



## **Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 2:**

### **Supporting Vibrant Parks by Improving Park Asset Management and Repair Processes**

**January 29, 2025**

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**AUDITOR  
GENERAL**  

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**TORONTO**

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## Executive Summary

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**Parks and Recreation's mission is to provide safe, clean, and beautiful parks**

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

City parks play a vital role in enhancing the quality of life for people of all ages. Ensuring the ongoing maintenance and repair of park assets and amenities is key to ensuring safe and well functioning public spaces.

**Parks Branch Technical Services staff maintain and repair park assets**

The Parks Branch is responsible for the ongoing care and maintenance of over 1,500 City-operated parks, including various amenities found in each park. Preventative maintenance and non-capital repairs of park assets, including infrastructure, features, and other park amenities, as well as the repair of small engine equipment used by Parks Branch (e.g. leaf blowers), are managed and delivered by the Parks Branch's Technical Services staff assigned to each district.

**Auditor General's multi-phased operational review of Parks Branch**

The Auditor General's 2024 Work Plan included an operational review of how the Parks and Recreation Division manages and maintains the City's parks.

**Results of the first phase were presented in October 2024**

In October 2024, the Auditor General presented the results of the first phase of the operational review in the report, [\*Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 1: Improving Oversight of Day-to-Day Maintenance Helps to Ensure City Parks are Beautiful, Clean and Safe\*](#). The first phase focused on the efficiency of daily park maintenance activities and compliance with the established service level standards. The audit report included nine recommendations to improve how the Parks Branch performs day-to-day maintenance to help keep parks beautiful, clean, and safe.

**Second phase focuses on park inspections, repairs, and complaints**

This report presents the second phase of the operational review, which focuses on Parks Branch's processes related to park inspections, non-capital repairs and maintenance of various park assets and amenities, and public complaints.

**Audit objective**

This audit aimed to address whether parks' maintenance and non-capital repair needs were being identified, prioritized, and addressed in a timely manner.

**Opportunities for continuous improvement**

Our audit identified opportunities for improvement in the following areas:

- A. Improving Park Maintenance Inspections and Monitoring of the Resolution of Deficiencies
- B. Implementing Consistent Practices for Repair-Related Service Requests and Work Order Tracking
- C. Establishing a Comprehensive System for Monitoring Public Complaints from Intake to Resolution

This audit focused on maintenance and non-capital repairs that fall within the mandate of Parks Branch's Technical Services group<sup>1</sup>.

**A. Improving Park Maintenance Inspections and Monitoring of the Resolution of Deficiencies**

**Inspections and general maintenance should enable prompt identification of most maintenance repair needs**

Parks Branch conducts semi-annual park maintenance inspections and other ad-hoc inspections throughout the year, as well as general park maintenance activities.<sup>2</sup> The periodic inspections and regular maintenance at parks should enable the prompt identification and prioritization of most maintenance repair needs.

**Work orders should be created to ensure repairs are actioned**

Where deficiencies identified through the semi-annual inspections cannot be addressed by general maintenance crews, the Parks Maintenance Supervisor that oversees general park maintenance and conducts the inspection is expected to create and email service requests to Technical Services staff, who will create, prioritize, and action work orders within their scope.

**Over half of work orders were created within 100 days to address identified repair-related deficiencies**

It is important to ensure work orders are promptly created, to prevent delays in addressing high priority concerns, as well as the potential deterioration of park amenities. Currently, there is no policy or procedures to set out how quickly work orders should be created after a deficiency has been identified. Work orders were created within 100 days for over half (56 per cent) of the 73 repair-related deficiencies identified by Parks Maintenance Supervisors during their inspections, that we selected for review, as shown in green (A) in **Figure 1**.

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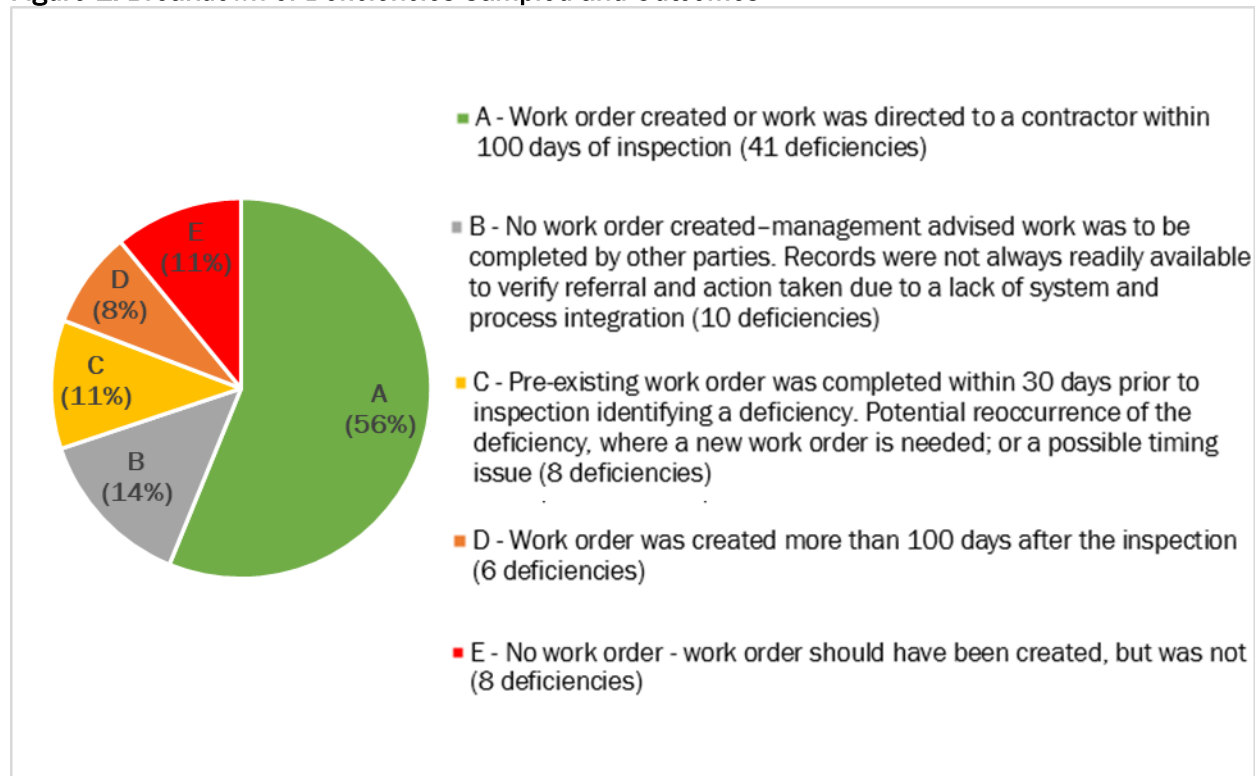
<sup>1</sup> This audit does not address repairs referred to groups outside of the Parks Branch or to other City divisions (e.g. Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM)).

<sup>2</sup> Parks & Recreation Division's Capital Projects Design and Delivery Branch is responsible for periodically assessing the condition of park assets and their state of good repair, as part of their work to develop and deliver the Division's Capital Budget and Ten-Year Capital Plan. Operational responsibilities of the Capital Projects Design and Delivery Branch were not included within the scope of this audit.

**Issues found for just under half of repair-related deficiencies**

However, for just under half of the repair-related deficiencies, we found issues, including: work orders were not created promptly or at all; potential reoccurrences of deficiencies where new work orders may have been needed; and, challenges tracking deficiencies where responsibility for action was transferred to others (e.g. general park maintenance, seasonal service, capital repairs) due to a lack of system and process integration.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of Deficiencies Sampled and Outcomes**



**Park maintenance inspections did not always identify repair needs**

In addition, in December 2023, we visited 40 parks and identified a number of repair-related deficiencies using the same criteria that is included in the Park Maintenance Inspection Tool (PMIT). Although we used the same set of standards, there were differences in the number and nature of repair-related deficiencies we identified and those that were identified by Parks Branch maintenance inspections conducted during the same season.

While some of the variance may be attributed to the timing of the park inspections and our site visits (if conditions in the parks changed between the two visits), the differences noted may also be indicative of inconsistencies in the approach to maintenance inspections performed by Parks staff. When repair-related deficiencies are not promptly identified, work orders may not be created. This can lead to delays in addressing the deficiency.



We recognize that repair-related deficiencies identified by inspections often are not safety related but reflect minor repairs needed to improve the condition of small assets or amenities. The Division then needs to balance addressing these deficiencies with safety and major repair related needs (including broader state of good repair of large assets/groups of assets) across all parks and in consideration of their resources and funding.

**Parks Branch should establish clearer guidance for tracking deficiencies and monitoring follow-up action**

Still, establishing clearer guidance on park maintenance inspections, including defining what deficiencies are significant enough to be tracked, can improve the consistency of the inspection process. In addition, clarifying roles and responsibilities for monitoring that follow-up action has occurred can help to ensure identified deficiencies are addressed in a timely manner.

## **B. Implementing Consistent Practices for Repair-Related Service Requests and Work Order Tracking**

**Challenges with current work order system**

The current work order system (SAP) does not fully meet the Parks Branch's needs. Consequently, work order management processes are largely manual and paper based. Furthermore, the Parks Branch does not have a formal policy or procedures for creating, prioritizing, tracking, and closing work orders. As a result, work order practices differ between districts. For example, there is no standard approach or criteria applied consistently across the districts for prioritizing work orders based on urgency and importance. Based on SAP data, we noted some districts were not assigning a priority status for work orders as frequently as others, and work orders for similar types of repairs were assigned different priority levels.

