



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### City of Toronto Outdoor Tennis Operations

<b>Date:</b>	February 19, 2016
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation Committee
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:\2015\Cluster A\PFR\CD10-030716-AFS#22685

### SUMMARY

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Interest in tennis at the community level, particularly for youth, has seen a resurgence in recent years. There is a corresponding increase in the role of the City in the provision of assets, programs and support for community tennis clubs in order to build interest, skill and capacity in the sport at the community level.

This report responds to direction from the Community Development and Recreation Committee for staff to review and recommend changes to policy, service delivery and asset management with respect to tennis operations.

This report recommends changes to the Interim Policy for Outdoor Community Tennis Club Operations, identifies strategies to expand community programming through the use of public courts and establishes a more robust advisory role for the Tennis Liaison Committee. These strategies are intended to support a sustainable and responsive tennis delivery model in the City of Toronto, one that is accessible, affordable and maximizes the city's assets.

The recommended changes and strategies respond to the evolving needs of both communities, and community tennis clubs and were informed by extensive consultation with all stakeholders.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council approve the revised Policy for Outdoor Community Tennis Club Operations, as outlined in Appendix 2.

2. City Council approve the proposed Tennis Excellence Framework, as outlined in Appendix 6.
3. City Council authorize the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to develop a pilot project for the 2017 season to issue permits for a maximum number of hours per day, as determined by the General Manager, to individuals or organizations at a selection of public tennis courts at locations where there are no community tennis clubs, and that recommended permit fees be included in the 2017 budget process.
4. City Council authorize the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to negotiate, approve, and execute agreements with non-profit organizations offering affordable tennis instruction in City parks with a focus on junior development, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager and the City Solicitor.

### **Financial Impact**

The intent is to submit the financial impact of this request as part of the 2017 Operating and Capital Budget processes. The costs associated with the recommended policy and program changes are primarily for signage and replacement and maintenance of lighting at lit courts.

The cost to replace signage at most of the 180 tennis court locations would consist of a capital cost of approximately \$90,000 each year, planned over the Years 2017-2019, for a total of \$270,000 and will be included for consideration as part of the 2017-2026 Capital Budget process.

The Deputy City Manager & Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial impact information.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting on November 16, 2004, the Economic Development and Parks Committee approved the Interim Policy for Outdoor Community Tennis Club Operations.

Decision document:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2004/agendas/council/cc041130/edp8rpt/cl013.pdf>

At its meeting of August 16, 2014, through item CD31.16, the Community Development and Recreation Committee directed the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to review the Policy for Outdoor Community Tennis Club Operations and report back with an up-to-date policy, including consideration to assist community tennis clubs with colour coating of court surfaces.

Decision document:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.CD31.16>

At its meeting of March 23, 2015, through item CD2.8, the Community Development and Recreation Committee directed the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report back on the development of Tennis Excellence Strategy.

Decision document:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.CD2.8>

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

There are 180 tennis court locations operated by Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) in Toronto with over 600 courts. See Appendix 3 attached for a map of public tennis court locations and a map including community tennis club locations. Of the 180 locations, 62 are permitted by community tennis clubs that provide tennis instruction, league play and social events for their members. The remaining locations are available for drop-in play where residents can play tennis for free. The interim Policy for Outdoor Community Tennis Clubs Operations was approved in 2004 by City Council. The policy has guided the operation of community tennis clubs in the city since that time and includes specific requirements for community tennis club permits, public hours at community tennis club locations, and the mutual responsibilities of the community tennis clubs and PFR in maintaining the courts at community tennis club locations.

As interest in tennis is seeing a resurgence across the city as well as across the country, residents, community tennis clubs and partners in tennis provision identified the need to review the Policy for Outdoor Community Tennis Club Operations as well as how tennis programming is delivered, and to look at how public courts are used where community tennis clubs do not exist. In addition, PFR was directed to explore permitting public tennis courts to private groups, enhancing our collaboration with tennis and not-for-profit organizations, and expanding tennis programming to develop a tennis excellence strategy.

## **COMMENTS**

The following is a summary of findings following a comprehensive review of the current policy and extensive public consultation. The review included an analysis of how tennis assets are provided and maintained, program collaborations and opportunities to best utilize public courts for casual and instructional purposes.

### **A Tennis Excellence Framework for Toronto**

The Tennis Excellence Framework is based on the principles of inclusion, access, equity and quality, which were approved within the contexts of the Parks and Community Recreation service plans. Parks, Forestry and Recreation proposes an industry-based approach to facility and service planning for tennis.

