

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

# Cricket Reference Group (CRG)

Meeting 8 Summary

October 24, 2023

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Susan Fall, Supervisor, System Planning



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# Attendees

## **Community Reference Group Members**

Azeem Khan - Ontario Twilight Softball Cricket League  
Heather Mitchell - Community Sport Collective  
Ingleton Liburd - Cricket Canada  
Melvin John – Canadian Police Cricket Club & GTA U19 Women’s Cricket Association  
Mohammed Shaikh – Toronto District Cricket Association  
Pram Persaud - Brampton-Etobicoke and District Cricket League  
Ranil Mendis - CIMA  
Shiv Persaud - Scarborough Cricket Association

## **Members not in attendance:**

Akshay Pandya - Cricket Canada Masters Council  
Md Akib Akhter - Bangla Warriors Cricket Club  
Amir Butt - Toronto Police Cricket Club  
Dharmwindra Kumar Jaipersaud - Ontario Softball Cricket League  
Ian Baldeo – Ontario Softball Cricket League  
Karan Kohli – Global T20 (replacing Wendy Kane)  
Kannan Rajagopal – Cricket Player

## **City of Toronto Staff**

Alex Lavasidis – Sr. Public Consultation Coordinator  
James Honeyman – Community Recreation  
Kevin Carr – Manager, Client & Business Services  
Matt Bentley – Project Manager, Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan  
Peter White – Manager, Parks Toronto East York  
Sandra McCallum – Manager, Community Recreation Toronto East York  
Susan Fall – Supervisor, System Planning  
Titti Dunn– Supervisor, Client Services

*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 (CRG) held on Tuesday October 24, 2023 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 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](http://www.toronto.ca/CricketStrategy)

## Meeting Goals

- Annual review and confirmation of the CRG Terms of Reference
- City to provide updates on the following topics:
  - Field updates
  - Field maintenance and classification
  - Learn to play programming
  - Permit Allocation Policy
  - Facilities Master Plan 5-year review and Cricket Strategy update
- CRG members to have the opportunity to share announcements, ask question about and discuss the updates presented.

## Discussion

The CRG discussion is summarised below, by meeting topic. Please reference the CRG Meeting 8 presentation posted to the [project webpage](#) for additional context and presentation slides.

### Updates and Announcements

Announcements were provided by staff and CRG members:

- **CRG Membership Updates:**
  - Welcome to Ingleton Liburd, General Manger of Cricket Canada.
  - Welcome to Karan Kohli who will replace Wendy Kane representing T20.
- **Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) Mayor's Trophy:** CIMA, City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation and corporate partners hosted the 18th CIMA Mayors Trophy on June 24 at Sunnybrook Park.
- **Global T20:** 2023 Global T20 Canada was held July 20 to August 6 in Brampton at the TD Cricket Arena. CRG City Staff attended this great event. Congratulations Wendy and Karan.
- **GTA U19 Women's Cricket Association:** The Toronto District School Board and the Peel District School Board have partnered with Melvin John to establish a non-profit girls cricket league with 12 teams and offer intensive weekly indoor training session and tournaments with plans to have these athletes qualify for the U19 2024 Regional Tournament and the 2025 ICC U19 Women's Cricket World Cup. This new group will help to support and build a new generation of women players.

- **Cricket Ontario and Cricket Canada:** Celebrating women's and girl's cricket programs. There has been growing interest in the past 8 years. The new GTA U19 league is welcome addition to supporting play.
  - **Women's National Cricket Team:** Placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2021 T20 World Cup Americas Qualifier and placed second in 2022. Congratulations to CRG member Praim as the 2022 Manager of the team!
  - Cricket Ontario has seen growing interest across all the leagues and the girls coming the school system and looking to play competitive cricket. Cricket Ontario fully-funded, with sponsors and school boards, a 2023 winter camp with 22 entries and plan to continue the free program for students this winter 2024. This may include a senior level Under 19 development winter camp.
  - Regional T20 with 4 teams feed into provincial and national level cricket teams, supported by Cricket Canada.
- **LA28** – Cricket will be played in the Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028, the first time since 1900. The process for qualifications is still to be determined for a rumored total of 6 teams. Cricket Canada will provide updates as more is known. The hope is that smaller nations will be represented in these Olympics as well.
- **Toronto Star article: *Does Brampton Need an International Cricket Stadium or More Community Pitches? The Mayor Says Both*:** City of Toronto staff and CRG members contributed to this article. Praim was quoted in the article recognizing that the demand for cricket exceeds how fast any municipality can build the fields. The Brampton Etobicoke Cricket League has had to turn away 90 applications to join the league because there is not enough field time to accommodate additional players. Brampton, like Toronto, is looking to convert ball diamonds to cricket and accommodate emerging forms of cricket like tennis and tape ball cricket off the pitches needed for hardball cricket. Brampton has pursued partnership agreement with their school board for cricket fields to be built and used for schools during the weekday and importantly used at night and on weekends for community cricket leagues. It is a good model for other cities to be aware of.
- **2024 T20 World Cup Qualifications:** Congratulations to Cricket Canada. Canada qualified for the Men's T20 World Cup in Bermuda earlier this month. This will be Canada's first appearance at the Men's T20 World Cup, and it will be hosted by the West Indies and the USA June 4 to 30, 2024.
- **Canada regained ODI status** after 9 years. For the next 4 years players will have a chance to improve their international rankings and show themselves as being among the top players in the world.

## Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference were reviewed and unanimously approved without any suggested changes. These will be posted to the project webpage.

## Field Updates

Presentation by: Name, Position

Facilities Master Plan was approved in 2019 with the recommendation for 5 new fields over the following 20 years. The Cricket Reference Group has been clear that is not enough fields and not fast enough. The funding for the fields has been moved in to the first 10 years of the Facilities Master Plan because cricket continues to be high priority for the players but also politically from councillors, including Mayor Chow. The CRG have discussed the challenge with finding full size fields but also the need to be creative by looking to advance a range of new field sizes to accommodate a variety of non-hardball cricket games.

- The City will begin constructing new cricket fields at:
  - **McCleary Park in 2024:** This will be (re)installing a full-size cricket pitch between the two ball diamonds and improving the two practice pitches. This will be the City's first lit cricket field.
  - **Centennial Park in 2025:** An additional cricket field is identified in the Centennial Park Master. As part of the broader planning for the park, there is a need for support facilities and a field house to support this area as a cricket hub. More information on the plans for Centennial Park will be shared at future CRG meetings.
  - **Parma Park in 2024:** The unused ball diamond will be converted to small cricket field with the addition of a pitch and retaining the backstop. This park is adjacent to the O'Connor Community Centre and offers washroom access for players and the opportunity for summer camps.
  - **Farquarson Park in 2024:** This is also a ball diamond conversion. This diamond is not being permitted by ball players and cricketers are already playing here.
- Staff are also reviewing opportunities at:
  - **Byng Park:** Staff are looking if practice pitches can be added to this park. It is adjacent to the West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre. More information to follow.
  - **320 Markham Road:** This is vacant city property being converted to parkland and offers a good opportunity for practice pitches. More information to follow.
  - **Littles Park:** This park, adjacent to a Catholic School Board property, is home to Ontario Masters Softball Cricket games and offers an opportunity to reposition current cricket play in the field between the ball diamonds to provide a 100 m field with a pitch.

More updates to follow with considerations of the Capital Budget approval in early 2024.

## Field Improvements

The Facilities Master Plan also recommends improving cricket pitches to support increased usage. The Cricket Reference Group has been instrumental in bringing those fields which need improvements to staff attention including:

- G. Ross Lord Park: practice pitches are being improved this year.
- Sunnybrook Park: practice pitches have also been flagged for improvement.
- Cedarvale Park: surface replacement
- Summerlea Park: surface replacement

The FMP 5 Year review, which will take place in 2024, will provide the opportunity to review and potentially accelerate cricket-related field improvements.