**Some work orders are missing key information**

During our audit, we found that work orders were not always filled out properly. Of the 74 work orders examined, 32 (43 per cent) were not properly documented. They were missing information such as hours, description of work completed/progress made over time, staff performing the work, materials used, and/or related materials costs (where applicable). Ensuring key information is documented in work order forms and in SAP better supports Managers and Supervisors ability to verify who performed the work and monitor progress to completion. This information is also needed to be able to analyze productivity and the cost-effectiveness of resources (time and materials) used to complete the work.

**Missing or incomplete records of daily activities makes it difficult to account for staff time**

While reviewing daily activity records together with work order records, we found that the extent to which staff documented their day varied. In some cases, discrepancies and gaps in records made it difficult to account for significant portions of staff time during their shift. In addition, many records we reviewed did not include vehicle information, which prevents the use of GPS data to verify reported locations. Parks Branch needs to set clear expectations for how Technical Services staff should track their daily activities. Management has advised that quality assurance procedures being implemented in response to the Phase 1 audit recommendations will also be rolled out for the Technical Services unit.

**New work order management system is expected for phased roll-out starting in 2025**

Management advised that the Parks Branch intends to accelerate the implementation of a new work order system (EWMS) through a phased roll-out starting in 2025.<sup>3</sup> The goal is for EWMS to provide a more integrated system for the Parks and Recreation Division that will improve overall efficiency of the work order management processes.

**Many completed work orders are not promptly closed in SAP**

There are no formal procedures for monitoring and following up on open work orders. The nature and extent of management review and oversight to ensure required repairs have been completed varies. At the time of the audit, there were almost 8,200 open work orders in SAP from 2018 to July 2024.<sup>4</sup> Through a review of a sample of 30 recently opened work orders in SAP from January 2024 to July 2024, we found that 90 per cent (27 out of 30) were completed, based on the manual work order records outside of SAP, but were not closed out in the system. Overall, due to the high volume of open work orders, their age, as well as inconsistencies in prioritizing and tracking the progress of work orders, it is not possible to readily determine how much of the work related to the 8,200 open work orders has actually been completed or more importantly, what work, if any, remains outstanding. Management has advised us that, in response to our audit, Parks Branch has reviewed all open emergency work orders in SAP to confirm they have been addressed.

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<sup>3</sup> The rollout will be phased to start with 311 integration; followed by the introduction of the Digital Daily Activity Sheet (DAS); followed by the full capability across all work units in later years.

<sup>4</sup> There are also a number of open work orders in SAP that were created prior to 2018.

**Parks Branch should set service level standards for work order completion based on priority and complexity**

The Parks Branch has not established service level standards and performance measures (e.g. completion and close out timeframes) for maintenance repairs. Setting appropriate service level standards for work within their mandate (giving consideration to constraints, such as coordination with other units or divisions and the availability of funding and resources), provides benchmarks for how quickly repair needs should be addressed, based on the priority and complexity of work. Measuring performance against these standards can then help management to better evaluate whether jobs are being completed and closed out in a timely and efficient manner, and whether public expectations are being met.

### **C. Establishing a Comprehensive System for Monitoring Public Complaints from Intake to Resolution**

**Broad range of calls received about parks**

Calls received from the public can be very broad, covering a wide range of issues. This includes calls about hours of operations, off-leash dogs, daily maintenance of parks (e.g. grass is too long, litter in the parks, or dirty washrooms), repair needs (e.g. leaking water fountain, graffiti removal, or lights not working), and overflowing garbage and recycling bins in parks (which is the responsibility of the Solid Waste Management Services Division, not Parks and Recreation).

**No centralized complaints management system**

As discussed at the October 2024 Audit Committee meeting when the Phase 1 audit report was considered, there is no centralized system in place to track, log, and manage public complaints effectively. As a result, it is challenging to easily identify the types and frequency of complaints received, the park locations involved, response times, and the actions taken. Without a centralized system, it is difficult to compile and analyze data to identify trends or address the underlying causes of recurring issues. Management advised that the planned service integration between 311 and the Parks and Recreation Division will provide improved and more consistent call resolution, accessibility, and communication for parks-related concerns. This is intended to be an end-to-end integration between 311 on the front-end and Parks Branch systems on the back-end.

Based on a sample of complaints we reviewed, the Parks Branch can improve compliance with targets for assessing, acknowledging complaints within one business day of receipt, and resolving complaints within 14 days of receipt. The Division should also ensure its complaints policy is kept up-to-date, as well as implement effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with the policy.



## **Conclusion**

The Parks Branch plays an important role in managing the amenities and assets in parks to ensure they are safe, clean, well-maintained, and meet the needs of communities.

Improvements are needed to policies, procedures, processes, and systems supporting how the Parks Branch tracks and manages maintenance and repair needs. Enhancing guidance and training will help to ensure repairs are being consistently identified, prioritized, and addressed in a timely manner. The report's nine recommendations will support vibrant parks by improving park asset management and repair processes.

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## Background

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**Parks and Recreation's mission is to provide safe, clean, and beautiful parks**

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

**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.<sup>5</sup>

### **Financial and operational highlights**

**2024 operating budget and staffing**

The Parks Branch 2024 operating budget<sup>6</sup> is over \$190 million (gross), with \$38.3 million dedicated to Technical Services<sup>7</sup> as summarized in Table 1. The Technical Services workforce includes 205 permanent and approximately 55 temporary seasonal staff (approved FTEs, full time equivalents) in 2024.

**Table 1: 2024 Operating Budget Dedicated to Technical Services**

	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
<b>Technical Services</b> (Gross Expenditures)	\$30.0M	\$34.8M	\$38.3M
<b>Technical Services</b> (Net Expenditures)	\$29.8M	\$34.2M	\$36.7M

*Source: Provided by Parks and Recreation. Excludes general park maintenance (covered in Phase 1 of the audit) and other areas that are out of scope for this audit (e.g. golf courses, horticulture) and does not include capital repairs.*

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<sup>5</sup> [Parkland Strategy – Growing Toronto Parkland \(Final Report, November 2019\)](#) adopted by Council on November 26, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/97b1-2024-Public-Book-PFR-V1.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> The Technical Services budget does not include Parkland Maintenance – General Summer and Winter Operations.

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## **Roles and responsibilities for park repairs and maintenance**

### **Parks Branch maintains City parks and amenities**

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

The evaluation of park asset conditions for their state of good repair, as well as completion of any significant capital repair or replacement, is the responsibility of the Capital Projects Design and Delivery Branch<sup>8</sup>. This work is done to develop and deliver the Division's Capital Budget and Ten-Year Capital Plan. These capital repairs were not included in the scope of this audit.

### **Parks Branch Technical Services staff maintain and repair park assets**

The Parks Branch organizes its staff through a geographic, district-based operating model. Preventative maintenance and non-capital repairs of park assets (e.g. replacing park benches/picnic tables) including infrastructure, features, and other park amenities, as well as the repair of small engine equipment used by the Parks Branch (e.g. leaf blowers), are managed and delivered by Parks Branch's Technical Services staff assigned to each district. In addition, Management advised that the Parks Branch is currently reviewing the scope of small asset state of good repair or rehabilitation work in City parks that falls under Technical Services' mandate and the funding allocated for that work.

## **Various types of regular and ad hoc park inspections**

### **Semi-annual park maintenance inspections**

Inspections are a critical component of maintaining the safety, functionality, and quality of public parks. Parks Maintenance Supervisors are expected to complete general maintenance inspections twice a year to assess the overall condition of park grounds and amenities.

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<sup>8</sup> The Capital Projects Design and Delivery Branch manages and supports Parks and Recreation's infrastructure and the Division's city-wide capital program.

The Parks Branch has established service level standards for operations and maintenance of parks. Areas to be covered during inspection include park amenities<sup>9</sup>, infrastructure<sup>10</sup>, horticulture, and turf. The standards define the minimum requirements each park asset must meet to pass the semi-annual maintenance inspection. The digital tool used for park inspections incorporates these service standards to assess park conditions.

Management advised that the Park Maintenance Inspection Tool (PMIT) is intended to improve the ability to inspect parks against service standards and identify potential hazards. Supervisors may not examine each and every single amenity or asset during these inspections, given workloads, technical competency requirements, and resource constraints. Still, Supervisors will log deficiencies they observe as they are reviewing the general maintenance of the park.

#### **Other inspections**

In addition to the general park maintenance inspections, the Parks Branch conducts monthly inspections of playgrounds and washrooms. Seasonal amenities such as washrooms, pools, wading pools, splash pads, artificial ice rinks, and fountains are inspected at the beginning and end of the operational season. Ad hoc inspections may be carried out in response to specific concerns raised by the public or other emerging issues.

#### **Addressing deficiencies identified during inspections**

#### **Technical Services handles maintenance and repairs that require more specialized skills**

Deficiencies identified during the inspections can range from minor maintenance tasks to more substantial repairs or even capital repair work (which is generally not the responsibility of Technical Services staff). Minor deficiencies are typically resolved by park crews as part of their daily maintenance activities. However, when a repair requires specialized skills (such as plumbing, electrical, carpentry, welding), a service request is forwarded to Technical Services staff for actioning within their mandate. Additionally, some deficiencies may be referred to other branches or units of the Parks and Recreation division, such as the Capital Projects Design and Delivery Branch (e.g., larger state of good repair or capital work), or other divisions entirely, such as the Corporate Real Estate Management division (e.g., facility related repairs such as roof repairs or fire safety systems).

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<sup>9</sup> Park assets or amenities included in semi-annual inspections: trees (located in close proximity to other park amenities), play spaces, drinking fountains / bottle filling stations, washrooms, outdoor fitness equipment, gazebo / shade structure, splash / spray pad / wading pools, baseball diamond fields, soccer fields (nets and goal posts), basketball courts (nets and hoops), park bench, picnic tables, dog off leash areas, etc.

