



100 John West Way  
Aurora, Ontario  
L4G 6J1  
(905) 727-3123  
aurora.ca

Town of Aurora

# General Committee Report

No. CMS23-045

---

**Subject:** Pickleball Opportunities - Update

**Prepared by:** Robin McDougall, Director of Community Services

**Department:** Community Services

**Date:** October 17, 2023

---

## Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS23-045 be received; and
2. That the indoor and outdoor pickleball program opportunities (offered in 2023) be endorsed to continue as an interim solution to support the interest in the sport of pickleball.

## Executive Summary

Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in North America and likewise, Aurora has observed a significant increase in the need to service this sport. This report will summarize staff recommendations that look to support the growing sport of pickleball over the next few years.

- Summary of 2023 pickleball programs and initiatives along with recommendations for future opportunities
- Private/commercial parking lot opportunities were investigated as possible alternative pickleball locations
- Future pickleball multi-court opportunities have been identified through the review of existing Town owned lands

## Background

In response to the increase in popularity of the sport of pickleball, Council passed the following Motion, February 2023:

1. Now Therefore Be It Hereby Resolved That staff report back with possible creative opportunities to increase Pickleball courts for the 2023 summer season; and
2. Be It Further Resolved That staff report back with a future Pickleball development plan with recommendations and future budget considerations through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Following a report from staff (CMS23-016), Council also passed the following recommendations:

1. That Report No. CMS23-016 be received; and
2. That the Sports Field and Park Use Policy be amended to reflect the proposed alternative use for dedicated outdoor pickleball courts; and
3. That Council approve OPTION 1B and OPTION 2 for implementation and to be funded from operating budget; and
4. That staff investigate and report back with possible private/commercial parking lot opportunities that could be used as alternative pickleball locations.

As a result, staff implemented a few changes/increases in service level to take effect this past summer and monitored the outcome for future consideration. Staff also investigated possible private/commercial parking lot opportunities that could be used for pickleball. Staff are bringing back the results of this review for Council consideration.

In addition, the most recent Parks and Recreation Master Plan was updated which also included future recommendations for the sport of pickleball and how Aurora can begin to meet the growing demand. This included the evaluation of capital investment on outdoor court development involving restoration, improvements and new builds.

## **Analysis**

### **Summary of 2023 pickleball programs and initiatives along with recommendations for future opportunities**

The following initiatives were added or enhanced to increase the availability for pickleball opportunities both indoor and outdoor:

#### Indoor pilot/programming

- increased indoor gymnasium playing time available

- New Fall drop-ins at AFLC, beginning Sept 2023:
  - Sundays 8:30 am – 10 am & 4 pm – 5:30 pm
  - Mondays 8:45 pm – 10:15 pm
  - Tuesdays 2:30 pm – 4 pm
  - Saturdays 10 am – 11:30 am & 11:30 am – 1 pm
- These are in addition to Wednesdays 8:15 am – 9:45 am drop-in that was already being offered, and 4 Beginner Leagues (max 24 participants), 2 Intermediate Leagues (max 24 participants), 4 Adult Learn to Play programs (max 8 participants) – all of which are currently full, with extensive waitlists
- added indoor drop in and registered programs utilizing the dry ice pads of the arenas during their off season
  - Drop-in pilot programs experienced low to moderate demand/utilization at the SARC and ACC in Spring/Summer 2023 (compared to registration model). Participants expressed feedback that the arena floor was not the preferred playing surface (would prefer gymnasium floor) and the arena was hot during summer months due to lack of air circulation / HVAC. In addition, the ACC has no service desk to collect admissions.

For 2024, staff intend to operate a variety of 4 week mini-sessions (Learn to play/lessons, Beginner/Intermediate gameplay) indoors at the SARC. These will be pre-registered so staff do not need to collect admissions onsite and will run in Spring only (specific dates to be determined, approximately mid April-mid May) as demand decreased during summer months due to the heat and players preference to play outside.

#### Outdoor pilot/exclusive use schedules for both sports

- added pickleball court lines to Fleury Park tennis courts to provide a multi-use amenity for both sports
- revised the sports use bylaw to accommodate the type of pickleball style of playing time (paddle rack method vs on the hour)
- installed paddle racks at all outdoor pickleball locations
- created and posted a revised playing schedule to balance out the available pickleball and tennis playing times on the shared outdoor courts at Norm Weller and Fleury Park
- Social Media campaign launched to promote all of the above
  - Staff collected both staff/user input through survey data
  - Findings are consistent with shared/equitable use between both sports

- Approximately 50 per cent of survey respondents reported being aware of Town's pilot prior to attending courts and of those not aware in advance, majority reported still being able to play upon arrival
- Majority of respondents were in favour of continuing with Town pilot. Those not in favour noted as Tennis players (<10 respondents).
- Peak times were 11 am – 1 pm and 5 – 7 pm at both sites for both sports.
- Of >50 data points collected by staff, on only 3 of those occasions were players waiting to get on a court, for either sport. In these instances, during periods where staff observed players waiting, they were in Pickleball use times so players could have been using paddle rack method.
- Minimal concerns regarding volume/noise level from Pickleball reported to staff through user feedback survey.