The Tennis Excellence Framework, along with the Facilities Master Plan and Toronto Sport Plan, will guide the City's future investment and prioritization of tennis provision and is outlined in Appendix 6.

The focus of the Tennis Excellence Framework is on capacity-building in the tennis delivery system and will be realised through:

- The revision of the Policy on Outdoor Community Tennis Club Operations
- Agreements with non-profit organizations to provide affordable tennis instruction that enhances Parks, Forestry and Recreation programming
- Pilot project to permit public tennis courts
- Capacity-building workshops for community tennis clubs and boards
- Enhanced Parks, Forestry and Recreation programming including the integration of tennis into broader service plans
- Development and implementation of a tennis excellence communication plan to improve communication with residents and leverage community tennis club communication channels

The components of the Tennis Excellence Framework were identified and informed through extensive community and stakeholder consultation. Enhancements to Parks, Forestry and Recreation programming will be determined upon approval of the framework and will consider current program offerings, instructional programming offered by not-for-profit organizations, community tennis club programming and community need.

## **Consultation**

Between June and September 2015, PFR conducted extensive consultation including four public meetings (one in each district), three executive community tennis club meetings, staff and stakeholder consultations, and an online public survey. In total, in-person consultation reached 179 people: 130 at the public consultation meetings and 49 at the community tennis club executive meetings. Additional feedback was received directly through email and phone feedback.

Accompanying the executive consultation was a community tennis club questionnaire completed by 50% of the community tennis club's executives.

Staff also met with partners in tennis provision including the Doug Philpott Children's Tennis Fund team, Wilmington Tennis, the Ontario Tennis Association and Tennis Canada.

Finally, an online tennis survey was created to provide the public with an additional opportunity to offer input regardless of club membership status. Over 1500 respondents completed the online survey which was active over the course of the summer season, closing on August 4, 2015.

The consultation summary identifies the following key themes:

- Community tennis clubs offer fair hours and access, but the City should improve public access hours to club courts.
- Improve communication between community tennis clubs, PFR and the public to promote clubs, publicize public access hours and clarify tennis regulations
- Enhance partnerships for junior development through schools, Ontario Tennis Association and local tennis associations.
- Community tennis clubs should share best practices and offer better networking opportunities.
- Board governance terms should be limited but with flexibility if no interest for other members to volunteer.
- Training/workshop opportunities are needed to improve community tennis club operations and increase board knowledge e.g. governance, complaint handling.

For a detailed overview of the consultation and survey findings see Appendix 5.

## **Outdoor Public Tennis Courts**

Public courts are free to access and available to the public during the tennis season, approximately April 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>, from 8 a.m. until dusk or until 10 p.m. where the courts are lighted. Nets are provided by PFR at all public courts. Casual tennis play on these courts is on a first come, first served basis. Players may play for half hour intervals, and must vacate these courts on the hour and half-hour unless otherwise noted.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation permits courts to 62 outdoor community tennis clubs across the city. In 2015, community tennis clubs had a total membership of 22,000. The community tennis club model also includes four "public" hours of prime time, drop-in access to club courts per week, regardless of membership status.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation maintains all courts in accordance with the capital and state-of-good repair standard, which calls for a standard asphalt surface for tennis courts. Community tennis clubs wishing to modify or enhance their playing surface (e.g. colour / top coating) must do so at their expense and in accordance with the City's capital requirements. This type of colour coating typically lasts about eight (8) years and does not meet Corporate Finance requirements for a capital asset life span requirement of ten (10) years, and can therefore not be considered under the capital project plans for tennis court assets.

With respect to requests for colour coating on public access courts, it is not our practice to apply coating at those sites. This would incur additional inspection, maintenance and replacement obligations which would result in increased operating costs, and require additional capital costs for the initial installation.

Access to community tennis club courts is generally controlled, and the condition of court surfaces have a much higher level of scrutiny than public courts. The activities at those sites are restricted to tennis. Public courts are subject to a broader variety of uses that would have a detrimental impact on colour coatings, including: community events (art festivals), and ad hoc activities (ball hockey, skateboarding, dog training, dogs off leash, etc).

Out of scope for the policy review was consideration for new facilities including indoor tennis assets. The development of new tennis courts including indoor tennis options and bubbles is being considered as part of PFR's 20-year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. Further information including a link to sign up for updates on the plan can be found at [toronto.ca/parks/facilitiesplan](http://toronto.ca/parks/facilitiesplan).

