



October 21, 2019

City of Toronto

Dear Mayor Tory and City of Toronto Executive Council Members:

I am Mark Inglis principal of York Urbanist, a consultant to curling clubs across Canada and internationally.

The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan 2019-2038 was adopted by City Council in November 2017. Executive Committee and City Council now need to consider its Implementation Strategy in October 2019.

The sports community, **particularly curling**, has changed dramatically in the interim 2 years. The Canadian culture of curling has changed in the past ten years, and we suggest that your consultant lacked current knowledge of the changing sport specific environment. There are 4 feature changes to that environment:

- 1. Private Golf communities no longer see the benefit of association with curling, preferring to use the space for indoor golf facilities and other golf centric uses.*

Toronto curlers, as your consultant reported, have indeed been served by the private facility providers in prior years. But the needs of the golf community, who were partners in the past with curling, has eroded the partnership. This is documented country-wide. Toronto has been the locus of this phenomenon.

The consequent shift that occurred influenced the supply of facilities in Toronto between 2017 and 2019. Three facilities totalling 18 sheets, representing 1800 players have disappeared from the sporting landscape. The remaining 8 facilities, three of which are owned by the City of Toronto, are operating beyond capacity of 120 members per sheet. The result is Toronto residents are forced to quit the game or look outside Toronto to satisfy their curling passion. GTA curling facilities have reached capacity and there is a gaping need for curling facilities in the west end of Toronto, where as of April 2020, only 1 facility will be available compared to 7 in Central and East Toronto. This is unacceptable and frankly embarrassing for a city of Toronto's stature and importance.

2. Ice time for curling is unavailable to the public

The Toronto Sports and Social Club have lamented that they cannot find ice time for their 20,000 members who wish to participate in curling on a regular basis. In addition, curling is a sport that corporations use as partnering opportunities for its staff and clients. There are few available 6 hour slots of ice time for them to organize the events that they desire, without going outside Toronto. Each lost corporate event represents \$20,000 worth of economic impact. Furthermore, rental ice which is used for high school, church groups, seniors, corporate events and special needs curling is no longer available.

3. Curling is a more visible sport than ten years ago

The sport has grown thanks to inclusion in the Olympic Games in 1998. Indeed, NBC, the US network telecasting the Olympics, had over half its sports air time dedicated to curling in the last winter Olympics. The growth in the US has been exponential. Viewership in Canada increased so much that in spring, 2019 curling on television during one week of the Men's Canadian Curling Championships filled 6 of the top ten viewed sporting events, outpacing ice hockey which filled three of the remaining four slots. There are 1055 curling facilities in Canada. There are 1.5 million active curlers in Canada. There are no curling facilities north and west of High Park where there are 1 million persons. This represents 6,700 curlers unserved in Etobicoke.

4. Curling is trending to athleticism complementary to recreation

Inclusion as an Olympics sport has wrought changes in competition and training. Canada's 2010 gold medalist curling team, Team Jacobs, emphatically declared that curling has come of age in the athletic world. They demonstrated that only the fittest and strongest could rise to the top. Hence, the culture of curling changed. Youth curling grew as their icons demonstrated that fitness was critical to curling success. Yet, the recreation and social structure of curling remained intact. This sport for life, a truly Canadian sport, attracts new players of all ages and cultures. Despite the trend to athleticism, curling continues to attract players from other contact sports to start at a later age. Your Master Plan alludes to the plateauing of hockey. As the boomers age out, they have the opportunity to participate in sport, through curling... if only there were facilities to accommodate their changing demands.

The City of Toronto Recreation Facilities Master Plan states that venues, previously only used for skating, need “strategic renewal and repurposing of existing arenas”. Curling needs facilities. Accordingly, it makes sense that the implementation of your master plan should include the repurposing of skating arenas to become curling venues. The need is particularly acute in Toronto West. The West End Curling Committee organized in 2018 and its members have investigated three such facilities: Long Branch Arena; Pine Point Arena; and, facilities in Centennial Park.

We request that the Implementation of the Master Plan be urgently directed towards the reuse of city-wide arenas to accommodate new space for the growing sport of curling. We are asking that, as an addendum to the Implementation Plan, you include this directive that strategies for accommodating additional curling facilities, particularly in Etobicoke-York, are undertaken.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Inglis