

## **Curling Facilities in Toronto**

<b>Date:</b>	October 30, 2008
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation Committee
<b>From:</b>	Brenda Patterson, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

### **SUMMARY**

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This report responds to a request from the Community Development and Recreation Committee (CD&RC) for a report on curling facilities in Toronto in light of concerns expressed on the loss of curling opportunities due to the closure of a number of curling facilities in recent years. The report provides an overview of curling facilities in Toronto and potential directions for the provision of curling facilities by the City of Toronto.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division consider:**

1. the potential to provide additional curling opportunities at the three City-owned curling facilities; and
2. to work with the Toronto Curling Association to support its efforts to sustain and expand curling activities in Toronto.

### **Financial Impact**

There are no financial impacts resulting from the adoption of this report.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting of February 19, 2007, the Community Development and Recreation Committee referred a communication (January 9, 2007) from Councillor Cliff Jenkins,

requesting the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to commission a study in regard to recreational curling facilities in the City of Toronto.

The General Manager was requested to report on the following:

1. The number of Toronto citizens who have lost the opportunity to curl as a result of closures and the latent demand for replacement curling facilities;
2. The economics of building and operating a curling club;
3. The interests of other stakeholders in addressing the demand for curling facilities; and
4. Recommendations for the City of Toronto in proceeding to address the question of the loss of curling opportunities for our citizens.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

The curling community is concerned about the loss of curling opportunities, as seven curling facilities have closed in the City of Toronto in the last 30 years, three of which occurred in the past 10 years. Some of the curling facilities that have closed (particularly the most recent closure, the 16-sheet Avonlea facility in Don Mills) provided curling opportunities to the general public, school groups, etc., which helped make the sport accessible to a variety of residents not able to pursue the sport as members of a curling club.

## **COMMENTS**

The report focuses on the items contained in the directive from the Community Development and Recreation Committee. The report also provides some additional general information on curling as context.

Information used in this report was collected from various publications and websites on curling. City staff undertook a telephone survey of curling clubs in the GTA in late 2007. City staff also met with representatives of the Toronto Curling Association on two occasions to share information on curling and to understand its perspective and ideas on the provision of curling facilities in Toronto.

Before turning to the specific questions in the directive from the Community Development and Recreation Committee, it is useful to review some basic facts on curling facilities in Toronto.

At present, the majority of curling facilities in Toronto are privately-owned and operated. Of the 11 existing facilities, the City of Toronto owns three (two of which are operated by Parks, Forestry and Recreation while the third is operated by a community club). Since 1980, seven curling facilities in Toronto have closed (an additional facility adjacent to Toronto, in Woodbridge, also closed). Attachment 1 provides a map and listing of existing facilities and those which closed since 1980.

The 11 existing curling facilities existing in Toronto contain a total of 69 sheets of ice (22 of which are provided in the three City-owned facilities). In general, the existing curling facilities tend to be provided in combination with other facilities or uses such as tennis or golf (particularly the private facilities). The existing curling facilities are over 35 years old, as no new curling facilities have been built since 1973.

Curling facilities typically accommodate both a membership base (e.g., a core of club members) and rental users. Rental users may be broken down into regular users (such as community leagues and workplace leagues) and occasional users (mainly groups that would use a facility 1-2 times a season, such as school groups, corporate events, and university/college championships). The blend of member use and rental use will vary between facilities, depending on facility size (number of ice sheets), ownership (private or public) and context (standalone curling facility or curling in combination with other uses).

In many facilities, member use and rental use tend to occur on different days of the week or hours of the day (e.g., members use the facility during weekday evenings, rental users are accommodated in residual times). Member use and rental are often complementary in terms of facility use and the facility needs of each major type of use are not necessarily additive.

The following sections respond to the points in the directive from the Community Development and Recreation Committee.

*1. The number of Toronto citizens who have lost the opportunity to curl as a result of closures and the latent demand for replacement curling facilities*

Seven curling facilities in the City of Toronto have closed during the last 25 years, resulting in the loss of 70 ice sheets from the curling inventory, a 50% reduction in the number of ice sheets since 1980. In the last ten years, 38 sheets have been lost due to the closure of only three facilities.