<sup>10</sup> Infrastructure assets included in semi-annual inspections: park lighting (should be completed at night) park drainage, water infrastructure (including pipes, irrigation systems), pathway, parking lot, bridge, recreational trail, staircase, including railing, light standard, etc.

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## Audit Results

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This section of the report contains the findings from our audit work, followed by specific recommendations.

### A. Improving Park Maintenance Inspections and Monitoring of the Resolution of Deficiencies

**Inspections are conducted to ensure safety, functionality, and overall maintenance of parks**

Park maintenance inspections are completed by Parks Maintenance Supervisors/Forepersons twice annually. The inspections are conducted to ensure that parks are safe and that the amenities are in working condition. The Parks Branch also completes monthly playground and washroom inspections, and the inspections of seasonal amenities such as washrooms, pools, wading pools, splash pads and fountains at the beginning and end of the spring/summer season. The Parks Branch may also perform ad hoc inspections in response to a 311 request or at the direction of City Council.

**Management indicated that it is not feasible for Parks Branch staff to inspect every asset during semi-annual inspections**

Management advised that the semi-annual park inspections are intended to assess the overall condition of parks rather than to assess the condition of every asset within a park. Management indicated it would not be feasible for Supervisors, given their current workload, to inspect every asset as part of the park maintenance inspections due to the large quantity of assets (e.g. benches, picnic tables). Management further advised that the Division's Capital Projects Design and Delivery Branch is separately responsible for assessing the condition of larger park assets (e.g. outdoor pools, park washrooms) and their state of good repair with scheduled condition assessments.

**Various inspections throughout the year should identify most repair needs**

Still, considering the various inspections conducted throughout the year, along with the weekly park maintenance performed by park general maintenance crews, we would expect that most significant repair needs would be identified and tracked through to their resolution.

The Parks Branch is responsible for identifying and prioritizing maintenance and repair needs that fall under Technical Services' mandate, which should then be addressed through service requests and work orders.



It is difficult to obtain a complete view of all the repairs that are outside of Parks Branch’s mandate

However, where repair work is the responsibility of other branches or units of the Parks and Recreation division or other divisions entirely, it is much more difficult to track and have an overall, coordinated view of all the park repairs that have been identified and how these repairs are being addressed, because there is no integrated system listing all identified repairs that have been handed off to other groups to address.<sup>11</sup>

## **A. 1. Park Maintenance Inspections Process Did Not Always Identify and Resolve Repair-Related Deficiencies**

Service requests are created by Parks Maintenance Supervisors

Parks Branch District Managers advised that deficiencies identified during park maintenance inspections are tracked in the digital Park Maintenance Inspection Tool (PMIT). For deficiencies that cannot be addressed by Parks general maintenance crews, the Parks Maintenance Supervisor/Foreperson who conducted the inspection is expected to create service requests and email them to Technical Services staff. This process then facilitates the creation of work orders (as described in **Section B**).

### **Some work orders were not promptly created or could not be located**

Work orders should be promptly created

It is important to ensure work orders are promptly created, to prevent delays in addressing high priority concerns, as well as the potential deterioration of park amenities. Currently, there is no policy or procedures to set out how quickly work orders should be created after a deficiency has been identified.

We reviewed the PMIT inspection data for inspections conducted between March 2022 and July 2024 and randomly selected 73 repair-related service requests initiated by the Parks Maintenance Supervisors/ Forepersons based on deficiencies identified during inspections covering the four districts.

Over half of work orders were created within 100 days

For over half of these deficiencies (56 per cent, 41 of 73 deficiencies), work orders were created or work was assigned to third-party contractors within 100 days of the deficiencies being identified, as shown in green (A) in **Figure 1**.

However, for just under half of the repair-related deficiencies, we found issues, including:

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<sup>11</sup> This audit focused on maintenance and non-capital repairs that fall within the mandate of Parks Branch’s Technical Services group. This audit does not address repairs where responsibility is transferred to groups outside of the Parks Branch or to other City divisions.

**Work orders were not promptly created, or at all, for at least 19% of deficiencies identified by park inspections**

- 19 per cent (14 of 73 deficiencies), where work orders were not created<sup>12</sup> or were not promptly created to track the need for action by Technical Services staff. More specifically, we identified:
  - 11 per cent (8 of 73 deficiencies) where no work order was created, as shown **in red (E)**.
  - 8 per cent (6 of 73 deficiencies) where work orders were not promptly created, delaying the start of actions to address the deficiency, as shown **in orange (D)**.
- In a further 11 per cent (8 of 73 deficiencies), a pre-existing work order was completed within 30 days *prior to* the inspection identifying a deficiency, as shown **in yellow (C)**. While this may have been due to timing issues, it is possible there was a reoccurrence of a deficiency, where a new work order may have been needed.

**Challenging to verify work actioned by other groups due to lack of system and process integration**

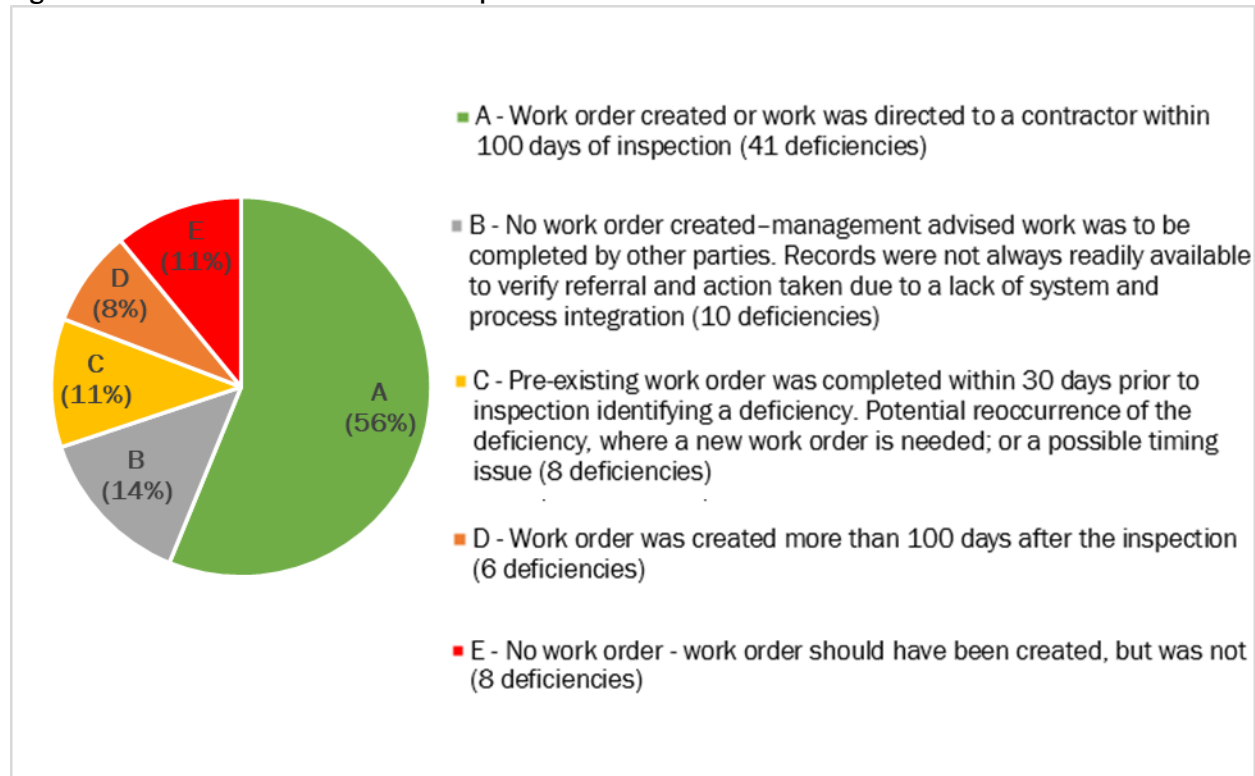
- Additionally, management advised that work orders were not created for work transferred to other groups to address (e.g., general park maintenance, seasonal service, capital repairs). When this happens, there is no end-to-end tracking from identification to resolution in a single, integrated system. As shown **in gray (B)** in **Figure 1**, no work orders were created in 14 per cent of deficiencies (10 of 73 deficiencies) where management advised that work would not be performed by Technical Services staff.

For some of these deficiencies, management was not able to provide sufficient supporting documentation to verify that the work was actioned by the other groups.

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<sup>12</sup> This does not include repair-related deficiencies where work orders were not created to track the actions needed / taken but were to be actioned by other groups other than Technical Services.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of Deficiencies Sampled and Outcomes**



### **Auditor General's Office site visits to parks noted deficiencies not identified through park maintenance inspections**

#### **Auditor General's Office conducted site visits to 40 parks across the four districts**

In December 2023, staff from the Auditor General's Office visited 40 randomly selected parks of different sizes across the four districts and conducted walkthroughs to identify potential deficiencies using the same service standards that are embedded in the Park Branch digital tool used by the Parks Maintenance Supervisors/Forepersons when conducting inspections.

Although we used the same set of standards, there were differences in the number and nature of repair-related deficiencies we identified compared to the results from the 2023-2024 Fall/Winter park maintenance inspections (covering the same period as our site visits).<sup>13</sup>

While some of the variance may be attributed to the timing of the park inspections and our site visits (if conditions in the parks changed between the two visits), the differences noted may also be indicative of inconsistencies in the approach to maintenance inspections performed by Parks staff.

<sup>13</sup> About 20 per cent of deficiencies identified during the site visits conducted by Auditor General staff were also identified during an inspection in the same season by Parks Branch staff.

