

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Cricket Reference Group (CRG)

Meeting 4 Summary

October 21, 2021

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Susan Fall, Supervisor, System Planning



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Attendees

Community Reference Group Members

Brampton-Etobicoke and District Cricket League – Prait Persaud
Cricket Canada – Keith Deonaraine
Cricket Ontario – Shah Saleem Zafar
Global T20 Canada - Wendy Kane
Ontario Cricket Association - Melvin John (new member)
Ontario Twilight Softball Cricket League – Azeem Khan
Open Member (Scarborough League Player) - Kannan Rajagopal
Scarborough Cricket Association – Shiv Persaud

Members not in attendance:

Bangla Warriors Cricket Club – Abu Rubaid Alam
CIMA – Ranil Mendis
Community Sport Collective – Heather Mitchell
Cricket Canada Masters Council – Akshay Pandya
Greater Toronto Cricket Club – Qhinathullah Mohammed
Ontario Softball Cricket League – Kumar Jaipersaud
Ontario Twilight Softball Cricket League – Azeem Khan
Superstar Colts Coach – Abdool Mudassar Samad
Toronto & District Cricket Association – Mohammed Shaikh
Toronto Police Cricket Club – PC Amir Butt

City of Toronto

Alex Lavasidis –Sr. Public Consultation Coordinator
Cathy Vincelli – Manager, Community Recreation
Cathy Hargraves - Supervisor, Client Support
Kathleen Stevens – Landscape Technologist
Kelly Murphy – Manager, Policy & System Planning
Mari Caravaggio – Business Development Officer
Pamela Ferrante – Supervisor, Client Services
Paul Farrish – Manager, Park Planning
Peter White – Manager, Parks
Shafeeq Armstrong – Toronto Urban Fellow Research Associate
Susan Fall – Supervisor, System Planning
Teresa Liu – Planner, Parks Development and Planning

These minutes are not intended to provide verbatim accounts of discussions. Rather, they summarize and document the key points made during the discussions, as well as the outcomes and actions arising from the CRG meeting.

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the virtual meeting of the Cricket Reference Group held on October 21, 2021 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

These meeting notes and the presentation, along with more information about the CRG and the development of the City's Cricket Strategy can be found on the project webpage at www.toronto.ca/CricketStrategy

Meeting Goals

Meeting goals included:

- Discuss/Confirm:
 - Design standards for the pitches, practice pitches and screens.
 - Opportunities for growing the sport with a focus on:
 - Raising awareness
 - Partnerships
 - Programming
 - Staff and Coaching
 - Building a diversity of players
- Share next steps

Discussion

The CRG discussion is summarised below, by meeting topic. Please reference the CRG Meeting 4 presentation posted to the [project webpage](#) for additional context and presentation slides.

Updates and Announcements

Program, park, and pitch updates were provided by staff and then CRG members.

- Terry Fox Park cricket pitch has been improved.
- Ellesmere Reservoir North cricket pitch patched.
- Ellesmere Reservoir south pitch improvement project moved into 2022.
 - With a new Capital Projects Manager on the project.
- Cedervale Park improvements:
 - In the process of securing a contract for the installation of an artificial turf in time for next season, 2022.
- Centennial Park Master Plan final staff report will go to Infrastructure and Environment Committee on October 26.
 - Planned cricket pitch cannot be installed prior to 2024 due to ongoing pipeline work and hydro tower repairs that must be completed in the area first.
 - Funding is yet to be identified.
- Brampton is considering a \$35-million dollar, 5000 fixed-seating cricket stadium with possibility to expand to additional 20,000.
- Toronto Police Cricket Team hosted the New York Police Department Cricket Team for a cricket match on Sept 18 with a great turnout.
- CRG member Azeem was recognized in the Guyana Chronicle for his work with the Ontario Twilight Cricket League.

