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**PARKDALE
QUEEN WEST**
Community
Health Centre

Dear Parkdale,

It is with a heavy heart that we must inform you of a difficult decision regarding the parkette at 1229 Queen Street West, our Parkdale site. After thorough consideration and in consultation with Toronto Parks and Recreation, **the Centre has made the decision to install temporary fencing around the parkette, to restrict all access and to support remediation work on-site.** This is not a decision we made lightly, as we recognize the mixed emotions this may evoke for everyone who cares about this space.

We are saddened that we must restrict open access to this vital public space, which many of you, over 25 years ago, contributed to building. The parkette was designed to be a place of respite, community and connection for clients of the health centre and everyone in the neighbourhood of Parkdale. For years, it has served that purpose by literally being a living room for many who do not have balconies, backyards, porches or housing.

We also recognize that, for a vulnerable segment of our community, the parkette was more than a public space; it became a refuge. It was a place where our outreach teams could connect with individuals experiencing homelessness and challenges with substance use, and provide a pathway, without judgment, to connection, community and care. Many of you are aware of the systemic issues that have converged: the removal of a nearby encampment, a critical lack of shelter beds and affordable housing, the ongoing toxic drug epidemic, and post-pandemic, the shifting landscape of support services, including the recent closure of Supervised Consumption Services across the province. These factors have created safety concerns and a need for social supports that exceed the capacity of any single organization to manage effectively.

We also want to acknowledge the community members who have expressed safety concerns and distress over the past months, including those who have had experiences that affected their real and perceived sense of safety. We understand that witnessing the visible hardship caused by the profound insecurity of homelessness is deeply unsettling especially when coupled with the presence of substance use. Your concerns about the safety of the parkette and surrounding neighbourhood have been heard.

Our dedicated staff and partner organizations, in cooperation with Toronto Police Services, Parks and Recreation and other city services have worked tirelessly to foster safety and support in the neighbourhood. However, given the volume and complexity of community needs we have witnessed in recent months, and our fears about escalating tensions, we have determined that temporarily restricting access to the parkette is the only viable course of action at this time.

While access to the space will be temporarily closed, we want to assure you this closure will allow us to make meaningful improvements to the space. **We have already engaged the city to remediate the wear and tear the parkette has experienced, with the goal of restoring it for future community use.**



Above are images showing the condition of the space. The improvements will likely include design features to encourage pedestrian use of the concrete walkway, reseeding for grass growth and possibly installation of some additional hardscape asphalt or concrete in areas where ponding occurs.

In the wake of the parkette closure, we are immediately ramping up our efforts to:

- Enhance outreach and collaboration with City Streets to Homes program to support community members who frequently visited the parkette with access to supportive programs and services.
- Expand programming to address food insecurity and access to healthcare. We will be expanding our breakfast program from 3 to 7 days per week and we would happily accept any donations you can make to support this program, or any volunteer support you can provide.
- Engage in collaborative advocacy. We are continuing to advocate at all levels of government for the long-term, systemic solutions our community needs that

includes increased funding for harm reduction, affordable housing and a robust healthcare response.

We understand this fence will not solve the complex challenges we face in Parkdale. **This is a temporary measure, not a systemic solution.** We ask you to join our call in advocating for a future where every person has a safe place to call home and access to the health and social care they need.

At this time, **we are unable to provide a specific timeline for reopening the parkette, however our desire is to see a reopening in fall.** We are actively working toward a sustainable, safe and compassionate path forward, one that prioritizes the well-being of everyone.

To make a donation for the breakfast program you can do so at pqwchc.org/donations. Also email us at info@pqwchc.ca if you would like to contribute volunteer time to this program.

Should you have questions, feedback or concerns please contact us at communityengagement@pqwchc.ca

Thank you for your understanding, your compassion and your commitment to building a healthier and safer community for all.



Angela Robertson - Executive Director



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