

Review of City of Toronto's Canada Day Events

Date: April 16, 2024

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: General Manager, Economic Development and Culture and General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to Council direction (2024.MM16.16) which requested a review of all City-run and funded Canada Day events across the city, including a review of their equitable distribution in terms of population and geography and report to the April 30, 2024 meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee. The report provides an overview of Canada Day events across the city and supported by the City of Toronto. It outlines the current funding for each of the events, the process by which funding is allocated, and includes a review of data relating to population and geography. The report also includes information on the plans for 2024 and opportunities to participate in City- and non-City run Canada Day activities throughout Toronto.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Economic Development and Culture and General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommend that:

1. Economic and Community Development Committee receives this staff report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no current year financial implications arising from the actions contained in this report. Funding of \$436,641 to support the 2024 planned activities for Canada Day will be accommodated through federal funding of \$250,000 received from the Canadian Heritage Celebrate Canada grant program and \$186,641 from the 2024 Operating Budgets of Economic Development and Culture (EDC) and Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR).

Future Canada Day events will have future year financial implications. Additional funding, particularly federal funding, would be required to increase activities beyond current 2024 levels.

Additional resources, if necessary, will be included in future year budget processes for consideration, subject to the City's financial resource capacity.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as presented in the Financial Impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on March 20, 2024, City Council requested a review of all City-run and funded Canada Day events across the city, including a review of the equitable distribution in terms of population and geography.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.MM16.16>

At its meeting April 6, 2022, City Council adopted the Reconciliation Action Plan and directed City Manager to ensure that City staff work towards the City's implementation of the following Strategic Actions contained within the Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2032. The Reconciliation Action Plan includes reference to the Indigenous Arts Festival, also mentioned in this report as a beneficiary of the federal Celebrate Canada grant.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EX31.1>

At its meeting July 19, 2022, City Council approved the Toronto History Museums Strategic Plan Laying a New Foundation as a framework for continuing to advance reconciliation, equity and inclusion at the City's Toronto History Museums. City Council also authorized the General Manager, EDC, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer as appropriate, to apply for, receive funds and to negotiate, enter into and execute any agreements, including any amendment, renewal or extension agreements and any ancillary documents (with a value of up to \$500,000) with the Government of Canada, Government of Ontario and/or agencies of the federal and provincial governments to support this plan. This is the authority under which EDC accept the federal department of Canada Heritage's annual Celebrate Canada grant.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EC31.23>

COMMENTS

Background on Canada Day Activities and Programming

Canada Day is a federally recognized and statutory holiday. The great majority of Canada Day celebrations in Toronto are led by local community organizations and funded by the federal government. The City has a smaller role in Canada Day events, directly delivering fireworks displays in some City parks outside the core, events in Toronto history museums, and partnering with community groups to provide access to City parks for events.

Canada Day Events in Civic Squares

EDC produced a Canada Day event at Mel Lastman Square (North York, Willowdale) for over 20 years. Funding for the event was eliminated in EDC's 2018 Operating Budget.

Despite budgetary constraints, EDC has been directed to deliver Canada Day activities in Mel Lastman Square three times since 2018: 2019, 2022, 2023, which resulted in these activities being heavily reliant upon financial support from federal grant funding and private sources. In 2019, 90% of event costs were covered by federal and private support, and the event was 100% funded by federal and private sources in 2022.

In 2023, the Mel Lastman Square event, which did not feature fireworks, cost \$170,886 to produce all-ages daytime programming. The event had a base funding allocation of \$10,000 and received only \$37,263 in federal and private funding support, resulting in a net expenditure of \$123,623, which was an unfunded pressure for the Division.

Notably, the City's ability to produce fireworks at Mel Lastman Square have been severely restricted over recent years, due to upgrades to the exterior of the North York Civic Centre and the risks posed by pyrotechnics, as well as a decline in public sector and corporate sponsorship for the event.

The City has never hosted City-run Canada Day activities at other Civic Squares, with two exceptions: 1) Canada 150 celebrations in 2017, for which the City received significant federal funding to produce events at Albert Campbell Square and Nathan Phillips Square, and 2) a small, one-off Canada Day event at Nathan Phillips Square in 2023, which received \$27,263 in federal funding, \$10,000 in sponsorship and \$10,000 in base funding against a \$175,462 total cost incurred by EDC, creating an unfunded pressure.

Canada Day Events at City Museums and Cultural Centres

In 2023, Fort York National Historic Site offered programming. The daytime all-ages July 1 event was curated by Chinese community partners including a citizenship ceremony and was supported by 2023 operating funds. City cultural centres do not offer Canada Day programming.