**22% of deficiencies identified by Auditor General staff, not identified through park maintenance inspections, should be addressed by Technical Services**

When deficiencies are not promptly identified, work orders may not be created. This can lead to delays in addressing the deficiency. For example:

- 22 per cent of the 99 repair-related deficiencies we identified were not identified during maintenance inspections. These would fall within the scope of repairs to be addressed by the Technical Services group. Because these deficiencies were not identified, work orders were not created and repair needs were not addressed. Illustrative examples of some of the repair needs we identified during our site visits are shown in **Photograph Series 1**.

**Photograph Series 1: Examples of Deficiencies We Found Within the Scope of Technical Services Group - Not Identified by Parks Branch Inspections**



**Photo 1:** Large burn holes on picnic table



**Photo 2:** Large rust areas and surface coating lifting off playground equipment



**Photo 3:** Broken back board on bench

**About 11% of noted deficiencies, not identified through park maintenance inspections, were subsequently identified and resolved**

- In addition, about 11 per cent of deficiencies we identified were not identified in park maintenance inspections but were subsequently identified through other means. The following is an illustrative example of a repair-related deficiency identified by the audit team during site visits that was not identified during park maintenance inspections but was subsequently identified and resolved.

**Example:** Auditor General's staff conducted a site visit of a community park on December 8, 2023, and spotted a broken bench (refer to **Photo 4**). An inspection conducted by Parks Branch staff on January 24, 2024, did not flag the broken bench as a deficiency in need of repair. Almost six months later on June 14, 2024, the Parks Maintenance Foreperson submitted a service request to Technical Services to repair a bench after it was identified by a general maintenance crew (refer to **Photo 5**). The repair was completed on June 25, 2024.





**Photo 4:** Photo of broken bench taken during Auditor General's Office site visit on December 3, 2023



**Photo 5:** Photo of broken bench identified by a Parks general maintenance crew as of June 14, 2024

**Management advised that some noted deficiencies, not identified through park maintenance inspections, are not tracked**

In the remaining cases, management advised that deficiencies we noted during site visits that were not identified through park maintenance inspections would not ordinarily be tracked because:

- The repair need is largely aesthetic<sup>14</sup> or low in priority (e.g., paint is chipped, rust on assets, minor damage to park bench). Illustrative examples of some of these repair needs are shown in **Photograph Series 2**.
- The repair need would be addressed through seasonal servicing, the Capital Plan, or addressed through other groups.

We recognize that repair-related deficiencies identified by inspections often are not safety related but reflect minor repairs needed to improve the condition of small assets or amenities. The Division then needs to balance addressing these deficiencies with safety and major repair related needs (including broader state of good repair of large assets/groups of assets) across all parks and in consideration of their resources and funding.

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<sup>14</sup> For playground equipment that fall under this category, management advised that separate playground inspections would identify if there was a safety or risk issue and a work order would have been created if a repair was needed. Otherwise, the aesthetic deficiencies would be addressed in the future through the Playground Enhancement Program.



**Photograph Series 2: Examples of Deficiencies Considered Low Priority/Aesthetic by Parks Branch and Would Not Generally Be Tracked During Park Maintenance Inspections**



**Photo 6:** Paint chipping off on wooden play equipment



**Photo 7:** Cracked and chipped wooden bleacher



**Photo 8:** Paint chipped off on metal play equipment

Inconsistent approaches to identifying deficiencies during park inspections, and creating and documenting work orders for deficiencies identified during park inspections, can diminish the usefulness and effectiveness of the inspection process. This can consequently impact whether maintenance and repair issues are addressed in a timely manner, increasing the risk of potential safety hazards, and diminishing the quality of parks. Strengthening processes through clearer guidance is discussed in **Section A.2**.

**Recommendation:**

- 1. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to:**
  - a. Review and analyze data from the park inspections system to ensure repair-related deficiencies identified in past inspections have been resolved and/or appropriate work orders have been created to track repairs where action is still pending to resolve the deficiency.**
  - b. Establish a process and/or supporting systems for tracking, through to their resolution, deficiencies that have been transferred to other groups or divisions.**

## **A. 2. Establishing Clearer Guidance on Park Maintenance Inspections Can Help to Improve the Quality of Inspections**

### **Most parks were periodically inspected**

While most parks were periodically inspected, the variances between deficiencies identified during our site visits and inspection results (as discussed in **Section A.1**), highlight opportunities to strengthen guidance provided to staff conducting and following up on these inspections.

### **More robust guidance for park inspections needed**

Parks staff use a digital tool with embedded service standards to assess each park. A technical training manual is available, and Supervisors received training when the Park Maintenance Inspection Program (PMIT) was introduced and seasonal updates were provided on the program; however, more robust guidelines can be provided to Supervisors/Forepersons. This includes providing clearer guidance on:

- Documenting the inspection results, including defining what deficiencies are significant enough that they must be tracked in the tool, as well as clarification of how to address circumstances that limit the scope of inspections (e.g., encampments, closed amenities or assets due to construction), repeated/recurring issues, and deficiencies previously identified (e.g., capital projects to be addressed through the Capital Budget and Ten-Year Capital Plan), and other exceptions; and
- Required timeframes and actions to follow up on deficiencies identified during the inspection, including creation of service requests and work orders or tracking the transferring of responsibility for repairs to other units.

Clearer guidance can improve the consistency of the inspection process, ensuring the deficiencies are identified, documented, and addressed in a timely manner.

In addition, Parks Branch management should clarify roles and responsibilities for monitoring that follow up action has occurred, including review of available reports generated from inspection data compared to work order data, or other tracking of referred responsibility for repairs.

**Recommendation:**

2. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to develop additional guidance and/or training to outline or clarify:
  - a. requirements for documenting inspection results, including noting of deficiencies and creating work orders for necessary maintenance; and
  - b. processes for monitoring and following-up of deficiencies.

## **B. Implementing Consistent Practices for Repair-Related Service Requests and Work Order Tracking**

**Service requests are managed differently across the districts**

Service requests for repairs in parks, submitted to Technical Services staff by Parks Maintenance Supervisors, are managed inconsistently across the districts. Three districts log service requests in SAP and generate work orders, while one district retains requests in a central email inbox, only creating work orders in SAP after repairs are completed.

In addition, the Parks Branch does not have a formal policy for creating, tracking, and closing work orders. Consequently, work order practices differ between the districts.

**Key steps in an effective work order management process**

An effective and efficient process for work order management provides a structured approach for handling service requests and supports accountability throughout the process. Some key steps in the process that should be consistently adopted across all districts include:

- creating and prioritizing work orders, and assigning resources;
- monitoring progress of work orders and escalating when necessary;
- completing the work, inspecting the quality of work, and closing out the work order; and
- reviewing and analyzing the work order data for trends and issues.

These areas are further discussed in the sections that follow.

Implementing standardized processes across all districts would support and reinforce equitable treatment across the City so that no area is underserved.

## B.1. Management of Work Orders and Documentation Need Improvement

### Work order processes are very manual in nature

#### Challenges with the current work order system

Management advised that the current work order system (SAP) does not fully meet their needs. Consequently, work order management processes are largely manual and paper based. Some of the challenges faced by the Parks Branch include multiple manual processes such as:

- data entry of service requests into SAP by a Support Assistant;
- printing paper copies of work orders for distribution by a Supervisor/Foreperson to Technical Services staff for action;
- manual record keeping by Technical Services staff of actions taken (on the paper copy);
- data entry of completed work order information (from paper copies) into SAP by a Support Assistant; and
- closing out of work orders in SAP by a Support Assistant.

#### SAP work order data is often inaccurate, incomplete, and/or out-of-date

Manual processes slow down task completion, increase administrative burdens, and diminish the quality and reliability of system data. Inaccurate, incomplete, and/or out-of-date information limits management's ability to use the data to monitor and improve operations.

The Parks Branch continues to wait for the new work order system, called Enterprise Work Management System (EWMS), to be implemented. As highlighted by the Auditor General in her November 2023 report, [\*Audit of the Enterprise Work Management Solution \(EWMS\): Lessons Learned for Future Large Information Technology Projects \(2023.AU3.4\)\*](#), corporately, the implementation of EWMS has been delayed. Management advised us that the Parks Branch intends to accelerate the implementation of a new work order system (EWMS) through a phased roll-out starting in 2025.<sup>15</sup> The goal is for EWMS to provide a more integrated system for the Parks and Recreation Division that will improve overall efficiency of the work order management process.

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<sup>15</sup> The rollout will be phased to start with 311 integration; followed by the introduction of the Digital Daily Activity Sheet (DAS); followed by the full capability across all work units in later years.

### **Work order records were missing key details**

The Parks Branch has basic procedures to guide Technical Services staff on completing the “Service Request & Work Order Form”. In particular these procedures indicate Parks Technical Services staff are expected to document details of the work orders, including staff performing the work, activities completed, materials required to complete the job, and materials costs.

**43% of sampled work orders were not filled out properly by staff**

During our audit, we found that work orders were not always filled out properly. Of the 74 work orders examined, 32 (43 per cent) were not properly documented. They were missing information such as hours, description of work completed/progress made over time, staff performing the work, materials used, and/or related materials costs (where applicable).

We noted that Parks Branch procedures do not provide any guidance on documenting actions taken or progress made when a work order cannot be completed within a single day. Guidance on documenting progress would be helpful, given that more than half of all closed work orders from June 2022 through July 2024 took multiple days to complete, based on SAP data.

**Incomplete information makes it more difficult to monitor progress and analyze productivity and cost-effectiveness**

Missing key information on manual work order forms and in SAP can make it difficult for Managers and Supervisors to verify who performed the work, monitor progress to completion, and analyze productivity and the cost-effectiveness of resources (both time and materials) used to complete the work.