For purposes of estimating the number of citizens that have lost the opportunity to curl, it is possible to look at the number of users accommodated by a sheet of curling ice on a regular basis. At present, the existing 69 curling sheets in Toronto are estimated to support about 8,500 regular users (membership and rental), equating to about 125 regular users per sheet of ice. At the provincial and national level, data suggests that a sheet of ice supports about 100 users. Based on this range (i.e., 100 to 125 regular users per sheet of ice), the 70 sheets that have closed in the past 25 years would have accommodated between 7,000 and 8,750 regular users, which may be assumed to represent the number of Toronto citizens who have lost the opportunity to curl on a regular basis. This does not include occasional and student users who tend to use facilities only once or twice a season.

“Latent demand” may be defined as the demand for goods or services that cannot be met because of a lack of market capacity to respond to the demand. For the purposes of this

report, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation survey of curling facilities probed latent demand by asking for information on waiting lists and unaccommodated requests for ice rentals as an indication of unmet demand. While waiting lists (and service requests) provide some insight into unmet demand, they nonetheless need to be viewed cautiously as people may place themselves on more than one list, or, on the other hand, a waiting list may not even exist or be presented as an option to potential participants.

Five of the GTA curling facilities that responded to the PFR survey reported waiting lists for memberships, totalling 106 people, 60 of which were reported for facilities within Toronto. Seven of the GTA facilities that responded to the survey indicated that they were not able to accommodate 32 requests for ice from rental groups, 16 of which were reported for facilities in Toronto (survey findings indicate that rental groups average 25 people per group).

Combining the reported membership waiting lists with the number of unaccommodated renters indicates some 906 individuals at the GTA level, 460 of which relate to facilities in Toronto. Applying the range of 100 to 125 curlers per sheet of ice to these numbers suggests a potential need for an additional 7 to 9 sheets of ice at the GTA level, and 3 to 4 sheets in Toronto, to address the combined number of people wait listed for membership and unaccommodated rentals. (This assumes no discounting of facility requirements due to members and renters using the same ice at different times of the day, which would reduce the number of facilities required for regular users.)

Activity participation rates can provide some perspective on potential demand for facilities. Although Toronto-specific rates were not available, both national (Conference Board of Canada 2004 Survey on sport participation) and provincial data on participation in curling suggest that some 54,000 to 58,000 people in Toronto are curlers. These numbers have not, however, been used in estimating additional facility requirements as they are very likely above actual participation levels in Toronto.

## *2. The economics of building and operating a curling club*

Based on an assumed facility program of six ice sheets plus a clubhouse of approximately 11,000 sq. ft (with lounge, kitchen, change rooms, etc.) the capital cost of a new facility in the Toronto area is estimated in the range of \$4,000,000 to \$5,000,000 (including project consulting and contingency, excluding land cost).

Operating costs are more difficult to estimate, and involve many assumptions. The Parks, Forestry and Recreation survey of curling facilities asked about operating expenses and revenues, but only a small number of facilities provided this information. Reported operating expenses ranged from \$96,324 (not including utilities) to \$441,726. Revenues ranged from \$259,852 to \$474,170. The range helps illustrate the many financial variables involved in a facility's operation such as the extent of the available revenue streams; staffing and volunteer levels; membership fees and so on.

### *3. The interests of other stakeholders in addressing the demand for curling facilities*

Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff met with representatives of the Toronto Curling Association (TCA) to gather information on curling.

The TCA indicated that it is committed to pursuing the growth of this sport and it is investigating a number of options that could result in the expansion of curling opportunities in and around Toronto. Among the options identified are:

- the purchase or rental of previously closed curling facilities;
- pursuing the inclusion of a curling component in any future replacement facility for the Don Mills Civitan Arena;
- supporting private initiatives to build curling or curling/skating facilities;
- pursuing the City of Toronto's willingness to partner with private investors in developing a curling facility on City land; and
- seeking City of Toronto's willingness to offer financial instruments, such as loan guarantees or property tax incentives to private investors in support of their delivery of additional recreational curling opportunities.