Canada Day Events in City Parks

Most Canada Day events and fireworks displays held in City parks are led by community organizations who receive permits from PFR for their activities in parks, with operational support from PFR. Through PFR, the City offers an annual Canada Day event in Thompson Park (Scarborough Centre) and fireworks display at Ashbridges Bay. There are additional fireworks displays at the following City parks, which support community Canada Day events outside the core, including: Centennial Park, Stan Wadlow Park, and Milliken Park.

Funding Sources for Canada Day Activities

As a national holiday, Canada Day celebrations are primarily funded by the federal government through the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH) Celebrate Canada program, which provides funding exclusively for activities related to:

- National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21)
- Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day (June 24)
- Canadian Multiculturalism Day (June 27)
- Canada Day (July 1)

The Celebrate Canada program of PCH is the principal funding vehicle for Canada Day events in Toronto, including dozens of community-led celebrations as well as a handful of City-led events.

EDC on behalf of the City, leads an annual application to the PCH Celebrate Canada program to support City-run Canada Day activities and other eligible events. The 2024 application included funding requests for the Indigenous Arts Festival and City-led Canada Day events.

For the small number of events led by the City and taking place in City parks, Canada Day programming currently produced and supported by PFR is funded through PFR's annual operating budget and supplemented by grant funding, in particular funding available from the federal government through PCH.

EDC also seeks funding for events delivered at Civic Squares or City museums, representing the majority of the Division's Canada Day event expenditures, over and above small amounts allocated by Council in the EDC divisional operating budget. However, the City and EDC have seen a significant reduction in federal funding for Canada Day activities, from over \$1 million for Canada's 150th in 2017, to more than \$500,000 per annum over the early years of the pandemic, to just \$250,000 in 2024.

2024 Federal Funding Application and Allocation

EDC submitted an application for 2024 Celebrate Canada funding on behalf of the City to offset costs for long-standing PFR and EDC produced Canada Day events and a large-scale National Indigenous People's Day event. Notably, this federal program prioritizes all national celebratory days in its remit, not just Canada Day. On March 13, 2024, Canadian Heritage advised EDC its Celebrate Canada application for \$350,000 would be granted at \$250,000, consistent with reductions received by many applicants this year.

Funding was allocated as described in Table 1 below. The federal funding requirements for these events do not allow the City to retroactively introduce projects for which they did not originally seek funding. The Celebrate Canada federal funding program also accepts applications directly from community event organizers and provides funding support to many community groups. For this reason, funds from the City's application are not allocated as a flow-through to support non-City community events.

Table 1. The City’s 2024 Celebrate Canada Grant Allocations

Activity/Site	Division	Celebrate Canada Allocation
Indigenous Arts Festival, Fort York National Historic Site	EDC	\$130,000
Canada Day activities, Thomson Memorial Park	PFR	\$50,000
Canada Day activities, Toronto History Museums	EDC	\$30,000
Marketing for all Canada Day events including PFR and EDC	EDC	\$40,000

Indigenous Arts Festival: In keeping with the priorities of the federal program and the City’s funding application, \$130,000 of the \$250,000 received from the federal government will be allocated to the Indigenous Arts Festival at Fort York National Historic Site (IAF, June 15 and 16), delivered in close collaboration with Indigenous partners. Notably, scaling this event is a commitment within the City’s Reconciliation Action Plan. Funding for IAF 2024 will be held at the 2023 level (\$130,000) with the remaining PCH funding (\$120,000) awarded to other City-led and planned Canada Day activities. Notably, these funds could not be allocated outside of the City, to community events, or for activities not outlined in the original funding application.

Thomson Memorial Park: Canadian Heritage advised applicants to deprioritize fireworks in favour of more environmentally friendly celebrations. Noting this recommendation, PFR will allocate \$50,000 from the 2024 Celebrate Canada funds toward daytime programming at Thomson Memorial Park.

Marketing: EDC will direct \$40,000 to support a unified marketing campaign for all City of Toronto Canada Day events, including PFR events.

Toronto History Museums: The remainder of \$30,000 will be used to support family and community-focused programming at Toronto History Museum sites, with the predominant portion of this funding going towards programming located outside of the downtown core.

Planned 2024 Canada Day Activities

2024 Canada Day Activities in Parks

PFR will continue to support Canada Day firework displays at four City parks locations this Canada Day: Stan Wadlow Park (East York), Milliken Park (Scarborough), Centennial Park (Etobicoke), and Ashbridges Bay Park (East York).