In conclusion, with minimal negative feedback received, staff recommend adopting this pilot. It was deemed overall successful as an interim solution until more pickleball courts come online as per recommendations in the Parks Recreation Master Plan (PRMP).

#### **Private/commercial parking lot opportunities were investigated as possible alternative pickleball locations**

Staff identified some potential parking lot locations based on the nature of the site and the existing relationship with the Town. The Town's GIS team pulled diagrams to share with the potential site owners during the discussions. Following consideration by the commercial property owners, they have all declined interest for a variety of reasons:

- Siting challenges with their existing lease agreements, concerned with what impact this proposal might have on future use opportunities.
- Another large commercial entity with multiple properties was contacted but they do not have a large enough property in Aurora that would suit the needs.
- Another simply not interested in this type of use on their property.

Staff also identified another larger commercial property that seemed to be vacant at times, but it is also heavily used by transport trucks which would not be feasible for the addition of pickleball courts causing restrictions on the ability for the turning radius of trucks. Therefore, it too was deemed not appropriate.

As a result, there are no options to partner with a commercial parking lot at this time.

**Future pickleball multi-court opportunities have been identified through the review of existing Town owned lands**

Staff are planning for future pickleball opportunities through new development, amenity upgrades and park redesign. The projects currently focusing on court opportunities in parks include:

1. Thomas Coates Park – resurfacing of court as per Capital Plan in 2025 (subject to approval) including improvements to drainage, cracks, and undulations in the surface.
2. Upgrades to existing pickleball courts at Trent Park and Edward Coltham Park as per the Capital Plan in 2024 (subject to approval) including resurfacing with a plexi-pave product (similar to Thomas Coates) fencing and expanded run out areas. These improvements will allow for more competitive play, increase safety, and separate basketball from pickleball to allow a dedicated space for each.
3. Upgrade and redesign of Fleury Park as per Capital Plan in 2024/25 (subject to approval). The park to be re-designed, move the playground (up for replacement) to front of park near washroom and construct a six (6) pack of pickleball complex in its place and a shade structure. This will co-locate pickleball to north of the existing tennis courts (similar to the co-location of courts at Thomas Coates Park). This fulfills the recommendation within the PRMP.
4. Park Development (North of St. John at Yonge St.)– dedicated two (2) courts fenced with lights, included in the design for the new park to completed by the developer in fall 2024.

**Advisory Committee Review**

None.

**Legal Considerations**

None.

**Financial Implications**

Should Council approve the continuation of the previously piloted indoor and outdoor pickleball program opportunities as an interim solution, all related incremental operating costs will be absorbed within its existing approved budget.

The majority of the above noted future pickleball multi-court opportunities have been included in the Town's 10-year capital plan; any other outstanding items will be inserted into the appropriate operating and/or capital budget for Council's review and approval as appropriate.

## **Communications Considerations**

Communications will continue to inform residents of pickleball court locations, and play via social media and our website.

## **Climate Change Considerations**

The recommendations from this report does not immediately impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation. However, if the pickleball court project is approved to proceed during budget deliberations, considerations will be implemented in detailed design, green infrastructure, and soft landscape as they all play an important roll mitigating the impacts of a changing climate.

## **Link to Strategic Plan**

Pickleball opportunities support the following Strategic Plan goals and key objectives:

**Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all** in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

- Invest in sustainable infrastructure
- Encourage an active and healthy lifestyle
- Promoting service accountability, excellence and innovation

**Supporting environmental stewardship and sustainability** in satisfying key objectives within these goal statements:

- Promoting and advancing green initiatives

## **Alternative(s) to the Recommendation**

1. Council may provide further direction.
2. Council may decline the interim pickleball program opportunities to be added to the service level and revert Fleury Park to a tennis only facility in time for 2024 season.

## **Conclusions**

In order to keep up with the growing demand for the sport of pickleball, staff are seeking Council direction on future pickleball opportunities based on the results and recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and feedback received from the recent program expansion held this past spring/summer.

## **Attachments**

None

## **Previous Reports**

CMS23-016 – Pickleball Opportunities – April 18, 2023

## **Pre-submission Review**

Agenda Management Team review on September 28, 2023

## **Approvals**

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer