

## **Update on MM40.20 - Reinstating Paddle the Don for 2027**

**Date:** May 27 2026

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee

**From:** General Manager, Parks and Recreation, Director, Urban Forestry and Director, Waterfront Secretariat

**Wards:** Ward 14, Toronto Danforth and Ward 15, Don Valley West

### **SUMMARY**

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Paddle the Don was a Toronto and Region Conservation Authority event that ran from 1993 to 2019. The event was framed around watershed awareness and environmental stewardship and included a guided canoe trip down the Don River, engaging roughly 500 participants annually. In 2020, the event was paused due to a combination of factors, including COVID-19, ongoing construction in the Lower Don, and broader operational, safety, and financial considerations associated with delivering the event.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority have identified several considerations that must be addressed in order to reinstate Paddle the Don in 2027. These include coordinating event operations in consideration of ongoing construction activities in the lower Don, assessing staff time and resources required to deliver the event, and reviewing financial implications associated with event costs.

City staff will continue to work collaboratively across divisions and with TRCA to support a reinstatement of Paddle the Don, as appropriate, particularly through inter-divisional and inter-agency coordination.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Parks and Recreation, Director, Urban Forestry and Director, Waterfront Secretariat recommend that:

1. The Infrastructure and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting of April 22 and 23, 2026 City Council adopted MM40.20 - Reinstating Paddle the Don for 2027. This Members Motion requested the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, the Director, Urban Forestry and the Director, Waterfront Secretariat to enter into discussions with Toronto Regional Conservation Authority to determine how the City, and other partners who may be identified, can support the reintroduction of this event in 2027 in a manner consistent with the Toronto Ravine Strategy and Don River watershed objectives and report on these discussions to the June 10, 2026, meeting of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee.

[Agenda Item History - 2026.MM40.20](#)

## **COMMENTS**

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Paddle the Don was a Toronto and Region Conservation Authority event that ran from 1993 to 2019. The event was framed around watershed awareness and environmental stewardship and included a guided canoe trip down the Don River from E.T. Seton Park to the Keating Channel, being shifted to the Corktown Common in later years due to safety reasons. The event was attended by roughly 500 participants annually.

Paddle the Don event management was coordinated by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority with the City of Toronto supporting permitting and hazard tree removal as needed.

The Paddle the Don aligns with a number of the Toronto Ravine Strategy's Guiding Principles as it allows people to connect with nature, promotes partnerships through organizations working together and celebrates the Don River Ravine system.

In 2020, the event was paused due to a combination of factors, including COVID-19, ongoing construction in the Lower Don, and broader operational, safety, and financial considerations associated with delivering the event.

As directed by Council, City staff have met with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority staff to discuss how the City can support the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority with the reintroduction of this event in 2027. Meetings took place between the dates of April 21 2026 to May 21 2026. Toronto and Region Conservation Authority staff have identified a number of considerations including operational

considerations due to construction in the lower Don, increased staffing resources required to host the event, and financial considerations due to the increased cost involved with putting on such an event.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority staff have indicated that an analysis is required to assess the viability of hosting a future event, which will be carried out in close coordination with partners and stakeholders. This analysis will include consideration of alternative event formats and locations that continue to support watershed awareness and public engagement, while aligning with operational feasibility, participant safety, and available resources. Results and recommendations will be brought to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Board of Directors for consideration by Q2 2027.

City staff will continue to work collaboratively across divisions and with TRCA to support as appropriate, including working with other agencies such as Waterfront Toronto, the Toronto Port Authority, and Metrolinx to mitigate concerns around access due to construction and to explore funding options to assist in reinstating the event.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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