### **The Parks Branch should establish a consistent approach for prioritizing service requests/work orders based on urgency and importance**

**Detailed work order prioritization criteria is needed**

Given the large number of parks and assets managed by the Parks Branch and constraints on both staffing and budget, proper prioritization of work orders will help to focus its Technical Services resources on the tasks that have the greatest impact on safety, service quality, and operational continuity.

Through our interviews with Technical Services General Supervisors, Supervisors, and support staff, we found that the Parks Branch has not established robust criteria for prioritizing service requests as emergency, high, medium, low/no priority. Currently, the prioritization of work orders is left to the discretion of the district Supervisors.

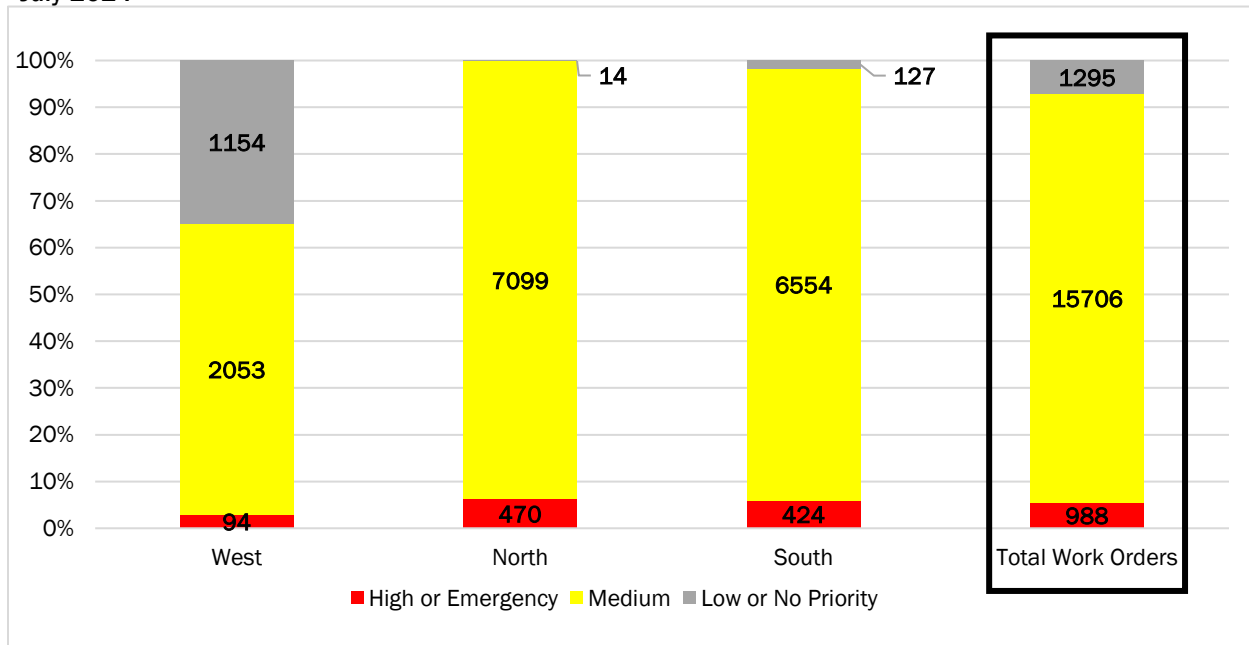
Based on SAP data, we noted some districts were not assigning a priority status to work orders as frequently as others to help prioritize work based on urgency and importance.



**Priority field in SAP is not consistently used across the districts**

As shown in **Figure 3**, SAP work order data shows the variation from district to district, in volume of work orders and proportion of work orders that are categorized as high priority. Work orders with a High Emergency, Emergency and High priority status in SAP are identified in red in Figure 3. (We have excluded the East district from this analysis because it does not use the SAP work order system in the manner it was intended to be used).

**Figure 3: Total Number of Work Orders by District and Priority (excluding the East District), June 2022 - July 2024**



**Parks Branch should provide staff with guidance on work that would be considered of higher urgency or risk**

To ensure consistency of practices across the districts, Parks Branch should provide guidance and examples of the scope of work that would be considered of higher urgency or risk. In turn, the work order description in SAP can better reflect the linkage between the scope of work and prioritization.

**Recommendations:**

- 3. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to develop and implement a service request and work order policy or procedure and provide training to staff. The guidance provided should include:**

  - a. criteria for creating work orders, specifying any exceptions for cases where a work order may not be required and how resolution of service requests without work orders should be documented and tracked;**
  - b. criteria for prioritizing work orders based on the urgency and impact (e.g. safety risk); and**
  - c. data entry standards outlining specific information required for each work order (e.g. descriptions linking work to be completed and prioritization or risks, task detail, start and end dates) and expected timeframes for entering a service request and generating and closing a work order in the work order management system.**
- 4. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, in consultation with the Chief Technology Officer, to modernize work order management practices to reduce inefficiencies arising from manual processes. In doing so, Parks Branch should consider the capability of enabling technologies to support the integration of work order management, work assignments and time tracking. Consideration should also be given to integrating the tracking of work transferred to other groups or divisions.**

## B. 2. Improve Monitoring of Work Order Status and Related Performance Measures

### **SAP is not being used effectively to track and monitor work order status**

**SAP is not consistently used – limiting visibility to open work orders**

As noted previously, one district does not enter work orders into SAP until the job is completed<sup>16</sup>. Since work orders for this district are not recorded in SAP or any tracking tool other than an email inbox, management does not have clear visibility of how many work orders the district needs to address, how much work is underway, and how much work has been completed. In addition, it is also not clear whether the emergency and high priority work have been addressed in a timely manner or if any work orders have fallen through the cracks. To be able to gather this information, management would need to manually review each email in their central inbox.

**Quality of work order data limits management's ability to use SAP to effectively monitor whether needed repairs are completed on a timely basis**

For the work orders that are entered in SAP, the status or the progress of the work and reasons for delays are not documented in SAP, making it difficult to track the progress of work. Instead, Supervisors/Forepersons advised us that they directly contact staff to obtain verbal updates on the status of the work orders.

We also noted other issues with the quality of work order data in SAP that further limits management's ability to use the system and data to effectively monitor work orders through to their timely completion and to ensure that no required repairs have been missed.

**Work order information in SAP is incomplete**

By analyzing work order data from June 2022 to July 2024, we found that information such as labour hours or completion dates were not always entered into the system accurately or in a timely manner.

**Completed work orders are not promptly closed in SAP**

Furthermore, through our review of a sample of work orders, discussion with district management, and analysis of SAP data, we found that work orders were not consistently closed in the system in a timely manner after the work is completed. Specifically:

- 90 per cent (27 out of 30) of the recently opened work orders from January 2024 to July 2024 we reviewed, were completed but not closed in the system. These work orders have been left open in SAP by as much as 195 days past the completion date noted in the manual work order records (as of July 18, 2024).

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<sup>16</sup> There is a significant backlog of completed work orders from 2022 and 2023 that still need to be entered into SAP. Management stated that they are working on clearing the backlog starting with 2023 work orders and working backwards.

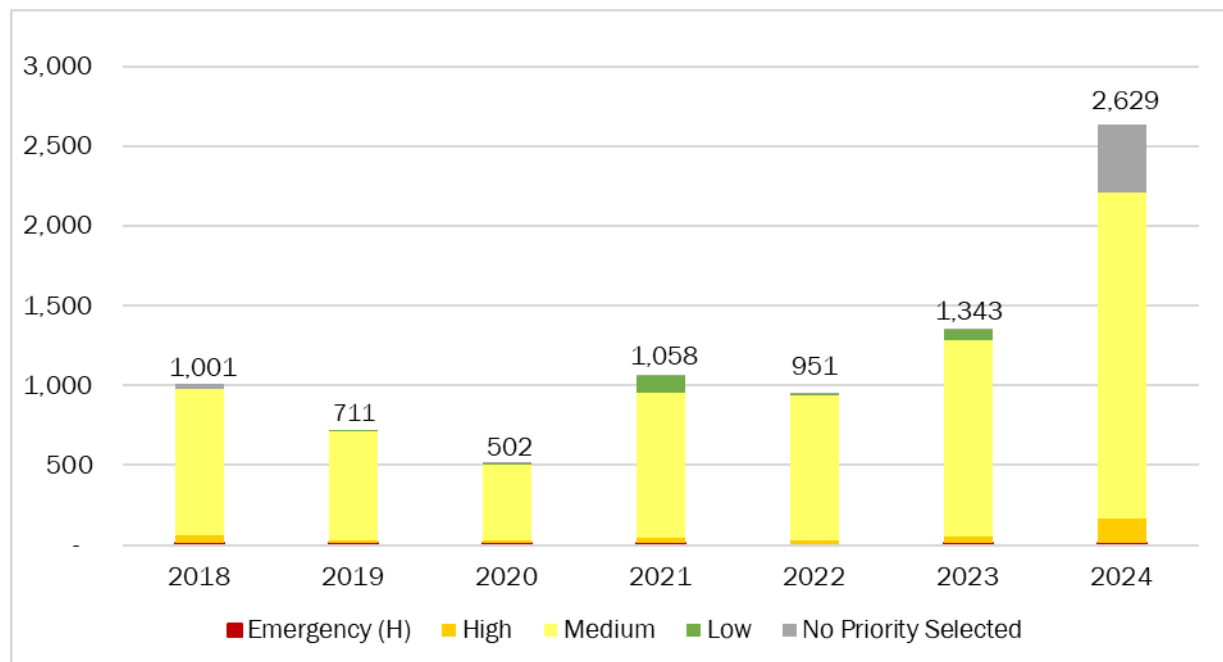
- Over 14 per cent of the over 14,000 work orders closed in SAP between August 17, 2022 and July 16, 2024, had a closure date that was more than 30 days after the work was completed.<sup>17</sup>

Technical Services Supervisors indicated that vacancies and other staffing challenges impact the group’s ability to promptly complete and close work orders.<sup>18</sup>

### Almost 8,200 open work orders from 2018 to July 2024

In SAP, there are almost 8,200 open work orders from 2018 to July 2024<sup>19</sup>. In our review of a sample of 30 recent work orders, we found that 90 per cent had been addressed but were not closed out in the system. However, overall, it is not possible to readily determine how much of the work related to the 8,200 open work orders has actually been completed, due to the high volume of open work orders, their age, as well as inconsistencies in prioritizing and tracking the progress of work orders. More importantly, it is unclear what work, if any, remains outstanding. **Figure 4** below illustrates the breakdown of open work orders by year and priority.

