

# Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

## Report

5th Meeting of the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee  
February 16, 2021

**PRESENT:** Mayor E. Holder (Chair), Councillors M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozo, A. Kayabaga, S. Hillier

**ALSO PRESENT:** M. Ribera, C. Saunders, J. Taylor, B. Westlake-Power  
Remote Attendance: L. Livingstone, A. Barbon, B. Card, K. Dickins, G. Kotsifas, J.P. McGonigle, J. Raycroft, K. Scherr, M. Schulthess, C. Smith, B. Somers, S. Stafford  
The meeting is called to order at 4:06 PM; it being noted that the following Members were in remote attendance: Councillors M. van Holst, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, J. Morgan, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozo, A. Kayabaga and S. Hillier.

### 1. Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest

Councillor J. Helmer discloses a pecuniary interest in Item 3.1 - City of London Service Review: Recommended Closure of River Road Golf Course, by indicating that his father is employed by the National Golf Course Owners Association, whose member fees could be affected by the decision associated with this matter.

### 2. Consent

None.

### 3. Scheduled Items

3.1 Public Participation Meeting - Not to be heard before 4:05 PM - City of London Service Review: Recommended Closure of River Road Golf Course

Moved by: E. Pelozo

Seconded by: M. Cassidy

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Parks and Recreation and the Managing Director, Corporate Services and City Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer, the following actions be taken:

- a) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to cease golf operations at the municipally operated River Road Golf Course, effective immediately, to mitigate budget pressures on the municipal golf system;
- b) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to initiate the disposition of property process in compliance with the Municipal Council's Sale and Other Disposition of Land Policy; and,
- c) notwithstanding the Municipal Council's Sale of Major Assets Policy, the proceeds from any partial or full disposition of River Road Golf Course lands BE ALLOCATED to the municipal golf reserve fund;

it being pointed out that the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee reviewed and received the following communications with respect to this matter:

- a communication from J. Albin;
- a communication from B. Byck;

a communication from B. Caldwell;  
a communication from B. Campbell;  
a communication from W. Campbell;  
a communication from B. Davis;  
a communication from R. Ferris;  
a communication from C. Fieder;  
a communication from K. Graham;  
a communication from M. Graham;  
a communication from T. Johnston;  
a communication from T. Johnston;  
a communication from D. W. Kostiuk;  
a communication from T. MacDonald;  
a communication from N. Macmillan;  
a communication from M. O'Keefe;  
a communication from D. Page;  
a communication from R. Reimer;  
a communication from D. Rowdon;  
a communication from E. Sivilotti;  
a communication from L. Smith;  
a communication from J. Smythe;  
a communication from J. B. Thompson;  
a communication from J. Wagner;  
a communication from R. Wharry;  
a communication from F. York;  
a communication from J. York;  
a communication from D. W. Shin;  
a communication from R. Carruthers;  
a communication from R. Kasprzak;  
a communication from D. De Vries;  
a communication from H. and L. Marienfeldt;  
a communication from P. Jackson;  
a communication from M. Klug;  
a communication from D. Quantrill;  
a communication from J. Bracken;  
a communication from R. J. Austin;  
a communication from S. Buccella;  
a communication from R. McLarty;  
a communication from G. Buckley;  
a communication from J. Attard;  
a communication from A. Johnson;  
a communication from F. Lamontagne;  
a communication from D. McMullin;  
a communication from J. Campos;  
a communication from C. Beck;  
a communication from B. Knowles;  
a communication from F. Donovan;  
a communication from O. Rizzolo;  
a communication from V. Clark;  
a communication from J. Russell;  
a communication from A. Lobsinger; and  
a communication from P. Herbert;

it being pointed out that at the public participation meeting associated with this matter, the following individuals made oral submissions regarding these matters:

C. Loughry, Golf Ontario – speaking in favour of keeping River Road Golf Course operational; and offering operational alternatives for the Committee's consideration; noting Golf Ontario's recent work with the City of Toronto;

A. McGuigan – speaking in favour of keeping River Road Golf Course operational as a public course; noting that demand for golf and outdoor

recreation expand with the growth of the city and likely this is why the course was purchased by the City.

Voting Record:

Moved by: S. Lewis

Seconded by: S. Lehman

Motion to open the public participation meeting.

Yeas: (13): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, E. Pelozza, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

Recuse: (1): J. Helmer

Absent: (1): S. Turner

**Motion Passed (13 to 0)**

Moved by: E. Pelozza

Seconded by: M. van Holst

Motion to close the public participation meeting.

Yeas: (13): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, E. Pelozza, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

Recuse: (1): J. Helmer

Absent: (1): S. Turner

**Motion Passed (13 to 0)**

Moved by: P. Van Meerbergen

Seconded by: S. Lehman

That the following actions be taken with respect to the River Road Golf Course:

a) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to proceed with the operation of River Road Golf Course for the 2021 season, in order to evaluate the municipal golf operations more holistically, in a "post-COVID" environment; and,

b) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to bring back the matter of municipal golf operations to a future meeting of the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee, no later than February 2022, with additional information and data with respect to the operations in 2021;

Yeas: (5): M. van Holst, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, and S. Hillier

Nays: (9): Mayor E. Holder, S. Lewis, M. Salih, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Turner, E. Pelozza, and A. Kayabaga

Absent: (1): J. Helmer

**Motion Failed (5 to 9)**

Moved by: E. Pelozo  
Seconded by: M. Cassidy

Motion to approve parts a) and b) of the staff recommendation:

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Parks and Recreation and the Managing Director, Corporate Services and City Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer, the following actions be taken:

- a) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to cease golf operations at the municipally operated River Road Golf Course, effective immediately, to mitigate budget pressures on the municipal golf system;
- b) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to initiate the disposition of property process in compliance with the Municipal Council's Sale and Other Disposition of Land Policy; and,

Yeas: (9): Mayor E. Holder, S. Lewis, M. Salih, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Turner, E. Pelozo, and A. Kayabaga

Nays: (5): M. van Holst, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, and S. Hillier

Recuse: (1): J. Helmer

**Motion Passed (9 to 5)**

Moved by: E. Pelozo  
Seconded by: M. Cassidy

Motion to approve part c) of the staff recommendation:

c) notwithstanding the Municipal Council's approved Sale of Major Assets Policy, the proceeds from any partial or full disposition of River Road Golf Course lands BE ALLOCATED to the municipal golf reserve fund;

Yeas: (13): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, E. Pelozo, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

Nays: (1): S. Turner

Recuse: (1): J. Helmer

**Motion Passed (13 to 1)**

Moved by: S. Lewis  
Seconded by: S. Lehman

Motion to receive the communications and verbal submissions.

Yeas: (15): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozo, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

**Motion Passed (15 to 0)**

**4. Items for Direction**

**4.1 Consideration of Appointment to the RBC Place London Board**

Moved by: S. Lehman  
Seconded by: P. Van Meerbergen

That Garrett Vanderwyst (sustainability business), Class 2, BE REAPPOINTED to the RBC Place London Board of Directors for a two-year term ending November 15, 2022.

Yeas: (15): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozza, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

**Motion Passed (15 to 0)**

**5. Deferred Matters/Additional Business**

None.

**6. Confidential (Enclosed for Members only.)**

Moved by: A. Hopkins  
Seconded by: E. Pelozza

That the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee convene, In Closed Session, for the purpose of considering a matter pertaining to personal matters about identifiable individuals, labour relations or employee negotiations, including communications necessary for that purpose and, advice and recommendations of officers and employees of the Corporation, including communications necessary for that purpose and for the purpose of providing instructions and direction to officers and employees of the Corporation.

Yeas: (15): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozza, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

**Motion Passed (15 to 0)**

The Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee convenes, In Closed Session, from 6:50 PM to 7:17 PM.

**7. Adjournment**

Moved by: S. Lehman  
Seconded by: M. van Holst

That the meeting BE ADJOURNED.

**Motion Passed**

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 PM.

## Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

**To:** Chair and Members  
Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

**From:** Scott Stafford, Managing Director, Parks and Recreation  
Anna Lisa Barbon, Managing Director, Corporate Services  
and City Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer

**Subject:** City of London Service Review: Recommended Closure of  
River Road Golf Course

**Public Participation Meeting Not Before 4:05 PM**

**Date:** February 16, 2021

### Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Parks and Recreation and the Managing Director, Corporate Services and City Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer, the following actions be taken:

- a) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to cease golf operations at the municipally operated River Road Golf Course, effective immediately, to mitigate budget pressures on the municipal golf system;
- b) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to initiate the disposition of property process in compliance with the City's Sale and Other Disposition of Land Policy; and,
- c) Notwithstanding the Council approved Sale of Major Assets Policy, the proceeds from any partial or full disposition of River Road Golf Course lands **BE ALLOCATED** to the municipal golf reserve fund.

### Executive Summary

The 2018 City of London Service Review project is part of a larger process that began in 2016 in response to direction by City Council to identify \$4 million in annual permanent operating budget reductions.

The opportunities identified through the 2018 Service Review are also intended to create capacity and or mitigate budget pressures anticipated for future Multi-Year Budgets.

Civic Administration brought forward a report to [SPPC on February 4, 2020](#) presenting the findings and recommendations from the review undertaken by KPMG for the service delivery of municipal golf, attached as Appendix "C", providing background and historical context of London's Municipal Golf System, and offering recommendations on next steps for City Council's consideration.

On February 11, 2020, City Council resolved the following in relation to the Service Review of the municipal golf system:

- a) the KPMG Report entitled "City of London Service Review - Review of Golf Operations", dated January 23, 2020 appended as Appendix "A" to the staff report dated February 4, 2020, BE RECEIVED for information;
- b) Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to report back at a Public Participation Meeting before the appropriate Standing Committee with respect to the options set out in Option 1 set out in the Report noted in a) above; and,

- c) Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to take no further action regarding Options 2, 3, 4 set out in the Report noted in a) above;

it being noted that Option 1 includes a review of all possible options for the future use of River Road Golf Course.

The purpose of this report is to directly respond to b) above, providing City Council with recommendations for consideration for the future of River Road Golf Course. A map of River Road is attached as Appendix “A”.

## Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

Leading in Public Service

- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery
- Maintain London’s finances in a transparent and well-planned manner to balance equity and affordability over the long term

## Analysis

### 1.0 Background Information

#### 1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- City of London Service Review: Review of Service Delivery for Municipal Golf (SPPC, February 4, 2020)
- City of London Service Review: Project Update (SPPC, April 8, 2019)
- RFP 18-04: City of London Service Review – Consulting Services (SPPC, March 26, 2018)
- London’s Municipal Golf System 2011: Financial Performance and 2012 Business Plan (CNC, November 1, 2011)
- Municipal Golf Task Force Recommendations (CNC, June 14, 2011)
- Potential Closing of River Road – Additional Information (CNC, March 8, 2011)
- London Municipal Golf System Update and Shift in Strategic Direction (CNC, February 1, 2011)

### 2.0 Discussion and Considerations

#### 2.1 Recap of Option 1 (as presented by KPMG)

“Discontinue operations at River Road. Under this option, the City would discontinue golf operations at River Road, which would eliminate 18 holes from the City’s golf system. Based on our review, we consider this option to be the most apparent strategy for reducing the City’s golf system given the ongoing financial losses experienced by River Road, which has experienced the highest degree of decrease in terms of rounds of golf played of the three City-owned golf courses” (KPMG Review of Golf Operations, January 23, 2020, p.20).

#### Golf Measures and Metrics

Civic Administration has updated all the golf measures and metrics (including 2020 financial statements) that were introduced as part of KPMG’s Service Review and attached this as Appendix “B”. Previous metrics and measures provided a review of data from 2012-2018. Appendix “B” has added data from 2019 and 2020.

It should be noted that River Road Golf Course was closed for the 2020 season due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the City of London.

## **2020 Municipal Golf System – By the Numbers**

- 2,035 members
- 111,427 rounds played
- 38,808 guest rounds played
- 73,339 member rounds played
- (\$105,964) loss as system
- \$158,000 current reserve fund balance (after covering operating loss)
- 70% utilization of available tee times
- \$25.35 total revenue per round for 2020

## **London's Municipal Golf History**

London's Municipal Golf System has a long history of providing public golf to the community, dating back to 1924. Over the past 96 years, green fees and other golf revenues have been used to cover all operating expenses, fund capital improvements and to expand the system. This means the system has historically operated without municipal tax subsidy. During the late 1990's and early 2000's, the municipal golf system additionally contributed approximately \$1,000,000 in funding for other municipal recreational endeavours.

- Thames Valley opened in 1924 with a 6-hole golf course and expanded to 18 holes over time and eventually to 27 holes in 1931. It should be noted that from 1940-1945, during the Second World War, Thames Valley ceased golf operations to become a military camp.
- Fanshawe Traditional was constructed in 1957 and grew to 3 nine-hole courses. In 1998, nine new holes were added creating two 18-hole courses with the second becoming known as the Quarry. In addition, the Parkside Nine, an accessible course, one of very few in the province/country, and free to play, was built in 1998.
- In 1991, River Road Golf Course, an 18-hole course, was constructed. This was done to take advantage of what was then considered an expanding golf market in the London and area.

The timing of the course builds is not uncommon as the golf course construction industry has gone through three boom periods: the 1920's, 1960's and 1990's.

As mentioned above, the revenues generated from all golf activities fund operating expenses, capital improvements, and in the past, until the late 1990's, system expansion (more holes), which is the last time the system grew. The principle of a self-sustaining golf system has been around since the inception of the system in 1924, according to records, which recognizes that even the building of Thames Valley was funded through memberships.

The City of London's municipal golf system has been through previous service reviews, most recently in 2011. This review was completed by TE Golf Services, and the impetus for this was noted as follows: "Civic Administration has been growing increasingly concerned about the declining financial performance of the London Civic Golf Courses."

The outcomes of the service review process in 2011 included the creation of a Municipal Golf Task Force, the development of a business plan with specific emphasis on River Road Golf Course's continued operation without municipal subsidy, and that the golf courses would be treated as a municipal golf system as opposed to individual golf courses. Other directions provided by Municipal Council, and as recommended by the Municipal Golf Task Force at that time, included a focus on three main goals: improving the golf experience, increasing participation, and increasing revenues.



Civic Administration has implemented many strategies attached to the above goals of improving the golf experience, increasing participation, and increasing revenues. Despite all the actions taken by Civic Administration, financial challenges still exist.

### **3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations**

#### **3.1 Capital Funding in a 'Golf pays for Golf' Environment**

Capital planning and re-investment in a 'golf pays for golf' environment is challenging. It requires land and playability (i.e. cart paths, greens, irrigation, etc.) as well as structure (pro-shops, washrooms, maintenance shops, etc.) investments. The golf reserve fund is the only source of financing available for both areas of investment. Contributions to this reserve fund are directly impacted by the ebbs and flows of participation, economic and market conditions, operating deficits, and unfavorable weather patterns. This presents a challenge in the prioritization of both short- and long-term needs and can often result in the deferral of important capital works, pushing assets past ideal life-cycle replacement timelines.

As noted earlier in this report, and in KPMG's findings, revenue generated from golf services is insufficient to fund future required capital works for the City golf system.

According to the 2019 Corporate Asset Management report (Section 11, page 240), "Golf courses are generally maintained in 'Good' to 'Very Good' condition as required for playability. Golf buildings, including clubhouses and other on course facilities like washrooms, concessions and maintenance buildings, have less priority than the golf courses and are predominantly in 'Fair' to 'Very Poor' condition. The condition of some golf building assets indicates short term investments are required."

Other important information from the 2019 Corporate Asset Management Plan related to the Municipal Golf System (CAM 2019 only reflects capital needs for buildings and structures, not golf course improvements or needs):

- Replacement value of all golf assets = \$20,578,000
- Average annual funding gap of \$615,000 or a 10-year funding gap of \$6,145,053:
  - Thames Valley Golf Course = \$3,577,363
  - River Road Golf Course = \$881,317
  - Fanshawe Golf Course = \$1,686,372

After covering off the operating losses in the amount of \$105,964 from the golf reserve fund for the 2020 season, the current balance in the golf reserve fund is approximately \$158,000 with all future contributions being directly tied to revenues generated.

This means that there is insufficient funding in a 'golf pays for golf' environment to fund required and pressing capital needs, which impacts accessibility, health and safety, and the golf system's ability to be viable in attracting new business.

One factor contributing to insufficient funding, is the annual operating losses at River Road Golf Course, which has a large impact on the golf system's ability to contribute to the reserve fund annually. Annual operating deficits of River Road are covered off by the positive financial results at Fanshawe and Thames Valley golf courses.

As noted by KPMG (January 23, 2020, p.11), "the 2018 financial results are generally reflective of financial performance of the City's golf courses over the past five years, with Thames Valley and Fanshawe reporting breakeven to positive financial results, while River Road has consistently incurred financial deficits."

To further exemplify this point, we can look at financial operating actuals from 2014-2019. If River Road was not part of the system during this time period, the potential increased contributions to the golf reserve fund would equate to approximately \$473,000 or \$79,000 on average annually.

The municipal golf system is currently at a tipping point. If another source of funding is not identified for capital requirements and future capital works are not avoided, the entire system may be in jeopardy as the unfunded infrastructure gap will only continue to grow.

## 4.0 Key Issues and Considerations

### 4.1. Recommendations and Rationale

Prior to providing rationale for the recommendations included in this report, it is important to highlight criteria used to evaluate the options considered and the assumptions under which the recommendations were developed.

First and foremost, it is assumed that the principle of ‘golf pays for golf’, or a self-sustaining system needs to continue for London’s municipal golf system. As noted earlier in the report, this approach has been around since the inception of the system in 1924. Secondly, it is assumed that any options to be brought forward are to mitigate budget pressures anticipated for future Multi-Year Budgets.

The following criteria, introduced by KPMG, was utilized as part of administration’s evaluation of options for the future of River Road Golf Course:

- Is the option expected to result in a manageable and acceptable impact on the supply of golf infrastructure in the community?
- Could the option provide an annual financial benefit to the golf system in the form of incremental net revenues?
- Could the option provide a financial contribution to the golf system through one-time sale proceeds?
- Does the option allow the golf system to avoid future capital expenditures?
- Does the option allow the City of London to continue ‘golf pays for golf’?

The below chart provides rationale for the options recommended in this report, noting that they were most effective in meeting the above criteria and provide an opportunity to continue a sustainable system of ‘golf pays for golf’.

**Table 1 Recommendations and Rationale**

RECOMMENDED	RATIONALE
Cease golf operations at River Road Golf Course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River Road Golf Course is experiencing on-going annual financial losses.</li> <li>• Since 2012, River Road has experienced a 37.5% reduction in rounds played.</li> <li>• KPMG’s report indicates, “discontinuance of River Road is the preferred approach to reducing the size of the City’s golf system”.</li> <li>• Allows for potential increased annual contributions to the golf reserve fund.</li> <li>• Removes \$881,317 from \$6M in unfunded capital requirements from the golf system.</li> </ul>
River Road Golf Course lands be disposed of pursuant to the Sale and Other Disposition of Land Policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides the appropriate process and policy framework for the potential sale of the golf course lands as outlined in the Council approved Sale of Major Assets Policy.</li> </ul>

RECOMMENDED	RATIONALE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It being noted the goal of this recommendation for the golf system is to sell subject lands (full or partial).</li> </ul>
<p>Proceeds from any disposition of River Road Golf Course lands be allocated to the Golf Reserve Fund notwithstanding the Council approved Sale of Major Assets Policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proceeds being allocated to the golf reserve fund provides a sustainable path forward for the golf system to continue 'golf pays for golf'.</li> <li>• The golf system will continue to put financial pressures on future budgets should proceeds not be allocated to the golf system.</li> <li>• Respects that River Road Golf Course was built and developed utilizing golf revenues.</li> <li>• Respects and recognizes that the Golf Reserve Fund contributed financially to other recreation endeavours (approximately \$1M) over the last 20 years.</li> </ul>

The below chart provides rationale for the options that were considered, but not recommended in this report, noting that that they were least effective in meeting the above criteria.

**Table 2 Options not Recommended and Rationale**

NOT RECOMMENDED	RATIONALE
<p>Maintain status quo</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires on-going municipal subsidy for unfunded capital needs which creates future budget pressures.</li> <li>• Discontinues 'golf pays for golf' principles.</li> </ul>
<p>Leasing out property as golf courses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While this option may provide positive net incremental revenue for the golf system, the incremental nature would not be large enough to solve the capital needs in the time period required.</li> <li>• May require capital investment to ensure property is adequate to be leased with no funding available.</li> <li>• Does not allow for the one-time proceeds from a land sale to be allocated to the Golf Reserve Fund which is part of the overall approach to address the capital requirements for the golf system in a 'golf pays for golf' environment.</li> </ul>
<p>Repurposing lands for other parks and recreation needs (partial or full)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan is the guiding document for the provision of facilities, services, and programs. Identified needs are funded through multiple sources and are done well in advance of delivery.</li> <li>• Repurposing golf course lands would currently be an unfunded project and contribute to future budget pressures.</li> </ul>

NOT RECOMMENDED	RATIONALE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approach does not recognize or respect that the subject lands were purchased and developed using revenues generated in the golf system.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

The City of London currently operates three golf properties, Fanshawe, Thames Valley and River Road, which provide golfing, cart rentals, retail sales, and food and beverage services.

London's Municipal Golf System has a long history of providing affordable and public golf to the community, dating back to 1924. Over the past 96 years, green fees and other golf revenues have been used to cover all operating expenses, fund capital improvements and to expand the system. This means the system has historically operated without municipal tax subsidy.

As identified by KPMG as part of the 2018 Service Review Project and concurred with by administration as part of this report, there is insufficient funding in a 'golf pays for golf' environment to fund required and pressing capital needs.

Therefore, London's Municipal Golf System, at this current time, is not sustainable and a change is necessary. The growing infrastructure gap has a shortfall of \$6.14M over the next 10 years with no funding source outside of the golf reserve fund.

The recommendations in this report support a path back to a sustainable model municipal golf for London in a 'golf pays for golf' environment. It includes the disposition of an underutilized and financially underperforming asset (River Road) that impedes the system's ability to reinvest into its revenue generating assets (Fanshawe and Thames Valley). This allows for the avoidance of capital costs at River Road (\$881,713) excluding golf course improvements or other needs, and an increase in net incremental revenues of approximately \$80,000 annually for contribution to the golf reserve fund.

It is also recommended that any proceeds from the full or partial disposition of River Road Golf Course lands be allocated to the golf reserve fund. The previous mentioned steps of capital cost avoidance and increases in incremental revenue still may put pressure on future budgets, as contributions can be tied to economic situations, weather patterns, participation ebbs and flows and other external factors. Providing proceeds from disposition to the golf reserve fund provides City Council the best opportunity to avoid any future budget pressures from the golf system.

