



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

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TO: Community Services Committee

DESTINATAIRE : Comité des services communautaires

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FILE NUMBER: ACS2026-RCF-GEN-0001

SUBJECT: **Personal Consumption of Alcohol in Designated Parks**

OBJET : **Consommation personnelle d'alcool dans les parcs désignés**

PURPOSE

This memo provides the Community Services Committee with an update on the personal consumption of alcohol in parks 2025 pilot project and outlines the proposed approach for the 2026 season.

BACKGROUND

In June 2025, City Council approved a new Parks and Facilities Bylaw (Bylaw 2025-251). This new bylaw included a recommended approach to undertake a pilot project to reflect changes to the Provincial Liquor License Act providing municipalities with the authority to designate public places where the personal consumption of alcohol is allowed.

The recommended pilot provided the opportunity for the Councillor in each ward to work with staff and their communities to identify and designate eligible parks where the personal consumption of alcohol would be permitted from July 1, 2025, to October 31, 2025. This approach was informed by extensive public engagement, benchmarking with other municipalities, and consultation with internal and external partners, including Ottawa Public Health, the Ottawa Police Service, Public Works, and By-law and Regulatory Services.

Eight parks in five wards were selected for the pilot, with clear restrictions in place to protect children's areas, support public safety, and safeguard City assets. The following parks were designated to allow personal consumption of alcohol in 2025: Queenswood Ridge Park, McNabb Park, Minto Park, Lansdowne Urban Park, Brewer Park, Champlain Park, Strathcona Park and Riverain Park.

DISCUSSION

Monitoring and evaluation data collected during the pilot period indicate that the program did not result in increased operational, enforcement, or public safety concerns. Service requests, enforcement activity, and police calls related to alcohol consumption in the pilot parks remained low and consistent with previous years.

Consistent with experiences in other Canadian municipalities, the pilot demonstrated on a limited scale that responsible alcohol consumption in parks can support social interaction and community use without compromising safety or operational integrity.

While the pilot produced positive outcomes, its scope was limited by both park selection and the volume of public feedback received. Although the feedback was generally constructive and aligned with monitoring data indicating minimal impacts, the limited response rate reduces the ability to draw comprehensive conclusions about user experience across diverse communities and park environments. As a result, observed outcomes may not be fully representative of how the program would function with a broader application across the City.

Public Engagement

Public engagement conducted as part of the Parks and Facilities By-law Review included over 3,100 survey responses and feedback from nearly 500 park users through

on-site pop-ups. While opinions varied, results demonstrated strong interest in exploring responsible alcohol consumption in parks, with support for a managed, location-specific approach.

Next Steps

Based on the limited scope of park participation and response rate, staff will be extending the pilot for 2026 to further evaluate impacts and inform a final recommendation to Council. This approach would support a more informed assessment of implementation options while continuing to manage risk through a phased and monitored framework.

Parks eligible for participation generally align with the following characteristics:

- Locations supported with three-stream waste management services
- Parks with basic amenities (seating, picnic areas, etc.)
- Parks with good visibility and regular use, supporting natural surveillance
- Areas not adjacent to schools, daycares, etc. and accessible via walking, cycling, or transit
- Parks with historically low levels of service requests or enforcement concerns

For the 2026 season, staff will make the following updates to the pilot process:

- The General Manager, Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services (RCFS), will identify candidate parks for participation in Q2 based on established criteria and operational considerations.
- Staff will work collaboratively with Ward Councillors to gather input and identify potential concerns with candidate parks. Consistent with the 2025 approach, Councillors can elect not to participate in the 2026 pilot.
- Final confirmation of participating parks will occur in consultation with the respective ward Councillors.
- Approved parks will permit personal alcohol consumption in designated areas, subject to existing by-law restrictions and ongoing monitoring.

Conclusion

Staff will continue to monitor operational impacts, enforcement activity, and public feedback throughout the 2026 pilot season. An evaluation and final recommendations will be brought forward to Council following the conclusion of the extended pilot period.

In addition to this update, Council may be aware that the Ontario Government has announced its intent to permit “bring-your-own” alcohol at certain outdoor events, which

is likely to have implications for municipally permitted activities and City outdoor venues. Staff are reviewing the recently released Regulations and will assess the potential impacts, policy and administrative requirements and implications on the Parks and Facilities Bylaw and related processes. Any required amendments or policy direction resulting from the provincial legislation would be subject to Council consideration.

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CC: SLT

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

City of Ottawa (2026). [Alcohol in Parks Pilot - Appendix A](#)