Additional CRG member updates include:

- Ontario Twilight Softball Cricket League representative spoke to the Prime Minister's Cup:

- There was some concerns about COVID in Guyana, but the tournament received the green light to proceed.
- Teams from New York and Florida are going, but no teams from Canada.
- Cricket Canada representative spoke to Canada's Cricket Teams:
 - The women's national team is in Mexico for T20 World Cup America Qualifiers, where Canada lost to Brazil.
 - The under 19 team qualified for the world cup in the Caribbean next year.
 - The men's team will be in Antigua in November for their world cup qualifier.
 - Recognized and appreciated Cricket Ontario, and that they played at King City for qualifiers.
- Cricket Ontario provided an update on Youth Cricket:
 - Ontario youth have won the under 19 championship held by Cricket Canada. They used Centennial Park for all practices.
- Brampton-Etobicoke and District Cricket League added to the news about the proposed Brampton Cricket Stadium:
 - Made a pitch to Brampton Council last week for the cricket stadium where there is little opposition to building this stadium.

Comments on the updates include:

- Ellesmere Reservoir North patch is a quick fix to allow play to resume in 2021. Concern that the joints/patches can result in injuries (if the ball hits the joint and bounces in an unexpected way) and these pitches should get entirely new artificial turf.
- Ellesmere South need to be levelled.
 - A new Capital Project staff has been assigned to the field renewals and Staff will ask for an update on this project & timing for our upcoming meeting.
- Summerlea Park pitch was unplayable this year, but no maintenance improvements were completed even after issues were raised with City Staff.
 - Some users had paid for permits for the entire season
 - Staff to follow-up on improvement plans.
- Suggestions for immediate improvement:
 - Cutting grass to appropriate length for cricket play is a quick and easy change that would be a major improvement for cricket players across the city. Cut grass more regularly in preparation for weekend cricket games. For example, although Centennial Park has a cricket pitch used for competitive cricket, the ground is not being cut to cricket-specific requirements.
 - Ensure timing of sprinkler systems coincides with the start of playing time (need to provide enough time for the field to dry before play starts) (e.g. At Scarborough pitches)
- Important to identify venues around the GTA where large, international cricket tournaments can be hosted.
- One member noted that they felt being a part of this CRG has resulted in real improvements to cricket pitches in the city, but that they would like to see a bit more consistency and follow through. They thanked everyone for working collaboratively to improve cricket across the City.

Measuring Cricket Growth

The Scarborough Cricket Association representative presented the growth trends in Cricket. The discussion following the presentation included:

- Support for and appreciation of the data presented by the Scarborough Cricket Association representative. Discussion about the data presented included:
 - Participation numbers will rise once COVID is over, and can see that the 2020

and especially the 2021 numbers are suppressed by COVID. Anticipated increase is 20-25%.

- Data on unmet demand can and will be provided to the City by the Scarborough Cricket Association representative. This will include information on who is being turned away from existing programs due to capacity limits.
- Player progression trend: Players often start off by playing softball in their youth, hardball in middle ages, and softball as older adults.
- Suggested that the City needs to start looking at data of growth in youth cricket to be proactive and be prepared for the increasing demand that is coming. This will help the City prepare for the future.
 - E.g. Review data from schools starting in grade 7/8 where a lot of development is happening. These students will need places to play in the future. The TDSB began a youth program for cricket in 2005 with 4 schools. Looking to the future there are 76 schools in TDSB that may participate.
 - School data was not included in the data presented.
 - The Cricket Canada representative will provide the City with data on cricket play in schools (intramurals and tournaments) if available.
 - There has been significant growth in cricket play in school settings.
- Cricket is one of the fastest growing sports in Canada, and there are many versions of it (hardball, softball, tennis ball etc.). All of the formats are on the rise, not just hardball. The strategy for moving forward needs to accommodate all of these groups.
 - Our discussion about field typology and smaller size fields will hopefully get people playing in a variety of fields to better suit skill and level of play.
- Reflections on what is working well in Brampton and Shelburne to help grow the sport: Avoid competition for high-quality fields, especially for those who don't need the artificial turf. Look for smaller fields, forgo artificial turf, paint on pitch lines, and cut grass as low as possible.