**Prepared and Submitted by:** **Jon-Paul McGonigle, Division Manager, Culture, Special Events and Sport Services**

**Recommended by:** **Scott Stafford, Managing Director, Parks and Recreation**

**Recommended by:** **Anna Lisa Barbon, Managing Director, Corporate Services and City Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer**

## Appendix A

### Aerial View of River Road Golf Course

River Road Golf Course

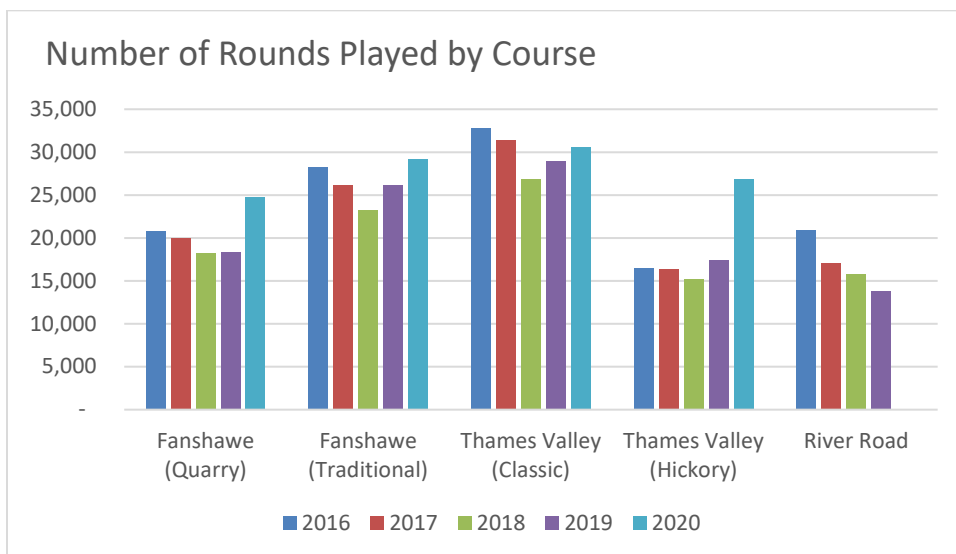
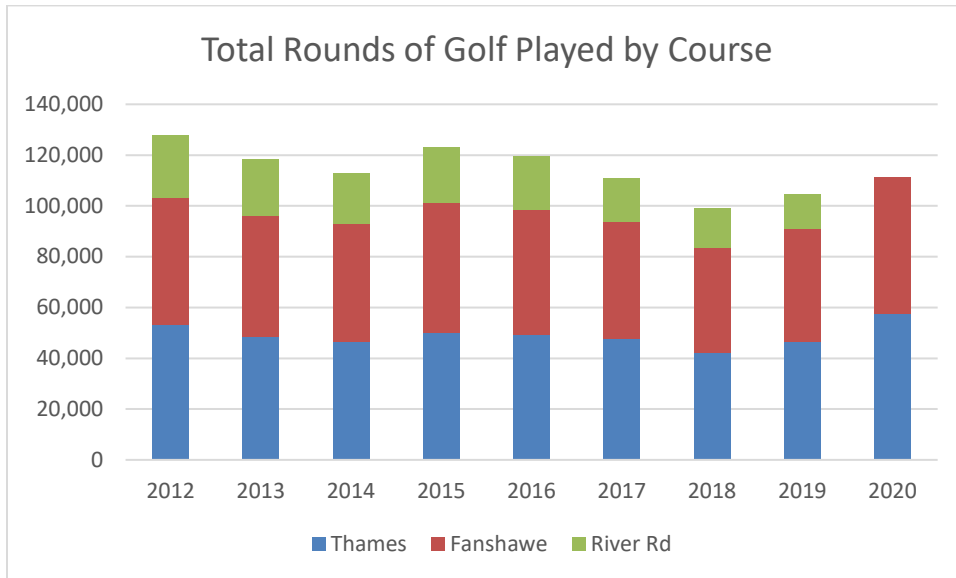


## Appendix B

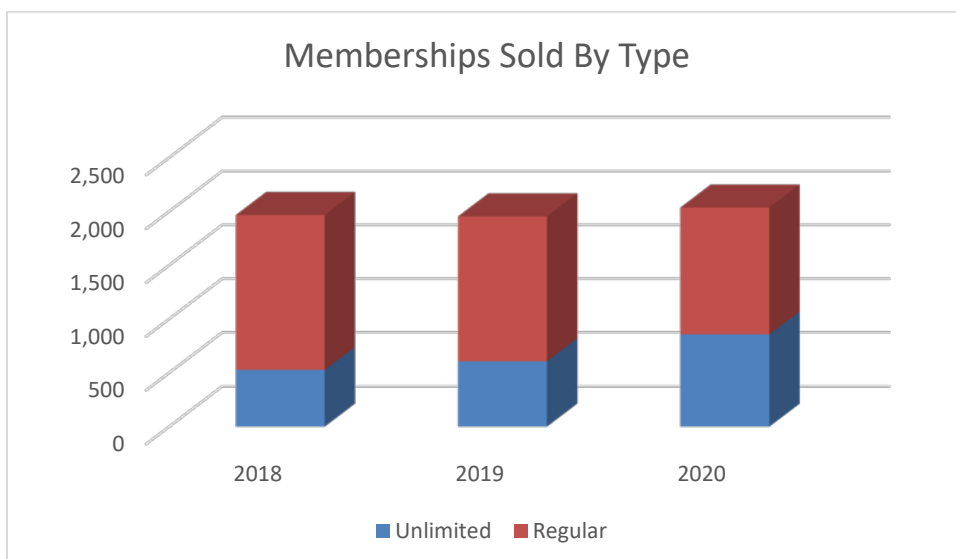
### Golf Metrics and Financials

The below data, graphs, and charts were introduced as part of KPMG's January 23, 2020 report, but did not include 2019 and 2020. They have been updated to include 2019 and 2020 to provide the most up to date information.

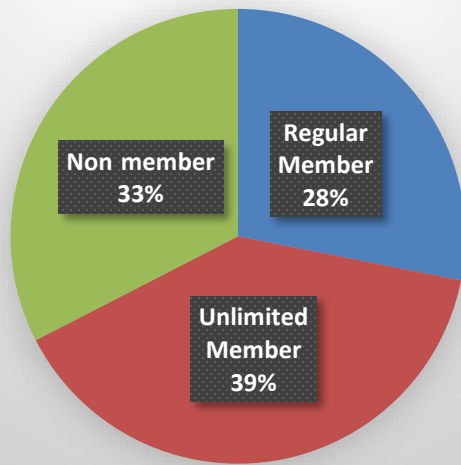
#### Activity Levels



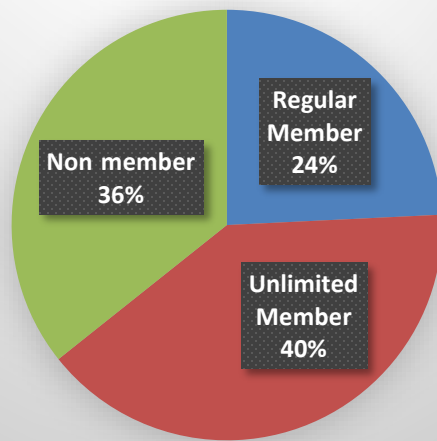
#### Memberships Levels



### Fanshawe Rounds 2020

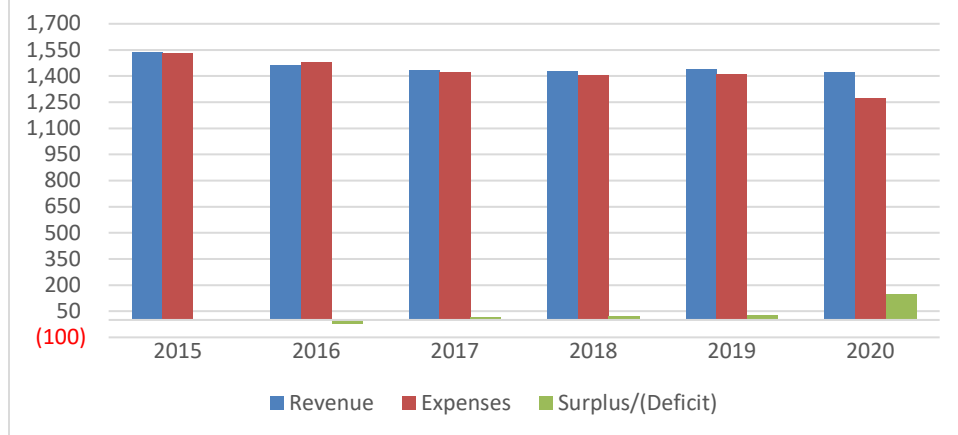


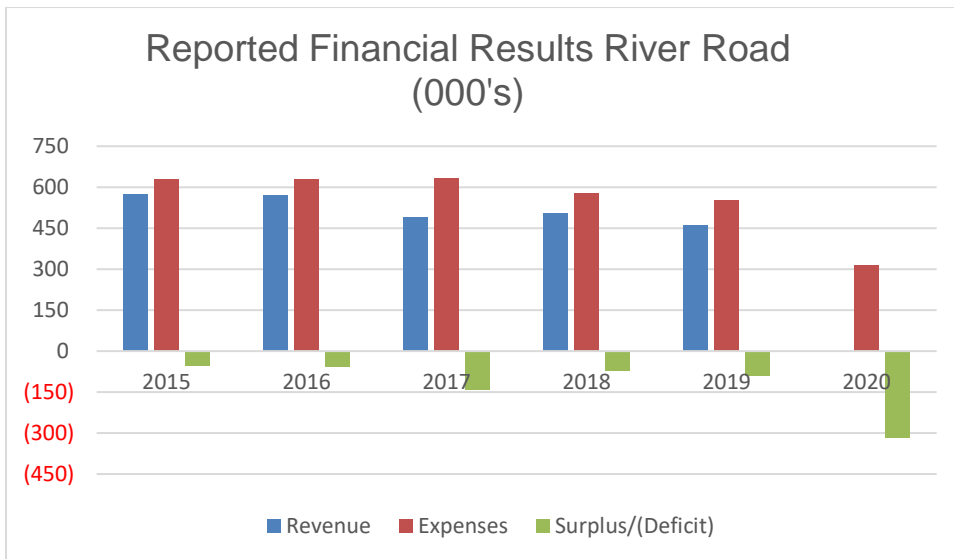
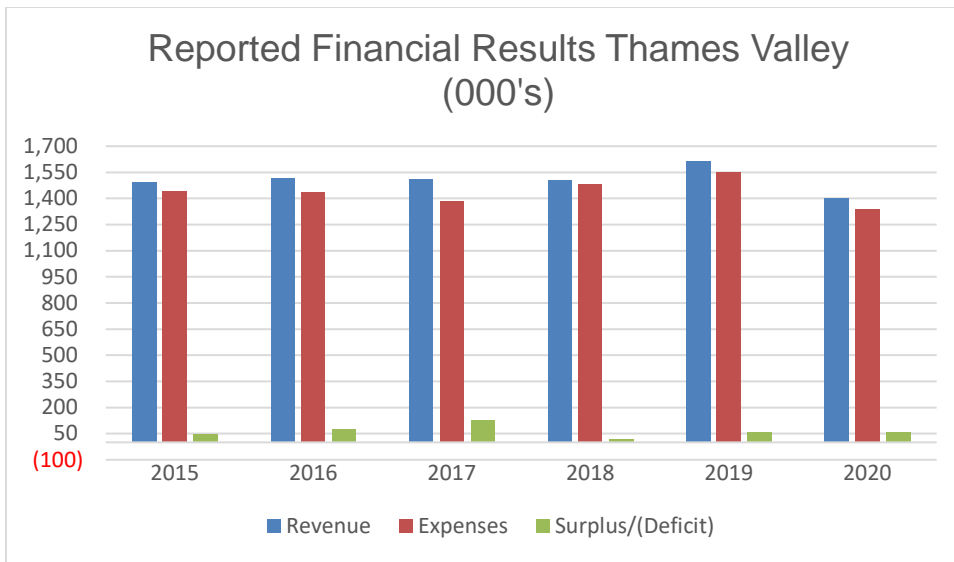
### Thames Rounds 2020



### Financial Performance

Reported Financial Results Fanshawe (000's)





Financial results for the Year Ended 2020	Thames Valley	Fanshawe	River Road	Total
<b>Revenues:</b>				
Membership sales	\$411,737	\$298,528	\$-	\$710,265
Green Fees (members)	205,360	277,112	-	\$482,472
Green Fees (non-members)	407,312	430,199	-	\$837,511
Golf Cart Rentals	199,338	271,332	-	\$470,670
Concessions (food & beverage sales)	84,762	105,779	16	\$190,557
Merchandise sales	75,541	27,102	-	\$102,643
Rentals, and other revenues	17,620	12,413	5	\$30,038
<b>Total Revenues:</b>	<b>\$1,401,670</b>	<b>\$1,422,464</b>	<b>\$21</b>	<b>\$2,824,156</b>
<b>Operating Costs:</b>				
Wages and benefits	\$762,422	\$645,182	\$140,072	\$1,547,676
Cost of Goods Sold (food & merchandise)	125,442	74,416	5,049	\$204,907
Equipment operation	168,926	233,319	88,844	\$491,089
Materials, supplies and utilities	117,246	119,544	32,488	\$269,277
Golf cart leasing costs	54,841	87,739	-	\$142,581
Property taxes	3,500	56,036	-	\$59,536
Other	108,962	57,199	48,892	\$215,053
<b>Total Operating Costs</b>	<b>\$1,341,339</b>	<b>\$1,273,436</b>	<b>\$315,345</b>	<b>\$2,930,120</b>
<b>Surplus (deficit) before reserve transfers</b>	<b>\$60,331</b>	<b>\$149,049</b>	<b>\$(315,345)</b>	<b>\$(105,964)</b>



Golf Property	Rounds Played	Revenue/Round		
		Golf Revenue	Non-Golf Revenue	Total
Thames Valley	57,518	\$21.28	\$3.09	\$24.37
Fanshawe	53,909	\$23.69	\$2.70	\$26.39
Total System	111,427	\$22.44	\$2.90	\$25.35

\*Golf revenue is comprised of memberships, green fees and cart rentals



City of London Service Review

# Review of Golf Operations

Final Report  
January 23, 2020



# Introduction to the Review

## A. The City of London Service Review

Pursuant to the terms of RFP 18-04, the City of London (the 'City') has engaged KPMG to undertake a service review, the overall goals of which included:

- Developing a better understanding of the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of City programs and services, as well as those offered by selected Agencies, Boards and Commissions;
- Identifying gaps in service that present opportunities for financial and time efficiencies, continuous improvement, and alignment with the City's strategic goals.

The 2018 Service Review project is part of a larger process begun in 2016 in response to direction by City Council to identify \$4 million in annual permanent operating budget reductions by 2019 that were built-in to the approved 2016 - 2019 Multi-Year Budget. As well, the opportunities identified through the 2018 Service Review are intended to create capacity and or mitigate budget pressures anticipated for the next Multi-Year Budget (2020-2023).

During the course of the review, KPMG prepared a list of opportunities for consideration by the City to pursue for further analysis. While a high level analysis of all opportunities was undertaken with respect to potential financial impacts and implementation considerations, the review also involved the prioritization of the identified opportunities based on financial and non-financial considerations, with priority opportunities further refined through the completion of individual detailed reviews. Overall, three opportunities were selected for more detailed analysis, including a review of the City's golf operations.

The City currently operates three golf properties through the use of City employees (three full-time non-union, five full-time unionized and 85 casual). The selection of the City's golf operations for further analysis reflects the following factors:

- The operation of golf courses is a discretionary service that is also offered by the private sector;
- The financial performance of the City's golf courses varies, with one course experiencing ongoing financial losses;
- The City is expecting to incur major capital investments relating to its golf operations, with 2019 Corporate Asset Management Plan identifying a funding gap of approximately \$6 million over ten years for both aesthetic improvements and major systems; and
- The City could consider alternative service delivery approaches (e.g. contracting out) as a means of potentially reducing costs.

The detailed review is intended to evaluate the rationale for the City's operation of golf courses, potential changes to its service delivery model and other strategies that could enhance its financial performance.

# Introduction to the Review

## B. Structure of the Report

This report summarizes the results of our review of the City's golf services and is structured as follows:

- The **Current State Assessment** provides a summary of the City's golf operations, including an overview of its facilities, their utilization and financial performance. The current state assessment also includes an assessment of industry trends as well as the supply of and demand for golfing in the community.
- The **Opportunity Identification and Evaluation** provides an overview of potential opportunities for changes to the City's golfing operations.
- The **Suggested Course of Action** outlines potential strategies that could be adopted by the City with respect to its golf operations.
- The **Financial Analysis** provides a summary of the calculated financial impacts and key assumptions underlying the calculations.

## C. Restrictions

This report is based on information and documentation that was made available to KPMG at the date of this report. We had access to information up to November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in order to arrive at our observations but, should additional documentation or other information become available which impacts upon the observations reached in our report, we will reserve the right, if we consider it necessary, to amend our report accordingly. This report and the observations and recommendations expressed herein are valid only in the context of the whole report. Selected observations and recommendations should not be examined outside of the context of the report in its entirety.

Our review was limited to, and our recommendations are based on, the procedures conducted. The scope of our engagement was, by design, limited and therefore the observations and recommendations should be in the context of the procedures performed. In this capacity, we are not acting as external auditors and, accordingly, our work does not constitute an audit, examination, attestation, or specified procedures engagement in the nature of that conducted by external auditors on financial statements or other information and does not result in the expression of an opinion.

Pursuant to the terms of our engagement, it is understood and agreed that all decisions in connection with the implementation of advice and opportunities as provided by KPMG during the course of this engagement shall be the responsibility of, and made by, the City of London. Accordingly, KPMG will assume no responsibility for any losses or expenses incurred by any party as a result of the reliance on our report.

This report includes or makes reference to future oriented financial information. Readers are cautioned that since these financial projections are based on assumptions regarding future events, actual results will vary from the information presented even if the hypotheses occur, and the variations may be material.



# Introduction to the Review

Comments in this report are not intended, nor should they be interpreted, to be legal advice or opinion.

KPMG has no present or contemplated interest in the City of London nor are we an insider or associate of the City of London or its management team. Our fees for this engagement are not contingent upon our findings or any other event. While KPMG does provide auditing and other professional services to the City of London, the service review was conducted by KPMG partners and employees that are not involved in the provision of these services. Accordingly, we believe we are independent of the City of London and are acting objectively.





City of London Service Review

Review of Golf Operations

# Current State Assessment



# Current State Assessment

The City golf operations consist of three golf courses comprising of 81 conventional holes (one 9-hole golf course and four 18-hole courses) and a 9-hole course that is wheelchair accessible.

Course	Year Opened	Number of Holes				Notes
		Conventional 9-Hole Layout	Conventional 18-Hole Layout	Accessible	Total	
Fanshawe Golf Course ("Fanshawe") <sup>1</sup>	1958	–	36	9	45	Property is leased from the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority ("UTRCA")
Thames Valley Golf Course ("Thames Valley") <sup>2</sup>	1924	9	18	–	27	Property is owned directly by the City
River Road Golf Course ("River Road")	1992	–	18	–	18	Property is owned directly by the City
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>90</b>	

## A. Activity Levels

A total of 99,348 rounds of golf were played at the City's golf courses during 2018, with Thames Valley and Fanshawe accounting for 42.3% and 41.8% of rounds played, respectively.

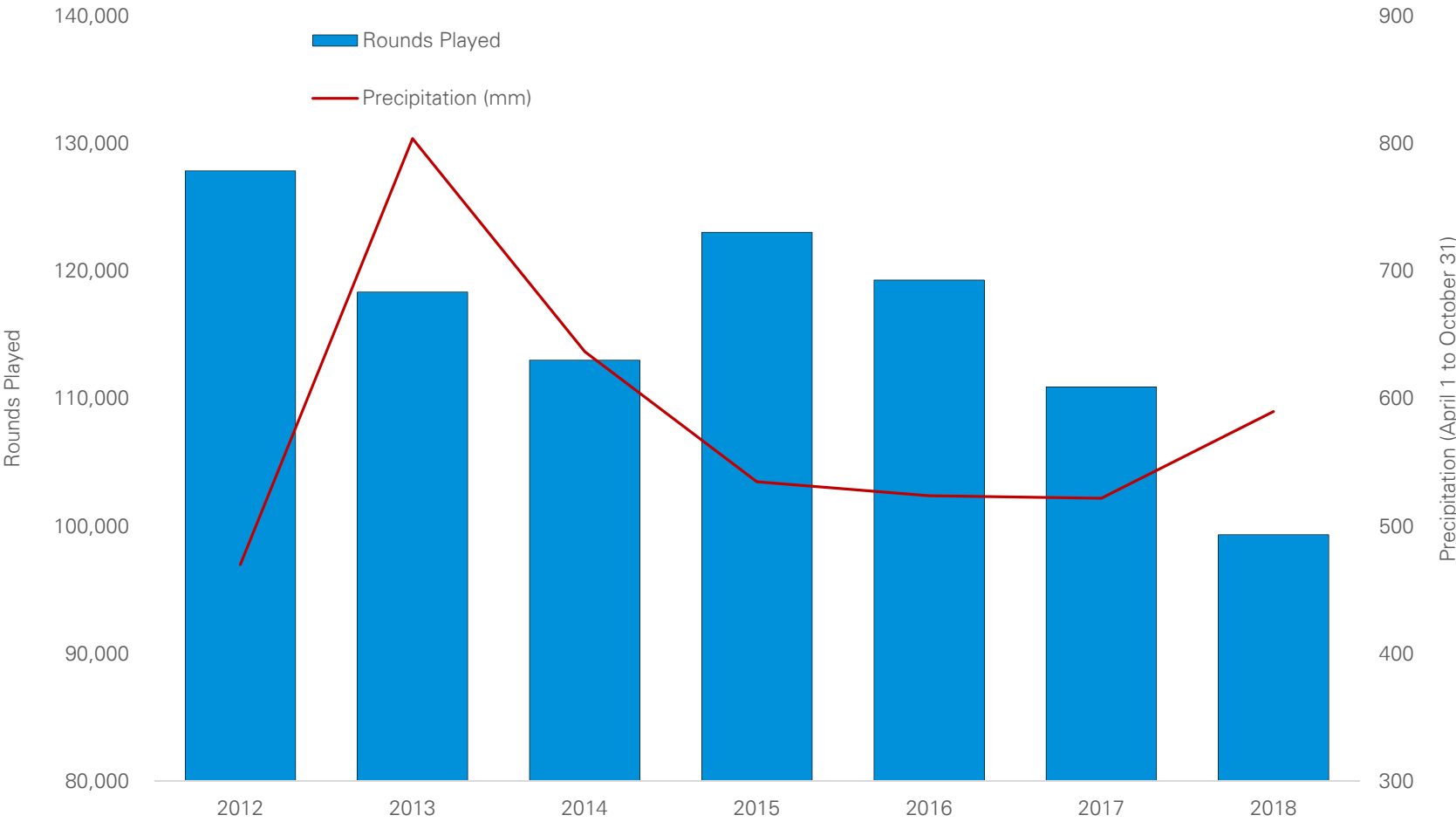
As noted on the following page, the number of rounds of golf played at the City's courses has decreased on an overall basis since 2012, with an average of 116,000 rounds played per year since 2012. An analysis of weather statistics for London (as provided by Environment Canada) indicates that the level of activity appears to be impacted somewhat by precipitation levels, with more rounds played during years with less rainfall. In addition, we were advised that pricing strategies undertaken by other London-area golf courses that offer higher quality golfing experiences have resulted in a loss of market share.

<sup>1</sup> Fanshawe is comprised of (1) the 18-hole Traditional Course; (2) the 18-hole Quarry Course; and (3) the 9-hole Parkside Course (accessible to those with physical challenges).

<sup>2</sup> Thames Valley is comprised of (1) the 18-hole Classic Course; and (2) the 9-hole Hickory Course.

# Current State Assessment

Total Rounds of Golf Played (All Courses) and Total Precipitation (April 1 to October 31)

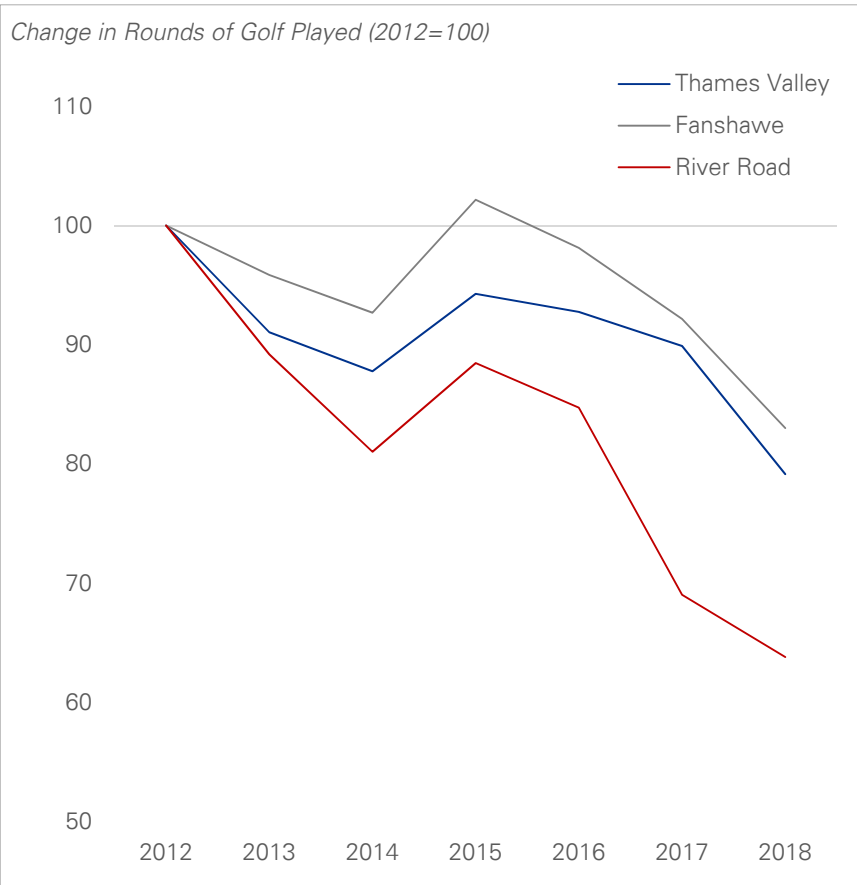
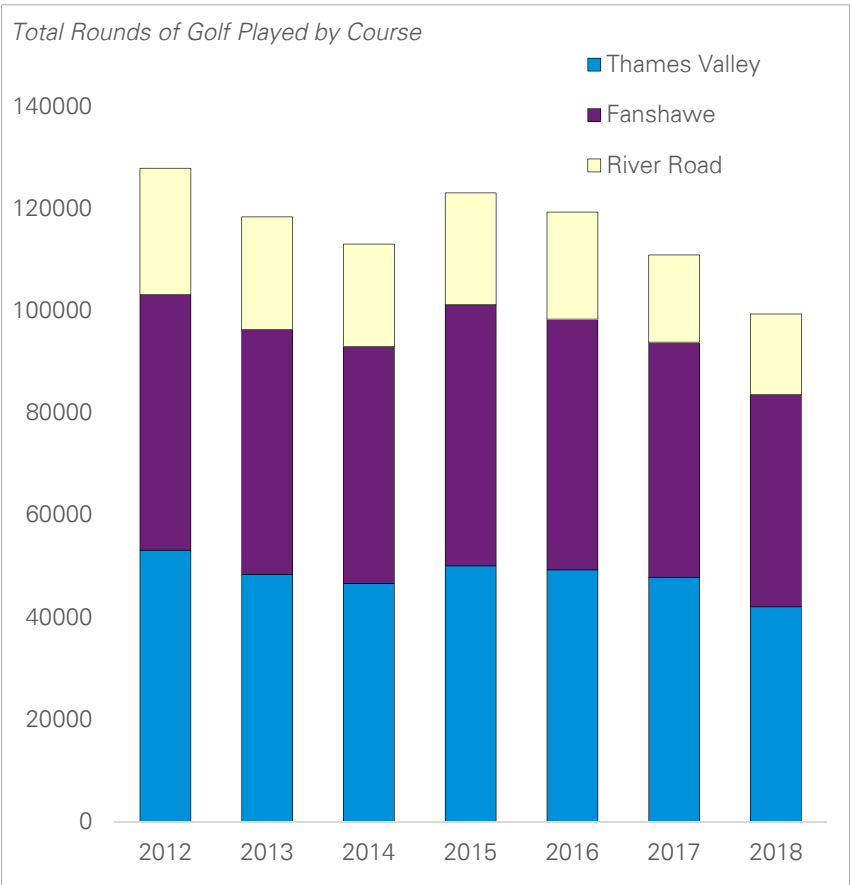


© 2018 KPMG LLP, a Canadian limited liability partnership and a member firm of the KPMG network of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Cooperative ("KPMG International"), a Swiss entity. All rights reserved. The KPMG name and logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of KPMG International.



# Current State Assessment

While all of the City's golf courses have seen a decrease in the number of rounds of golf played since 2012, the largest decreases during this time period have been experienced at River Road (37.5% decrease) and Thames Valley (20.9% decrease). Over the same period, Fanshawe has experienced a 16.7% decrease in the number of rounds of golf played.



# Current State Assessment

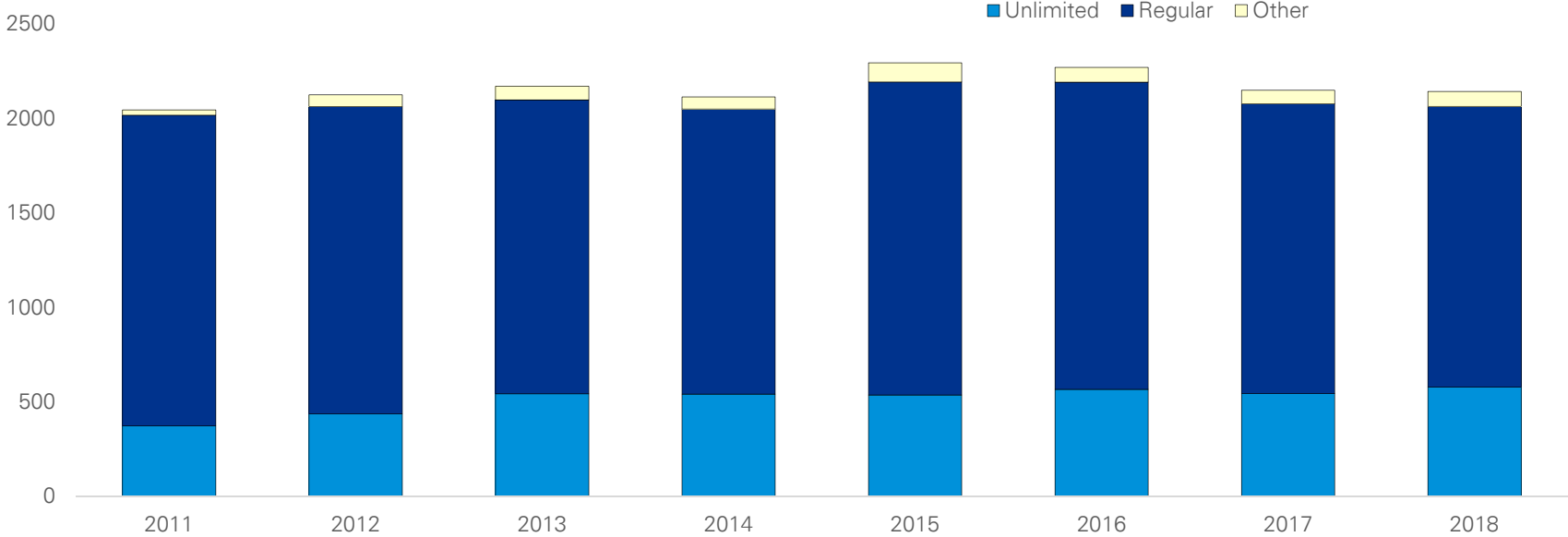
## B. Membership Levels

The City’s golf courses are open to the public (walk-on) and also sell memberships. Generally speaking, two classes of memberships are sold by the City<sup>3</sup>:

- Unlimited memberships, which provide unlimited access to all of the City’s courses at no additional cost beyond the initial membership fee; and
- Regular golf memberships, which allow access to all of the City’s courses with reduced green fees.

Member levels have remained fairly consistent over the past ten years, averaging just under 2,150 memberships per year. As noted below, regular memberships represent the most popular category of memberships sold by the City and account for approximately three-quarters of all memberships sold.

Memberships Sold by Type

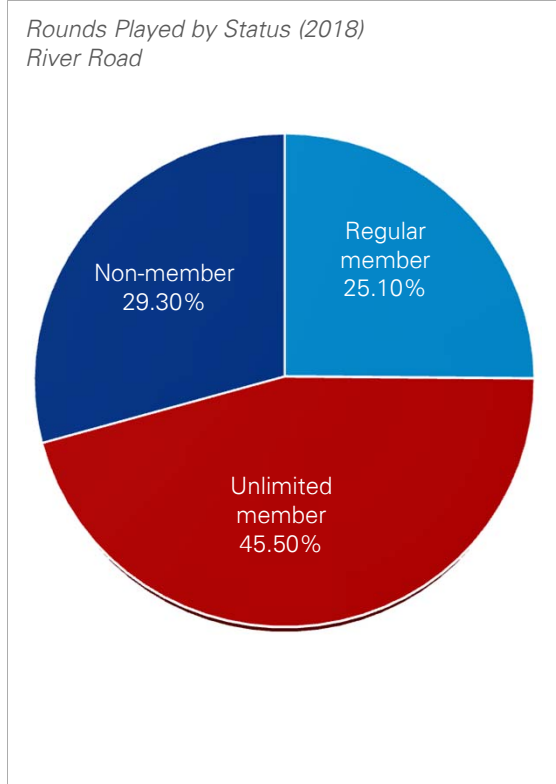
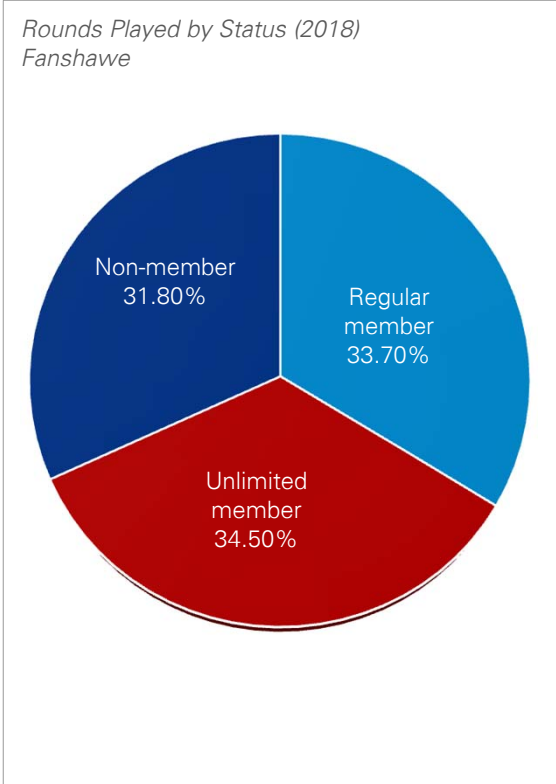
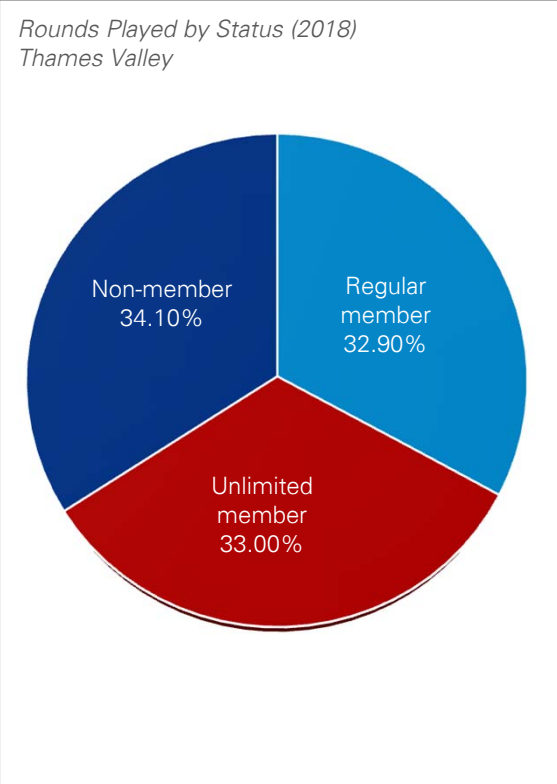


<sup>3</sup> Memberships will also vary by age group (bantam, junior, adult, senior), weekday or weekend and other considerations.



# Current State Assessment

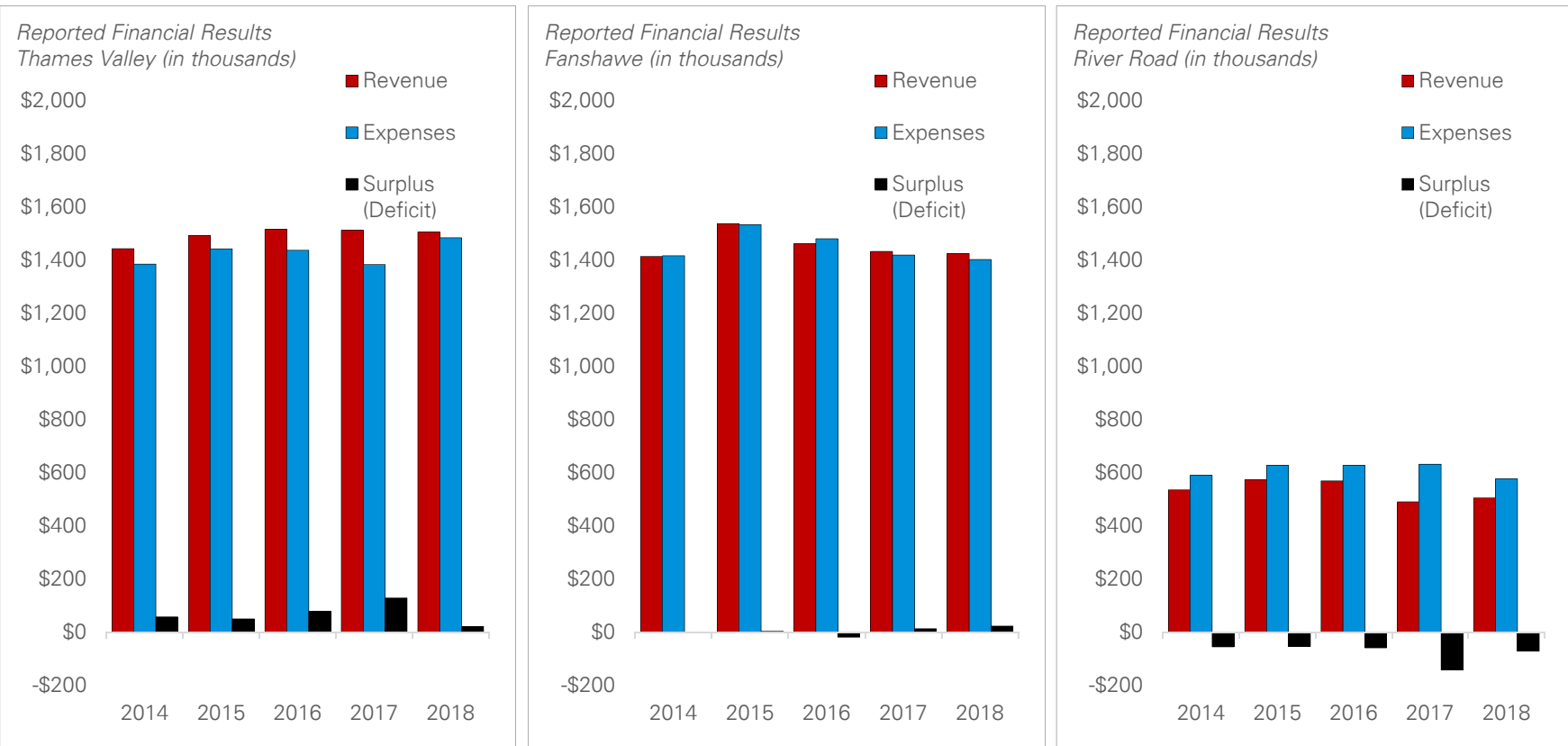
From an overall perspective, members (unlimited and regular) accounted for 67.6% of rounds played at the City’s golf courses in 2018. While the distribution between members and non-members was generally consistent at Thames Valley and Fanshawe, River Road had a higher level of rounds played by members, particularly unlimited members, as opposed to non-members. This distribution is consistent with River Road’s experience over the last five years, during which members accounted for between 70.0% and 72.4% of all rounds played.



# Current State Assessment

## C. Financial Performance

During 2018, the City generated a total of \$3.433 million in revenues from its golf operations compared to \$3.459 million in reported operating expenses, resulting in an overall deficit of \$26,858. As summarized on the following page, Thames Valley and Fanshawe reported positive financial results for the year, while River Road incurred a financial loss of approximately \$71,000. The 2018 financial results are generally reflective of financial performance of the City's golf courses over the past five years, with Thames Valley and Fanshawe reporting breakeven to positive financial results, while River Road has consistently incurred financial deficits.



# Current State Assessment

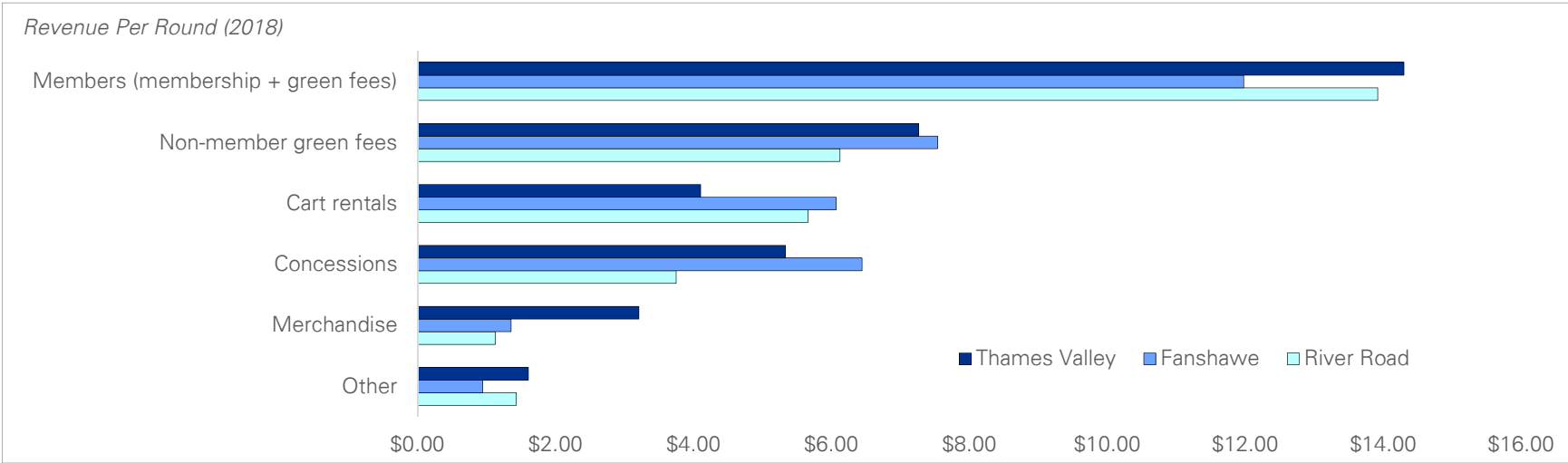
Financial Results for the Year Ended December 31, 2018	Thames Valley	Fanshawe	River Road	Total
<b>Revenues:</b>				
• Membership sales	\$414,772	282,000	161,143	857,915
• Green fees (members)	186,581	215,367	58,583	460,531
• Green fees (non-members)	305,554	313,013	96,682	715,249
• Golf cart rentals	172,559	251,947	89,363	513,869
• Concessions (food and beverage sales)	224,270	267,600	59,158	551,028
• Merchandise sales	134,872	56,281	17,786	208,939
• Rentals, merchandise sales and other revenues	67,567	39,241	18,688	125,496
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>\$1,506,175</b>	<b>1,425,449</b>	<b>501,403</b>	<b>3,433,027</b>
<b>Operating costs:</b>				
• Wages and benefits	\$739,296	736,077	353,133	1,828,506
• Cost of goods sold (food and merchandise)	287,335	158,403	26,432	472,170
• Equipment operation	152,814	206,281	75,982	435,077
• Materials, supplies and utilities	129,834	127,622	64,365	321,821
• Golf cart leasing costs	54,779	70,551	27,000	152,330
• Property taxes <sup>4</sup>	–	55,493	–	55,493
• Other	120,541	48,107	25,840	194,488
<b>Total operating costs</b>	<b>\$1,484,599</b>	<b>1,402,534</b>	<b>572,752</b>	<b>3,459,885</b>
<b>Surplus (deficit) before reserve transfers</b>	<b>\$21,576</b>	<b>22,915</b>	<b>(71,349)</b>	<b>(26,858)</b>

<sup>4</sup> The City owns Thames Valley and River Road, and as such no property taxes are paid on these properties. As Fanshawe is leased from the UTRCA, the City is required to pay property taxes on the course.

# Current State Assessment

During 2018, Thames Valley reported the highest revenue per round (\$35.82), with Fanshawe and River Road generating an average of \$34.33 and \$32.01 per round, respectively. The contributing factor to the differences in average revenue per round is different levels in non-golf revenues, with golf revenue (memberships, green fees and cart rentals) relatively consistent between the three courses.

Golf Property	Rounds Played	Revenue per Round (Amount)			Revenue per Round (Percentage)	
		Golf Revenue <sup>5</sup>	Non-Golf Revenue <sup>6</sup>	Total	Golf Revenue <sup>5</sup>	Non-Golf Revenue <sup>6</sup>
Thames Valley <sup>7</sup>	42,045	\$25.67	\$10.15	\$35.82	71.7%	28.3%
Fanshawe	41,519	\$25.59	\$8.75	\$34.33	74.5%	25.5%
River Road	15,784	\$25.71	\$6.31	\$32.01	80.3%	19.7%



<sup>5</sup> Golf revenue is comprised of memberships, green fees and cart rentals.

<sup>7</sup> Thames Valley includes a 9-hole course that results in a lower average revenue per round in comparison to Fanshawe and River Road.

<sup>6</sup> Non-golf revenue is comprised of concessions, merchandise sales and other revenues.



# Current State Assessment

## D. Key Themes

Based on the results of our review, we have identified a number of key themes relating to the City's golf operations.

### 1. While golf operations represent a discretionary service, there is precedence for municipal ownership of golf courses

As part of our review, we undertook an analysis of municipalities with populations in excess of 175,000 residents in order to assess the extent to which other large municipalities directly own and operate golf courses.

The results of our analysis indicate that municipal involvement in golf operations is relatively common, with eight of the 13 Ontario single and lower tier municipalities with populations in excess of 175,000 residents reporting municipal golf operations (62%). We note, however, that the extent of the City's involvement appears to be more pronounced than other municipalities that have golf operations:

- With a total of 81 conventional holes, the City's golf operations represent the largest for the selected communities (tied with Toronto in absolute terms).
- On a per capita basis, the City operates the most golf holes of the selected municipalities (21.1 holes per 100,000 residents vs. 5.0 holes per 100,000 for the selected municipalities that operate municipal golf courses). If the City were to reduce its involvement to a level consistent with the average of the selected municipal comparators, it would operate 18, 27 or 36 holes as opposed to the current system of 81 holes.

