

Authority to Enter into an Extended Agreement with Parkrun Canada for Nominal Permits to Hold a Community Running Program

Date: June 29, 2026

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee

From: General Manager, Parks and Recreation

Wards: Ward 4 - Parkdale-High Park

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek City Council authority to extend the existing nominal-fee licensing agreement with Parkrun Canada to continue operating a community-based running program on the Martin Goodman Trail. The extension is recommended based on a successful pilot with strong participation, no identified operational or park impacts, and alignment with City priorities for accessible public recreation.

For over 20 years, Parkrun has operated globally as a free, volunteer-led, weekly 5 km run, jog, or walk held on Saturday mornings in communities around the world. Local events are organized by community volunteers and promote healthy, active lifestyles for participants of all abilities. There is no cost to participate, making the program accessible to residents of all income levels.

Parkrun requires organizers to follow established “Event Location and Course Design Guidance,” including obtaining permission from landowners to use event locations at no cost.

The proposed route along the Martin Goodman Trail is accessible to participants of all abilities, including wheelchair users and those with strollers. Low-impact signage is installed at the start and finish areas for a maximum of two hours during each event. Events are operated by approximately five to 15 volunteers, providing opportunities for local community involvement, including for high school students completing community service hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Parks and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks and Recreation to negotiate and sign an agreement to extend the existing non-exclusive nominal fee licensing agreement to Parkrun Canada, to provide nominal fee permits for a community running program on the Martin Goodman Trail at Budapest Park, Sunnyside Park, and Sir Casimir Gzowski Park ending at Humber Bay Arch Bridge, for a term of up to two (2) years with two optional renewal terms of one year each, in compliance with the Non-Profit/Charitable Special Event Guidelines for City of Toronto Parks and Trails, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Parks and Recreation and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor commencing in the fall of 2026.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with the recommendations in this report.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of December 17 and 18, 2024, City Council adopted recommendations authorizing the General Manager, Parks and Recreation to negotiate and execute a one-year agreement with Parkrun Canada for non-exclusive, nominal-fee permits to operate a community running pilot on the Martin Goodman Trail.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.IE18.13>

COMMENTS

Stakeholder Engagement

As of mid-April 2026, the pilot program has delivered 20 Parkrun events along the lakeshore corridor from Budapest Park to the Humber River. The program has demonstrated strong community interest and participation from local residents, as well as Canadian and international visitors. A total of 659 unique participants have taken part, supported by 57 volunteers.

Participation has been consistent across age groups and seasons, including:

- Participants ranging in age from under 10 to over 80
- Inclusive participation by walkers, runners, wheelchair users, and residents with leashed dogs
- Average attendance of over 50 participants and approximately 12 volunteers per event during January and February
- Average attendance of approximately 100 participants per event during the fall
- Recent attendance levels approaching 70 participants as spring programming began

The events have maintained a strong safety and operational record. Organizers emphasize shared use of the Martin Goodman Trail at each event and clearly communicate that the trail remains a public space without exclusive right-of-way. To date, no concerns or issues with other park users have been reported. Organizers have also proactively identified and implemented adjustments to mitigate potential overcrowding.

Program Outcomes and Operational Assessment

Staff have not identified any damage to parkland or infrastructure through inspections and monitoring, and no public complaints have been received to date.

The program has demonstrated the ability to operate with minimal impact on staff resources and park operations. Organizers have been responsive and collaborative in addressing operational considerations and mitigation measures.

The non-exclusive nature of the program ensures that public access to park space is maintained while supporting organized community programming and activating parkland through positive recreational use.

The pilot supports accessible, low-barrier recreation opportunities aligned with City objectives related to community wellness, active living, and increased participation in public spaces.

Ongoing evaluation of this model may help inform the management of similar permit requests in the future and support consideration of a formal permit category for comparable programs within Client & Business Services.

If interest in similar initiatives emerges in other wards, the Parkrun model may provide a useful operational reference for future consideration. Parkrun will continue to serve as a pilot example as broader program and permitting approaches are assessed.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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