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Newly Designated " Signature Parks ", Citizen Advisory Councils and a City-Wide "Adopt-a-Park" Program at the Heart of Smitherman's Recreational Renaissance

In an effort to ensure the beautification of some of Toronto 's key public spaces,

Toronto Mayoral candidate George Smitherman today announced plans to directly involve Torontonians in the ongoing management of their parks through the creation of Advisory Councils at 15 Signature Parks and the aggressive championing of a city-wide Adopt-a-Park program.

“Torontonians are fortunate that our forefathers saw fit to build and protect green space and parkland throughout our city. I want to take the next step and give Torontonians a real say in the preservation and enhancement of those parks,” Smitherman said.

Modelled on the successful High Park Community Advisory Council, these new Councils would be established at 15 Signature Parks designated by City Council. The Councils would include local ratepayer/residents associations, recreational stakeholders and a number of members-at-large from the community. Local City councillors and City staff representing park operations and programs would sit as non-voting members of the Councils.

Smitherman noted that while public participation in parks management would seem like common sense to most people, bureaucratic resistance and union politics at City Hall have all but killed previous attempts to promote similar programs.

Despite the fact City Council has twice passed motions this decade authorizing the city-wide expansion of the old City of Scarborough 's Adopt-a-Park program, there still remains no attempt to promote the program on the City website.

“I have seen first-hand how the generosity of individuals, families and corporations have helped build world-class hospital and university buildings across our city. I can think of no better opportunity for those with an ability to do so to give back to their community than through the donation of a swing set, basketball court or walking path in parks throughout

Toronto ,” Smitherman said.

A recent report by the City Auditor found that the parks department faced a \$233 million backlog in maintenance and repairs and estimated that amount to grow to \$600 million by 2018.

As is currently the case, individuals and corporations making donations would receive a charitable tax-receipt and a discrete plaque would be placed onsite to recognize their civic contribution.

The creation of Signature Parks and the championing of an Adopt-a-Park program will form part of a comprehensive program George Smitherman will outline during this campaign to fulfill his vision of creating a recreational Renaissance in Toronto .