Municipality	Population	Municipal Courses	Municipal Holes	Courses per 100,000 Residents	Holes per 100,000 Residents
Toronto	2,731,571	5	90	0.1830	3.2948
Ottawa	934,243	–	–	–	–
Mississauga	721,599	2	27	0.2772	3.7417
Brampton	593,638	1	9	0.1685	1.5161
Hamilton	536,917	3	54	0.5587	10.0574
London <sup>8</sup>	383,882	3	81	0.7815	21.1002
Markham	328,966	–	–	–	–
Vaughan	306,233	–	–	–	–
Kitchener	233,222	2	36	0.8576	15.4359
Windsor	217,188	2	27	0.9209	12.4316
Richmond Hill	195,022	–	–	–	–
Oakville	193,832	–	–	–	–
Burlington	183,314	1	18	0.5455	9.8192
Average (excluding London)		2	37	0.5016	8.0423

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of our analysis, we have excluded Parkside (nine holes) due to its unique nature (accessible for individuals with physical challenges)

# Current State Assessment

## 2. The community of London does not appear to be overserved or underserved with respect to golf facilities when compared to other larger urban centres in Ontario

An analysis of golf courses for selected Ontario geographic areas (see next page) indicates that both the number of golf courses in London and the surrounding area and the number of holes is consistent with other larger population areas in Ontario (excluding the GTA). As a result, our analysis would support the conclusion that the London/Middlesex area, from an overall perspective, does not have an apparent need for additional golf courses/holes, nor is it operating with a significantly higher level of supply than other larger population centres.

## 3. The City appears to be a high cost service provider

The City's golf operations are staffed by three full-time non-union personnel (one per course), five full-time unionized greenkeepers and greenkeeper assistants and approximately 85 casual staff responsible for maintenance, sales and food and beverage services. Overall, wages and benefits account for 52.8% of operating costs in 2018. In comparison, financial indicators provided by Industry Canada indicate that on an overall sector basis, wages and benefits average 37.6% of total expenses, with the differential equating to approximately \$525,000 per year.

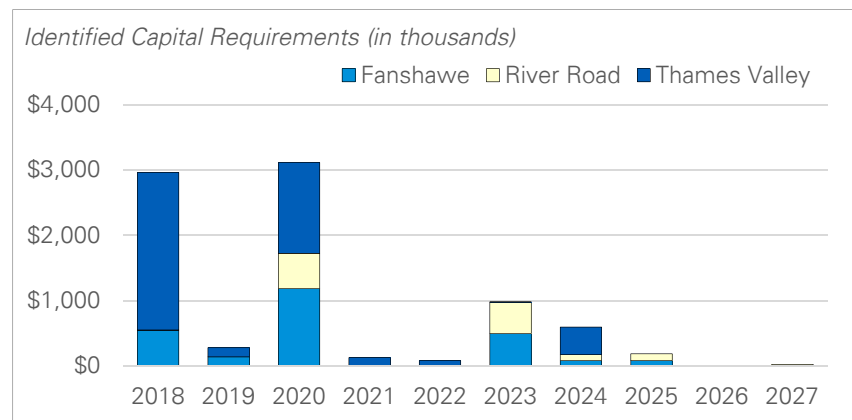
## 3. Reported financial information likely does not reflect the true cost of golf operations to the City's taxpayers

As noted earlier in our report, the City's financial analysis indicates that its golf courses traditionally operate at near breakeven or with a small financial surplus, resulting in no impact on the municipal levy. However, we note the following with respect to the reported financial results for the City's golf operations:

- The reported financial results for 2018 do not appear to include a contribution towards capital expenditures, meaning that any capital requirements in excess of operating surpluses will need to be funded by either the City's golf reserve (which amounts to \$0.315 million) or other sources, most likely taxation support. We note, however, that the golf operations generated positive cash flows that supported a contribution to capital reserves in prior years.

Based on discussions with City representatives, we understand that capital expenditures have not been significant in the past and have traditionally been funded through operating surpluses and the reserve fund. However, the 2019 Corporate Asset Management Plan has identified a ten year capital reinvestment requirement for aesthetic improvements and major systems of \$8.4 million. At the present time, there does not appear to be sufficient reserves available to fund these expenditures, with the City identifying a funding shortfall of approximately \$6 million.

While the reported financial results include direct labour costs, the cost of City staff providing support – including but not limited to personnel from the City's Parks and Recreation Department as well as corporate support functions (finance, information technology, human resources) – does not appear to be included in the reporting operating costs.





# Current State Assessment

Type of course	Public				Semi-Private				Private				Total
	<18	18	27	36+	<18	18	27	36+	<18	18	27	36+	
<b>Golf Courses:</b>													
London/Middlesex	2	4	–	–	1	18	1	1	–	8	–	–	35
Hamilton/Burlington	5	7	1	–	–	8	3	3	–	5	1	–	33
Windsor/Chatham	3	5	3	–	2	9	2	–	–	4	–	–	28
Kitchener/Waterloo/ Cambridge/Guelph	1	–	1	–	3	16	5	1	1	7	2	–	37
Niagara	1	2	–	1	6	15	2	1	–	4	–	–	32
Average (excluding London/Middlesex)	3	5	2	1	4	12	3	2	1	5	2	–	33

<b>Number of Holes:</b>													
London/Middlesex	24	72	–	–	12	324	27	45	–	144	–	–	648
Hamilton/Burlington	45	126	27	–	–	144	81	108	–	90	27	–	648
Windsor/Chatham	27	90	81	–	18	162	54	–	–	72	–	–	504
Kitchener/Waterloo/ Cambridge/Guelph	9	–	27	–	27	288	135	54	9	126	54	–	729
Niagara	9	36	–	45	56	270	54	36	–	72	–	–	578
Average (excluding London/Middlesex)	23	84	45	45	34	216	81	66	9	90	41	–	615

**Public** – Public courses are open to the general public without restrictions.

**Semi-Private** – Semi-Private courses are open to the general public and also sell memberships that provide specific privileges to members (e.g. preferred times, reduced green fees). The City's golf properties are all considered to be semi-private courses.

**Private** – Private courses are open solely to members and not members of the general public.





City of London Service Review

Review of Golf Operations

# Opportunity Identification and Evaluation



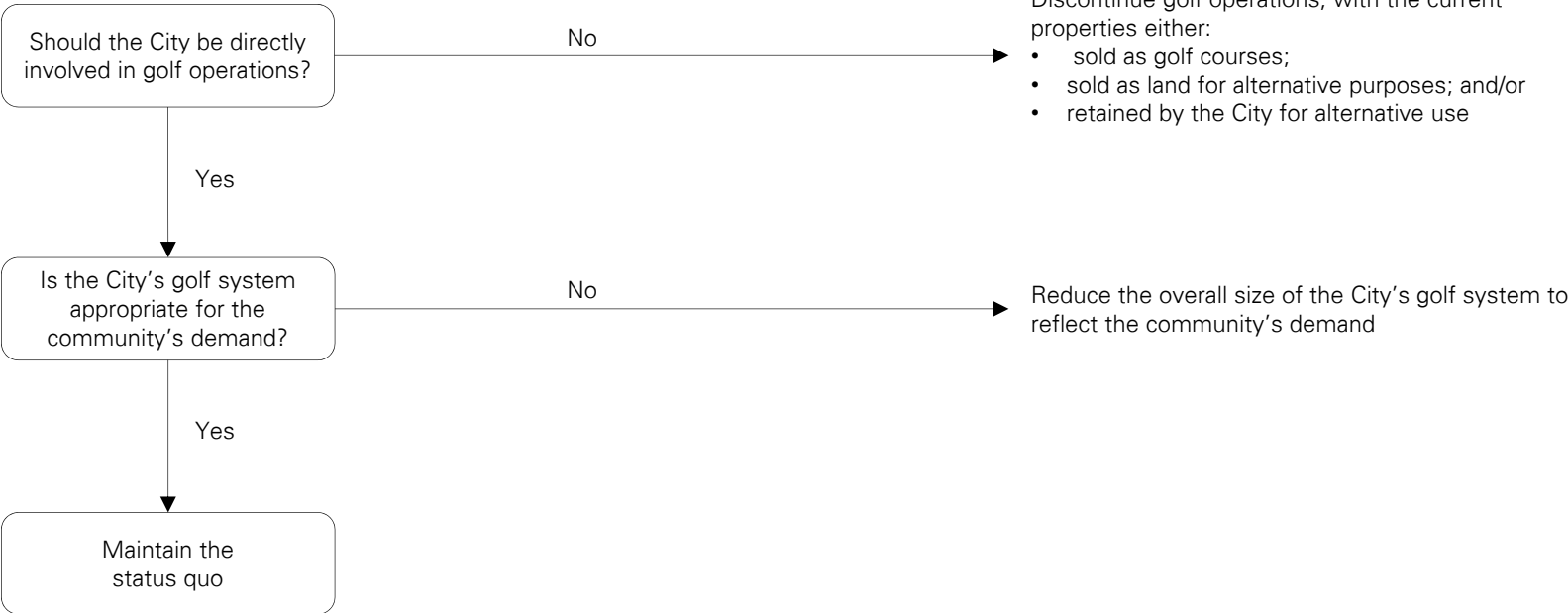
# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

## A. Opportunity Decision Tree

In order to assess potential opportunities for consideration by the City with respect to its golf operations, we have developed a decision tree that attempts to identify key choices that could be considered by the City which, depending on the decision, would open up potential courses of action that could be pursued. In determining the approach to be adopted, consideration should be given to the current context for the City's golf operations:

- The City's golf infrastructure has an anticipated capital investment shortfall of approximately \$6.0 million over the next ten years;
- Thames Valley and Fanshawe generate positive financial results (which could be used to support debt servicing costs associated with infrastructure borrowing), while River Road has experienced consistent financial losses; and
- Usage of the City's golf courses has decreased in recent years.

Our assessment of the City's options is included on the following pages.



# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

## **Question 1 – Should the City be Directly Involved in Golf Operations?**

*Ultimately, the determination as to whether the City should be directly involved in golf operations rests with Council.*

Factors that would support the decision to remain involved in golf operations include the following:

- The direct involvement of larger municipalities in golf operations occurs elsewhere in Ontario and as such, a choice to continue the City's involvement is not without precedence;
- With the exception of the 2018 fiscal year, the City's golf courses have, on a consolidated basis, generated positive financial operating results (ranging from \$59,000 to \$134,000 during the period 2014 to 2017), requiring no taxation support for operations; and
- Continued involvement by the City in golf operations allows the City to adjust its operations to reflect affordability considerations, as well as to continue programming and strategies that continues to provide additional benefits to targeted segments of the community (e.g. youth, low income, individuals with physical challenges).

Factors that would support the decision to discontinue the City's involvement in golf operations include the following:

- The City's golf operations are at risk of incurring financial losses, particularly in light of anticipated future capital funding shortfall over the next ten years of approximately \$6.0 million;
- The level of activity at the City's golf courses has been decreasing, resulting in a decline in overall profitability; and
- There are 32 golf courses in the London/Middlesex area that are in direct competition with the City of London golf system.

# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

## **Question 2 – If the City Continues to be Involved in Golf Operations, Is The Size of The City’s Golf System Appropriate for the Community’s Demand?**

In the event that Council wishes to continue the City’s involvement in golf operations, consideration could still be given to reducing the extent of its involvement. As noted earlier in our report, the City’s golf operations – when viewed from the perspective of number of courses and holes – is higher than other communities that operate municipal golf courses. Accordingly, even if the City continues to be directly involved in golf operations, consideration could be given to reducing its involvement to reflect a level that is consistent with other municipalities.

To the extent that the City chooses to reduce the size of its golf system, there are a number of potential options that could be considered, which we have highlighted below<sup>9</sup>.

- **Option 1 – Discontinue operations at River Road.** Under this option, the City would discontinue golf operations at River Road, which would eliminate 18 holes from the City’s golf system. Based on our review, and as highlighted later in this chapter, we consider this option to be the most apparent strategy for reducing the City’s golf system given the ongoing financial losses experienced by River Road, which has experienced the highest degree of decrease in terms of rounds of golf played of the three City-owned golf courses.
- **Option 2 – Discontinue operations at River Road and the Quarry Course portion of Fanshawe (“Quarry”),** which would eliminate a total of 36 holes from its golf system (18 from River Road and 18 from Quarry).
- **Option 3 – Discontinue operations at River Road and the Hickory Course portion of Thames Valley (“Hickory”),** which would see the City reduce its golf system by 27 holes (18 from River Road and nine from Hickory).
- **Option 4 – Discontinue operations at River Road, Quarry and Hickory,** which would reduce the City’s golf system by 45 holes (18 from River Road, 18 from Quarry and 9 from Hickory).

A graphical depiction of potential strategies involving River Road, Quarry and Hickory are provided on the following pages, with our analysis of each of the options provided in the following section.

---

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of our analysis, we have excluded the potential discontinuance of golf operations at the remaining portions of Thames Valley or Fanshawe as these options are predicated on the City wishing to maintain some form of golf operations. We believe this would, at a minimum, involve the continued operation of the original Thames Valley and Fanshawe given their higher rate of utilization, positive financial results and the potential for adverse public response to a closure of either course.

# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

Potential divestment of River Road



- ① Land available for development (11 acres)
- ② Land regulated by UTRCA and not available for development (109 acres)
- ③ Adjacent former landfill site
- ④ Adjacent industrial areas

# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

*Potential reduction of Thames Valley*



# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

*Potential reduction of Fanshawe*





# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

For the purposes of our report, we have evaluated these options based on the following criteria:

- Is the option expected to result in a manageable and acceptable impact on the supply of golf infrastructure in the community?
- Could the option provide an annual financial benefit to the City in the form of incremental net revenues?
- Could the option provide a financial contribution to the City through one-time sale proceeds?
- Does the option allow the City to avoid future capital expenditures?
- How does the opportunity align the City's golf system with the average for comparator municipalities of 0.5016 courses and 8.0423 holes per 100,000 residents?

Our evaluation of each option is summarized on the following pages, based on the following rating scale.

● Fully effective in meeting consideration

◐ Partially effective in meeting consideration

○ Least effective in meeting consideration

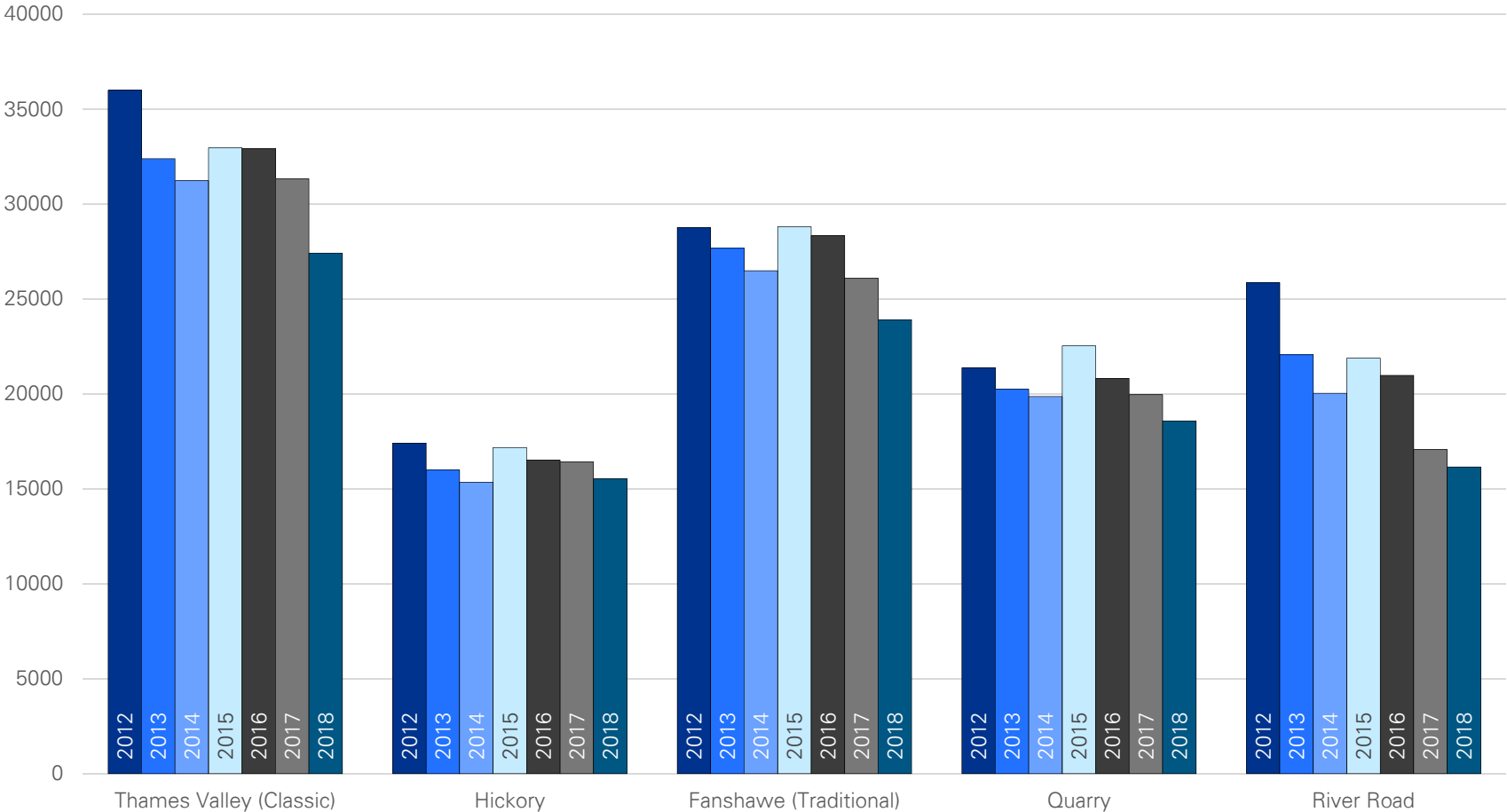
With respect to the evaluation, please note that the determination of rankings is relative (i.e. Option 1 vs. Option 2 vs. Option 3 vs. Option 4) and as such, assigning a "least effective" rating is not necessarily a negative reflection on the option. Rather, it indicates that while the option may sufficiently address the consideration, other options do so to a greater extent.

# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

Consideration	Option 1 City Discontinues River Road	Option 2 City Discontinues River Road and Quarry	Option 3 City Discontinues River Road and Hickory	Option 4 City Discontinues River Road, Quarry and Hickory	Comments
Is the option expected to result in a manageable and acceptable impact on the supply of golf infrastructure in the community?	●	◐	○	○	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As noted on the following page, River Road has experienced a decrease in rounds played of 37.5% since 2012, with Quarry and Hickory experiencing decreases of 13.1% and 10.8%, respectively, over the same period, which could indicate that market demand for River Road is less than the other courses.</li> <li>We understand that Hickory is the only 9-hole course located within the City of London and as such, its closure may impact golfers that prefer 9-hole play (although 9-hole courses are available in the Middlesex area and it is possible for golfers to play 9 holes on 18-hole courses located in the community).</li> </ul>
Could the option provide an annual financial benefit to the City in the form of incremental net revenues?	●	○	○	○	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included as Appendix A is an analysis of the potential financial impacts of the options under consideration. As noted in the analysis, Option 1 is expected to provide a net financial benefit of \$146,000 annually, while Options 2 to 4 are all expected to result in a net financial loss to the City.</li> </ul>
Could the option provide a financial contribution to the City through one-time sale proceeds, as well as ongoing taxation revenue from new development?	●	◐	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As noted in Appendix A, the discontinuance of River Road could provide as much as \$1.9 million in proceeds on sale, with the discontinuance of Hickory potentially providing an additional \$6.1 million in sale proceeds. No proceeds have been assumed for Quarry as the land is currently owned by the UTRCA.</li> </ul>

# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

Number of Rounds Played by Course



© 2018 KPMG LLP, a Canadian limited liability partnership and a member firm of the KPMG network of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Cooperative ("KPMG International"), a Swiss entity. All rights reserved. The KPMG name and logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of KPMG International.

# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

Consideration	Option 1 City Discontinues River Road	Option 2 City Discontinues River Road and Quarry	Option 3 City Discontinues River Road and Hickory	Option 4 City Discontinues River Road, Quarry and Hickory	Comments	
Does the option allow the City to avoid future capital expenditures?	●	○	○	◐	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The City's Corporate Asset Management Plan has identified a ten-year capital reinvestment requirement of \$1,245,000 for River Road, which we have assumed could be fully avoided in the event that River Road is discontinued.</li> <li>While the Corporate Asset Management Plan also identifies ten-year capital reinvestment requirements for Thames Valley and Fanshawe, this would likely not be avoided in the event of the discontinuance of Hickory and Quarry as the City would continue golf operations on the sites.</li> <li>In the event that the City discontinues Quarry and/or Hickory, one-time costs are expected to be incurred in connection with redesigning the layout of the remaining portions of Fanshawe and Thames Valley.</li> </ul>	
How does the opportunity align the City's golf system with the average for comparator municipalities of 0.5016 courses and 8.0423 holes per 100,000 residents?	○	◐	◐	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of golf courses and holes per 100,000 residents under each option is as follows:</li> </ul>	
					<b>Courses</b>	<b>Holes</b>
	Option 1				0.5209	16.4112
	Option 2				0.5209	11.7223
	Option 3				0.5209	14.0668
Option 4				0.5209	9.3778	



# Opportunity Identification and Analysis

## **Question 3 – What If The City Retains Status Quo**

In the event that the City determines that (a) it will continue to be involved in the direct delivery of golf operations; and (b) a reduction of the current size of the municipal golf system is not warranted; it will continue with status quo. In this scenario, we encourage the City to continue to identify strategies for revenue generation and cost reductions, recognizing that:

- The City undertakes regular reviews of its user fee structure for golf and our review of the City's user fee structure indicates close alignment with other golf courses in terms of the quantum of rates as well as the use of different rate structures (e.g. different rates depending on tee-off times, the inclusion of golf cart rentals in a single rate).
- While the City could contract out golf operations to a private sector operator, we note that with the exception of River Road, the City's golf operations have traditionally operated at a surplus and as such, we expect the financial benefit of this strategy to be limited for Thames Valley and Fanshawe. In the event that contracting out is considered, we suggest that this strategy be undertaken through a request for proposal process as opposed to a lowest cost tender so as to allow for the evaluation of financial and non-financial considerations.

# Suggested Course of Action

As noted in the preceding chapter and summarized below, the results of our analysis indicate that Option 1 – Discontinuance of River Road is the preferred approach to reducing the size of the City’s golf system in the event that the City determines a reduction is necessary.

	<b>Option 1</b> City Discontinues River Road	<b>Option 2</b> City Discontinues River Road and Quarry	<b>Option 3</b> City Discontinues River Road and Hickory	Option 4 City Discontinues River Road, Quarry and Hickory
Number of fully effective ratings	4	–	1	2
Number of partially effective ratings	–	3	1	1
Number of least effective ratings	1	2	3	2

While the other options have merits, the analysis indicates that they would have a higher degree of adverse impact on residents that use the City’s golf system while at the same time likely resulting in ongoing annual financial losses, which would need to be financed through other sources. Accordingly, if the City were to determine that a reduction in the size of its golf system is appropriate while continuing to operate golf courses, the analysis would support the conclusion that the discontinuance of River Road (Option 1) is the sole practical option from a financial perspective.



