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City of Toronto launching initiative to bring new life to Toronto's parks and recreation facilities

The City of Toronto in partnership with national charity Evergreen and Montreal-based place-making firm La Pépinière invites communities to reimagine their local parks and public spaces. Place-making refers to a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces.

Starting February 9, a series of place-making pilots will launch across the city. The initiative, made possible with the financial support of the Bombardier Foundation, brings together community leaders, City staff, the public and experts in place-making to bring new life to some of Toronto's parks and recreation facilities.

Rink Social, the first of the place-making pilots, will focus on Toronto's outdoor ice rinks and transform four of these community facilities into hubs of free activity on and off the ice. The Rink Social pilot will be delivered in partnership with the Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment Foundation and Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities.

Rink Social will take place in parks in different areas of the city for one weekend each, with enhanced outdoor community space featuring warming huts, skate lending, on- and off-ice winter play, crafting and cozying up by the fire for a feast of family fun. Food and drink vendors will offer comfort and nourishment to brave the cold. Future projects in the place-making initiative will focus on other public spaces such as beaches and conservatories.

Rink Social will be available on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. as follows:

- February 9 to 10 – West Mall Outdoor Rink, 370 The West Mall
- February 16 to 18 (including Family Day from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.) – Regent Park Athletic Grounds Rink, 480 Shuter St.
- Feb 23 to 24 – McCowan District Park Rink, 150 McCowan Rd.
- March 2 to 3 – Mel Lastman Square Rink, 5100 Yonge St.

Through the place-making initiative, Evergreen and La Pépinière brought together City partners, staff and designers to rethink the public's relationship with each rink. Incorporating interest in ancillary services such as skate lending, social gathering spaces and food and beverage opportunities, the team worked to add low-cost and temporary furniture, activities and décor that will transform each space into an even-more vibrant community gathering space. This initiative will be used to gather data on user interest and satisfaction to guide future space and program design.

Quotes

"The City builds parks and recreation facilities because we know how important they are to residents. Our public spaces are well-loved and well-used, and I am excited to see these pilots in action in communities across our city."

- Toronto Mayor John Tory

"Great public spaces are at the heart of vibrant cities and we are thrilled with the City's commitment to partnering to experiment with ways we can bring new vitality to existing public spaces. Our beloved outdoor rinks are a great location to build on residents' love for skating and shinny. We are excited to take the best of the winter social season and bring it outdoors."

- Geoff Cape, CEO, Evergreen

About Evergreen

Since 1991, Evergreen, a not-for-profit, has provoked bold action in transforming public landscapes into thriving community spaces. We believe that connecting people, natural and built worlds create flourishing cities for the future. For more than 25 years Evergreen has connected, collaborated, and catalyzed Canadians to do amazing things positively affecting attitudes and behaviours that lie at the core of a sustainable city.

About La Pépinière

Born in 2014 from a citizen's initiative, La Pépinière is today the leader of the place-making movement in Quebec, with more than 30 projects completed. With its expertise, La Pépinière implements programs to support the multiplication of the number of collective spaces and the number of actors able to carry them.

Toronto is Canada's largest city, the fourth largest in North America, and home to a diverse population of more than 2.9 million people. It is a global centre for business, finance, arts and culture and is consistently ranked one of the world's most livable cities. For information on non-emergency City services and programs, Toronto residents, businesses and visitors can visit <http://www.toronto.ca>, call 311, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or follow us on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/cityoftoronto>, on Instagram at <http://www.instagram.com/cityofto> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/cityofto>.

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