## CRG Comments and Questions on Field Updates

- Can staff provide a status update for improvements at G Ross Lord Park? Will these be improved next year? These are premiere fields but they are very lumpy. When will the jute pitch be converted to artificial turf?
- Can staff provide a review of Sunnybrook Park premier field repairs? The field was out of play in August and September for what was a minor repair. Players are disappointed there was not a quick fix/patch to allow play to continue. How can this best be avoided in the future?
- Many players are beginning to prefer playing outside of Toronto because of the poor quality of the Toronto fields. This is in part why Brampton is turning away so many players.
- Improve the relationship between Permit staff and Park field maintenance staff so as to provide better communications to permit holders.
  - Centennial Park permits were held for construction/pipe replacement for two seasons which did not occur. Last year permitting began again, but the artificial turf was poorly reinstalled and despite complaints about the playability of the pitch, the issue wasn't resolved.
  - Permits are being issued for pitches/fields that require maintenance basic to the playability and safety of the field, raising concerns by the players.
  - When permit holders call to complain about the quality of the field they are told from staff that it is a C grade field and no additional maintenance will occur. New staff in the past 3 years are not always addressing field maintenance issues.
- Decrease turn-around time for improvements and provide improvements more consistently across the city.
  - Summerlea Park pitch took requests over 2.5 years
  - It's frustrating for players. Park Staff responses to permit holder requests are sometimes disrespectful.
  - Rather than wait for purchase order for each field, consider having a company be on retainer for spot repairs through out the season city-wide.

- Some locations such as Keele Reservoir and Ellesmere were fixed in a timely manner.
- Staff noted that the local Park Supervisor is the contact for field issues and should be the first line of contact as they are responsible for maintenance scheduling, and preparing work orders for repair on artificial turf. These processes shouldn't take months.
- Improve permit renewals in advance of a new system.
  - Renewals are painstaking because they are not automated, and every document must be re-entered each time.
- Reminder of the practice pitch design standards discussed in previous meetings.
  - The practice cage dividers need to be extended significantly longer to protect players as well as netting on the top. Needs a newer model of design. See Brampton model and as drafted and discussed by Kathleen Steeves in previous CRG meetings.
- The priority field improvement that is basic to cricket play is the grass being cut to the right length and with enough frequency. Once a week is not enough on any field classification.
  - Grass cutting impacts safety, which is important for all players but especially for younger players (including girls).
  - Grass cutting schedule is the basis of complaints and concerns. If a cricket pitch is permitted heavily on the weekend, grass cutting should take place on the Friday, not at the start of the week.
- Softball cricket has been played at Littles Park for 20+ years. If Littles Park is improved with a pitch, will these players be displaced and if so where will they go? Given Ellesmere Reservoir will be under construction, will those hardball players take over Littles Park, a traditional softball cricket location? How will teams that have made that park into a softball cricket location for years be assured they will get to continue to play there?
  - Staff note that this is not an exercise to displace the softball cricket players.
- A CRG member felt the discussion centred too much around competitive league play, which requires access to premium fields. There is a need to refocus on facilities that address the fact that not all cricket being played will be at an elite level, therefore may not require costly premium fields. Creating more cricket spaces that are not premium fields meant for competitive play is important too.

### **Learn to Play Programming**

The City currently offers cricket programming at 3 indoor locations this fall, in part because not many staff have a cricket background or training. There are additional pilot programming sites planned for the Regent Park Athletic Grounds in the south district and Birchmount Community Centre in Scarborough.



Community Recreation are developing resources to support cricket programming. This past summer Community Recreation staff developed a beginner player manual and a quick reference guide for those staff who are not as familiar with the sport. By spring 2024 will have staff trained and certified as cricket instructors in time for Summer 2024 programs. The pilot will be evaluated in the fall, and if it is well received, then look to roll out the program city-wide. Community Recreation welcomes the guidance and support of the CRG's experience with neighbourhood learn to play programming.

### **CRG Comments on Programming**

- Glad to hear that Community Recreation are receiving training about cricket and suggest that Parks staff would also benefit from cricket training to better understand the game and the importance of the fields/pitches. There are a lot of new Parks staff who are dealing with the cricket field maintenance but without knowing what players require to play safely.
- Foundation training is available on the ICC website <https://www.edapp.com/icc/>
- NCCP Coaching is available through Cricket Canada and Cricket Ontario that staff will benefit from.
  - City Staff can contact Ingleton or Shiv for more information and support.
- The program should not only reflect skill development but the Toronto Sport Plan theme of introducing physical literacy into the delivery of sport programs as a means of providing benefits for both physical and mental health. These benefits can occur at entry level participation as well as higher level competitive play which is why the Plan also addresses the importance of inclusion and equitable recreation access.
- Consider a city-wide strategy that identifies where instructional programming or community-based cricket could occur, separate from practice areas.

