Public bake ovens in parks increase social cohesion and community safety, teach and provide healthy and affordable food choices to all ages, and link in with other community activities such as community gardens and farmers' markets to help animate Toronto Parks and create vibrant neighbourhoods. Well run and community animated bake ovens reflect the goals of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the Toronto Food Strategy with little expense to the City.

A spirit of collaboration and cooperation between the City and the community partner for a specific bake oven is essential. Bake ovens in city parks are a ***partnership*** initiative between community and City. Such partnership initiatives are an efficient and cost effective way to animate community activities in public spaces across the City. While the City provides space for ovens, communities invest a great deal of resources and time into the operation and implementation of bake ovens. For example, communities fundraise to purchase the oven itself ($5,000 – $20,000), commit a lot of volunteer time, purchase all ingredients for baking, and often cover some of the maintenance costs. The City could strengthen their role as a partner by increasing access to storage space and community kitchens, and waiving or reducing permits fees for bake ovens (in recognition of the enormous commitment of fundraising and volunteer time by community groups).

It is commendable that the City wants to implement a bake oven policy that would set the rules for creating more bake ovens in more parks. **In the proposed policy, however, there are some outstanding issues that undermine a community's ability to access and animate their local bake oven**.

We are concerned that asking community groups to pay a permit or lease fee would reduce the groups' capacity to deliver vibrant community programs and activities. For example, the City has proposed a lease agreement for the tandoor at R.V.Burgess Park which includes a $500 annual fee in addition to requiring the community group to pay for the purchase of the oven, for all maintenance and repairs, and for insurance. At the same time they are expected to run City-mandated programs, manage external requests for use, and allow the City to use the bake oven for its own programs. The lack of a spirit of collaboration on the part of the City, as well as the fee requirement, will very likely result in an end to community bake oven programming and ovens across the City sitting unused.

The following “enabling” amendments would resolve these concerns and ensure that the bake oven policy achieves everyone’s goal of well used bake ovens in many parks across Toronto.

Amendments:

1. **Fees:** Add "Permit and agreement fees are waived for community groups that are providing public programming which supports the local community, Parks, Forestry and Recreation's mandate, and / or the goals of the Toronto Food Strategy."
2. **Collaboration:** Add Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff are responsible for "working with applicants to provide support for oven programming in order to help maximize the oven's use"

   Add Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff are responsible for "collaborating with the applicant on creating a fair partnership agreement."

   Add Parties interested in long-term use of a bake oven are responsible for "collaborating with city staff on creating a fair partnership agreement.
3. **Oven construction:** Community groups would be allowed to build the oven themselves, including in-kind donations, subject to City approval and inspections.

   Replace "Funds dedicated to the construction ..." with "An outdoor oven in a City park is considered a donation for community benefits, and as such, becomes part of the public park system.

Therefore, provisions set out in the *Policy on Donations to the City for Community Benefits* apply to new outdoor ovens in City parks."

Amend: Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff are responsible for

"-Constructing, ensuring that City-approved contractors construct the outdoor oven, or reviewing the applicant's construction plans.

- Supervising the proper installation of the outdoor oven or reviewing the applicant's construction or installation plans."

- All funds must be provided to Parks, Forestry and Recreation prior to the commencement of construction of the outdoor oven, if the city is supervising the construction phase."

Amend: Parties interested in building a new oven are responsible for "Supplying funds for the outdoor oven, or supervising the construction or installation of the outdoor oven."

4. **Mechanisms for Accountability:** Add: A bake oven stakeholder group will be created to work with City staff to monitor the implementation of this policy and resolve any issues.

   Add: City staff and bake oven stakeholder group will report back to Parks and Environment Committee after one year with an update and review of the policy.

5. **Allowable materials:** Replace "hardwood" with "dry, seasoned wood."