Design Standards and Field Typology

Staff presented proposed typologies and design standards for fields, pitches, practice pitches and screens. The discussion following the presentation included:

- North-south is the best orientation for a pitch, because of the sun's direction.
- Run-Up length:
 - 4 meters is not enough of a run-up to avoid turf erosion on artificial pitch turf for competitive play.
 - On small fields (60m X 60m) 2 metres is enough of a run up.
 - In the future, cricket facilities should be measured in yards (e.g. on diagrams, in meetings) so it is easier for members to provide feedback.
- Practice Pitches:
 - Dixie 407 practice pitches in Brampton are ideal.
 - Correct size.
 - Covered on top, which is beneficial for:
 - Safety (allows the practice pitches to be closer to homes and other park features without a safety concern of stray balls).
 - Blocking the sun (a tarp is used on top of chain links).
 - Coverage on top of practice pitches should be at least 75-90% of the entire length, ideally 100%.
 - The Brampton-Etobicoke and District Cricket League representative will arrange for someone to guide City Staff on their tour of the Dixie 407 facility

in Brampton.

- The practice pitches at Centennial are the correct height and width, but the walls should be extended out further. See the Brampton example, mentioned above.
- Artificial turf is a good surface for practice pitches.
 - Can have either an asphalt or concrete base, as long as it is built properly (level and made to last).
- Screens:
 - Screens are important behind the wickets/bowler.
 - Black is the ideal colour so the ball is easily seen by the batter.
 - Screens should be 7 feet or more, but the exact size and placement are determined on a site-specific basis. The planners should stand as a batsman, looking towards the bowler. Someone should stand in the bowler's position and hold a ball above their head. The height of the screen should ensure the ball is always in view in front of the screen, from the position of the batsman, since the purpose of the screen is to ensure the batsman can see the ball as it is bowled, without distraction from the field setting.
 - Instead of wooden screens, which require maintenance, Brampton is using a close-knit black chain link fence for screening (appears almost solid).
 - The Brampton-Etobicoke and District Cricket League representative will provide photos.

Growing the Sport

The City is looking to develop a 9-week introductory cricket program. These programs exist for other sports like basketball and soccer. Staff develop a draft program then share the program plan with experts for comment and refinement. The discussion following this announcement included:

- A CRG member asked if staff working on the program would have a background in cricket.
 - Staff responded that this would be ideal but cannot be confirmed as staff have not yet been selected for this project.
- Staff inquired if any CRG members would like to be involved in developing the program model.
 - Cricket Canada, Scarborough Cricket Association, Brampton-Etobicoke and District Cricket League, and Cricket Ontario representatives are interested in being involved.
 - Cricket Ontario already have similar training resources available, as well as experts who are able to provide the training.
 - Similar training is provided in the City of Winnipeg through their recreation programming, aimed at ages 5-9 and 10-12.
 - Staff confirmed that they are open to using existing training models, with changes as required.
 - Recommendation for staff working on the program to attend NCCP training to help facilitate a better understanding of the sport and issues. Cricket Ontario provides courses through NCCP for about 15-18 people, which may be a route for City employees to attend trainings.
 - Suggested approach is:
 - Staff training
 - Building a program model (extending existing models)
 - Running the program

- Staff confirmed this training would be beneficial, and that they are open to this as a possibility.
 - There is strong support for the development of an introductory program as this will provide access to cricket for many more communities.
 - Staff noted that the program would be aimed at children and youth, and if there is a demand for adults as well. Once people begin these introductory programs, they can be connected to existing leagues for further sport development.
 - The City also hopes to run drop-in and "try-it" style events to introduce more people to cricket.
- Staff inquired if there any community clubs or organizations that would benefit from hosting a NCCP community cricket session, at no charge. Staff explained that as part of the legacy of Para-pan Am Games' goal of capacity building, the City works with groups and organizations to offer free National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) courses, with an annual budget dedicated to this. As part of this outreach the City can arrange for facilitators through the Provincial Sport Organisation (PSO). Training can be brought right to a club or organization, multiple times a year, or run a generic course, where the public can sign up. If a club needs their coaches trained, staff would be happy to arrange this.
 - Some CRG members have worked with this program before. Everyone can benefit from beginners to experts.
 - Cricket Ontario are currently training coaches, with 24 program graduates so far earning their NCCP certificate. Some still require skills certification.
 - It would be beneficial to offer this program publically. Members suggested the City set up a meeting with Cricket Ontario and Cricket Canada to discuss the various elements of the program, plan dates, and to coordinate advertisement of the sessions.
 - The training opportunities should run quarterly to ensure everyone has an opportunity to join.
- The City is currently in the process of hiring a sport community development worker, who will start planning for 2022. Training would be offered at a community level.