Additional events continue to be delivered by the City and in partnership with local organizations, community groups and the local Councillors. These events are located in Toronto-East York, Etobicoke-York, and Scarborough community council districts:

- *Community-led*: Amesbury Park (1507 Lawrence Ave. W) – York South-Weston
- *Community-led*: Ashbridges Bay Park (1561 Lake Shore Blvd. E) – Beaches-East York
- *Community-led*: Centennial Park Etobicoke (256 Centennial Park Rd.) – Etobicoke Centre
- *Community-led*: Milliken Park (5555 Steeles Ave. E) – Scarborough North
- *Community-led*: Stan Wadlow Park (373 Cedarvale Ave.) – Beaches-East York
- *City-led*: Thomson Memorial Park (1005 Brimley Rd.) – Scarborough Centre

2024 Canada Day Activities in Toronto History Museums

Nine of the ten Toronto History Museums operated by EDC will be open on July 1, 2024 with a wide variety of all-ages daytime programming. These events are located in Toronto-East York, Etobicoke-York, North York, and Scarborough community council districts. All programs are City-led.

Other 2024 Canada Day Events

There are many other event offerings on Canada Day, including fireworks. These include federally funded, community, and corporate events taking place across Toronto such as Harbourfront Centre, Woodbine Park, Canada's Wonderland, and Downsview Park. Non-City-led programs can be captured on the Festival and Event calendar on Toronto.ca. This information can be included as part of the City's unified marketing campaign.

Key Considerations—Risk Management

The City continues to address significant financial challenges in the 2024 budget. At this time, EDC's Operating Budget does not allow for a large-scale Canada Day event. Further, per federal requirements, the funds awarded through Celebrate Canada for 2024 activities are now committed to specific events and cannot be re-allocated to support delivery of an additional large-scale event. As such, City staff would advise that the City continue to limit its financial risk and not expand the direct delivery of City-run Canada Day events beyond those that are funded.

Additional considerations informing this decision include the move of the Pride Parade and its closing festival weekend to Canada Day weekend, which will place additional pressure on City infrastructure, essential services and divisions that weekend.

Distribution Analysis

A review was conducted using population data from the 2021 census as well as the the 2024 budget and activities for City-led Canada Day events. The purpose of the analysis was to understand and illustrate the distribution of events across the city.

Attachment 1 provides brief descriptions of activities for City-led Canada Day events and July 1 programming planned for 2024 and details regarding the current budget allocation per site.

Attachment 2 provides maps illustrating the different locations of Canada Day programs in 2024 across the city as well as the proportional funding per location. The map illustrates how 15 City-run July 1 events in 2024 will fall within 12 of the City's 25 wards. The total population of the 12 wards where 2024 Canada Day activities are planned is 1,352,375, which accounts for almost 50% of Toronto's population. For details of site locations, see Attachment 3: Distribution of Planned 2024 Canada Day Activities.

It should be noted that City-led July 1 events and programs are being planned in all four community council catchment areas. All four community councils include wards with no planned City-led Canada Day 2024 activities and wards with planned activities.

The total projected cost of EDC and PFR's 14 Canada Day events, including marketing-related costs, is approximately \$436,641. Details of the breakdown including City portion and federal grant portion can be seen in Attachment 3: Distribution of Planned 2024 Canada Day Activities.

Key Considerations and Future Canada Day Planning

The City through EDC and PFR will continue to support City-run Canada Day events and programming across Toronto's neighbourhoods, particularly across the inner suburbs. Programming will continue to be feasible within and scaled to the Operating budgets with the overall goal of creating engaging public programming and events for and with community. However, it is important to note that expanding the current scope of large-scale activations for Canada Day in the future is dependent on external funding sources, particularly the Department of Canadian Heritage's Celebrate Canada Program.

As the federal government is the primary funder of Canada Day events across the nation, including dozens of community-led events across Toronto, City staff are prepared to assist community organizations in the planning of such events to maximize their likelihood of receiving federal funding. Such assistance could include sharing information with community organizations on the supports for which they could be eligible, facilitating introductions to funders or to potential artists and community-arts organizations, and providing guidance in navigating City services including permitting requirements.

Beyond Canada Day, consideration needs to be given to ensuring an equitable distribution of City cultural event delivery and funding across the entirety of the City. On behalf of the City, EDC is currently leading a cultural planning process to develop the City's first new culture plan since 2011. This work is being undertaken by the City and the Toronto Arts Council in partnership, including broad based consultations reaching all corners of the city, where a key theme is emerging on a need for greater equity in funding, across social and geographic lines, including more City funding for culture outside the city core.

Within this need for greater equity in cultural funding is an understanding that Toronto's many diverse ethnocultural communities need more opportunities to bridge cultural divides and connect together through events to strengthen bonds of social connection and belonging. Canada Day events, both those led by community and delivered by the City, can assist in serving this need. Efforts should be made to engage the federal government in recognizing the importance of such events in fostering stronger intercultural connections in Toronto, especially its many newcomer gateway neighbourhoods outside the core, and in providing the resources necessary to address this need.

CONTACT

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Overview of City of Toronto produced Canada Day Activities and Programs for 2024

Attachment 2: Data Summary and Analysis and Map Graphic of City of Toronto produced Canada Day Activities and Programs for 2024

Attachment 3: Distribution of Planned 2024 Canada Day Activities