. reducing the time spent on supporting activities where possible (i.e., driving, time spent at the yard, etc.)
- c. minimizing non-productive time (i.e., idle time, unreported stops and breaks, etc.)

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: The Division agrees with this recommendation. Parks Branch is currently developing a quality assurance and accountability program which includes policies and procedures related to use of Global Positioning System technology (GPS) that incorporate digital Daily Activity Sheets. These tools and data will assist with planning, assigning and reviewing work, measuring and reporting key performance indicators and identifying operational changes to improve and manage productivity. Data made available after full implementation will inform seasonal planning and assignment of work in order to maximize productivity. The program contemplates accountability measures for crews in various stages of modernization This work will begin in Q4 2024 adhering to current policies, procedures and Collective Agreements and will scale up as the program is fully implemented. Projected timeframe for full implementation Q4 2025 and contingent upon technology approvals and provision of resources where required. Data which will be available after this time to be used for subsequent seasonal work planning.

Recommendation 2: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division to reinforce clear guidelines and allowances for acceptable stop times, break times, and the valid operational reasons for taking these stops and breaks.

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: The Division agrees with the recommendation. The Division will strengthen training and communication related to guidelines and allowances for acceptable breaks and stop times in the annual branch orientation training and operational handbook. Additionally, 'tailgate' training (topic specific training delivered on site) will be developed and delivered by Park Supervisors to each of their crews to reinforce clear expectations at the start of each operating season (Spring/Summer & Winter/Fall). Timeline for tailgate training to commence Q4 2024 and annual orientation and handbook in Q2 2025.

Recommendation 3: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to:

- a. implement monitoring and accountability procedures that include a regular review of a sample of parks maintenance crews' Daily Activity Sheets (DAS) together with the Global Positioning System (GPS) reports to verify that crews accurately record information (including locations, activities, and times) on their DAS
- b. review additional DAS and GPS reports where issues are noted to determine whether further follow-up is needed to ascertain the accuracy and reliability of work reported on the DAS

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: The Division agrees with this recommendation. Parks Branch is currently developing a quality assurance and accountability program which includes a Parks Quality Assurance Framework and procedures for measuring productivity and accountability. The framework and related procedures will set out regular review requirements and management quality checks and will provide guidance to supervisory staff when deficiencies/discrepancies are found between DAS and GPS data. The program contemplates accountability measures for crews in various stages of modernization. The manual work will commence in Q4 2024 as an interim measure, adhering to current policies, procedures and Collective Agreements and will scale up as the program is fully implemented. Full implementation is aligned with the roll out of the technological tools of digitized DAS and integrated GPS reports in Q4 2025 contingent upon technology approvals and provision of resources where required.

Recommendation 4: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation in collaboration with the General Manager, Fleet Services to ensure that Global Positioning System devices are installed onto all vehicles used by the Parks Branch.

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: The Division agrees with this recommendation. The Division will work with Fleet Services Division to install GPS on the remaining 192 vehicles/equipment. Projected timeline for full implementation is Q4 2025.

Recommendation 5: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to provide additional training and ensure staff are consistently following the Division's operational policies and procedures and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for completing the Daily Activity Sheets.

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: The Division agrees with this recommendation. The Division acknowledges improvements are required in the completion and review of Daily Activity Sheets and existing training materials require strengthening. Information contained in this audit will enhance training materials currently under development for additional training sessions and enhance related information in annual orientation sessions and the Parks Operations Handbook for front line staff. Timeline for completion of enhanced training, enhanced information in annual orientation and enhanced information in parks operations handbook is Q2 2025.

Recommendation 6: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, to require supervisory staff to conduct thorough reviews of Daily Activity Sheets to ensure crews are properly documenting their daily activities including locations, time in and out for each location, lunch/break times, tasks completed at each location, and travel time.

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: The Division agrees with this recommendation. The Division acknowledges improvements are required in the completion and review of Daily Activity Sheets and existing related training requires strengthening. Information contained in this audit will enhance training materials currently under development for a Supervisor Quality Check procedure to include review requirements, physical site checks and next steps if deficiencies are identified.

In the interim quality assurance work is ongoing with respect to the quality of paper DAS and digitized DAS (where in pilot phase) through independent reviews and follow-up with supervisors for compliance which was implemented in Q3 2024.

Timeline for completion of enhanced training is Q1 2025 in conjunction with roll out of Supervisor Quality Check procedure.

Recommendation 7: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, in collaboration with the Chief Technology Officer, to digitalize and modernize processes, adopting technology-enabled tools to:

- a. improve tracking, recordkeeping and monitoring of daily maintenance activities
- b. support the Parks Branch's ability to collect and analyze data to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the parks' maintenance operations

Management Response: ☒ Agree ☐ Disagree

Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:

The Division agrees with this recommendation.

The Division will continue to work with the Chief Technology Officer and the General Manager of Fleet Services to develop and implement the required interim digital tools to modernize parks operations prior to the implementation of an Enterprise Work Management System, including:

- Digital Daily Activity Sheets
- Access to data within the GPS/Geotab environment

Projected timeline for completion is Q4 2025 and contingent upon technology approvals and provision of resources where required.

Recommendation 8: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, to strengthen supervision, monitoring and quality assurance processes over park maintenance activities by:

- a. establishing clearer guidelines for Supervisors for what should be observed when conducting on-site monitoring / review of completed parks maintenance activities
- b. providing periodic training to Supervisors on guidelines and good practices for conducting on-site monitoring
- c. ensuring on-site monitoring and observation are conducted on a surprise basis at different times of a workday for crews at work locations being reviewed
- d. summarizing and analyzing results from quality assurance reviews to identify trends or themes that indicate where more guidance, training, and supervision of crews may be warranted

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: <p>The Division agrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>Procedural documents for Supervisor Quality Check will be developed and include physical site check of crews work noted on a DAS, frequency of inspection, guidelines for review and next steps if deficiencies are identified.</p> <p>Further, an enhanced supervisory staff training module will be developed as part of new supervisor orientation and periodic refresher training to include quality assurance processes, guidelines and monitoring procedures and expectations. Analyses of quality assurance reviews will inform continued improvement to training material updates.</p> <p>Projected timeline for Supervisor Quality Check roll-out is Q1 2025 with refresher training materials updated by Q4 2025.</p>

Recommendation 9: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, to:

- a. review the current service level standards to ensure they are realistic and reasonable, taking into account the budget and resource constraints of the City and benchmarking against service level standards being delivered by other relevant jurisdictions
- b. create and maintain a standardized service level for each park classification
- c. develop key performance indicators to measure the achievement of the existing service level standards
- d. develop the necessary processes to periodically measure and report service level performance and to identify and address gaps between service level expectations and actual performance

Management Response: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame: <p>The Division agrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>The Parks Branch proposes to undertake a review of service level standards with benchmarking against other relevant jurisdictions, developing key performance indicators, measuring and reporting performance to identify and address gaps and document service levels for park services.</p> <p>As the Branch moves to implementing a digitized DAS process, we anticipate being better able to aggregate data between DAS and GPS to measure the various KPI's outlined within the audit report.</p> <p>Projected timeline for completion Q2 2026.</p>

**AUDITOR
GENERAL**

TORONTO