City of London Service Review

Review of Golf Operations

# Appendix A Financial Analysis of Potential Options



# CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF LONDON

## Summary of Projected Financial Impacts Associated With Municipal Golf (Unaudited - See Notice to Reader)

	Reference	Option 1 City Discontinues River Road	Option 2 City Discontinues River Road and Quarry	Option 3 City Discontinues River Road and Hickory	Option 4 City Discontinues River Road, Quarry and Hickory
(1) Annual financial results					
Reported operating surplus (deficit) based on status quo:					
River Road	(note 1)	\$ (71,349)	(71,349)	(71,349)	(71,349)
Thames Valley	(note 1)	21,576	21,576	21,576	21,576
Fanshawe	(note 1)	22,915	22,915	22,915	22,915
		(26,858)	(26,858)	(26,858)	(26,858)
Elimination of River Road financial loss upon discontinuance	(note 2)	71,349	71,349	71,349	71,349
Revenue shift from River Road golfers moving to other City-owned golf courses	(note 3)	101,450	50,700	50,700	-
Elimination of Quarry financial surplus upon divestment	(note 4)	-	(187,000)	-	(187,000)
Elimination of Hickory financial surplus upon divestment	(note 4)	-	-	(325,200)	(325,200)
		\$ 145,941	(91,809)	(230,009)	(467,709)
(2) One-time financial impacts					
Proceeds on divestment of River Road	(note 5)	\$ 1,925,000	1,925,000	1,925,000	1,925,000
Proceeds on divestment of Quarry	(note 5)	-	-	-	-
Proceeds on divestment of Hickory	(note 5)	-	-	6,125,000	6,125,000
Course reconstruction costs	(note 6)	-	(500,000)	(1,000,000)	(1,500,000)
Avoidance of capital reinvestment requirements	(note 7)	1,245,000	-	0	-
		\$ 3,170,000	1,425,000	7,050,000	6,550,000



# CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF LONDON

## Summary of Projected Financial Impacts Associated With Municipal Golf (Unaudited - See Notice to Reader)

Note 1 Based on the reported financial results for the City's golf services for the year ended December 31, 2018. Financial results for Thames Valley include both Hickory and Classic, while the financial results for Fanshawe include both Quarry and Traditional.

Note 2 With the discontinuance of River Road under Option 1, it is anticipated that its reported financial loss will be fully eliminated.

Note 3 For the purposes of our analysis, we have assumed that the discontinuance of River Road would result in a movement of golfers to other City-owned golf courses with 50% of current River Road golfers choosing to golf at another City-owned course. This transfer of golfers is expected to result in a net increase in revenues for the remaining City-owned golfing courses which we have assumed to be \$101,450, as follows:

	Option 1 City Discontinues River Road	Option 2 City Discontinues River Road and Quarry	Option 3 City Discontinues River Road and Hickory	Option 4 City Discontinues River Road, Quarry and Hickory
Total River Road golfing revenues:				
Membership sales	\$ 161,143	161,143	161,143	161,143
Green fees (members)	58,583	58,583	58,583	58,583
Green fees (non-members)	96,682	96,682	96,682	96,682
Golf cart rentals	89,363	89,363	89,363	89,363
Annual reported golfing revenue	405,771	405,771	405,771	405,771
Percentage of revenue assumed to be shifted to other City-owned golf courses (a)	50%	25%	25%	0%
Assumed revenue shifted from River Road to other City-owned golf facilities	202,900	101,400	101,400	-
Estimated increase in operating costs (b)	(101,450)	(50,700)	(50,700)	-
Incremental increase in net revenues from River Road to other City-owned golf courses	\$ 101,450	50,700	50,700	-

(a) For the purposes of our analysis, we have assumed that 50% of River Road golfers would move to other City-owned courses under Option 1, with this percentage decreasing to 25% under Options 2 and 3 due to the further decrease in the size of the City's golf system and the associated impacts on capacity. Under Option 4, we have assumed no shift in golfers from River Road to other City-owned golf courses based on the magnitude of the reduction of the City's golf system.

(b) For the purposes of our analysis, we have assumed that operating costs would increase by 50% of the revenue shifted from River Road to the other City-owned golf facilities.

# CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF LONDON

## Summary of Projected Financial Impacts Associated With Golf Operations (Unaudited - See Notice to Reader)

Note 4 We have estimated the financial impact of the discontinuance of Quarry and Hickory to be as follows:

	Quarry	Hickory
Estimated loss of revenue:		
Current estimated annual revenue (a)	\$ 623,300	544,700
Less: Revenue shifted to Fanshawe Traditiona/Thames Valley Classic (b)	(155,800)	(54,500)
Estimated annual loss of revenue	467,500	490,200
Estimated reduction in operating costs:		
Current estimated annual operating costs (c)	561,000	494,900
Less: Fixed costs to be incurred by Fanshawe Traditional/Thames Valley Classic (d)	(280,500)	(329,900)
Estimated annual reduction in operating costs	280,500	165,000
Estimated financial impact (loss)	\$ (187,000)	(325,200)

(a) Estimated based on the pro-rated revenue per round played for Fanshawe and Thames Valley.

(b) For the purposes of our analysis, we have assumed that, in the event that the City discontinues Quarry, 25% of current golfers would utilize Fanshawe Traditional, with the remaining 75% of golfers utilizing other (non-City owned) golf courses. We have also assumed that in the event that the City discontinues Hickory, 10% of the current golfers would utilize Thames Valley Classic, with the remaining 90% utilizing other (non-City owned) golf courses.

(c) Estimated based on the pro-rated operating cost per hole for Fanshawe and Thames Valley.

(d) As Quarry and Hickory are maintained as part of the overall Fanshawe and Thames Valley golf properties, a portion of their operating costs are fixed in nature and as such, would not be avoided in the event that Quarry and/or Hickory are discontinued. Based on discussions with City personnel, we have assumed that 50% of the estimated operating costs for Quarry are fixed in nature (and as such would continue in the event that Quarry was discontinued), while 67% of the estimated operating costs for Hickory are fixed in nature.

Note 5 For the purposes of our analysis, we have assumed a selling price of \$175,000 per acre, which reflects the rate for developable lands as identified in the City's 2019 Development Charges By-law. Our calculation of potential proceeds on disposition are as follows:

	River Road	Hickory
Number of acres available for disposition (a)	11	35
Assumed proceeds per acre	\$ 175,000	175,000
Potential proceeds from disposition	\$ 1,925,000	6,125,000

(a) For the purposes of our analysis, we have assumed the land would be redeveloped for residential purposes, with no consideration given to the value of the properties as golf courses. Accordingly, we have only considered the portion of River Road that is not subject to UTRCA limitations as available for sale.

No proceeds have been considered for Quarry as the land is leased from the UTRCA.

# CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF LONDON

## **Summary of Projected Financial Impacts Associated With Golf Operations (Unaudited - See Notice to Reader)**

- Note 6 For the purposes of our analysis, we have assumed that the City would be required to incur an estimated \$500,000 to construct a linkage between the main Fanshawe course and the accessible 9-hole course in the event that it discontinues Quarry. We have also assumed that the City would be required to incur an estimated \$1 million to redesign the Thames Valley course in the event that the City discontinues Hickory. This investment would be required in order to realign the layout of the 9th hole such that it ends at the Thames Valley clubhouse.
- Note 7 The City's Corporate Asset Management Plan has identified a ten-year capital reinvestment requirement of \$1,245,000 for River Road, which we have assumed could be fully avoided in the event that the City discontinues River Road. While the Corporate Asset Management Plan also identifies ten-year capital reinvestment requirements for Thames Valley and Fanshawe, we have assumed that these would not be reduced in the event that the City discontinues Quarry and/or Hickory as the City would continue to operate Thames Valley and Fanshawe.



[kpmg.ca](http://kpmg.ca)



© 2018 KPMG LLP, a Canadian limited liability partnership and a member firm of the KPMG network of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Cooperative (“KPMG International”), a Swiss entity. All rights reserved. The KPMG name and logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of KPMG International.

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to address the circumstances of any particular individual or entity. Although we endeavour to provide accurate and timely information, there can be no guarantee that such information is accurate as of the date it is received or that it will continue to be accurate in the future. No one should act on such information without appropriate professional advice after a thorough examination of the particular situation.

**From:** jack.albin  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 04, 2021 1:56 PM  
**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] river road

Hello

I am a senior citizen in London who has been golfing at city courses for 20 years.

I wish to make the following points to be considered regarding the River Road golf course issue.

1 the availability of River Road makes booking a golf tee off time in the city more reasonable

2 I live in North London And do find that getting to River Road golf course is a longer than Thames and Fanshawe

I don't know what the tee Off bookings are like But I suspect they're lower than Thames and Fanshawe

3 there are ways to make bookings at River Road higher;

some of my thoughts

offer a lower rate for booking River Road than the other two courses; For example if it was five dollars lower would that increase tee off times but increase volume.

Offer a deal on booking of carts at River Road; I personally always use a cart.

Offer a deal with lower prices if a foursome books together

offer a deal on food and beverage that the other two courses don't have.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jack Albin

**From:** "jack"  
**Date:** February 6, 2021 at 11:47:55 AM EST  
**To:** "Pascual, Audrey"  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road

Hello

I already made an email submission about suggestions for dealing with River Road at the public meeting currently I have another thought about River Road and its financial viability.

I have typically been what I call a half-price member in the city courses for years  
this cost about \$300

I may be incorrect but last year's articles indicated opening River Road is at a loss of \$50-\$80,000 a year.  
in order to help support the financial situation with River Road I would not be immune to having the annual fees increase by \$50 even for the so-called half-price members.

I and maybe some others would be willing to pay an extra \$50 a year to be a member Of city courses if River Road would open and be supported.

For example if the fees for my membership were to be \$300 this year or so I would gladly pay \$350 if I knew River Road was going to be open

I don't know how many members use the half-price membership fee and how much volume in money this would bring in if an extra \$50 was added to the fee.

The price of everything goes up a lot every year; if it takes an increase in member fees to get River Road open and financially in the black I think it would be worth considering.

I have spoken to three or four guys that I golf with regularly and they would not have a problem with the fee increase for their membership to support River Road opening

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jack Albin

**From:**

**Sent:** Thursday, February 04, 2021 1:29 PM

**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] closing of golf courses

**I have looked at this item and have not seen how the closing of River Road (turned into park) would save the city and funds - since I cannot determine how much the city would have to pay for upkeep of the land as a park.**

**If it is more than \$50,000 / year then then keeping the course open would not be as much a burden as people think.**

**Closing River Road might move some play to the other courses – but do they have room for these additional players?**

**Having been a member a few years ago I found that the City of London courses had many more people working at the ‘pro shop’ level than most of the local courses (non city). At Fanshaw I remember seeing a pro, an assistant and two others on cash,,,**

**The course I currently play at (Caradoc Sands) and a few others I have frequented over the past few years have only one person working in the proshop at any given time and the course is full at all times.**

**In some of the courses the person in the proshop also is able to run the bar/kitchen at many times of the day.**

**It should be expected that the golf courses are a recreational facility for the citizens and should NOT have to any more self-sufficient than the soccer fields or ball fields, parks etc...**

**Bob Byck  
London, Ontario**

**From:** Bill Caldwell  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 7, 2021 1:18 PM  
**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
**Cc:** Cassidy, Maureen <[mcassidy@london.ca](mailto:mcassidy@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public input regarding River Road Golf Course

Members of the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

I am writing to voice my support for the continued operation of River Road Golf Course. Golf is an activity in which all sexes and ages participate but is of particular importance to the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of the senior segment of our society. As our population continues to age, this segment of society's participation in the sport of golf will continue to grow. I can tell you from personal experience that it was extremely difficult to find tee times during the pandemic this past the golf season. Had River Road been open it would have easily turned a profit. All other courses in our area had a bumper year.

Public golf in this community is virtually self supporting, even when River Road does operate at a loss. What other community recreation facility can boast that claim?

The City of London ought to be looking to expand municipal golf rather than diminish it.

Bill Caldwell



**From:**

**Sent:** Saturday, February 6, 2021 5:13 PM

**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] golf

-- again I'm hearing the city is thinking about closing river road golf cours I am hoping this does not happen . it the road closes my membership will go somewhere else I have gotten a city membership for as long as I can remember it would be a shame to have to spend my money elsewhere

Blaise Campbell

**From:** Wayne Campbell  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 04, 2021 5:20 PM  
**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RIVER ROAD GOLF COURSE - PROPOSED CLOSING

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Closing River Road Golf Course would be a significant mistake. The three other 18 hole courses have been overburdened for the past several years, and it was extremely difficult to book tee times in 2020 due to the pandemic freeing up more potential players.

City Council needs to find a creative way to keep River Road open. Accountant's opinions deal simply with numbers and projected numbers. The value of River Road is that it takes pressure off the two Fanshawe 18 hole courses and the Thames Valley 18 hole course. The City has four great City owned golf courses plus the 9 hole course at Thames Valley.

Suggestions: - Sell a number of full memberships specifically for River Road. Discount these from the full 4 course City memberships by 20%, so roughly \$1,200 versus \$1,500+

- Offer deals at River Road, such as purchase a pass for three rounds and get a fourth round free, or purchase 10 rounds and get four rounds free etc.

- increase the per round price by \$2 so somewhere closer to Fanshawe Traditional and Thames Valley.

- I personally find River Road challenging for my skill level, but it is a beautiful course surrounded by nature, and I enjoy playing there with my golf buddies.

- Offer golfers incentives during low usage days to encourage higher usage. Such as a free hot dog or soft drink on Tuesdays or whatever day is a normally slow day. Do things that will not cost a lot of money, but that show a desire to have golfers play this excellent course.

If all of these efforts fail in the next two or three years, sell the course to Golf North or another competent operator.

Thanks for considering these thoughts!  
Wayne Campbell

**From:** Bill Davis

**Sent:** Thursday, February 04, 2021 1:54 PM

**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Don't Close River Road Golf

- KMPG report is no longer relevant as it was written pre-COVID.
- in 2020 it was difficult to get tee times as courses busy
- City is looking for additional \$'s
- owning a golf course is like a license to print money

**From:** Rob Ferris

**Sent:** Saturday, February 06, 2021 12:47 PM

**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Recommended Closure of River Road Golf Course - Comments by Rob Ferris

Dear Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee members,

Please consider my comments and others who contact you when reviewing the recommendation to close River Road Golf Course. As a resident close to the golf course itself I feel I have a good understanding of the value river Road offers to golfers, non-golfers and the city in general.

*Summary – River Road Golf Course provides the city membership with increased value not recognized in the report. Value added to the membership itself making it worth more and value to wildlife and non-golfers who use the property. It meets the cities responsibility to providing health and well being to residents in the form of parks and recreation as well as protection for the environment. Leaving it open shows the Forest City's forward thinking by investing in a sport that has greatly grown over this pandemic alone and one that can be played virtually at any age.*

*Closing River Road will start a snowball effect resulting in other city courses losing money. Tee-Times have been almost impossible to find this year given the increase in popularity with the sport and less times available, 1 less course to play from the city. Investing in River Road is an investment of the wellbeing of the residents of London and there are better ways to offset the expense than closing the course itself.*

## **Revenue**

River Road must be included in the pool of courses the city operates and not as a stand alone. This is reflected in the membership the city sells and profits from and not broken out in the recommendation to close the course. As an example the city offers early-bird deals if you buy your membership early yet the only course open to do that is Thames Valley. Thames Valley appears to net that revenue yet myself and many, many others do not play that course but instead prefer River Road.

What the report misses – The cities responsibilities to the people include many things and balances financial with good health and well being in many forms. If the same report was written about Springbank Gardens, the report would surely say it should be closed and sold off as it costs money, the land is valuable and it does not generate revenue. Of course the city is responsible to its residents for bike paths, greenspace, soccer fields, parks and more and must consider more than just whether something makes money or not.

Profits - The city could **raise the membership fee** which covers all the courses. The membership is very economical as it is and could easily go up \$200 per person to cover the courses including River Road. Allocating the membership fees better + increasing the membership cost to account for River Road + considering the non-financial benefit and the responsibility of the city for the wellbeing of the residents makes keeping River Road open the right decision.

Lost Revenue – Given the pandemic golf has seen a massive increase in those participating for the first time. Riven Road lost a lot of revenue this year as the summer was perfect and the residents of London and those of nearby towns could not golf there. In fact this put a lot of pressure on finding Tee-times at the other city course and many people with city memberships had to golf in other towns. The city lost revenue at Riven Road, at the other city courses and within the city itself at supporting businesses.

## **Location**

This area of the city deserves this beautiful attraction. Golfers from all over enjoy River Road and afterhours I see people walking their dogs and enjoying the land. This winter I see many people snowshoeing, walking dogs and enjoying the space so it is not just about the golf. I assume the city could charge for people to cross country, snowshoe, walk their dogs and more there to offset revenue and in fact could do that for all parks but does that make sense?

Please consider my comments in you review and do the right thing for the sanity of the residents, the health and well being of those that use this space and for the city itself.

Regards,

Robert Ferris

**From:** Chris Fieder  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 6, 2021 11:01 AM  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road golf course .

I'm writing this in response of closing g river road golf course. I've been a partial member of the city courses for 25 yrs I play River a lot with a group of 8 have been for years closing River road is wrong its a great course and it will be missed if it closes last season was very frustrating getting tee times on the internet I was lucky to 10am times a lot were for 12pm or later thats not acceptable years past with River road open we had good tee times. This is a public course and I feel it should stay open as a tax payer I pay for other public things I don't use but I don't mind because its a community public funded . If River closes I will be buying a membership at a privately owned club and will not support the city courses anymore .I love golfing all city courses River being my favorite I hope city council keeps this course open

Thanks.

Chris Fieder

**From:** KATHRYN GRAHAM  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 6, 2021 11:17 AM  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River road

Who closes a perfectly groomed,played,packed golf course.Rich people who can play anywhere they want.Its cruel to take this away from people who save up all year to get a membership for the year and cant get times for the other courses..It generated income through memberships and revenue inside the club house.No other city would do this.Please keep it open we all cannot afford the hunt club Sunningdale or West haven. Thank you kindly.....Kathy Graham

**From:** mark graham  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 7, 2021 9:22 AM  
**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] river road golf course

I would like to see the course remain open. If it weren't for bad luck River Road would have no luck at all. When you look at the numbers from the last 3 or 4 years you not seeing the true picture. Obviously last year not opening the course was a big mistake. Golf was the thing to do and every course on the planet was busy. The year before last we had a very wet spring and the course was up playable till almost the end of may. 2 years back we had the water contamination which would not allow the sprinkler system to be used. The course dried up and the city had to bring in water trucks to water the course and the it hooked up to the city water system. All these factors would contribute to lower number of rounds and higher expense.

I have been a city member for over ten years and have always loved my membership. Playing over 100 rounds a year. Last year with all the covid protocol it was very hard to get a tee time and rarely at the time you wanted. You had to book as soon as the website opened 7 days in advance. So many times we could not get times so we had to go and play other courses. This was frustrating when you already paid for a full membership and the Road was closed. Even more so when you drove by the course and see it was fully maintained and playable. I call River Road my home course and have supported it as much as possible. Joining men's league entering all the tournaments that are offered through out the season. The Road is a blue collar course and in the east end so many people could careless about it. Like they say "live in the east and get the least". A lot of people remember the old River Road course. Which was very tuff and would eat golf balls. Which frustrated golfers and they would not return and gave the course a bad rep but over the last number of years the city has made great improvements to the course. Clearing out areas and opening up the course to be a lot more forgiving. I am amazed at the number of people I talk to who still think it's the tight unforgiving course. I tell people if you have not played the Road in the past couple of years you must go play it again. It is the best of the city courses period. When you shoot a good score there you feel way better then if it was at Fanshawe or Thames.

I do know that if the course is closed there are going to be a lot of city of London golf members thinking about memberships. Doubtful if I renew my membership.

From: Terry Johnston  
Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2021 5:43 PM  
To: CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] River Road

This is my second letter to this group, so I will be as precise as possible. Much of the facts and reasons for closing River Road are based on outdated population numbers. There are close to 450,00 people within an hour of River Road. If we lose this course, we will never get another public course in London. What happens twenty five years down the road when the population is over 500,000? We will be lamenting the fact that we have only three eighteen hole PUBLIC golf courses in this City. Please when you look at the financial numbers, realize that when we checked into Courses last year, the person asking about Covid safety was someone who was making \$90,000 as a high ranking person in the Recreation Department. We saw this over and over at the Thames and Fanshawe Courses. I could go on and on about the unfair practices used at our Public Courses last year. Please, do not close River Road, it is need now and will be needed even more in the future. Terry Johnston.



**From:** tom johnston  
**Sent:** Monday, February 8, 2021  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Proposed Closure of River Road Golf Course

To: Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee.  
From: Tom Johnston  
Subject: The Future of River Road Golf Course.

Feb.8,2021

River Road Golf Course should not be closed!

1. Thames and Fanshawe Course cannot meet the demand for member and non-member golfers in London and area.

2. Covid -19 and variants will remain with us this coming summer of 2021.

3. The past summer of 2020 was not a good experience for City of London golfers. The two operating courses could not meet the demand for golf. Members and non-members were forced to find golf at privately owned courses. Many of them may never return to the City courses if there are only two courses operating in the future.

4. Under the existing booking system, the City is losing money as non-members cannot access the system to book a tee-time. They go to privately owned courses.

5. Past reports have shown figures of how River Road Golf Course does not operate with a profit. Why are the three courses separated when calculating profits and losses. They should all be assessed as one City Golf System.

6. London has many excellent Parks, Paths, Bike Lanes and Trails that offer great enjoyment for City residents and visitors. These all cost money to maintain. None of these make a profit. Our Golf System makes a profit.

6. The City of London has numerous attractions that are well known and envied in Ontario and Canada. We read regularly of how new residents are moving to London for these golf venues and many other factors. Our three excellent courses have been an important consideration for many.

I hope that the committee will consider all input received and maintain our excellent Golf System of three golf courses!

Thank you.  
Tom Johnston

**From:** Kozak .

**Sent:** Thursday, February 04, 2021 2:07 PM

**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road Golf

The decision to close River Road Golf Course last season was a missed opportunity for the City. It appeared to be based on past performance. While this is not unreasonable as a starting point, it seems to ignore, or not realize, the unique opportunity that the pandemic situation provides. People are taking up the sport because they have days to fill, money to spend ...and limited options. Not giving them maximum opportunity to do so at city-run courses is missing the chance to reinvigorate the Road as a golf destination of choice, relieve pressures for available tee times at other courses, and generate much needed revenues to help offset losses in other areas.

At any time, but especially these, revenue generation out of any city-run operation would be a desirable goal. Given the closures in other areas, and lost opportunities to derive income from them, deciding to shut down one which could contribute to city coffers seems irresponsible.

River Road is not the "jewel" of the city courses but it could have been (and probably still could be) a star performer in year-over-year growth if given the chance.

It makes even less sense if there are ongoing costs (including membership refunds/reductions) associated with maintaining the facility that are not being offset, even marginally, by green fee collection. Fact is, I know several golfers who, while using the course infrequently, would have no complaint paying the full membership rate with the understanding that some of the value is having the option to play River Road whether they use it or not. (That is cash-in-hand, too, not dependent on good weather or other variables.)

Championing this cause might appear to only cater to the golfers among us but, these days, it can have significantly more impact than that.

I have to admit to a selfish motive here: River Road owes me a hole-in-one so I would appreciate the opportunity to collect that "debt".