### **Maintenance Update**

Peter White is City-wide Sports Field lead for Parks, Forestry, and Recreation (PFR). He has been discussing the importance of consistent maintenance with the Sports Field Committee and communicating out to park districts about maintenance expectations. There are a significant number of new park maintenance staff in the last three years, and many acknowledge they are not as knowledgeable about cricket maintenance needs compared to the needs of other sports and will be the focus of additional staff training.

Cricket specific classification and maintenance standards (Premier, A, B, C) are necessary to establish through the Sports Field Leadership Committee. This would recognize the different quality of field, grass cutting schedule, aerating, fertilizing, rolling etc. that is important and unique to cricket. PFR will bring a draft of the new maintenance standards and classifications for the CRG to review once drafted.

## CRG Comments on Maintenance

- Classification does need review as the “premier” fields are not in premier condition, they don’t offer a premier type of play.
- Premier field at G. Ross Lord is being used for Under 19 in the mornings and the senior teams are subsidizing their play because the permit cost is determined the type of field, not the type of player (e.g. youth). If proof could be provided that youth are playing on a field, they should not have to pay the full fee. More consideration for skill development and youth play on the premier fields should be encouraged through lower permit fees.
- Agree that a cricket classification should be established to improve playability of the field, especially grass height, aeration, and reducing bumps. Concerned about safety and liability of some fields.
- Agree staff education about how the game is played and why the conditions of the field and pitches are important. Cricket maintenance standards would help both staff and players.
- Cedarvale Park is a beautiful location, and perfect for spectators to sit on the hill and watch game play. However, it is a C Field and so only gets cut once a week. It would be preferable if it was cut late in the week because by Saturday and Sunday, the grass is too high for cricket play. Parks staff are mowing on their own schedule, not on the schedule of the permit holders and that ideally needs to be reversed.
- The replacement of the artificial turf at Cedarvale Park and the repair at Ashtonbee is too short and the concrete edge is exposed. A pitch design standard is necessary to (1) improve the safety for players and (2) reduce the need for maintenance. Because of the design it will need additional maintenance of the edges.
- Ashtonbee and Wexford Hydro Corridor has 3 cricket fields, practice pitches, 2 ball diamonds and 7 soccer fields. There are a lot of players and sports on the fields evenings and weekends and that location would benefit from dedicated staff to ensure proper maintenance across all fields. Dedicated staff on site can see the challenges and can fix them a lot faster.
- Consider that Toronto is not using the correct type of grass because when what we have is cut short it burns, clumps and becomes dangerous. The problem may be the grass itself. Golf courses use grass specific for that sport, cricket fields need the right grass too (Kentucky blue grass). The Premier and C fields are using the same type of grass and maybe changing the type of grass for different fields should be considered. Going forward use a cricket standard grass for new fields (or when replacing the field)
- The Sports Fields Committee should have a minimum of one person representing Cricket leagues who are permitting cricket fields.
- Pitches that are less than premier fields but are well maintained could help expand availability for recreational programs and possibly help alleviate the concerns raised by leagues about having to give up "historical" time slots for

fledgling groups (e.g. community based participatory games; learn to play programs)

### **Permit Allocation**

Client Services are responsible for permitting city fields. Field fees are related to the field classification and are Council approved rates. Any change to the fees need to go through Council and staff have no flexibility to adjust these fees without Council direction.

Permit Allocation Policy comes into effect when demand exceed available hours and directs how the city allocates time.

Last year, five parks had permits for cricket on non-cricket fields. This reflects the City's interest in looking to convert under-used ball diamonds to cricket fields.

However, there were also unused evening cricket hours available for permit in 2023. Staff reached out to past permit holders last winter to understand their permit needs and will be surveying all groups again this winter. Last year 15 of 22 organizations responded, and we hope to have a higher response this year. The information being collected includes the number of teams in a league, the amount of resident and non-resident players, gender information, and more. The city is looking for a better understanding of the types of cricket being played, duration of games, and more, to better understand demand for the fields, and to better accommodate permits.

Opportunities to make more permit times and locations available for a wide range of cricket play have been discussed by the CRG in past meetings. Suggestions have included adding new cricket fields adjacent to existing fields (e.g. between ball diamond outfielders or between soccer fields), converting under used fields to cricket, decreasing the current game time length to allow for more permits, and field lighting to extend play later in the evenings.