In essence, the TCA position is very much based on a desire to "grow" the sport in Toronto, based on a concern that the level of provision is in decline and appears to be a constraint on the viability and financial accessibility of the sport.

### *4. Recommendations for the City of Toronto in proceeding to address the question of the loss of curling opportunities for our citizens*

The closure of curling facilities in Toronto appears to be the result of many factors, including changing recreational preferences (e.g., reduced interest in curling amongst Toronto citizens), as well as economic factors (such as the opportunity to derive a higher financial return from other facility or land uses, a particularly relevant motive for private or commercial facilities).

Curling is a traditional winter sport in Canada. While the closure of a number of private curling facilities in Toronto has reduced opportunities for participation, Toronto remains home to many curling clubs and accomplished curlers. Curling clubs are recognized as central to the sport of curling in Toronto, providing an important element of community capacity.

The majority of curling facilities in Toronto are private, however, City-owned facilities represent a sizeable share of the provision of curling facilities (3 out of 11 clubs, and just under a third of the 69 curling sheets in Toronto). Many Canadian municipalities are involved in the provision of curling through partnership arrangements with community groups (e.g., municipal ownership of curling facilities operated by a community club or board).

Toronto's future involvement in curling facility initiatives could continue along these lines, similar to other specialized sports or recreation activities where community groups cover facility costs and the City provides some resources (such as the use of City land at nominal cost).

The City could also consider partnering with community-based curling groups through the inclusion of curling facilities with compatible recreation facility projects (such as new arenas or sports complexes) to achieve cost efficiencies as well as the potential for environmental gains.

In short, Toronto's future role in new curling facilities might best be in some form of partnership, etc., and not in direct provision. This position will be further discussed and refined as part of Parks, Forestry and Recreation's service planning process.

It is also suggested that Parks, Forestry and Recreation work with the clubs and rental groups at the existing City facilities to ensure that rental opportunities for the broader community are maximized at City-owned facilities.

Such involvement is consistent with Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Strategic Plan, "*Our Common Grounds*" and its three pillars (environmental stewardship, child and youth development, and lifelong active living). Recommendation # 40 of *Our Common Grounds* is that "new Canadians be provided, especially those from warm climates, opportunities to learn and play Canadian winter sports."