**Figure 4: Number of Open Work Orders by Year and Priority, 2018 to July 2024**



Note: Work orders that were identified as a “High Emergency” and “Emergency” are grouped together as a single Emergency (H) category in red in the figure above.

<sup>17</sup> In an additional 9 per cent of work orders, it could not be readily determined how long it took to close after completion because of issues with the accuracy and completeness of data in SAP.

<sup>18</sup> 56 positions within Technical Services were vacant as of January 2025. Further, management advised that, currently, the manual entry and closure of SAP work orders is completed by five administrative support staff, which is a decrease in resources assigned in the past.

<sup>19</sup> Additional older open work orders were found in SAP, with some dating back to 2009. However, due to their age, this was excluded.

In response to our audit, management has advised that Parks Branch has reviewed all open emergency work orders in SAP to confirm they have been addressed.<sup>20</sup> Management further advised that analysis is ongoing to address the remaining open work orders and ensure they are closed out in the system in 2025.

**Procedures for effective monitoring and follow-up of open work orders are needed**

The preceding findings highlight opportunities to improve oversight, increase monitoring, address procedural gaps in confirming required repairs have been completed, and timely closing out of work orders.

**No consistent approach to monitoring and following up on open work orders**

Currently, there are no procedures to guide Supervisors in monitoring and following up on work orders. The nature and extent of review and oversight in ensuring required repairs have been completed varies from district to district and supervisor to supervisor. For example, some Supervisors stated:

- *"I don't really know how many work orders are outstanding. We try to keep on top of the work orders."*
- *"We do not get reports from SAP. Smaller work orders are taken care of quickly. If it's a large work order, I'll track its repair on my white board or note it down for follow up."*

Although there are SAP reports that can be used to assist Supervisors with monitoring work orders, these reports, including aging reports identifying how long work orders have remained open, are not regularly utilized by district management.

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<sup>20</sup> In total there were 15 open "High Emergency" work orders and 30 open "Emergency" work orders dating as far back as 2009 that management reviewed. We reviewed documentation to confirm that open work orders that were prioritized as "Emergency" within 2023 and 2024 have now been completed and closed. Additionally, Management has advised that the remaining issues prioritized as emergency work orders have been addressed, are no longer applicable (e.g., the related asset has been replaced or decommissioned) or have been transferred to other groups.



**Good practices for monitoring open work orders**

Implementing effective monitoring and follow-up procedures of open work orders will help management determine that repairs have received appropriate attention based on urgency, safety, and impact, and ensure timely resolution of maintenance needs. Good practices for work order management that the Parks Branch should adopt include:

- establishing clear and standardized completion targets and protocols for closing out work orders to ensure consistency and accountability;
- implementing regular reviews of open work orders to track progress, monitor against completion targets, address delays, and reallocate resources to ensure that critical work is completed in a timely manner; and
- using available exception reporting to monitor the duration of open work orders. Documenting reasons for delays in completing work orders and regularly analyzing trends on reasons why work orders remain open will help to identify patterns that may indicate systemic issues that should be addressed.

**Key performance measures/completion targets for work orders should be established and monitored**

Setting service level standards for work order completion is essential for ensuring that work is completed efficiently, on time, and meets quality expectations.

**Work order completion timelines for similar tasks varied**

The Parks Branch has not established completion time frames for work orders. In our analysis of work orders opened from June 2022 to July 2024, we noted significant variations in completion times for similar types of jobs. For example<sup>21</sup>:

- Timeframes to complete work orders to unclog drinking fountains ranged from 0 to 18 days from the date the work order was created (median: 3.5 days).
- Timeframes to complete work orders to repair benches (not including the replacement of benches) ranged from 0 to 19 days from the date the work order was created (median: 3 days).

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<sup>21</sup> Work orders with similar descriptions that had inaccurate or incomplete data (e.g. missing completion dates) within SAP were excluded from the data range assessment.

- Timeframes to complete work orders to repair swings ranged from 0 to 36 days from the date the work order was created (median: 0 days/same day).

While we recognize that certain tasks may require more time to complete due to their complexity or other factors such as availability of parts and materials, the absence of established timeframes leave staff without clear guidance and contributes to inconsistency in how work orders are prioritized and addressed. Additionally, it is challenging for management to evaluate whether jobs are being completed in a timely and efficient manner.

**Parks Branch should set target completion timelines based on priority and complexity**

The Parks Branch should consider setting target timelines for completion of routine repairs and maintenance or non-urgent tasks; shorter target timelines for emergency, critical, or high priority repairs; and longer target timelines where work needs to be coordinated with other units, divisions, or third-party contractors or require parts/equipment to be ordered/available.

**Parks Branch should measure performance against these standards**

Measuring performance against these standards, while taking into account the impact of funding and resource constraints, can then help management to better evaluate whether jobs are being completed and closed out in a timely and efficient manner, and whether public expectations are being met.

#### **Recommendations:**

5. **City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to:**
  - a. **implement management reviews of open, in-progress, and completed work orders to monitor compliance, identify backlogs, and to assess productivity, efficiency, and workload; and**
  - b. **establish and implement guidelines for supervisors to conduct site visits to monitor the completion and quality of work performed by Parks Branch - Technical Services staff. Site visits should be documented, and feedback be provided to staff for training and process improvements.**

6. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to:
  - a. establish benchmarks for work order completion timeframes starting from the receipt of the service request to the time of work order completion, considering different priority and complexity levels; and
  - b. develop key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure and report the achievement of the established service standards, taking into consideration resource and funding constraints, and ensure the reasons for any delays impacting achievement of KPIs are tracked, analyzed, and addressed.

### **B. 3. Improve Accountability for Daily Activities and Work Orders Including Use of GPS**

#### **No policy or procedures to set expectations for Technical Services staff to document daily activities**

There is no policy, procedural guidance, or standard system in place for Technical Services staff on how to log their daily activities, which may involve a combination of tasks associated with one or more work orders<sup>22</sup>, as well as other activities. Most Technical Services staff selected for review across the districts did prepare some records of their daily activities; however, the records documenting and tracking assigned and completed daily activities varied between districts and amongst staff. One district's records lacked sufficient detail to fully account for time and tasks performed by staff throughout the day.

Using multiple ways of initiating and tracking the work activities of Technical Services staff makes it much more difficult to monitor workload distribution and productivity.

#### **Challenges reconciling daily activities**

In reviewing a sample of records for staff selected to cover the four districts and different Technical Services specialty areas, we found that staff were not always recording key information such as locations, activities, lunches and breaks, vehicles and equipment used and relevant work order information.

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<sup>22</sup> As previously noted in **Section B.1.**, there is only very basic guidance provided to staff on how to document work orders.

While reviewing daily activity records together with work order records, we found some staff documented most of their day, while in other cases discrepancies and gaps made it difficult to account for significant portions of staff time during their shift. When we followed up with district Supervisors, they could not always explain what staff were doing during the unaccounted hours, due to missing or incomplete records.

**Vehicle information missing – GPS analysis could not be performed**

For staff going to multiple locations, vehicle information was often not recorded. Therefore, it was not possible to use GPS data to verify that staff were present at the locations they reported.

**Daily activity records and work orders are important for accountability**

The Parks Branch should develop and implement a structured approach for consistently documenting, tracking, and completing maintenance tasks. Requiring staff to adopt a standardized format to document their activities and to provide a clear accounting of how the time is spent each shift, helps to ensure that tasks are completed as assigned and resources are used effectively. Properly completed daily logs and work orders also allow Supervisors to monitor staff performance and ensure priority tasks are being addressed.

The Parks Branch should continue its work to digitize and modernize its processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance activities and to distribute resources based on needs.

Management advised that the Technical Services unit will be adopting the quality assurance framework<sup>23</sup> being developed and implemented in response to our Phase 1 audit.

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<sup>23</sup> In an update to the December 2024 Audit Committee, the Parks Branch reported that they had begun implementing a new Parks Quality Assurance Framework. Supervisors will be conducting and documenting on-site quality checks. Supervisors must also verify that work reported on daily logs have been completed and meets parks standards. As well, quality assurance staff will be responsible for systematically reviewing a rolling sample of daily logs to ensure they are filled out completely, with no deficiencies.

**Recommendation:**

7. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to develop and implement procedures for documenting and tracking daily activities of Parks Branch - Technical Services staff and provide training on these procedures. The procedures should set expectations for:
  - a. using a standard template for logging daily activities to ensure consistency across the districts;
  - b. the types of activities staff must record, including tasks completed and time spent on each task (as well as linkages to work orders and information required for work orders, where applicable);
  - c. supervisory review of activity logs for accuracy and completeness, leveraging GPS where applicable; and
  - d. reviewing and analyzing data from activity records to support accountability and workload management.

### **C. Establishing a Comprehensive System for Monitoring Public Complaints from Intake to Resolution**

**Public concerns provide valuable feedback**

Complaints provide valuable feedback that help identify areas where service delivery may not meet expectations. By inviting the public to report issues or voice concerns, the Parks Branch can gain critical insights that could be used to improve park maintenance, enhance service delivery, and increase operational efficiency.