Growing the Sport – Diversity of Players

Staff noted that it is important for the City to promote a growth in Cricket for a diversity of layers including women and girls. Youth, seniors, and adaptive/inclusive program. Staff asked:

- Can your organization share data about the makeup of players in leagues & programs?
- What is your organization doing to encourage a diversity of players?
- What opportunities do you see for increasing diverse participation in cricket?

The discussion that followed included:

- Data on the makeup of players in Leagues and Programs:
 - The Scarborough Cricket Association has a data breakdown of the diversity of players, which they will provide.
 - Cricket Canada will work with Cricket Ontario to provide data that shows the makeup of players in Ontario Cricket leagues as compared to other provinces, disaggregating the data by target group (youth, women/girls, seniors, and adaptive/inclusive programs) if possible.
- Promotion of diversity:

- Scarborough Cricket Association offers programs with no fee for youth (to 19 years old) and women.
- Cricket Ontario runs free programming for youth (up to 19) and high performance programs for women.
- Cricket Canada has committed to a young women's development program.
- When asked what has been working to get more women involved in cricket, members responded:
 - Promoting women's programming in schools and through existing cricket communities.
 - Advertising on Cricket Ontario forums and in existing leagues.
 - Providing open-trials for women's teams.
 - Pairing mothers and daughters, where possible. There has been success through:
 - Mothers and daughters playing competitively and practicing together.
 - Hosting "try-day" sessions at the City and community level with moms and daughters.
- Suggestions for getting more women and girls into cricket include:
 - Providing more opportunities at the school, community and City level.
 - Ensuring proper changing and washroom facilities, not just pitches.
 - Continue to offer free/subsidized programming. Cost is a big factor/barrier to participation, especially when trying to grow entry-level cricket.
 - Keep the game interesting and exciting by ensuring fields are maintained, and especially that grass is cut so that the ball is not slowed down.
- Older Adults (50+):
 - A growing number of older adults are interested in senior-only leagues, as many are intimidated play with younger players when returning to the game after hiatus.
- Existing adaptive/inclusive programming:
 - An inclusive winter cricket program is currently being developed for approximately 12 children with autism between ages 4 to 11. This is being developed with Cricket Canada, a local Scarborough Cricket Academy, and a local Autism Centre for Children.
 - There is a small inclusive cricket program run by the Special Olympics and the Toronto Police since 2010 with about 10-20 youth participants. Success is dependent on the area and barriers included providing appropriate transportation for people with special needs to participate in the program, and financial barriers.
 - There is also a program being developed for people with vision impairment through the Toronto Accessibility Sport Council. A modified ball (tennis ball with a bell inside) is proposed to be used, with the goal of presenting to the CNIB and moving forward with programming in 2022.
- Suggestions to promote adaptive/inclusive programming:
 - There needs to be a physical centre that can serve the needs of people with disabilities.
 - A facility for, and additional programming for people with disabilities, would be ideally positioned for the City to facilitate because they have the budget and resources

CRG Membership

A member suggested that the CRG membership list be refined to a core group of people to ensure consistency and useful discussion at meetings, as many members have not been present at most/any meetings. Other CRG members and staff agreed. A membership review will be discussed further in the next CRG meeting.

Next Steps

- Members to email any other ideas for growing the sport of Cricket in the City of Toronto or additional feedback to Susan Fall by October 31.
- Staff to research and pursue the ideas, opportunities and options we have discussed and follow up on relevant items.
- Staff will circulate a meeting summary. Please review and provide any edits within a week.
- Tentative date for the next meeting is late November/early December.
 - CRG to discuss overview of the Cricket Strategy, reflect on the CRG so far, and discuss goals for 2022.
- Cricket Strategy report to Committee anticipated in Q1 2022

Contact Us

For questions or comments related to this project, please contact:

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