

ITEM 13
MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 34
COUNCIL MEETING 88/05/09

RE: DEER LAKE DEVELOPMENT - a) SWIMMING AREA
b) GOOSE PROBLEM
INQUIRY FROM MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - 1988 MARCH 14

MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the recommendation as contained in the report from the Director Recreation & Cultural Services be adopted.

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1988 MAY 02

TO : MUNICIPAL MANAGER
FROM: DIRECTOR RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES
RE : DEER LAKE DEVELOPMENT - a) SWIMMING AREA
b) GOOSE PROBLEM
INQUIRY FROM MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - 1988 MARCH 14

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT this report be received for information purposes.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 1988 March 14 Council approved the following recommendation:

"THAT the question of the feasibility of constructing a distinct swimming area in Deer Lake and alternate means of removing goose excretions from Burnaby playing fields be referred to the Parks & Recreation Commission."

The Parks & Recreation Commission received Council's request at its meeting of 1988 April 06 and subsequently received a staff report on these topics at its meeting of 1988 May 04. The Commission approved a recommendation that the contents of the report be provided to Council and these contents are summarized below.

2.0 FEASIBILITY OF CONSTRUCTING A DISTINCT SWIMMING AREA IN DEER LAKE

Before the Canada goose control program was proposed, discussions were held with wildlife authorities over the possibility of developing ways of making certain problem areas less attractive to geese. Such discussions were based on the realization that these birds prefer the open manicured lawns associated with sports fields, beaches, golf courses and similar park areas. This limits the amount of modifications that can be introduced that would leave the area still functional for public use, yet restricts Canada goose access. Nevertheless, staff are continuing to look for ways to either decrease the desirability of the habitat or to physically restrict the birds' access. This work will be continuing with guidance from provincial and federal wildlife authorities.

At Deer Lake Park, the problem is the very attractive lawn area adjacent to the water's edge. We have investigated the feasibility of creating a separate swimming area by installing a chain link fence around the perimeter of the grass to exclude the geese. This was rejected because: **149**

- a) Canada geese could still fly into the fenced area.
- b) The fencing would restrict access to the beach, even if frequent openings were left for pedestrians.

The development of a second beach strictly for the geese, at the opposite end of the lake was suggested by one wildlife consultant. This new "beach" would attract birds to it, especially if the new beach was baited and the birds were frequently chased away from the existing public facility. There are two problems with this approach:

- a) In all likelihood, birds would visit both beaches and it may even increase bird numbers, thus aggravating the problem.
- b) The birds would continue to foul the water and aggravate the poor water quality conditions already restricting lake swimming opportunities.

The contamination of the lake water is one of the main reasons why a totally separate swimming area has not been pursued. It would not be practical to develop a beach that is free from bird droppings if the people still have to swim in water that is contaminated in part by the geese.

The Corporation is in the final planning stages of a program of improving lake water quality to a level that meets public health standards for swimming. The poor water quality in Deer Lake is attributable primarily to high nutrient content and high fecal coliform counts. The Canada geese, in fact all waterfowl, contribute to the high coliform counts and thus are contributing to the loss of recreational opportunities for the public. If the Corporation is committed to maintaining the lake for public swimming and may soon embark on a very extensive lake improvement program to meet that commitment, then a Canada goose control program is an integral step toward achieving that goal.

The alternative to lake swimming is to construct a swimming pool with its own water system. This would eliminate the need for a water improvement program but would not decrease the need for a Canada goose control program. The large open lawn areas and beaches throughout the park would still be littered with goose droppings, as would these same areas in other large parks.

The issue of a public swimming pool in the park was investigated through a questionnaire circulated at the 1987 open house forum on the development of Deer Lake Park. One hundred and thirty (130) people, or 61% of those participating indicated that they would not prefer to have an outdoor lake-side public swimming pool. Only 82 people (39%) said that they would prefer the public swimming pool. The possibility of an additional outdoor pool has not been totally ruled out but it would appear not to be a preferred option at this time.

3.0 REMOVAL OF GOOSE EXCRETIONS FROM BURMABY LAKE PLAYING FIELDS

In Burnaby the following measures have been taken to remove goose excretions:

- a) The grass is mowed twice a week in the growing season. The mowing is to keep the grass at the required height for games, but at the same time it spreads the excretions over a wider area and thus gives the impression that there is less goose droppings on the fields.
- b) In the past, staff have used a light screen and dragged it across the fields. This has been done on a day prior to the weekend games being played. This effort has had limited success, as the dragging spreads the droppings the same as in a) above, giving the impression that there is less droppings on the field.

c) Recently a sweeper has been used on Fridays, in preparation for weekend games. This appears to be a better method of removing the droppings. At present the geese are concentrated near the fields closer to the lake, because of the nesting season. Once the nesting period is over, the goose excretions on the hockey fields will become more severe.

The problems of field sweeping and removal of goose excretions has been discussed with other municipalities who have the same concerns. At Lost Lagoon in Stanley Park, the Vancouver Parks Board has the same problem. The roads and sidewalks are swept but on the turf, mowing and sweeping have had the same results that staff in Burnaby have experienced. Consequently, they have requested assistance from both the Federal and Provincial Wildlife Services.

In Regina, Saskatchewan, the same problem is experienced by the Mascana Center Authority. The staff there have confirmed that the turf around the Legislative Building (near the lake) has been completely denuded because of the large number of geese. Sweeping the droppings was not effective. The Mascana Country Golf Club has a similar problem with a large number of geese on their golf course. The club members have been concerned so much so, that they have taken up the matter with the Federal Minister of the Environment.

From all the above comparative discussions of the problem, it is felt that mowing and sweeping the geese excretions have their limitations as long as there is a large population of geese.

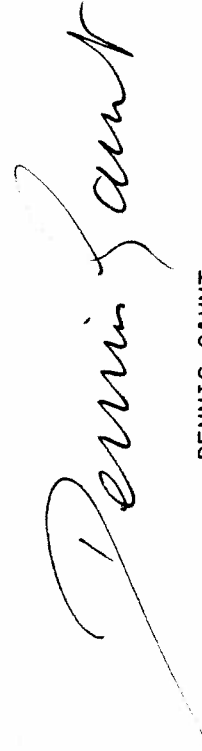
Two management alternatives for goose control are being considered for Burnaby Lake Sports Complex:

- a) To install a chain link fence between the edge of the sportsfields and the lake itself. This would prevent the birds from walking from the breeding area to the playfields but would not prevent them from flying.
- b) To plant rows of trees and shrubs between sportsfields. Since the birds prefer wide open areas with good visibility, this treatment may reduce the appeal of the area but there is no guarantee. Additionally, tree and shrub planting may need to be so dense that it interferes with sportsfield use and maintenance.

Both of these issues and any other suggestions will be reviewed this fall with the wildlife authorities. Staff will continue to seek alternatives to the goose population problem and will be conducting an evaluation of the control program this fall.

On 1988 May 02, Council inquired about a grass or turf that the City of Toronto is using which is unpalatable to geese. Whether or not this has any practicable application to conditions in Burnaby is being investigated by staff.

This report is provided for the information of Council.



DENNIS GAUNT
DIRECTOR RECREATION &
CULTURAL SERVICES

PAL:ps

cc: Chief Public Health Inspector Environmental Health
Director Finance, Attn.: Licencing & Revenue Collection