**Broad range of calls received about parks**

Calls received from the public can be very broad, covering a wide range of issues. This includes calls about hours of operations, off-leash dogs, daily maintenance of parks (e.g. grass too long, litter in the parks or dirty washrooms), repair needs (e.g. leaking water fountain, graffiti removal, or lights not working), and overflowing garbage and recycling bins in parks (which is the responsibility of the Solid Waste Management Services division, not the Parks and Recreation division).

**Public concerns can be submitted in many ways**

Currently, the public can submit complaints using the following methods/mechanisms:

- **Phone 311:** calls are forwarded to the relevant district Supervisor for follow-up.
- **Email Parks central inbox** ([parks@toronto.ca](mailto:parks@toronto.ca)): complaints are reviewed by the Parks Branch Client and Business Services group and forwarded to the relevant Parks Supervisor for follow-up.
- **Email or phone District Manager/Supervisor:** complaints are reviewed by the Parks Supervisor.
- **Meet in-person with staff at the park:** complaints are either resolved on the spot or referred to be emailed or submitted to 311.

**C. 1. Inconsistent Tracking of Complaints and Service Requests**

**No centralized complaints management system**

As discussed at the October 2024 Audit Committee meeting when our Phase 1 audit report was considered, there is no centralized system in place to track, log, and manage public complaints effectively. As a result, it is challenging to easily identify the types and frequency of complaints received, the park locations involved, response times, and the actions taken. Without a centralized system it is difficult to compile and analyze data to identify trends or address the underlying causes of recurring issues.

**Limitations of 311 data for park inquiries**

While the Customer Experience Division (also referred to as 311) advised that they received about 13,000 general information inquiries (also referred to as a call seeking information) in 2023, and about 10,000 were transferred to the Parks Branch, both the Customer Experience Division and the Parks Branch were unable to provide data on the nature of the calls or identify how many of those were complaints resulting in maintenance or service requests.

**Inconsistent logging and tracking of complaints received by Parks Branch**

Complaints received directly by Parks staff via phone call or in-person are not always consistently logged and tracked. Similarly, complaints submitted directly to Parks staff by email are tracked in a variety of ways (e.g., in individual email accounts, verbal instructions, manual log books), limiting comprehensive analysis. Consequently, when some records are not consistently tracked, there is an increased risk of overlooking or duplicating actions to address complaints.

The Division advised that over 800 complaints were emailed in 2023. However, they do not track, categorize, or break down complaints by type, districts/wards/parks, or action taken. Parks Branch staff would need to manually review and aggregate each email received, to provide this information for audit or management reporting purposes.



**System is needed to track and manage complaints through to their resolution**

Implementing a fully integrated system for tracking and managing complaints through to their resolution will help to identify opportunities to improve or enhance customer service and ensure necessary maintenance and repairs are identified, prioritized, and addressed in a timely manner.

**Parks and Recreation and Customer Experience divisions are working together to improve service integration going forward**

Management advised that the planned service integration between 311 and the Parks and Recreation Division will provide improved and more consistent call resolution, accessibility, and communication for parks-related concerns. The service will be an end-to-end integration with 311 at the front end and Parks systems at the back end.

**Recommendation:**

- 8. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, and Recreation Division, in collaboration with Customer Experience Division and Technology Services Division, to:**
  - a. implement a centralized system for tracking all public complaints (regardless of the method or mechanism by which it was submitted) and recording key data on any related service requests through to their resolution; and**
  - b. create reports and dashboards for management to monitor complaints/service request types, volumes, aging, and trends.**

## **C. 2. Improve Compliance with Target Timeframes to Address Complaints and Update the Complaints Policy**

The Division's website ([Parks, Forestry & Recreation – Complaints & Compliments – City of Toronto](#)) provides information to guide the public and staff on service level expectations for addressing complaints. The website outlines the Division's guiding principles for managing complaints, including targets for:

- **Assessing and Acknowledging Complaints:** Within one business day of receipt, an expected timeframe for resolution is provided.
- **Resolving Complaints:** Within 14 days, if adjustments are required to the timelines provided, the Division will update the complainant and explain why.

**Complaint resolution timelines were not followed**

In our review of a sample of 26 complaints emailed to [parks@toronto.ca](mailto:parks@toronto.ca) between September and November 2024, we found that complaint resolution timelines were not followed:

- **Assessing and Acknowledging Complaints:** 22 of 26 (85 per cent) complaints were not acknowledged within one business day of receiving the complaint.
- **Resolving Complaints:** 5 of 26 (19 per cent) complaints where Supervisors had actioned the complaint (e.g. open a work order), but the repair could not be completed within the 14-day period and the complainant was not informed of the delays or the reasons for the extended timelines; and, 1 of 26 (4 per cent) complaints where the Supervisor had not acknowledged or actioned the complaint.

**Complaints policy has not been updated since 2013**

The Division's Complaints Policy, which provides some guidance on expectations when staff are reviewing complaints, has not been reviewed and updated since December 2013. Management advised this is an outdated policy and it is being reviewed and updated.

Updating and enforcing the Complaints Policy and processes would reinforce to staff their responsibilities to adhere to a standardized process for handling complaints and meeting response targets, enhancing transparency and service quality.

**Recommendation:**

9. **City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division to review and revise the Division's current complaints policy and processes, provide training to staff on their responsibilities and expectations, and monitor compliance with the policy, including targeted timeframes for responding to complaints.**

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## Conclusion

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### **Improvements are needed to ensure maintenance and repair needs are being identified, prioritized, and addressed in a timely manner**

The Parks Branch plays an important role in managing the amenities and assets in parks to ensure they are operable, clean, safe, and meet the needs of communities.

This audit identifies opportunities to improve policies, procedures, processes, and systems, supporting how the Parks Branch tracks and manages service requests, work orders, and public complaints, to ensure maintenance and repair needs are being identified, prioritized, and addressed in a timely manner.

Formal policies and standardized procedures are needed to address the inconsistencies and inefficiencies arising from varying practices across districts and to improve accountability, tracking, and performance monitoring.

Improved monitoring is also needed to ensure follow-up actions are taken on repair-related deficiencies that fall under Technical Services' mandate. Service requests did not always result in work orders being created or there were delays in creating work orders. Consequently, some maintenance and non-capital repair needs may have been delayed or left unresolved.

It is also difficult to obtain a complete view of all the repairs that are needed, and actions pending / taken, because there is no integrated system listing all identified repairs that fall outside Technical Services' mandate that have been transferred to other groups or divisions to address.

As discussed at the October 2024 Audit Committee meeting when our Phase 1 audit report was considered, and as highlighted in this report, there is no centralized system in place to track, log and manage public complaints effectively. This means there is no comprehensive data available on the nature of complaints, their frequency, or trends by district or individual parks. Improved service integration is an area of focus for the Parks Branch and 311.

### **Nine recommendations**

The nine recommendations contained in this report will enable the Parks Branch to improve its processes and procedures for addressing complaints, managing and monitoring asset repairs, and conducting park inspections.

### **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 and Recreation Division.

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## Audit Objectives, Scope and Methodology

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

The Auditor General's [2024 Work Plan](#) included an operational review of how the Parks and Recreation Division manages and maintains over 1,500 parks in the City of Toronto.

In October 2024, the Auditor General presented the results of the first phase of the operational review in the report "[Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 1: Improving Oversight of Day-to-Day Maintenance Helps to Ensure City Parks are Beautiful, Clean and Safe](#)". The audit focused on the efficiency of daily park maintenance activities, compliance with the established service level standards, and identified opportunities for improving how the Parks Branch performs day-to-day maintenance to help keep parks beautiful, clean, and safe.

This report presents the second phase of the operational review, which focuses on Parks Branch's processes related to park inspections, non-capital repairs and maintenance of various park assets and amenities, and public complaints.

### Objective

This audit aimed to address whether park maintenance and non-capital repair needs were being identified, prioritized, and addressed in a timely manner.

### Scope

This audit primarily focused on park inspections and repairs and maintenance activities conducted in 2023 and the first half of 2024.

### Areas not covered within the scope of this audit

Areas not covered within the scope of this audit include: Toronto Island, capital repairs/development, repairs referred to groups outside of the Parks Branch or to other City divisions (e.g. Corporate Real Estate Management), and the Parks Ambassador Program (encampments).

### Methodology

Our audit methodology included the following:

- Reviewing relevant Parks Branch operational policies and procedures
- Interviewing Technical Services General Supervisors, Supervisors, Support Assistants, and other Parks staff

- Site visits to 40 parks of varying sizes/classifications across the four districts during the week of December 4, 2023 to identify potential repair-related deficiencies, as well as comparing the 99 repair-related deficiencies identified by the Auditor General's staff with:
  - deficiencies recorded in the Park Maintenance Inspection Tool (PMIT) for 2023-2024 Fall/Winter park maintenance inspections to determine whether the deficiencies were identified by Parks Maintenance Supervisors/Forepersons
  - work order data in SAP for the 40 parks visited to determine whether action had been taken on repair-related deficiencies
- Analyzing park inspections data extracted from PMIT for the period from March 2022 to July 2024. The audit team randomly selected 73 repair-related deficiencies (service requests) identified by the Parks Maintenance Supervisors/Forepersons based on deficiencies identified during inspections, covering the four districts, to trace them to work orders
- Analyzing SAP work order data, including the processing times for repairs for the period from June 2022 to July 2024, which involved:
  - Trending of work orders by season
  - Stratification of work orders by district, priority and year of creation
  - Timeframes for work order creation, completion, closure, and data entry
  - Categorization of types of work orders (by activity or description)
- Analyzing open work order data in SAP as of July 18, 2024
- Reviewing and analyzing a sample of 30 open work orders in SAP from three of four districts and 10 open work orders not yet recorded in SAP for one district from January 2024 to July 2024.
  - Supervisors advised that 31 of the 40 work orders were completed. We conducted site visits in November 2024 to confirm work was completed for 17 work orders. The remaining 14 work orders could not be observed by Auditor General staff due to closure of the asset for the season, inaccessibility of the location or complexity of the request

- Selected a sample of 13 Technical Services employees across the four districts covering different technical speciality areas and requested records supporting daily activities for the weeks of June 3, 2024 and June 14, 2024
  - Reviewed and analyzed 79 daily logs and the 74 related work orders provided for these 13 Technical Services staff to assess accuracy and completeness of recorded information and evidence of supervisory reviews
- Selected and reviewed a sample of 26 complaints submitted to [parks@toronto.ca](mailto:parks@toronto.ca) between September and November 2024 across the four districts (and the waterfront) which was forwarded to Parks Maintenance Supervisors for action and assessed responses against target timeframes.
- Performed 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 work order data and daily log records was limited to records and information retained, recorded into SAP and/or provided by the districts. The work order data was incomplete, not updated in a timely manner, and/or contained inaccurate information impacting the reliability of the data.