Discussion questions from Client Services posed to the CRG:

*A shorter game (Short Form Cricket) could be played on weekday evenings during the months of June and July at a number of pitches. This would increase the number of games able to be played on non-premiere pitches on weekday evenings. What can PFR do with the support of the CRG to encourage booking evening weekday permits?*

### **CRG Comments on Permitting:**

- The challenge with encouraging more games in the evening is that there are no opportunities for development programs. There is nowhere else to run development programs. The development program cannot just be held on practice pitches because (1) this are not enough of them (2) the ones we have are not maintained well enough to use in a meaningful way.
- Cannot support reducing game length because cricketers need as much playing time as possible to develop skills, and need to develop their stamina for competitive and international competition, not fewer hours.
- Space needs to be made for all types of cricket play, and it is unclear how this will be accomplishes (e.g. hardball, softball 70 or 150g, tennis ball, etc.).

- Questions for consideration by the City, regarding permitting, include:
  - a. Are cash tournaments permitted on fields?
  - b. With more U18 programs being established, how will new teams be accommodated, how will permit hours be distributed?
  - c. How does the city know who is playing on the fields? When permits are issued for youth or seniors, who is confirming that youth or seniors are playing?
- Lighting cricket fields will accommodate more evening games and may open more time on the weekends. Games cannot start until 6 pm at the earliest (with work schedules and traffic) and some evenings it gets too dark and consequently dangerous to play by 8 or 8:30 p.m. There are no cricket fields with lights unlike baseball or soccer in Toronto.
- Lights at G. Ross Lord Park, Eglinton Flats, and Ashtonbee would help extend use of those fields. Monday to Friday until 10 pm (or 11 pm like Brampton) would be ideal and fully used.
- Permitting have historical users and the City should not take away time from people already playing, who have established a community of players and teams at the same locations over 20 or 30 or 40 years. That's unfair.
- Softball has grown tremendously and they are looking for their own fields, as well as other forms of crickets that are growing. However, they should not take time away from established communities of play. They need to look for additional fields and other locations to play.
- It is important to focus on finding new locations to accommodate additional play rather than reducing the number of hours to established groups. Dividing the existing time on existing fields only will create a new set of problems.
- In Brampton, the new groups have to wait and/or identify new opportunities to play tape and tennis ball. Those teams do not need a proper pitch installed, and could have a pitch mown into a field that is rolled flat. This would help accommodate the new groups looking to play those forms of cricket.
- Emphasis needs to be on finding new fields not reducing hours.
- Lighting for cricket fields is important, especially for competitive hardball fields.
- We need more fields to create capacity for emerging growth of the sport amongst young kids and women. A range of sizes and types of fields are needed.
- There are groups double dipping by participating in leagues and also applying for their own permits to run for-profit tournaments under the guise of a not-for-profit.
- Permitting and allocation should be a separate meeting on its own with the members of this group and the City's Permit & Allocation staff.
- Deeper exploration of the various shorter forms of cricket could allow more time for access by other groups on specific fields. Although this item was raised it did not feel that it was fully explored.

- There is a perception that current league usage on city facilities is primarily adult male-oriented with little to no opportunity for females, youth or seniors. Not only are different forms of cricket increasing in popularity, but cricket play in general is also becoming much more popular amongst school aged participants and seniors. Consideration of these demographics in the permit allocation process may also impact adult play.

### **Facilities Master Plan and Cricket Strategy**

Staff are drafting the Cricket Strategy. This will be a compendium of what the CRG have discussed and recommended to improve cricket play in the City. We will send the document out prior to our next CRG meeting for review to ensure it represents our ideas, aspirations, and recommendations about the classification and maintenance standards, types and sizes of fields, permits and programs. This strategy will be a background document and will inform the Facilities Master Plan 5 Year Review.

The draft will be sent out in advance of the next CRG meeting.

## **Next Steps**

Provide additional questions or comments on tonight's discussion through email to Susan Fall ([susan.fall@toronto.ca](mailto:susan.fall@toronto.ca)) by October 27th for inclusion in the meeting summary.

Staff will provide a draft meeting summary after for CRG member review.

A confidential draft cricket strategy document will be circulated in advance of the next meeting.

## **Contact Us**

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

### **Matt Bentley**

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