

EX 21.8.3

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE
SECRETARIAT SECTION

July 8, 2012

Toronto City Council
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON.

2012 JUL 11 A 8:47

Dear Mayor Ford and Members of Toronto City Council,

RE: EX 21.8 Outdoor Sports Field Provision, Maintenance Standards and Fee Structure

We represent thousands of volunteers and parents who are dedicated to giving Toronto's children and youth opportunities to participate in outdoor sports.

We donate countless hours of volunteer time to run our organizations, recruit sponsors and coaches, prepare and maintain City fields, run snack bars, collect fees, clean washrooms and many other things. We do this because we want our children to be active, healthy and happy. We want them to learn skills, make friends, experience competition, have fun, respect others, and be leaders.

Our organizations have attended meetings and participated in consultation sessions with Parks staff over the past several months. We have discussed the proposed field permit fees, the state of our playing fields, and most important, how we can build stronger partnerships. This report reflects those discussions.

Improving Fields

Toronto's sports fields simply don't compare to GTA fields. Toronto's maintenance standards are lower and our facilities are in poor repair. Our parks have been ignored for years, and it has been the investment of time, energy and funds from our clubs that have kept the fields playable.

We support the City's proposals to:

- review and revise the field classification system and maintenance standards for all fields;
- improve the quality of fields using dedicated teams of turf specialists;
- develop a process for auditing fields pre and post-season;
- examine field capacity and set utilization standards to ensure access and "rest" fields;
- develop new policies on "block booking" and "rain dates";
- work with sports leagues to recognize their contributions and clarify roles and responsibilities;
- establish a Sports Field Advisory Committee.

The City's proposed program is an ambitious one and will take several years to complete. We believe the City should develop an implementation plan, in cooperation with sports organizations, to ensure that the key elements of the plan are successfully implemented. We do not want this to become another report ignored once it's approved.

Charging Fees

The report proposes new fees for A, B, and C fields and "dry pads". We are prepared to accept new permit fees – but we believe they should be phased in while the promised changes to fields are being made. We must see real improvements, and our contributions must be recognized as part of the process.

We also believe that "dry pads" should be removed from the discussion of fields and fees. Dry pads do not have the same maintenance and investment requirements, and should be considered on their own.

We are very concerned about the introduction of user fees for lighting, and ask that this be deferred until the 2015 fees are considered.

We want sports to remain affordable and accessible for all children and youth. Your report rejects a program to subsidize individual players, but we believe the City should develop a policy to waive permit fees for organizations as necessary. As well, the City should change the age classification for youth to keep fees affordable for this group.

The City has not organized an information session on the User Fee Review Process as was approved by Council in April. Nor has the City Manager announced how he intends to consult with community groups about recreation and permit fees during the 2013 budget process. We ask that the City consult with sports organizations, including the Toronto Sports Council, on the User Fee Policy before approving fees based on that process.

State of Good Repair for Fields and Facilities

Sports organizations regularly invest funds and time to improve parks facilities. But often we simply can't make up for inadequate capital investment by the City. Our fields are simply not maintained as they should be because of broken irrigation systems and inadequate equipment. The City needs a long-term capital investment strategy to ensure that fields and facilities are adequately repaired, replaced and developed.

Our Recommendations:

1. The proposed Sports Field permit fees for children and youth organizations be phased in over two years, so that the rates for 2013 will be \$3/hour for A fields, \$2/hour for B fields, \$1/hour for C fields; and the rates for 2014 will be \$6/hr for A fields; \$4/hour for B fields; \$2/hour for C fields, conditional on implementation of the field improvement plan and achieving the field maintenance standards.
2. Dry pad permit fees remain at \$0/hour until such time as the maintenance needs for these facilities are reviewed and reported to Council.
3. Sports field permit fees for children and youth apply to teams with participants up to 22 years of age.

4. The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation establish a policy and criteria for partial or full waiving of permit fees, at the discretion of the General Manager, in the interest of ensuring affordable access to outdoor sport in all communities.
5. The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation develop a proposed implementation plan for the steps outlined in this report to strengthen the City's partnership with sports organizations and to improve the quality of sports fields and report to the Parks and Environment Committee in October 2012, including the process and timelines for the completion of the sports field classification and maintenance standards review, pre and post-season field condition audits, current utilization statistics and sports field capacity assessment, allocation of sports turf crews, roles and responsibilities with sports organizations, inclement weather and block booking policies, and the establishment of a Sport Organization Reference Group.
6. The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation report to the Parks and Environment Committee in October 2013 on the status of implementation, and to confirm fees for 2014.
7. The permit fees for 2015 be considered through the User Fee Review process, and that any increases be phased in over time, with appropriate consultation and in a manner that allows the sports groups to adjust their fees accordingly.
8. The City consult with sports organizations, including the Toronto Sports Council, on the development of a long-term facility plan and capital financing strategy for sports fields, as approved by Council in April 2012.

The City has begun a new dialogue with sports organizations in Toronto. We see the prospect of improvements arising out of the 2012 budget debacle. Just like fields, a new relationship between the City and our organizations requires time and nurturing. In this spirit, we ask that you consider seriously our recommendations. Thank you.

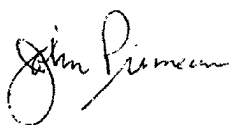
Signed by:



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President, North York Baseball Association



David Black
President, Toronto Baseball Association



John Primeau
President, Toronto High Park Baseball Association



Patricia Olugbala
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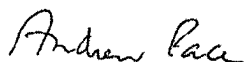
Karen Somerville
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