



Councillor Paul Ainslie
Toronto City Council
Scarborough East - Ward 43

Chair, Scarborough Community Council
Chair, Government Management Committee

Date: June 9, 2011
To: Parks and Environment Committee
From: Councillor Paul Ainslie
Re: On-line Permit Registration for City parks and City Owned Facilities

In keeping with the City's improvements to customer service, I am requesting Parks Forestry and Recreation implement an on-line permit registration process for City parks and City owned facilities. Providing residents the ability to permit events on line saves the City funds and enables residents to receive an immediate notification on whether or not a site is available and if further information is needed to secure the site. Registering on-line is not new to the City of Toronto as on-line registration for recreational programming is already in place.

The process of obtaining permits in the City of Toronto is lengthy involving visiting a permit office, calling a permit office or downloading an application. Manually filling out the application and then faxing or e-mailing it back to the City Permitting office. The applicant is then left to wait until a staff person contacts them to determine if the site is available, if the site will accommodate their venue and what further applications need to be made if any. The permit office is available from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. hours when most residents are working and not able to handle personal matters.

Streamlining the permitting system by placing it on-line gives residents the freedom to plan their events on their own time while at the same time providing them the ability to make necessary changes with dates and venues. It puts the power into the applicant's hands.

The City has also introduced a permit for a gathering of more than 25 people for the purposes of hiking, walking groups, volunteer running groups or school classes who decide to take their lunches out into the park on warm days. The cost of these permits is \$60.00. Setting a permit fee for residents to enjoy the park amenities which they have already paid for through their taxes is being viewed as double taxation as no special requests are being made by these users.

The City of Toronto is moving towards transparency and customer service above all. The City's relationship with residents should move in unison, be inclusive and welcoming. The City needs volunteer groups to make our City vibrant. Gathering permits are discouraging local free local events put on by volunteers when they should be encouraged by the City.

Understanding the City's budget shortfall, introducing on-line permitting would relieve division costs and time. It would greatly benefit the applicant by providing transparent easy service. The means of putting into place a permit system exists as the City already has on-line registration for recreational activities. These tools could be extended to permitting out City parks and City owned facilities. Applicants would download their permit at home relieving excess work for the City. If a permit requires further approvals a permit reservation receipt could be downloaded pending the further approvals.

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Recommendations:

1. That the City parks and Environment Committee recommend that Toronto City Council approve that City parks Forestry and Recreation streamline the permitting process by implementing an on-line permitting system for City parks.
2. That the City of Toronto's City parks Forestry and Recreation report back to the September 15, 2011 City parks and Environment Committee alternative revenue sources and the possible elimination of gathering permits.

Sincerely,

Councillor Paul Ainslie
Scarborough East Ward 43