## **Programming**

Tennis participation in the City of Toronto is either self-directed through the informal use of public courts or through instructional programs delivered by the city and the many community tennis clubs utilizing city assets.

Community tennis clubs provide Toronto residents with an opportunity to play tennis in organized leagues; serve as a significant provider of tennis instruction across the city including a junior players program; provide members an opportunity to socialize in parks; and serve as hosts to various special events. Many community tennis club locations also offer users the opportunity to play on modified surfaces including clay courts and colour-coated courts.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation offer a variety of tennis lessons year-round ranging from introductory to more advanced skill development. These programs are typically offered using gymnasium facilities.

## **Program Collaboration**

In addition to directly delivered programs and the community tennis clubs, the city has established program collaborations with not-for-profit organizations and tennis instruction providers to provide free and low-cost tennis instruction to children and youth. Formalizing these relationships through approved agreements as part of the Tennis Excellence Framework will enhance affordable tennis programming opportunities in 2016 and beyond.

Formal program agreements would enhance tennis programming in the city primarily through instructional programs for children and youth. These agreements would apply to non-profit program partners selected by PFR only (community tennis clubs are not eligible) and may include program supports such as registration and equipment storage for the purpose of tennis instruction and junior development on public courts. Formal agreement approval will be at the satisfaction of the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the City Solicitor.

## **Sponsorships and Fundraising**

Community tennis clubs interested in pursuing relationships with external organizations and corporations to maximize their funding opportunities can do so through PFR's Partnership Development Unit who facilitate donations and sponsorships. The division can support clubs in this process in a variety of ways including through fundraising support as outlined in the "Step-by-Step Fundraising Guide" available online. Hard copies of this guide will also be provided to interested clubs through the Tennis Liaison Committee.

## **Capacity-Building for Community Tennis Clubs**

Community tennis club representatives identified the need for PFR to provide support in the area of sport development and capacity building for the clubs. Parks, Forestry and Recreation will work with the Ontario Tennis Association and Tennis Canada to develop and deliver workshops for community tennis clubs in areas of interest and need including club governance, effective constitutions, conflict resolution, building tennis communities and program collaboration opportunities.

## **Permitting Public Courts**

Throughout the community consultation process both community tennis club members and non-members identified their support for permitting public courts where no community tennis club operates. Community members and community tennis club members identified that permit parameters should be considered including: identifying locations where tennis is not as popular, limiting permit times throughout the week, and ensuring at least one court remains accessible during the permitted times for free drop-in play. Parks, Forestry and Recreation permit staff also identified that they receive a number of requests from the public to permit public tennis courts for lessons, programs and special events like social gatherings and children's birthday parties. The proposed permit pilot project criteria are outlined in Appendix 4.

## **Policy for Outdoor Community Tennis Clubs Operations – Recommended Changes**

A number of policy changes are recommended to the interim Policy for Outdoor Community Tennis Club Operations as a result of the extensive consultation outlined above. These policy changes have been reviewed with and are supported by the Tennis Liaison Committee. The draft policy is attached as Appendix 2. As most community tennis clubs hold their annual general meeting in the fall, it is recommended that the policy be implemented for the 2017 season. Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the Tennis Liaison Committee will work jointly to confirm the implementation plan for the revised policy. Key policy changes are highlighted in Appendix 1 and membership and guest fees are located in Appendix 7.

## **CONCLUSION**

The recommendations put forward in this report were informed by extensive consultation with tennis providers, stakeholders and interested members of the public. Parks, Forestry and Recreation continues to value community tennis clubs and the opportunities and benefits they afford the residents of Toronto.

Development of a Tennis Excellence Framework for the City of Toronto provides staff with areas of focus to build capacity in the way in which the sport is delivered. Policy changes, a focus on program collaboration, permit opportunities for public courts, and strengthening the role of the Tennis Advisory Committee are all intended to build interest, sustained participation and skill development in tennis. A communication plan will be initiated with our stakeholders and community tennis club partners once the policy and framework have been approved by Council.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Janie Romoff  
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix 1 – Outdoor Community Tennis Club Operations Policy – Recommended Changes
- Appendix 2 – Policy for Outdoor Community Tennis Club Operations
- Appendix 3 – Public Tennis Court Locations
- Appendix 4 – Public Tennis Court Permit Pilot Project
- Appendix 5 – Consultation Overview – What We Heard
- Appendix 6 – Tennis Excellence Framework
- Appendix 7 – Toronto Outdoor Community Tennis Club Membership and Guest Fee Chart 2016