



March 8, 2006

Councillor Gloria Lindsay Luby,
Chair, Economic Development and Parks Committee,
Toronto City Hall,
100 Queen St. West, Ste. B 38,
Toronto M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Luby:

I am writing as President of Citizens Concerned About the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront (CCFEW) to comment on the Staff Report: Colonel Samuel Smith Park, Proposed Skateboard Facility Location, dated March 6, 2006. I regret that I am unable to attend the March 9th meeting of the Economic Development and Parks Committee because, I received only 48 hours notice that this item would be discussed.

CCFEW welcomes the proposal to build a skateboard facility in South Etobicoke. However, we feel that identifying Sam Smith Park as the preferred site runs contrary to the City's environmental policies.

We are concerned that the selection and evaluation process appears extremely basic, made up mostly of one-line bullet points. This in effect allows decisions to be made without a clear decision-making trail. Taxpayers have a right to a detailed decision-making process that could withstand a third-party independent review. There should be definite criteria for comparing the various sites. For example, there should be points awarded in the various factors that are part of the decision-making process -- categories such as safety, security and surveillance, for example. There is no mention of these factors in the staff evaluation.

We are also surprised and concerned that the evaluation of Don Russell Park does not adequately take into consideration the imminent land swap with the Toronto District School Board. This is listed as a "con" for this site whereas we understand it to be a short-term reality, which will negate most of the other disadvantages listed for this site. A community meeting was told recently that a joint redevelopment master plan for that area is being worked on by the City of Toronto, the Toronto District School Board and the Lakeshore Lions Club. The master plan identifies a site for a skateboard facility.

The Staff Report details parts of the Lakeshore Grounds Master Design and Implementation Plan (MDIP) including the statement, "*Single purpose facilities which occupy large land areas should be discouraged at this specific site.*" It would appear that a Skateboard Facility would fit this description of a facility which should be avoided.

The report does not make reference to some other parts of the plan, such as the site management guidelines. The area under consideration for the skateboard facility is located in the “Landscape Regeneration Unit” which specifies:

- The landscape within this unit should be managed to encourage the natural succession process, biological diversification, and habitat creation.
- Generally, no new buildings should be permitted in this area.
- Native vegetation species should be planted.
- The landscape in this unit should be self-sustaining with a minimum amount of human intervention

The report details public consultation with various groups, but fails to note that the scope of the project, if it were to be in Colonel Samuel Smith Park, has changed dramatically since those consultations. The skateboard facility as it is being proposed for Sam Smith Park would now be built in conjunction with an ice skating facility. The land area under consideration has now at least doubled, and the cost has quintupled from \$500,000 to \$2,500,000 for the whole project. This increased scope has never been communicated publicly to the community. What happened to the City’s widely-publicized policy of transparency? The report suggests that a CCFEW representative is the only member of the community who has seen the integrated design plan. As that representative, I can say that the design plans that were shown to me demonstrate that the two facilities won’t fit on that site.

My final concern with the Staff Report is its title. I find it highly unusual that a report would use its conclusion as its title. Something like “Evaluation of Potential Sites for a Skateboard Facility in South Etobicoke” would seem more appropriate. It would also make us feel more comfortable with the idea that this was an evaluation rather than a justification for a decision that has already been made.

Sincerely

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