DWKostiuk

From: Gina Macdonald  
Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2021 6:04 PM  
To: CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] River Road

I am strongly in favour of reopening River Road. The wait lists for a tee time at London's public courses were incredibly long this past year. London has also seen an increase in population which would only make it even more challenging to access a tee time in the future. The ability for everyone to be able to play golf is a benefit to the City of London.

Tom MacDonald  
London, On N6K 2N4

Re: Recommended closure River Road Golf Course.

I would like you to consider various items from both the 2011 report, and the KPMG report submitted to you in February 2020. As a long time member of the municipal golf system I am concerned about certain deletions and misinformation included in both reports. I would also like you to accept that Covid 19 was not a factor when the conclusions of both reports were submitted, and might now be a consideration.

According to the National Golf Foundation of Canada there was a rise of just over 20% in golf participation in 2020, and " 2.5 million kids teed it up in 2019."The full opportunity cost of closing River Road for the 2020 season will never actually be known. What we do know for an absolute fact is that golf courses in London had their best and most profitable season ever.

Many experts agree that the pandemic will be with us, in one form or another for at least a couple more years. Any member of our municipal golf system will tell you that it was virtually impossible to get a tee time at preferred times, Both Fanshawe and Thames were stretched to the limit due the closure of River Road, and the increment of players the pandemic produced. I for one have never seen so many young people playing our courses. Some like me, for the first time in 20 years bought a partial membership. It made no sense to purchase an unlimited one when I was unable to book tee times. Thames and Fanshawe just did not have the capability to service its members, and all three lost out on the lucrative green fee market.

The 2020 report points out that 29 - 34 percent of rounds played between 2011 and 2018 were by non members (green fee players). We lost the majority of those last year, and will do so again in 2021 should River Road remain closed. If members could not get tee times, imagine the frustration of green fee players. These green fee players simply went to other courses like Forest City, Eastpark, and Firerock. Firerock in fact was so overwhelmed by green fee players that, for the first time ever this coming season they are not allowing memberships in order to accommodate the more lucrative casual player. The 29-34 percent of rounds played represents a minimum (KPMG report on rounds played) of 29,000 - 34,000 green fee rounds potentially lost at an average of \$30-\$32 a round. Added to this lost revenue was also cart rental and food and beverage that these players would also have had.

The KPMG report also points out that in 2018 the largest operating cost (52%) incurred through municipal golf operations was wages. It does not break down the wage cost per position, but when River Road remained closed in 2020 the two largest salaried employees were still on the payroll. The Government was offering a program whereby we could have staffed the pro shop and grounds crew with university students at no cost to The City, as their salaries would have been paid by the Pandemic Relief Program. Even with River Road closed, the course was still maintained to some degree and also incurred extra wages in security. River Road has always operated with a smaller staff than the other courses. The only 'real ' thing that changed in 2020, was that there was no revenue in a year where all courses enjoyed a bumper year despite the shortened season.

I suggest to you that the same would happen in 2021 should River Road remain closed. The system will be stretched, the casual 29-34 % will go elsewhere, and you will lose members over the frustration of fighting for tee times. Golfers are course loyal, and once they leave they may never come back.

#### Other Considerations From 2011 and 2020 Reports

In many ways the conclusions of the February 2020 report accepted certain recommendations of the 2011 report were implemented, which they were not.

It also did not take into account the dramatic change in population and demography of the area surrounding River Road since the 2011 report.

It also did not take into consideration that, as a City run department, ultimately financed in part by London taxpayers it should be perceived as a service, rather than a business. The other facets of Parks and Recreation create little or no revenue. Should a park, tennis court, football field, ice rink merit different considerations than a golf course? Geographically, Fanshawe and Thames primarily service North and West London. Surely East Londoners deserve similar amenities? If River Road were a park I would imagine that maintaining it might even be more costly, especially because winter maintenance would be added to the expense.

In terms of revenue, there was no mention in the 2020 report that River Road was partially closed for over two months for a couple of years due to an ongoing water issue and subsequent law suit. For at least a couple of months in 2019 the course had only 16 holes open. Potential green fee players do not want to play a 16 hole course, akin to ten pin bowling with eight pins. Also there was no mention in either report about the comparative lengths of golf seasons. Anybody who plays in the system will know River Road is opened later than the other two and closed earlier.

The 2020 KPMG report, for all its statistical information assumed a couple of things which it based its final recommendations on. I submit to you that this information is erroneous, and therefore negates the validity of its recommendations.

The 2011 Report set out a three point business plan to enhance the golf experience, specifically at River Road: The KMPG Report states that despite these things being implemented the status quo is being maintained.

1. To improve customer experience a cart path would be constructed and services such as food and beverage would be enhanced. A cart path was never constructed, and in fact River Road never has had enough electric carts for demand. I have heard someone in the pro shop on the phone in numerous occasions tell a prospective customer that all the carts were out. These people go elsewhere. There is no such problem at Thames or Fanshawe. River Road is not maintained to the same degree as Thames or Fanshawe. I have witnessed River Road open with only the Greenskeeper and one other employee on the grounds crew. Compare this with Fanshawe who have so many staff working on the course that they often can be seen looking for golf balls rather than working. Also since 2011 River Road has gone from a full service kitchen to literally only microwaved hot dogs. The kitchen remains there and fully equipped, but not used. At the very worst this could be put out to tender for additional revenue. The lack of catering facilities at the club would dissuade a lot of corporate tournament bookings, and greatly reduce revenue from everyday golfers. Both Fanshawe and Thames have full service functioning kitchens.

2. To create and continue club events. There used to be three events, a weekly men's night, a yearly match play, and a club championship. These have actually been reduced to two, and the weekly men's night is cavalier at the very best.

3. To increase revenue through promotion and advertising. This simply has not been done. You would be alarmed at what percentage of members at other courses do not know about the four course City membership. Plus with a fourth course you increase the potential for corporate tournaments with the correct promotion and marketing, which to my knowledge does not exist.

But most importantly, the KPMG report makes conclusions primarily based on a single misguided assumption which says: " There are 32 golf courses in the London/Middlesex area that are in direct competition with the City of London Golf System" This is only partially true. We offer, with River Road, four full sized courses for one membership. Although there are 32 golf courses in the London area, only one other organization offers a three course membership. Eastpark is included in this three course package, our only real competition. We gave them an unexpected gift closing their neighbour. And even then our courses are considerably better. We are in essence unique, so in fact have little competition, but like every business have to promote ourselves better.

The other main change since the 2011 report which was not taken into consideration in the 2020 report is the massive increase in population in the catchment area, which is ongoing, and the social demography of its new residents.

Since 2011 there has been enormous growth in new residential developments along

Commissioners Road east of Highbury, and in the last couple of years and in the immediate future adds a whole new customer base to River Road. The most concentrated and newest development is literally hanging over the golf course. In 2011 there was very little residential near the course.

The added developments along Fanshawe Park Road East and the new development to be built on previous farm land just north of the entrance to The Fanshawe Conservation area on Clarke Road will only add to the congestion at Fanshawe. River Road is literally a five minute drive south on Clarke as an alternative.

#### Conclusion

A lot of the conclusions in the 2020 report were based on the presumed implementation of recommendations of the 2011 report which were not done

These conclusions did not take into consideration the dictates of the pandemic.

The massive recent increases in residential developments were not considered in either report.

There is little consideration in looking at other overheads such as wage efficiency currently running at 52%, equipment, and the running of the courses. Simply closing one or two of the courses is viewed as the only option.

If Golf Operations are run by The City, then they should be viewed as a service to all its residents in much the same way as a park. Unlike a park, according to KPMG, golf operations more than pays for itself.

The increment in outdoor activity and the 20% rise in people playing golf because of the pandemic should dictate the timing of any decrease in such activity.

The 2020 KPMG actually comes to a conclusion in so many words when it summarizes that, "The community is not over serviced nor under served when it comes to the supply of golf" Surely the closure of River Road tips the balance towards the latter.

From: Mike O'Keefe  
Sent: Saturday, February 6, 2021 4:06 PM  
To: SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Make River Road great again!

Hello, I was a city member at the London golf courses for the last 5 years. Last year was an absolute joke because you guys took away my favourite course which is River Road. You guys charged us 1200 for a membership and I struggled to find a tee time at Fanshawe and Thames. Personally I felt ripped off because when River Road was open it wasn't like this. We are a family at River Road, men's league is always full and the tournaments are well run and are packed with participation. I don't understand why you guys groomed the course to perfection and didn't let anyone play it. I had my first and only hole in one at River road on hole 6 and will never forget it. Please re open the course and it'll make us all ecstatic! Make 2021 a year to remember for the people who pay good money to be a member of the city! Make River Road great again!! Thanks for your time.

Re: KPMG Report and Recommendations on Municipal Golf.

Submitted February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Sirs:

I am responding to your request for comments on the recent recommendation to Council regarding River Road Golf Course. As I understand it, council has directed staff to review the recommendation to close River Road including options for alternative uses for the property.

I have been a full time member of your courses since 1997 and have played an average of 100 rounds each year since that time. Although the majority of those rounds were played at Thames Valley I have also played many times at the other courses including River Road. The concern that I ,and many of my fellow players have, is that restricting the review to River Road ignores the wider issue of the future of Municipal golf in our city. A year from now we could be looking at proposals to close Fanshawe and a year after that proposals for Thames Valley. It seems that now is the time to do a thorough review of the entire management and marketing of Municipal golf in our city.

There is no doubt that membership and participation in golf is declining. This is happening all over North America and there are various and well known reasons. These have been laid out by KPMG and do not need repeating here. Over the past 20 years I have observed locally the decline in the number of golfers, the lack of Junior players, fewer tournaments, smaller Men's and Women's Leagues and so on. Unfortunately it appears KPMG only addressed closures as a solution. Perhaps their terms of reference restricted them to that.

It may be that River Road should close. For "hackers" like me (and there are many of us) it is a difficult course. It is subject to flooding and has competition from many daily play courses nearby (East Park, Maple Ridge, Dorchester, Crumlin, Pine Knot) most of which have lower rates.

It is unfortunate that the course named for closing has the most attractive club house by far. If River Road closes we would certainly expect that the savings be committed to improving the remaining courses.

The Master Plan for Municipal Golf in London has always been to make golf "Affordable and Accessible". To that we should add "enjoyable". It is not affordable when the price for a daily green fees player with a cart exceeds the price at many other courses. It is not accessible when tee-times always seem so hard to get and the "on-line" reservation system crashes and the phones go unanswered. It is certainly not enjoyable when your shoes are covered in goose droppings, and the bunkers are as hard as cement, and a round takes five hours to play since there are no rangers on the course.

The city should realize that annual dues paying members are the foundation of the courses; the daily green fees players are where money and profit lie; and Junior golfers are the future. All these groups need to be catered to. The members in particular want to be proud of their course. They want to show it off to visitors they invite for a round. Dingy clubhouse, limited food and beverage selection, closed halfway houses, are not impressive and do not bring people back. There are more enjoyable courses to go to.



The issue of clubhouse decor and service can only be solved with capital investment. The kitchens are old and outdated, the atmosphere is uninviting, the menus limited. There is great potential to turn Thames Valley at least into a popular dining destination year round, and not just for golfers. The location and scenery could easily be marketed. However “You have to spend money to make money”. The city budget being what it is makes that difficult. Hopefully Federal infrastructure money is being aggressively sought. Also the food service should be contracted out to a professional and knowledgeable catering company. Years ago that seemed to work.

Marketing is the key to increased use and membership. Here are a few suggestions:

- Hire a marketing consultant.
- Regular and continual marketing in all forms of media.
- Loyalty rewards for members and green fee players.
- Packages such as burgers and fries with a round at certain times.
- Reduced rate tokens (5-10 a year) for members to use for visitors they bring along.
- Juniors play free for nine holes when accompanied by an adult.
- Earlier twilight rates.
- “Nine and Dine” packages.
- Stay and play packages with local hotels
- Regular newsletters to members and the media.
- Special event days for local clubs and organizations.

In regards to tee times there is a perception that the courses are overbooked and that it is difficult to get tee times. It is true that the tee sheet is often full. However the course is quite often empty. This has to be due to “no-shows”. A member can lose his privilege to book tee times in advance if he is a no show. I am not aware of any policy on general public no shows. There should be one. Another complaint from occasional players is the slow pace of play on city courses. Rangers should be assigned to the courses at peak times and the clock system should be put back in place.

As to course appearance something must be done, particularly at Thames Valley regarding the goose droppings. It is not only a mess but probably a health hazard. I personally am embarrassed to bring a visitor to the course. Also at Thames we have a beautiful river running along the last three holes. At one time it was a lovely, attractive sight. Now the river cannot be seen due to the ragged underbrush, scrub poplars and other overgrown weeds that have grown up in the last few years. Surely this can be cleaned up.

London’s Municipal Courses are gems. Most cities would love to have such a variety of venues and opportunities. Staff at the courses work hard to keep the courses playable and their patrons happy. They do their best with what they have and they are appreciated. Hopefully the city recognizes this and can develop both resources and a plan to keep golf in London affordable, accessible, and enjoyable.

Don Page  
London.

**From:** Rodney Reimer  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 4, 2021 1:50 PM  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] river road golf course

To city of London Council

Closing down River Road Golf course is wrong. We the golfers have paid for this course when this was being built. No money came from the tax payers of London. I understand the 3 courses over all makes money for the city, which is use for other facilities. I also understand when this came up many years ago, the report said that the course should be consider 1, and not as an individual facility.

Last year 2020, it was very difficult to get tee time to unless you book it with 30 seconds after the tee time open up at 9 PM. The city will lose memberships over this, I know fellow golfers that will go to another course, and I will be one.

Rodney Reimer

**From:**

**Sent:** Friday, February 05, 2021 8:53 PM

**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] please include on the agenda

Committee Members,

Several of our group of loyal members of the Corporation's golf courses have made submissions to this committee concerning the possible closing of River Road golf course. In my mind, there is no question that this is a financial decision and as many members speculate, this decision is based upon questionable financial data and poor policy decisions.

I will focus on the latter. I understand that policies and protocols for opening and managing the 2020 "cvid driven" golf season were made at the "administrative" level not at the "clubhouse" level. The pros and staff at Thames and Fanshawe worked hard to implement those questionable policies.

The problem was that those policies and protocols have contributed to a revenue stream that was likely considerably less than privately owned public courses. According to my research, Thames and Fanshawe initially had tee time intervals greater than any other course in Southwestern Ontario with comparable green and cart fees which results in fewer golfers per day. When you combine this with the totally ridiculous program for booking tee times which resulted in many no shows it is no surprise that revenues were not maximized and members were frustrated and angry. The clubhouse staff were the undeserving recipients of this outcome.

To clarify for example, our group of about 16 members would have 10 to 12 members try to get tee times. Initially at 5am!! This often resulted in obtaining no tee times, or sometimes obtaining more times than needed resulting in tying up what resulted in unused tee times. This strategy was used by a majority of members.

Needless to say, with the number of golfers who join and play the Municipal Courses, closing one is doing a disservice to the membership. Without River Road last year there was a 25% decrease in available tee times and combined with the extremely conservative "Covid" protocols re time between tee times there was likely closer to a 30% decrease in green fees every day.

Finally, if Thames and Fanshawe did not operate at a surplus, the "City" is guilty of total mismanagement of their golf courses. River Road needs to be reopened and a better business plan is needed.

Respectfully,

Don Rowdon

From: ENNIO SIVILOTTI  
Sent: Friday, February 05, 2021 2:29 PM  
To: CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] River Road golf

Of all the municipal courses in London this in my opinion is one of the best in the area .A true challenge of golf's complexities.

London taxpayers have payed and own this this asset and I am against closing it . This past year I took out a full membership ,as I have done in previous years , and experience a lot of frustration in getting tee times. This could have been avoided had River Road not closed.

Why was it closed ?? and yet maintained for the full season.Just another waste of taxpayers funds .

I only hope council comes to their senses and vote in favour of reopening River Road .

Thank you .

From: Larry Smith  
Sent: Saturday, February 06, 2021 4:11 PM  
To: CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>;  
Cc: [lpf.letters@sumedia.ca](mailto:lpf.letters@sumedia.ca)  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] River Road Golf Course

Re: Recommendation for the closure of River Road Golf Course

To: Lindsay Mathyssen, Shawn Lewis and respective city council members.

As a tax payer and resident in the London east area I am writing this committee to express my deep concern for the possible closure of the River Road Golf Course. When I last spoke to our cities ward two council representative we had a vibrant discussion around maintaining and building new infrastructure while discovering new amenities because These things in East London have long since been lacking. So, here we are discussing the suspension of operations of one of the cities best golf courses which would be a disservice to area residents and businesses. It's been observation that the city has invested a good deal of time, energy and resources into researching why we shouldn't keep River Road open. The City with London residents in mind should give an equal amount of time, energy, resources and might I add creativity to assess how we could better utilize the River Road property. This might include a new business plan that might include an actually plan to address and resolve the casual flooding issue, new shared business' which might include making better use of the almost non existing kitchen and bar facilities or creating some shared ventures on property say having the clubhouse double as a cross country ski and trail club in the winter all to augment the golf courses summer revenues.

Respectfully, Larry Smith.

Sent from L. Smith

**From:** jimsmythe  
**Sent:** Friday, February 05, 2021 11:58 AM  
**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road Golf Course

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion on the River Road Golf Course decision.

I am a member of a group of senior golfers that I joined 15 years ago after my retirement. The originals in the group have been playing the city-owned courses for over 40 years. We play all four courses on a rotational basis and look forward to the different challenges that each course presents. In my experience, our municipal golfing community in London has been the envy of the broader golfing community outside of the city, especially as you get closer to the GTA, because of the course variety, geographic accessibility and relative economic value we have in our municipal golf course system.

Most of us have appreciated the unique differences and challenges that River Road brings to our game and we have missed this opportunity over the past season! The physical (and I'm sure expensive!) changes to the course over the past number of years, to make conditions more playable and fair for the amateur golfer, have certainly been recognized and appreciated by our group. I believe the majority of River Road naysayers who claim the course is too difficult have not played there since these improvements have been made so the course suffers from that negative first impression from years before.

I think it would be a misguided decision to close River Road, not only for today's golfing community but for the increasing population of our region and the growth of the game that we all witnessed over this past year. It seems very shortsighted to me that you would consider closing this community asset after this past season of frustration we all experienced trying to get tee-times on the other city courses. Like many other groups and individuals, there was a time last year when we were up at 5:00am trying to book a tee-time for the following week with limited success of achieving our desired time and course!

I would be exceptionally upset if part of the financial rational for closing River Road included the high-priced help of displaced city administrative staff who acted as 'COVID greeters' this past season as well as the costs of grooming and maintaining a golf course that was not open and generating any income.

Let's continue being the envy of other communities when it comes to an accessible and affordable recreational golf system for London that is looking to the future and support the uniqueness of the River Road Golf Course as part of that model!

Sincerely,  
Jim Smythe

**From:** Wendy Thompson

**Sent:** Thursday, February 04, 2021 3:16 PM

**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee Added Agenda

Dear Madame/Sir: I have been a member of the London Municipal Golf Program for more than fifteen years. This past year, beyond its COVID challenges, left many of our Municipal program's members frustrated with what I trust will be a "temporary closure" of River Road.

Without River Road, a uniquely challenging loop, the demand/pressure on the other courses was significant leaving many of us without reasonable access to tee times.

Considerable work has been invested in this course over the past eight years to make it more playable/enjoyable for players and this is greatly appreciated by fellow River Roaders. River Road should continue as our fourth Municipal London golf course to meet the requirements of current members and future guests. I believe a golf course to be the most viable and positive use of this land, much of it on a "flood plain", typically of little use for other forms of activity.

Take care & stay safe,

John B. Thompson

**From:** JAMES WAGNER

**Sent:** Friday, February 5, 2021 3:45 PM

**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Recommended Closure of River Road Golf Course - Citizen Input

I am writing on behalf of a group of 14 members of the London golf courses. We are all retired individuals aged from 60 through 85. We have been members for many years and have, up to 2020, distributed our golf playing amongst all of the City of London golf courses. We come from all parts of the city.

In our view, the study conducted seems mainly a financial study focused mainly on how to build up a reserve for golfing activities and unlike most other recreation activities, to fund it only from golfing activities or from selling of assets in the golf portfolio. Prior assessments or studies were conducted by consultants in the field of golf. This latest one was not.

As retired persons, we choose to be active and outdoors. We all chose golf as a wonderful activity for health and recreation and plan to continue playing so long as we are able. We are currently blessed to be in a city that supports its citizens with many recreation activities and a terrific group of golf courses. We are also members of a cohort of older persons which continues to grow in size as any study of the aging population will attest. My first point for the committee to consider is why the study failed to consider the growth of this cohort and their needs for recreational activities? In the report, there is discussion of the reducing number of rounds played. Perhaps there should be more concern with why these rising numbers of retired persons have not come to the city courses to enjoy the pastime of golf? Also is discussed the impact of weather. There is little doubt that River Road Golf Course takes longer to dry out for the beginning of play. Availability of the course due to late opening has been an issue and some drainage work has been carried out recently. Was this a wasted investment or was this investment considered in the study?

My next point of issue relates to more current events. The study only covers to 2019. I believe things changed substantially in 2020. Not only did the city close River Road Golf Course, but due to health considerations, tee times were greatly restricted on other courses and tournaments and leagues were suspended. The impacts of these events must have created a great learning opportunity to study the impacts of these measures. We would suggest that the impact on the golf operations and the golfing users be studied and understood with the view to moving forward with better golf operations in the future.

My next point relates to the golf course properties use in the winter months. This winter has seen outstanding utilization of the courses for recreational activities whenever snow accumulations permit. Also, when there is limited snow cover, walkers abound. If you are looking for revenue, why not consider outdoor recreation activities for all ages on these large properties to support citizens? Why not consider making River Road a cross Country Ski destination?

During the year 2020, most golfers would agree that the availability to reserve tee times was a challenge. We certainly don't have any quick solutions to offer. But, there must be a better way to maximize the utilization of these great courses and minimize the pain of attempting book reservations. In addition, providing enough staff to marshal the course might go a long way to smoothing out play and maximize revenues.

My final comment relates to revenue generating options. There is a brief mention of contracting out. The River Road golf course has its challenges. However, there are many persons who enjoy using the course. Perhaps there would be an organization or group that would lease the course and operate it paying into the golf coffers. These funds could be put into the golf reserve, building it up to allow for the reserve accumulation that is being sought by the city.

Disposing of city assets is a one time shot at revenue generation. Once the asset is gone further opportunities are no longer available. Retaining city assets and maximizing returns should be paramount in these discussions and decisions.