#### **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.



## Appendix 1: Management's Response to the Auditor General's Report Entitled: " Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 2: Supporting Vibrant Parks by Improving Park Asset Management and Repair Processes"

**Recommendation 1:** City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to:

- a. Review and analyze data from the park inspections system to ensure repair-related deficiencies identified in past inspections have been resolved and/or appropriate work orders have been created to track repairs where action is still pending to resolve the deficiency.
- b. Establish a process and/or supporting systems for tracking deficiencies that have been transferred to other groups or divisions through to their resolution.

<b>Management Response:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
<b>Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:</b>  The Division agrees with this recommendation.  The Park Maintenance and Inspection Tool (PMIT) is used to document general park conditions and any potential hazards. Data from the Spring/Summer 2024 and Fall/Winter 2025 PMIT inspections will be reviewed and analyzed to ensure repair-related deficiencies were resolved or routed to the appropriate area for action including submission of work orders for repairs in scope of Technical Services staff.  A tracking system will be created to capture repair-related work identified as in scope of other areas, transfer data to other areas, and resolutions reported back by other areas.  Projected timeline for review and analysis of previous PMIT inspections is Q2 2025.  Projected timeline for process and tracking system changes will be completed in parallel with Recommendations 2 and 3 (Q4 2025).

**Recommendation 2:** City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to develop additional guidance and/or training to outline or clarify:

- a. requirements for documenting inspection results, including noting of deficiencies and creating work orders for necessary maintenance; and
- b. processes for monitoring/follow-up of deficiencies.

<b>Management Response:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
<b>Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:</b>  The Division agrees with this recommendation.

Staff will update the existing Park Maintenance Inspections procedure with requirements including scope of deficiencies, creating service requests, monitoring, and follow-up. Training will support the roll out of this procedure.

The purpose of this procedural update is to ensure staff completing inspections capture and submit information about repair-related deficiencies, so that the Technical Services work unit can either create necessary work orders or submit work for repairs outside this work unit, and so that appropriate monitoring and follow-up can occur.

Projected timeline for completion is Q4 2025.

**Recommendation 3: City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to develop and implement a service request and work order policy or procedure and provide training to staff. This guidance should include:**

- a. criteria for creating work orders, specifying any exceptions for cases where a work order may not be required and how resolution of service requests without work orders should be documented and tracked;
- b. criteria for prioritizing work orders based on the urgency and impact (e.g. safety risk); and
- c. data entry standards outlining specific information required for each work order (e.g. descriptions linking work to be completed and prioritization or risks, task detail, start and end dates) and expected timeframes for entering a service request and generating and closing a work order in the work order management system.

**Management Response:** ☒ Agree ☐ Disagree

**Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:**

The Division agrees with this recommendation.

The Division will develop procedures that will support both the current manual processes and the end state environment when a work order management system has been implemented. This will include criteria for creating and prioritizing work orders, what information must be captured on the work order, and how work orders are to be tracked. Timeframes for entering service requests and generating and closing a work order will also be specified, as well as how service requests resolved without a work order should be documented and tracked. Training will support the roll out of these procedures.

Projected timeline for completion of updated procedures is Q4 2025 and implementation will be supported through the allocation of additional data management resources to support the ongoing volume of work orders the branch receives.

**Recommendation 4: City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, in consultation with the Chief Technology Officer, to modernize work order management practices to reduce inefficiencies arising from manual processes. In doing so, Parks Branch should consider the capability of enabling technologies to support the integration of work order management, work assignments and time tracking. Consideration should also be given to integrating the tracking of work transferred to other groups or divisions.**

<b>Management Response:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
<b>Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:</b>  <p>The Division agrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>While originally planned for late 2026, the Parks Branch is working in partnership with Technology Services and Customer Experience to accelerate the rollout of end to end integrated systems with a comprehensive roadmap and timeline to be confirmed by the end of Q3 2025.</p> <p>311 integration and the rollout of digitized daily activity sheets will start rollout in Q3 2025 and Q4 2025 respectively.</p> <p>Once fully implemented, this technology will increase efficiencies by integrating work management, work assignment, work activity tracking, and 311 service requests together.</p>

**Recommendation 5: City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to:**

- a. implement management reviews of open, in-progress, and completed work orders to monitor compliance, identify backlogs, and to assess productivity, efficiency, and workload; and
- b. establish and implement guidelines for supervisors to conduct site visits to monitor the completion and quality of work performed by Parks Branch - Technical Services staff. Site visits should be documented, and feedback be provided to staff for training and process improvements.

<b>Management Response:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
<b>Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:</b>  <p>The Division agrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>A process for regularly reviewing work orders at various stages will be implemented to support productivity and workload management. Work order reports will be used by management to analyze this information and monitor for any follow-up action. The process is underway and includes the review of current open work orders and a process by which they are reviewed and closed off once confirmed as resolved. This is anticipated for completion in Q3 2025.</p> <p>As part of the implementation of the Supervisor Quality Check developed in response to Phase 1 of the Parks Audit, weekly site visits to review and verify work completion and quality have been implemented in a phased approach. Site visits for work done by Technical Services staff phase into the process in Q1 2025.</p>

**Recommendation 6: City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division to:**

- a. establish benchmarks for work order completion timeframes starting from the receipt of the service request to the time of work order completion, considering different priority and complexity levels; and
- b. develop key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure and report the achievement of the established service standards, taking into consideration resource and funding constraints, and ensure the reasons for any delays impacting achievement of KPIs are tracked, analyzed, and addressed.

<b>Management Response:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
<b>Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:</b>  The Division agrees with this recommendation.  The Division will develop benchmarks for service requests and work order timeframes in conjunction with prioritization criteria being developed in response to Recommendation 3.  Benchmarks will be completed by Q4 2025.  As the Branch implements digitized processes, we will obtain improved aggregate data, enabling the branch to measure KPIs recommended in the audit report.  Projected timeline for completion of KPIs aligns with full implementation of digital tools and availability of data in Q2 2026.

**Recommendation 7: City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to develop and implement procedures for documenting and tracking daily activities of Parks Branch - Technical Services staff and provide training on these procedures. The procedures should set expectations for:**

- a. using a standard template for logging daily activities to ensure consistency across the districts;
- b. the types of activities staff must record, including tasks completed and time spent on each task (as well as linkages to work orders and information required for work orders, where applicable);
- c. supervisory review of activity logs for accuracy and completeness, leveraging GPS where applicable; and
- d. reviewing and analyzing data from activity records to support accountability and workload management.

<b>Management Response:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
<b>Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:</b>  The Division agrees with this recommendation.

In response to the Phase 1 Parks Audit, Parks Branch updated Daily Activity Sheet (DAS) templates, procedures, and training. This included adding mileage to each DAS daily when vehicles used. Interim quality assurance work is ongoing with respect to the quality of paper DAS and through independent reviews and follow-up with supervisors for compliance which was implemented in Q3 2024. The new paper DAS procedure is being implemented for Technical Services units in Q1 2025.

DAS specific for Technical Services have been created and training is ongoing. This manual process is an interim measure while DAS are digitized across the Branch.

**Recommendation 8: City Council request the General Manager, Parks, and Recreation Division, in collaboration with Customer Experience Division and Technology Services Division, to:**

- a. implement a centralized system for tracking all public complaints (regardless of the method or mechanism by which it was submitted) and recording key data on any related service requests through to their resolution; and
- b. create reports and dashboards for management to monitor complaints/service request types, volumes, aging, and trends.

**Management Response:** ☒ Agree ☐ Disagree

**Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:**

The Division agrees with this recommendation.

The Parks Branch, in partnership with Technology Services and Customer Experience divisions, will implement a service request tracking capability through the integration of 311 (Salesforce) and the work management system (IBM Maximo) to track service requests initiated by the public through to completion.

Reports and dashboards will be created to manage and monitor service request types, volumes, aging, and trends.

Discussions have been ongoing with the Parks and Recreation Division and the Technology Services and Customer Experience Divisions to finalize the plan and timeline with implementation starting in Q3 2025.

**Recommendation 9: City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division to review and revise the Division's current complaints policy and processes, provide training to staff on their responsibilities and expectations, and monitor compliance with the policy, including targeted timeframes for responding to complaints.**

**Management Response:** ☒ Agree ☐ Disagree

**Comments/Action Plan/Time Frame:**

The Division agrees with this recommendation.

The Division will update the current complaints policy and process in conjunction with the work being done on 311 integration. Staff will be trained on the new processes and monitor compliance.

Timeline for completion is Q4 2025.



**AUDITOR  
GENERAL**  

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**TORONTO**

