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MEDIA ADVISORY - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAYOR'S AD FIRM BYPASSES NORMAL PARKS APPROVAL

Friday, May 18, 2007 – TORONTO – Audi Car Company has been forced to remove most of its 50-plus “TT” billboards that were placed in various City of Toronto parks and road allowances this past week. Without consulting any City Councillors or the Parks Department and Economic Development Department General Managers, staff at the City’s Film and TV Permit office issued a blanket “grid permit” for the 14’ by 6’ signs to be erected all over the City as “set dressing” for an alleged commercial shoot. Audi used the same advertising company as Mayor Miller did for his past election campaigns.

While this flagrant advertising blitz may have spurred discussion at the water cooler for some, the net benefit to taxpayers in the City was zero dollars: the City does not charge for film permits in order to help the floundering industry. But in reality this was not a film shoot but several installations for an aggressive corporate advertising campaign to catch the eye of drivers over the long weekend.

Several City Councillors, including Councillor Michael Walker, were shocked to hear about this scandal on Wednesday morning from residents they represent. Normal consultation was not followed for the issuance of this permit because Councillors whose wards were to be affected were not consulted. Further, the permit was issued by the Film Office the same day as the permit request was made to the Film Office. Our own “Parks Policy” dictates that no advertising of any kind is allowed in City Parks – but this was not advertising in City staff’s opinion. It was considered a film shoot by staff even though the permit request stated no crew was needed.

Interestingly enough, Councillor Adam Vaughan admits he was notified prior to these monstrosities being placed all over the City. Also of note is the fact that the film permit listed Councillor Vaughan’s area, Ward 20, as the permit location – the same area that represents Audi’s flagship Toronto location, Downtown Fine Cars. Funny thing, all but one of the many locations are outside of Ward 20. For example, Ward 22 had at least 5 locations and the Film Office didn’t consult with the ward Councillor.

A major concern is that this may allow other corporations to use our parks for advertising in the future.

One big question still remains unanswered – if this was in fact a commercial film shoot, why was it necessary to have 50 different “TT” billboards placed all over the City instead of just one billboard moved from location to location?

Mayor Miller must account for his role in this debacle and take the necessary steps to ensure this never happens again.

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