Jim Wagner



**From:** Rob Wharry  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 06, 2021 6:26 AM  
**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road GC

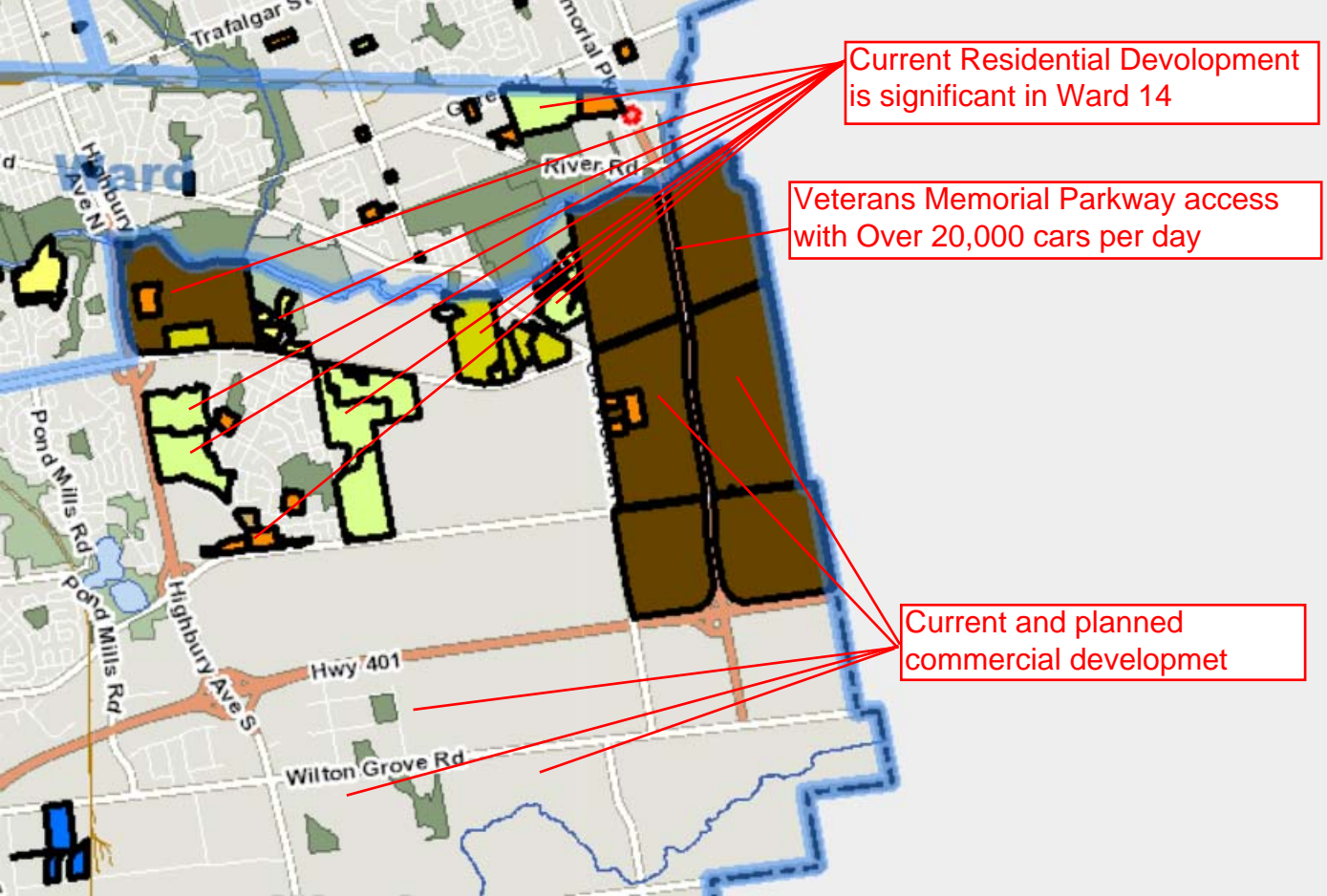
Hello,

Just looking at Ward 14 we can see that development is very strong. Residential and commercial/industrial development will create recreational demand in the southeast of London. London is one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada so you can assume that increasing success will take place for the entire Golf system with only some strategic patience. Marketing in the form of signs placed on VMP could be a big boost for River Road when you consider the traffic volume on that road (23,000 / day ) Please see the attached PDF

I will be buying a full membership at River Road this year if given the opportunity.

Regards

Rob Wharry



Current Residential Development is significant in Ward 14

Veterans Memorial Parkway access with Over 20,000 cars per day

Current and planned commercial development

**From:** york\_family

**Sent:** Saturday, February 6, 2021 4:26 PM

**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road Golf Course should be kept OPEN

To whom it may concern,

I have been a PUC Golf member for over 16 years. River Road has always been my favourite course. I golfed 4+ times a week & each time I always had an early morning Tee-time with my friends. My son also became a PUC member 5 years ago and also loves the River Road Course.

Last year, when you closed River Road for the pandemic, it was a **disaster!** Many of my friends and long time PUC golfers were unable to get Tee-times. We had dedicated members trying to book Tee-times on the internet **5 to 7 days in advance**. And we could never get off early in the morning all summer. Not good for many of us older, long time, golfers that don't do well in the afternoon sun & heat!

The staff have always been great at this course! River Road Course is in great shape & with the pandemic & more new people joining golf, we really need more PUC Tee-times in London. You can't do that by closing River Road.

If you do decide to close River Road Golf, let us know **BEFORE** we renew our early memberships as my son, myself, and a large number of our golf friends, will NOT be returning to PUC Golf.

Please do the right thing and keep it open.

Sincerely,

Fred York, London

From: Justin York  
Sent: Sunday, February 7, 2021 11:31 AM  
To: SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Closing River Road Is A Mistake.

Hello, to whom this email may concern. I have been a member for the city golf courses for the past 5 years or so. Except for last year, where it was impossible to get a tee time that is ideal unless you are able to get up at 6 am too book a tee time for the following week. That is embarrassing, I decided to take my money elsewhere because you closed River Road which was one of the best courses to play in the membership. I have had fond memories there and when I heard it was closed for the year during covid-19 (when you have all these golfers with nothing else to do but golf!!) I was in shock. Instead I heard from friends who bought the membership telling me it was a waste of money, you can't even get a tee time, courses are packed over capacity. Having these problems takes the fun out of the sport in a time where we needed all the fun we could get. If you guys completely remove River Road from the membership and it is permanently closed I will be taking my money elsewhere again and I am aware of many other golfers that will be doing the same thing. Having it impossible to find a tee time is one thing, but when you do find one your playing a 6 hour round is just ridiculous. Bring back River Road in 2021, or lose money on the amount of people that will not want to deal with the hassles of having the membership in a broken system. The cost of the membership when it was revised due to River Road being closed was still not worth it because of all of the issues I addressed.

Thank You for your time,

Justin

**From:** DUNG WON SHIN  
**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2021 1:28 PM  
**To:** CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] To whom it may concern.

To whom it may concern,

It is extremely upsetting to hear about the recommendation to halt operations at River Road Golf Course.

As a senior citizen, golf is my only form of *safe* exercise. If River Road closes, then that would mean that residents in South and East London, like myself, would have to drive all the way across the city to get this form of exercise. Not only is this inconvenient but it is also unfair for the residents of South and East London. North and West London conveniently have golf courses in their respective areas.

With new residential areas being built in South London, the focus should be on reviving this part of London—not closing down recreational livelihoods of the residents.

I ask that the city counsel reconsider their recommendation and not close River Road Golf Course.

Regards,

Dong Won Shin

From: **Ron Carruthers**  
Date: Mon, Feb 8, 2021 at 12:12 PM  
Subject: River Road

Hi

As we all know, this virus is the best thing to happen to golf. Right now the supply and demand is way out of line. If the City is interested, now is their opportunity to not only provide recreation and good exercise to Londoners, but also make some money in the process. **River Road should remain Open.** And I believe recreation and exercise should be the top priority. Golf for me in 2020 was very disappointing. We have a group of 6-8 golfers who, in the past, would book tee times at Thames for the Wed Men's golf. We would get 2 tee times, back to back and enjoy the golf and also enjoy the comradery after the golf with a glass of beer. That happened once in 2020. Getting back to back tee times was impossible. And we had at least 5 in our group trying to book tee times at one second past 9 PM the week prior to our Wed golf and most times we were given tee times in mid afternoon. No one will convince me that your tee time reservation time is fair.

If we had a few more golfers on City Council, there is no doubt in my mind that **River Road** would remain open. People also need something to do for their own mental health.

**Please keep River Road open. The demand for golf tee times far exceeds the supply.**

Ron Carruthers

**From:** Richard Kasprzak  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 10, 2021 10:01 AM  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] CITY OF LONDON SERVICE REVIEW: REVIEW OF SERVICE DELIVERY FOR MUNICIPAL GOLF

Good Day,

I have played the city golf courses for years, and recently started getting a membership annually. This has been a fantastic way to get out for some exercise, and start introducing my kids to the game. However I opted **not** to get a membership in 2020 because Fanshawe Golf course was way too busy. The times I played took over 5 hours to finish 18 holes. I have never seen it this busy in all the years I have played. After speaking with dozens of members, the overflow has come from River Road.

River Road isn't the closest golf course, but on average we would play it 10+ times a year. In my opinion this course has the most impressive views of all the city courses.

It was my understanding that the municipal golf courses were never intended to turn a profit, but rather make London more desirable. But if cost is the concern, like many I would happily pay more for a membership/round if that meant keeping River Road open.

Thanks

Richard Kasprzak

**From:** Dirk De Vries  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 9, 2021 9:52 AM  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fw: River Road Question

With the decision last year to close River Road because of Covid, we were told that it would be open another year before a decision was made, now it seems as if a decision is made without another year to prove itself, so I ask the following questions .

1) Why did we have KMPG do a study of the City Golf Course ( RR, only had 15 holes open), and they never talked to any members/Club Pros and superintendence I also know that they also work for private courses like Golf North, would that not be a conflict.

2) Why, as per attached, does the citizens of London not know about the contributions that the city courses/golfers of London have made to the Aquatic Centre of at least \$750,000 in the early 2000's and much more, also at least \$500,000 to build soccer fields etc. Why do they not know that not any taxpayer money has ever gone to the golf courses, but they are stand alone, with profits after the money to the reserve fund go to help the items above.

Most members would gladly pay \$50-\$100 more to keep it open.

3) Why did the City close River Road this past year, when the reports from Ontario Golf Association, say that it was one of the best years for Golf course in North America and to the best of my knowledge, River Road was the only course closed.

4) Why was it never said that the main reason that rounds were down at River Road in 2018 was because of the contamination of the water caused by a Recycling Plant nearby and they only had 15 holes open. The city also decided not to go after them for loss of revenue, don't know why??? They were just fined.

5) How much of a refund did the City give back to members for closing River Road, I got near \$500, would rather have had RR open, they said they would lose \$80,000 if open, my guess is the refund was much higher, no other courses gave refunds because of late start.

6) Why are they not promoting the fact that London has one of the best Public course systems in the Ontario

Thank You  
Dirk De Vries



**From:** loretta loretta  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 9, 2021 5:29 PM  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] CITY OF LONDON SERVICE REVIEW: REVIEW OF SERVICE DELIVERY FOR MUNICIPAL GOLF

Re: 'City of London's Service Review: Recommended Closure of River Road Golf Course' report.

Past individuals had the foresight almost 30 years ago to initiate planning and development of the River Road Golf Course (RRGC). If it was needed and a good idea then, why not now with City population having increased significantly?

The KPMG report found that London is not over serviced or under serviced with respect to golf facilities. That said, it would appear counter intuitive to eliminate an 18 hole facility.

City owned/operated golf facilities offer an affordable alternative to the golfing public. London having 3 such venues strategically located across the cityscape is something of which to be proud. It offers variety plus an opportunity to minimize travel to access a City operated golf service.

"Golf pays for golf" is ideal but an arbitrary premise. Why focus on golf services with an expectation to be totally self-funding whereas other City services i.e. public parks, pools along with baseball and soccer fields couldn't possibly exist with a "services pay for services" mandate. Based on background information provided golf system revenues have been used to support these other City services.

The KPMG report indicates that the City's golf system has been traditionally self funding. Focusing on a 2018 loss seems a bit quick to judgement suggesting a permanent shutdown of operations at RRGC.

Focus on what things can be done to move RRGC toward a financially viable enterprise:

- 1) According to the KPMG report Unlimited Memberships account for the majority of golf rounds played at River Road. It seems prudent to increase the cost of that membership option by \$100-\$200. In my opinion, such a modest increase would not discourage usage of that membership option.
- 2) According to the KPMG report, staffing contributes to a significant portion of operating expense. I believe RRGC does not require the services of an on-site head professional and that annual salary could be saved.
- 3) Facilitate more rounds being played at RRGC by improving course drainage consequently allowing grass cutting to expected standards hence encouraging use of RRGC to play one's round.
- 4) I don't foresee any looming capital expense required for RRGC it being the newest of the 3 golf venues.

Continued direct City ownership and operation of RRGC is my preference. If the City is adamant in its desire to cease golf services at RRGC an outright sale of the property to another party as a golf venue would have my support. In that way the City would receive significant funding for future capital expenditures it deems necessary for Thames Valley and Fanshawe. The sale would allow implementation of a property tax thereby providing an on-going revenue stream.

The spring of 2020 ushered in a harsh introduction to Covid-19 and its looming ramifications. Despite a host of restricted activities golf provides an excellent opportunity for exercise, fresh air and safe socialization in compliance with mandated restrictions. Now in 2021 having gained significant Covid-19 insight and the on-going

vigilance required for many months, foresight suggests having RRGC available for play during the 2021 season would be most prudent.

Thank you for considering these suggestions.

Henry Marienfeldt

I agree with everything that Henry has written. I want to add that I have enjoyed golfing at River Road over the past number of years and think it is an excellent course. It would be a shame to throw away all the manhours that have gone into making River Road the course it is today. (The added in-ground sprinkler system, widening of fairways and clearing of underbrush, revision of some holes to make more playable for all) Surely there can be some way to keep this beautiful golf course in the City golf package. River Road is to be treasured from the tranquil setting along the Thames River to the tree lined fairways and all the wildlife to be seen while playing a round. Golf is a game for all ages and we should be promoting it as a way of helping to keep the people of London active and healthy; not taking away opportunities.

Please consider all the options to keep River Road open.

Loretta Marienfeldt

February 9, 2021

**From:** Paul Jackson  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 10, 2021 2:48 PM  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road Golf Course February 16 comments for agenda

To: City of London, Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee  
Subject: Discontinuance operations at River Road Golf Course

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the suggested closing of River Road Golf Course in the City of London.

I have been fortunate to enjoy the game of golf at City of London operated golf courses for 30 plus years. This experience makes me proud to be a taxpayer in the City of London.

2020 was a very challenging year and golf was no exception. I would strongly suggest that 2020 not be used as part of the decision-making process on whether River Road be closed. However, one thing became obvious in 2020, demand for tee times cannot be met with only Thames Valley and Fanshawe courses. The Pandemic likely will still be with us for most of 2021 and demand should at least equal 2020.

In response to the 2020 KPMG report, I believe the following items are relevant but not clearly identified and/or should be presented differently.

- 2018 Percentage of revenue generating holes of golf (and % of total rounds played); Fanshawe 36 holes 44% (rounds played 41.8%), Thames 27 holes 33% (rounds played 42.3%), River Road 18 holes 22% (rounds played 15.9%). The spring of 2018 had high level of precipitation. River Road typically opens later in spring (due to flooding of lower valley holes) and closes sooner in the fall which should be considered when looking at these numbers.
- Membership revenue should be lumped together as most members purchase membership in the City of London golf system, rather than a specific C of L course. Golfers with Unlimited memberships were the highest at River Road. The income for "membership sales" on page 12 of KPMG report is flawed in my opinion for this reason.
- Page 13 report "**3. The City appears to be a high cost service provider**" This part of the report in my opinion comparing financial indicators provided by Industry Canada is also flawed. I believe comparisons to municipally owned recreational facilities would be more relevant.
- Page 19 report "**Question 1 – Should the City be directly involved in Golf Operations?**" My Answer- Absolutely! Just as the city is involved in other forms of recreation (parks, trails, aquatics, ice skating, etc.), golf provides opportunities for exercise, fellowship, competition, and enjoying nature which if not provided in city operated facilities, many would not participate.

I would agree that golf operations need some attention and changes to improve the financial performance to allow the current number of courses (Thames Valley, Fanshawe **and River Road**) to remain operational for many years to come.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Paul Jackson

**From:** Michael Klug  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 10, 2021 10:16 PM  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road Golf Course

To the members of the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee:

I write in my personal capacity to express my strong opposition to the City selling River Road Golf Course.

If the City does decide to sell River Road, it will be compounding immeasurably its serious mistake in closing the golf course in 2020, which decision appears to have cost the City (and its golf reserve fund) in the range of \$300 000.

It is certainly frustrating in the extreme that these losses – due to the City's error in closing River Road to the public in 2020 but still staffing it – are now used to justify the sale of this beautiful course on public lands.

The fact is that it is well understood that golf is experiencing a major rebound in popularity currently, for obvious reasons. If there was ever a good case for eliminating River Road from the City's golf system – which I dispute -- it is certainly not in early 2021.

Municipal golf is a public good which, like other recreational facilities, supports the well-being of the population. Given the non-existent impact on the City's budget, there is no good reason for our municipal government to be making cuts to these important public recreational facilities. Instead it should be investing in and expanding the use of these public lands.

Respectfully, I request that the City reject the Administration's recommendation to sell River Road and instead maintain it as a City-owned and operated golf course at least for 2021 and 2022 to determine how it performs in this new golf economy. I think there is good reason to predict that London's public golf system (and the golf reserve fund) would profit from this.

Please also consider the following points in support of a decision to maintain River Road as a public golf course.

1. The lands upon which it sits – which the Administration is proposing to sell – were identified by UTRCA as late as 2009 as “core conservation lands.” In its Thames Valley Corridor Plan, the City recommended that these lands be added to the Thames Valley Corridor and further provided that “the River Road Golf Course also provides an opportunity to serve as a demonstration of best management practices in support of ecological objectives.” It is obvious that the maintenance of the lands as a public golf course supports important environmental objectives of the City, while the sale of these former (or current?) “core conservation lands” likely would not.
2. Related, the Administration's recommendation with respect to River Road is to sell the property with no indication of what the ultimate use of the property would be post-sale. If the City sells the golf course to a private golf course operator, who purchases it on the premise that it will be profitable as such, that simply establishes that the City should maintain it as a golf course itself and reap those profits for the public golf system. If, by contrast, the lands are to be sold for some form of development, then the City will have decided in effect to allow for development of a large tract of scarce environmentally sensitive public lands, bordering the Thames River, when that land could have been used in perpetuity, creatively for any manner of environmentally-sensitive public purposes, including golf.
3. The main argument that the Administration advances is that the sale proceeds from River Road are needed to fund capital improvements at the other golf

courses. Remember – golf pays for golf, and the City selling these lands and denying the golf system the proceeds would be a serious violation of this principle. However, the report does not identify what these supposedly necessary capital improvements to Thames and Fanshawe are. If the City is going to sell River Road to fund capital improvements at the other golf courses, surely Council and the public need to understand what the proposed capital expenditures entail and whether they are truly necessary. In my own experience, as a regular customer of these golf course over the years, neither the golf courses or the club houses require any apparent major capital investment. More to the point, the 2019 Corporate Asset Management report, cited by Administration, provides at page 268 for only \$200, 000 in annual existing capital budget for the City's golf assets. Is the City really intending to spend an additional \$615 000/year, i.e. \$842 000/year (or the entire proceeds of the sale of River Road) on capital improvements at Thames and Fanshawe golf courses? For what? I can say with confidence that the vast majority of those who use these facilities would rather River Road remain as a public facility over spending money on un-needed new clubhouse at Thames and/or Fanshawe (especially given how charming these clubhouses currently are). Certainly as part of the decision before it, the Committee should carefully consider what capital investments are being proposed at Thames and Fanshawe GCs and whether there may be a possibility of these capital costs being inflated in a desperate attempt to find some palatable justification for selling River Road for other unstated reasons.

In short, I am very much opposed to the City cutting back on the provision of public recreation facilities like River Road Golf Course and encourage the Committee and Council to direct Administration to operate River Road as a public golf course this year, as it has for 30 years.

Yours truly,

Michael Klug  
London, Ontario

From: David Quantrill  
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 6:22 PM  
To: CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] River Road

After the KPMG consultant was done city council voted to leave River Road Golf Course to be open for the 2020 season and to be re-assessed in September/ October of 2020 when a final decision was to be made about whether to close or keep open.

Due to COVID19 all courses opening were delayed for 2 months and when the go ahead to open was allowed and hopes by all members that all 3 courses would open as planned, but River Road was kept closed due to anticipated lost revenue even though the city had lost 2 months of revenue on all courses With the closure of River Road and an increase of golfers at the 2 remaining clubs T- times where hard to get and frustrating to book times.

I hope that city council will vote to meet their original decision and keep River Road open for the 2021 season and re-assess as originally voted on for 2020 , it would be a shame to leave the course empty and not try to get some revenue even if evaluating ways to reduce operating costs or slight increase in rates

Thanks  
David Quantrill

To: Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee  
From: John K. Bracken  
Subject: River Road – proposed closure  
Date: February 11, 2021

Dear Members of Council;

Thank you for giving City golf members an opportunity to express some of our concerns about the future of River Road.

As a director of the London Seniors Tour here in London with about 60 members playing out of the City golf courses I can confirm that they would definitely support keeping River Road open. I am confident that most of them would also agree with the emails sent by other City golf members here.

As members of Council I am sure you are all too familiar with the excellent points made by City golfing members regarding: 1) tee time problems this year due to COVID-19; 2) projected growth estimates in the eastern part of the City; 3) the huge increase in new players taking up the game in 2020 etc etc. I do not intend to belabour the many points already raised here. Suffice it to say that many new young members who took up the game this year because of COVID will make every effort to come back to the game of golf, if at all possible.

Instead, I want to focus primarily on the financial aspects of the situation. It seems that the principal reason for KPMG and City staff recommending the closure of the course is that it would never be able to generate sufficient net revenues for the reserve fund.

You will note from the Financial results for the year ended in 2020 that Thames Valley had a surplus of \$60,331, while Fanshawe had a surplus of \$149,049. River Road shows a surprisingly large deficit of \$315,345 for the year. Of course this deficit was incurred because it was closed for the entire 2020 season. It had NO revenue whatsoever and yet still had large carrying expenses such as wages, supplies and equipment operations etc. (see Table on p.13).

If River Road had been open in 2020 like the other two City courses then the worst it would have done, given the recent upswing in the popularity of golf, is break even. If that had happened then the City would have saved \$315,000 in expenses. Then the \$210,000 total profits from both Thames Valley and Fanshawe could have been deposited in the reserve fund. That would have been a far superior result than what actually happened.

It is worth mentioning that there are many current City members who would be glad to pay a bit more for their annual dues if they could be assured that the course would remain open.

Finally, with the reality of COVID, there is bound to be less international and domestic travel before things get back to normal. Consequently, people will stay at home and look for things to do. Golf is by far the healthiest outdoor sport activity available, particularly for seniors who are the most compromised demographic.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

John Bracken  
London, ON



To: Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee  
From: Robert J. Austin  
Subject: River Road – proposed closure  
Date: February 11, 2021

Council Members,

River Road Golf Course is green gem in the City's municipal golf system which happens to run a minor deficit. I say "minor" because the deficit could be easily covered by a minor increase in membership fees.

Then there is the issue of future capital expenses. For years the municipality basked in the "golf pays for golf" principle while diverting the surplus from municipal golf for other recreational projects and foregoing a solid golf reserve fund. Are hockey, baseball and other municipal recreational ventures held to the same financial standards?

The KPMG report shows a snapshot of the financial "now" for the municipal golf system with no creative consideration for the possibility of turning the present losses to a profit. The report's simplistic, one dimensional answer to the running deficit is to close down one or more golf courses. There is no real consideration for future growth in the southeast quarter of London and serving a future growing population. Also consider that the population is aging and golf is a wonderful and healthy recreation for seniors. Golf provides fresh air physical exercise even for those seniors that require carts. Additionally, golf provides mental stimulation and social interaction. And in the off season, the courses are used by walkers, cross-country skiers and other winter sports enthusiasts.

Council might view municipal golf with the same light as it views non-profit making amenities such as the Convention Centre, Budweiser Gardens, Storybook Gardens and various recreation centres. Such facilities are deemed to be of net value as they make London an attractive and vibrant place to live.