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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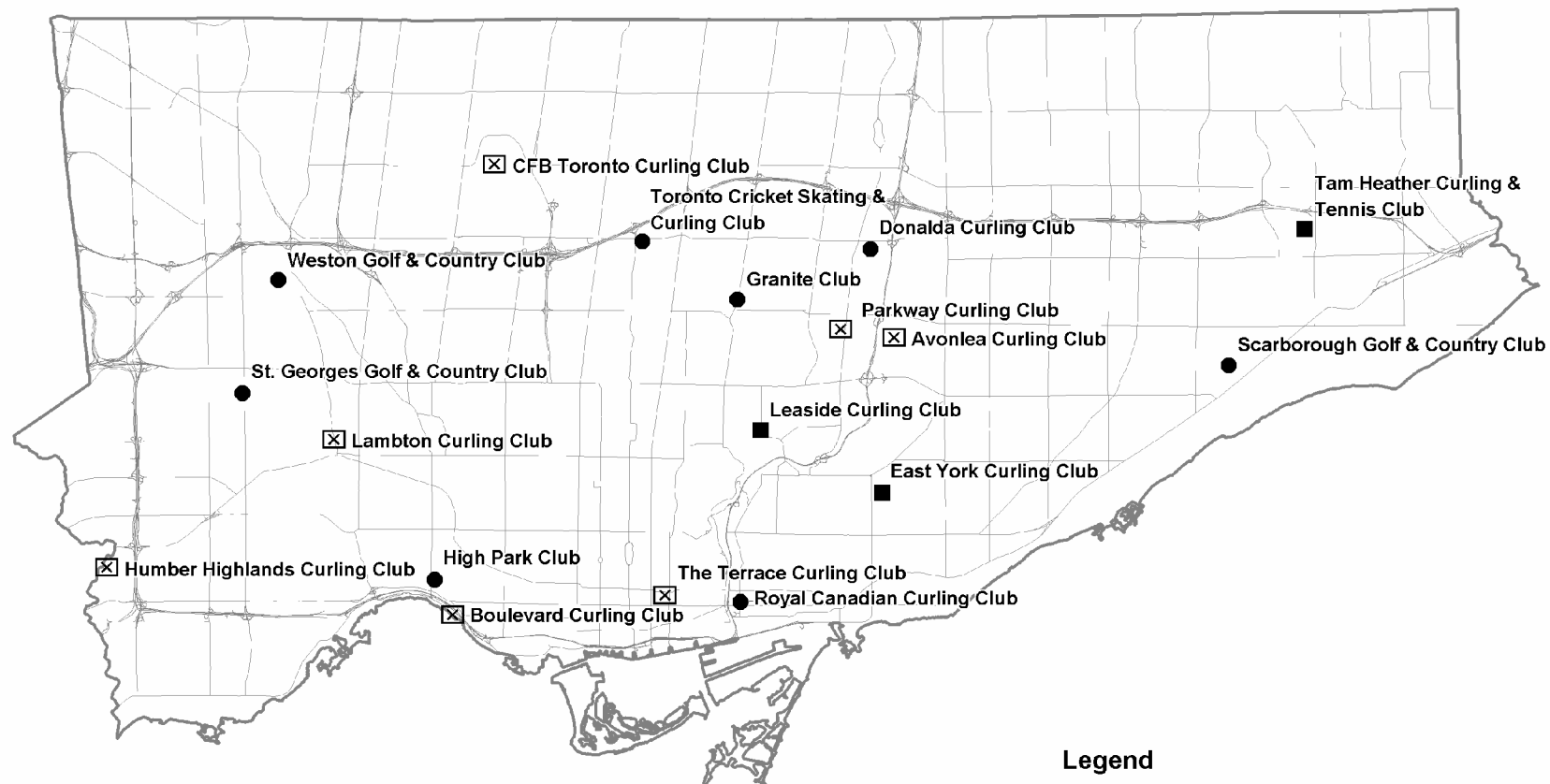
## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Existing and Closed Curling Facilities in Toronto

## Existing and Closed Curling Facilities in Toronto

## Attachment 1

Facility Name	Location	Ownership	Curling Sheets (#)	Comment
<b>Existing</b>				
East York Curling Club	901 Cosburn Ave	City	6	Stand alone
Leaside Curling Club	1073a Millwood Rd	City	8	Stand alone
Tam Heather Curling & Tennis Club	730 Military Trail	City	8	Includes tennis club
Donalda Curling Club	12 Bushbury Dr	Private	4	Part of mixed use golf club
High Park Club	100 Indian Rd	Private	5	Includes tennis club
Granite Club	2350 Bayview Ave	Private	8	Mixed use facility
Royal Canadian Curling Club	131 Broadview Ave	Private	6	Stand alone
St. Georges Golf & Country Club	1668 Islington Ave	Private	6	Includes golf club
Scarboro Golf & Country Club	321 Scarborough Golf Club Rd	Private	6	Includes golf club
Toronto Cricket Skating & Curling Club	141 Wilson Ave	Private	6	Mixed use facility
Weston Golf & Country Club	50 St. Phillips Rd	Private	6	Includes golf club
<b>Closed since 1980</b>				
Parkway Curling Club	1030 Don Mills Rd		6	
The Terrace Curling Club	Mutual St		18	
Lambton Curling Club	100 Scarlett Rd		4	
CFB Toronto Curling	Canadian Forces Base, Downsview		4	
Humber Highlands Curling Club	30 Waulron St		16	
Boulevard Curling Club	1491 Lake Shore Blvd W		6	
Avonlea Curling Club	101 Railside Dr		16	



## Legend

- Existing City Curling Facility
- Existing Private Curling Facility
- ☒ Closed Curling Facility