Please consider imaginatively and carefully. Once River Road Golf Course is dead, there is no bringing it back. This is a one-way, irrevocable decision, a decision that may save London a small amount of money but also detract from London's attractiveness as a place to live. Also consider that most of us members are willing to pay more to keep River Road alive.

Thank you for your consideration.

Robert Austin  
London, ON

From: Sergio Buccella  
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2021 11:57 AM  
To: SPPC <sppc@london.ca>  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] River Road golf course

Many London golfers will be very unhappy if this great course were to close permanently. It's a fine golf course that would generate a good source of income for the city if properly managed. Please don't close it.

**From:** Red McLarty

**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2021 1:51 PM

**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>

**Cc:** van Holst, Michael <[mvanholst@london.ca](mailto:mvanholst@london.ca)>; Lewis, Shawn <[slewis@london.ca](mailto:slewis@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Closure of River Road

I have been a member of the City of London golf system since I moved here upon retirement. For 6 years, I have enjoyed golfing at River Road almost exclusively as I live in the East End of London. River Road is the only 'real' golf course in this area, and while I do like the other city courses, I don't believe they are as nice as River Road.

Ever since I came to London, I have heard many times how River Road was not making enough money and is on probation. Yet in those 6 years, I have NEVER heard of ANY suggestions from the city on how to make it more playable or profitable. In fact, it seems River Road has been left on its own with no additional resources to try and improve it. Now the reports suggest it will cost too much to keep River Road open in the future, because of the maintenance and improvements it requires! Not very surprising since so little money has come this way over the past 6 years.

This past year was a time when the city golf courses should have been made more accessible, instead we made them harder to use. Keeping River Road closed showed that the permanent closure of this course was a foregone conclusion, and as such, reports from both KPMG and city staff have made the data reflect that foregone conclusion.

It is clear that the people who make this proposal do not believe golf should be a benefit to all Londoners. Instead, London's East Enders are getting short shifted again.

If the conclusion is to close River Road permanently, then I will strongly advocate that the City of London shutter ALL of its golf courses, and get out of the business altogether. If the people running the city golf courses can't make it work for everyone, then they are not the right people for the job.

As River Road is on a flood plain, and the others are not, I believe Thames Valley will be a great place to build affordable housing for the city. The Fanshawe and Quarry courses would also be valuable as housing developments.

I know this is falling on deaf ears,

Sincerely,

Red McLarty  
London, ON

February 11, 2021

Dear Ladies & Gentlemen of the Strategic Priorities & Policy Committee:

Please find below thoughts pertaining to the closing of River Road and some possible suggestions as to how we can work together to save this beautiful golf course.

Within the contents of the City of London Golf Report I was amazed to see that River Road lost \$315,345.00, of which \$140,072 was wages and benefits. It appears like this was an error in judgement closing River Road last season and if the City permanently closes the Road, why was that money spent ?. If River Road was open last year, given the surge of interest in golf, then the worst it could have done was break even and that would have saved the City of London Municipal Golf program \$315,000.

Thames Valley showed a surplus of \$60,331., and Fanshawe a surplus of \$149,049., why is it that Thames with 27 holes paid out \$762,422 in wages which was \$117,240 more than Fanshawe with 45 holes to maintain ??? This significant wage difference at Thames should be reviewed as a possible saving and fine tuning to the Golf System's bottom line.

Last season was unique due to Covid19 and for that reason alone the City needed River Road to be open due to spaced out tee times at the other courses and the surge in people turning to the game of golf as an outlet for outdoor physical activity. Acquiring tee times was a miserable experience for many last year, with the disturbing part being the amount of no shows not only from an opportunity for others to play at those times but the amount of lost revenue to the program and no one holding those "no shows accountable."

The report indicates that Golf should pay for Golf, we have to figure out how to achieve that if we wish to make sure we can keep playing golf at River Road plus enhancing our golfing experiences at Fanshawe and Thames Valley.

I am in a dilemma on the above thought as I am confident that swimming does not pay for swimming, walking and bike paths do not pay for walking and bike paths, soccer does not pay for soccer, tennis does not pay for tennis etc. etc. and I am confident there are many other activities that do not fund themselves but are subsidized by City Hall. Golf pays for Golf because at one time it could, perhaps increased golf related expenses and a different Business model adopted in the nineties have contributed to this turnaround.

Is it possible that River Road could be overseen by one of the existing managing Golf Professionals from one of the other two courses ? Could the pro shop including the limited food and beverage responsibilities not be staffed by capable seasonal casual employees, would this not allow for a wage savings of at least \$30k per year?

Efforts need to be made to address the better marketing of River Road to attract green fee golfers that do not subscribe to a City golf membership. Has this ever been seriously addressed ?.... or just continue to passively advertise in the Spectrum. The Managing Professionals could work together with a volunteer member committee to come up with a plan to promote more play at River Road, every little bit helps.

In the letters included, there is considerable conversation about reducing green fees and other discounts at the Road, at the end of the day discounts should increase rounds played but won't have much effect on the bottom line which is the ultimate goal, however if the discount road is the chosen path..... let the world know those discounts are there!! Perhaps with substantial increased volume the bottom line may look brighter.

Maybe it is time to recognize that if the Membership desires to keep River Road as part of the Membership Program we may have to pay a little more to keep it included. Do some Londoners feel City Hall should be subsidizing Golf to some degree? The reality at present is that is not going to happen in the immediate future. Should Members be willing to address this through an increase in their membership fees? There are just over 2000 Members in which approximately 500 are full members, if each full membership realized an additional \$150 per membership that increase would offer another \$75k plus if the Regular (half ) members fees were increased \$75 x 1500 golfers that would equal another \$112,500 totalling \$187,500.

I want to acknowledge that a Full or Value membership in the City of London is the best Golf Green Fee value in Ontario. The Value membership concept is and perhaps "was" a brilliant idea.

River Road is a good golf course and is challenging but certainly a fun golf experience for both young and old. The City is growing every day, in some way four 18 hole golf courses has got to add to the appeal of individuals, families and new business coming to our City.

Real “hands on management and marketing are necessary in every business, has it ever been anyone’s responsibility to pursue outside revenue?..... “more profitable corporate tournaments”, “signage” , “score card advertising”, creating additional playing programs offered by other courses “Friday Night 9 and Dines”, “a couples night” etc., this is not a “Field of Dreams” where if you build it they will just come.....

City of London Members perhaps never took it seriously that the Road would close, the message has hit home now!!

Years ago City of London golfers made a substantial investment in the creation of River Road and City of London Golfers also generated substantial funds allocated to other City recreational activities perhaps City Hall should not abandon this asset considering those facts.

We are looking at another year very similar to last year in the Golf Industry due to The Corona Virus . The numbers in the City of London Golf Report are black and white for 2020 and support keeping River Road open.

Thank You for your time.

George Buckley  
London, Ontario

**From:** Joe ATTARD  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2021 3:33 PM  
**To:** Woolsey, Heather <hwoolsey@London.ca>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: River Road Closing

I whole heartedly agree with the argument that George Buckley has presented in the attachment below. Please give it your consideration

Joe Attard  
London

**From:** ANGUS JOHNSON

**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2021 3:50 PM

**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] SPPC recommendation - closure of River Road

Re: Report to SPPC on River Road Closure

Predictions of the Golf Team

(1) This recommendation to close River Road is based on an implied prediction by the team that revenues from golf at River Road will continue to decline and it will be an ongoing financial burden to the system as a whole.

(2) Since we are being put in a position of having to depend upon the reliability of the team's predictions, it would only be prudent to consider how accurate their last predictions were. The team predicted last June, that in 2020, Fanshawe and Thames combined would lose \$200000 and that River Road would lose an additional \$55000 to \$80000 if opened.

(3) According to the 2020 report, Fanshawe and Thames actually generated a profit of \$209 000 and River Road closed, lost \$315000. Based on the rounds played at the other courses, I'd argue that if River Road had opened it would have at worst broken even, making the prediction score zero out of three.

(4) Since we are having to depend on predictions, I'd bet that 2021 will be year two of the COVID golf boom and there will be even more play on all our golf courses and larger increases of revenue.

(5) Beyond that, it is more uncertain but I'd guess at least another year or two of boom times are possible as many players who start to play the game get 'hooked', even after the COVID factors, hopefully, are gone.

(6) If you note the golf boom cycles mentioned in the report, they occur roughly every thirty years. The last was in the nineties. COVID may be creating the beginning of the boom of the 2020s.

In short, I don't think there is sufficient reason for action based on the prediction that any of these golf courses is bound to go on losing money. I just don't agree with the guessing.

But if we're in for a boom, courses packed from dawn to dusk and there's still not enough revenue being generated to cover needed infrastructure costs, obviously prices would have to be raised. Perhaps at this point it would be appropriate to get some input from members as to their preferences: sell a course vs. raise the price?

Predictions aside, the other major problem with this report is the proposed coordination of the two recommended actions namely, to close River Road and put it up for sale.

Ceasing Operations / Selling the Asset

I do not believe for a minute that River Road should be sold off. It is a valuable and needed asset whose value will only increase as time goes on. But if you are going to sell it this is clearly not the way to do it.

(1) First, this recommendation to sell the asset avoids the issue of what kind of asset it will be sold as. While only the response of the market will determine this, it is very likely that the greatest value of this piece of property is as a golf course. What might that value look like?

(2) In 1991 it cost London golfers roughly two and half million dollars to create River Road golf course. Add the cost of improvements made over the last thirty years multiplied by some inflation factor and you would have a rough idea of what River Road

is worth now as a golf course. It should be what it would cost to build a similar golf course today. In the meanwhile, to preserve this potential value it should continue to be maintained and operated as a golf course. It does not make sense to cease operations at River Road and then put it on the block.

Reasons:

(1) To potentially sell this as a golf course, it needs to be maintained as a golf course and you need the course open and generating revenue from play to cover those costs.

(2) Potential buyers will be more interested, and pay more for an operation, busy from dawn to dusk, as I think River Road will be in 2021, than in an abandoned landscape. They'll see all these golfers as their potential customers. Otherwise, this is no different from trying to sell any property without 'business', like a closed store, or rental property without tenants, etc. It just has less value.

(3) While operating, every effort should be made to help the operation show a profit to also increase the appeal to buyers.

(4) There have been several golf course sales in the area recently, suggesting buyers may be out there but none have bought 'closed' courses. Tarandowah which was bought out of bankruptcy, could be considered the exception, but it would have probably been viewed by the new owner as a bargain.

(5) Moreover, if you close River Road and just maintain it while trying to sell it, you will once again anger members, who will feel, with some justification, that they are being forced to pay the cost of maintaining a course they are prevented from playing. No small consideration.

Angus Johnson



From: Francine Lamontagne  
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2021 3:47 PM  
To: SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RR golf course

I have been a member at the London City Golf course since 2006 and I always played at RR until last year. I now live in St Thomas & I will not travel to Fanshaw or Thames to play golf. If RR had been opened last year you would have made money with green fees & tournaments as is was the members took most of the available time This summer will be just as bad with the Covid still going on golf is the only sport available. I hope you consider reopening RR

Francine Lamontagne

**From:** Don McMullin  
**Date:** February 11, 2021 at 3:08:47 PM EST  
**To:** [sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)  
**Subject:** River Road Closing

I am in total agreement with the arguments presented by George Buckley, and have a couple of additional points for your consideration.

1. Why does London never take the long view on anything? My experiences were formed by the city's operations in dealing with hockey and rinks in the 70s and 80s. At that time, the city's idea of reacting to rapid population growth, adding high schools, etc., was to spend the least possible amount of money. Roofs were put on outdoor rinks at West Lions, Carling, Silverwoods, etc. No provisions were made to build modern facilities, with showers, or to assist in the running of tournaments, benefiting from the economic potential for tourism resulting from the great high school and minor teams in London at that time. Only with the development, by private developers, of the four rinks at Hockeyland did the city fathers start to understand potential economic benefits. With the collapse of Hockeyland, the city was obliged to build a modern facility at Nichols, and start the long, very expensive catch-up period upgrading the old, covered, outdoor rinks, and the need for twinning the single rinks based on operational economics.

2. Similarly, the city took little advantage of huge and rapid growth Slo-Pitch, and the decline of Fastball in the 70s and 80s. There has never been any specific facilities built for Slo-Pitch in this city. As a result, Slo-pitch City was developed privately in Dorchester, the City stopped maintaining diamonds, and negotiated multi-field arrangements, first with Wally World and then at Dreamers, so games were only played in the SW. Overall interest declined, and the number of adult teams declined from about 450, to the 90 or so playing in Dorchester at present. Huge events like the World's Largest, and the Snow-Ball tournament were no longer run, at great cost to city hotels, restaurants and bars.

3. So now we enjoy rapid growth, from students, immigrants, and Toronto retirees. Do the signs display the true growth numbers? I doubt it. What do those three groups have in common? Perhaps it is golf? Of course it is. The retirees will not all live and play at River Bend, or want to join the Hunt Club, or likely might not want to join a club at all. But they will want to play, frequently or just occasionally. Is it racist to suggest that certain immigrant groups are trying to emulate the success of the LPGA players from their home countries?

Please stop thinking your job is to make each golf course self sufficient this year. Think of the City you seem to be trying to build - 500,000 people or the 700,000 like you admire in Hamilton. These people will generally be older, likely retired, and seeking recreation. River Road, with its 6-3s, 6-4s and 6-5s, is now and will in future be a source of pride to exist in the City of London.

Lastly, I am, and generally always have been, a lousy golfer. I seldom broke 100. I never had a Hole-In-One. But I did have one Eagle. And I had that Eagle at River Road. A three on a par five. A great feeling. And by closing River Road, you will take that memory away from me, but worse, you will be making sure that no one else will ever generate that kind of memory.

Please take the long view. If courageous politicians had not fought to keep Thames open during the Depression, and WWII, we would not have it now. And if courageous politicians had not used foresight in dealing with London's Boomer growth, we wouldn't have Fanshawe either. Think of the future.

Quick Quiz - How many councillors know that Torrey Pines in San Diego is a municipal golf course? How many know that it was developed to provide cheap golf for the many U.S. Navy people who retire there? Just asking.

Don McMullin

**From:** jcampos jcampos  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2021 1:04 PM  
**To:** SPPC <[sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road Golf Course

I'm so disappointed that the city is thinking of closing River Road Golf Course. To see the mismanagement of the city courses has been so frustrating year after year. Maybe instead of closing River Road, fire the management team for such a poor job performance. Last year the opportunity was there to make lots of money if River Road was opened. How much did it cost to maintain River Road last year? I did not play a round last year at the City Courses because of lack of available tee times. This year, like many other people, I will not purchase Membership if River road is closed. The City of London must look at ways to make more profit at city golf courses because the opportunity is there with a management team that knows what needs to be done. Rounds of golf with food package deals is an idea like some other courses do to attract more golfers and revenue. Sometimes less is more. Cheaper prices for BEER, people might buy at golf course instead of bringing their own as I see a lot of that at city golf courses. Lost opportunity!!! Keeping regular membership fee above \$325 instead of \$259. I'm willing to pay that amount. Westminster Trails, Maple Ridge, and East Park are charging \$375 for theirs this year. River Road has to attract more revenue outside of golf fees. Weddings, better food choices and deals, golf cart deals, etc.

I don't understand why Golf is such a burden on the city when other services are funded by property taxes and always a burden on city taxes. Re: Bus Rapid Transit as an example. That has been a complete waste of money. That's just one example. I could go on, but I would spent the rest of this year listing all the money the City of London throughs away.

**KEEP RIVER ROAD OPEN**

**GET A NEW MANAGEMENT TEAM TO RUN CITY GOLF COURSES TO START MAKING PROFITS**

**From:** Clyo Beck

**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2021 11:00 PM

**To:** SPPC <sppc@london.ca>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The Recommendation to SPPC to close River Road Golf Course

**Proposal: Open River Road Golf Course to Reduce COVID Transmission**

Ontario's Ministry of Health is predicting a third wave of COVID come Spring 2021, due to more easily transmissible virus mutations. If it is the intention of London City Council to open London's golf courses to the public during that time, I question the wisdom of closing River Road Golf Course.

It seems to me that opening River Road will be absolutely necessary to protect golfers from these more easily transmissible mutations because this will allow golfers to spread out across three courses instead of two.

Also, because the first tees of the Hickory and The Classic are so close together, the entry point at Thames Valley is a very difficult place in which to social distance, unlike the entry point of River Road.

River Road is also an ideal venue in which to provide golfers the opportunity to play low interaction "bubble golf" by allowing them to play in discreet social bubbles with no interaction with the pro shop or other groups.

If London's other two golf courses will be open, it only makes sense to keep River Road open to prevent the spreading of the virus that comes when people crowd together.

Given the popularity of golf, you can be sure crowding will occur with only two venues.

Clyo Beck

**From:** Brian and Donna Knowles

**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2021 9:12 PM

**To:** City of London, Mayor <[mayor@london.ca](mailto:mayor@london.ca)>; van Holst, Michael <[mvanholst@london.ca](mailto:mvanholst@london.ca)>; Lewis, Shawn <[slewis@london.ca](mailto:slewis@london.ca)>; Salih, Mo Mohamed <[msalih@london.ca](mailto:msalih@london.ca)>; Helmer, Jesse <[jhelmer@london.ca](mailto:jhelmer@london.ca)>; Cassidy, Maureen <[mcassidy@london.ca](mailto:mcassidy@london.ca)>; Squire, Phil <[psquire@london.ca](mailto:psquire@london.ca)>; Morgan, Josh <[joshmorgan@london.ca](mailto:joshmorgan@london.ca)>; Lehman, Steve <[slehman@london.ca](mailto:slehman@london.ca)>; Hopkins, Anna <[ahopkins@london.ca](mailto:ahopkins@london.ca)>; Van Meerbergen, Paul <[pvanmeerbergen@london.ca](mailto:pvanmeerbergen@london.ca)>; Turner, Stephen <[sturner@london.ca](mailto:sturner@london.ca)>; Pelozo, Elizabeth <[epelozo@london.ca](mailto:epelozo@london.ca)>; Kayabaga, Arielle <[akayabaga@london.ca](mailto:akayabaga@london.ca)>; Hillier, Steven <[shillier@london.ca](mailto:shillier@london.ca)>; Livingstone, Lynne <[llivings@London.ca](mailto:llivings@London.ca)>; Stafford, Scott <[SStaffor@London.ca](mailto:SStaffor@London.ca)>; CPSC <[cpsc@london.ca](mailto:cpsc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road Golf Course

**To begin as a tax payer in the City of London, I am in favour of the City of London opening and operating River Road Golf Course in the Spring of 2021.** There is the possibility that continuing Covid restrictions which impacted all golf courses in a positive way in 2020 could result in more rounds being experienced throughout the system in 2021. Having read the KPMG report <https://pub-london.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=70901> to the City based on 2018-2019 operations, purely on an economic basis one could agree that the obvious path for the City would be to close the River Road operation or sell the property for continued operation or lease it to a current golf course operator, allowing it to meet the needs of existing or future players in the area.

Having said this, I am in favour of maintaining the status quo, the City is probably going to cover any short-term losses through the land appreciation and with new residential development taking place in the southeast quadrant hopefully these younger residents will be golfers.

When the City talks about saving money, the small amount associated with River Road golf course represents rounding off compared to the following areas of expense:

- LTC expenses presently and going forward in an ever-changing world out of control.
- Core Area expenditures to improve the area giving huge grants (give away) and tax incentives to developers, and look at how successful this has been. Also bike path expenditures to please small portion of population.
- Social housing (not that we don't need it) but high cost and huge maintenance costs going forward and unfunded
- Subsidization of industrial land and development costs.
- Not sure if it costs City (taxpayer) but the investment in soccer fields has been significant in recent years, underground watering, mowing at least twice a week.
- Investment in the Arts impacts only a small percentage of the population
- etc. etc,

In closing it is lucky that the Thames and River Road courses do not pay taxes if so, they would both be in trouble. In the KPMG report they identified an item of expense which was "*Wages and Benefits*" which accounted for 52.8% while the industry norm was 37.8%. Perhaps through the analysis of all operating income and expenses the Net Operating Income could be increased. Obviously, London like most other municipalities has developed golf courses to meet the needs of those that can't afford private memberships and allow our youth the experience golf at a reasonable rate.

**Please vote to approve the continued operation of the River Road Golf Course beginning in 2021.** Thank you.

**BrianKnowles**

**Do not look back. That is not the direction we are going.**

February 11, 2021

City Clerk's Office  
Room 308  
300 Dufferin Ave.  
P.O. Box 5035  
London, On  
N6A 4L9

Submitted by email : [sppc@london.ca](mailto:sppc@london.ca)

Dear Sir/ Madam:

**RE: Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee (SSPC)  
City of London's Service Review: Recommended Closure of River Road  
Golf Course**

I am writing to give notice of my objection to the closure of River Road Golf Course.

The grounds for my objection are as follows:

1. the closure of River Road reduces the enjoyment of my golf membership due to the fact there are too many players searching for limited tee times at Thames and Fanshawe Golf course
2. River Road golf course provides a natural habitat for many species. There are environmental concerns should the property be used for development

**Enjoyment of the Golf Membership**

I have been a member of the City of London Golf Courses since 2017. Having the three (3) golf courses available to golf increases the enjoyment level for all. Each of the municipal courses provides a different challenge due to their different designs. The courses are close to all residential areas in London and reduce travelling time. For example , if you live by River Road Golf Course, Thames Valley is not always an option.

**Environmental Concerns**

River Road is a natural habitat for many species. If sold for development , this would impact the environment that could never be replaced.

The City of London should not base their decision on a cost benefit analysis. Our recreation department provides many sports that do not show a profit but have a positive impact on the whole community.

**RE: Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee (SSPC)  
City of London's Service Review: Recommended Closure of River Road Golf  
Course**

In my opinion, the long term effects of COVID-19 on golf participation will not revert back to normal after vaccination. Fortunately COVID-19 has increased participation in golf and I think it would be short sighted to assume that things are going back to normal anytime soon.

Yours sincerely,

Freda Donovan

**From:** Olindo Rizzolo  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2021 7:50 PM  
**To:** SPPC <sppc@london.ca>  
**Cc:** George Buckley  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fw: River Road Closing

Dear Committee, I am in total support of keeping this course open for many of the same reasons mentioned in Mr. Buckley's attachment. Based on many of the points mentioned I believe that a further review should be taken to keep this course open. As the season approaches once again, we will have to struggle to get tee times and thus produce the over use of the courses open. It is an opportunity to do the right thing for our city and those that support our great city courses. Please reconsider this decision.  
Thank you for your time.

O. Rizzolo  
London, Ontario



**From:** Valerie Clark

**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2021 9:57 PM

**To:** SPPC <sppc@london.ca>; CPSC <cpsc@london.ca>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Input to City of London SPPC around possible River Road Golf Course closure

Dear SPPC Members,

I am writing to recommend the City of London open and operate River Road Golf Course for 2021 and future years.

Last year with only Thames and Fanshawe City golf courses open to those with memberships, it was very difficult to reserve a golf time even close to the time or the day one wanted to play. I have had a membership for the past 3 years. Because of last year's frustrating experience to get t times, if River Road is not opened, I will golf elsewhere in 2021. I know a number of other city golf members who will also do this.

The City of London staff say they are loosing money with operating River Road and the other 2 courses. The private golf courses just outside London offer rounds at more reasonable rates than the City courses and turn a profit. Otherwise they wouldn't be in business. Lessons can be learned from them. Are there too many high priced managers in this department?

Covid-19 brought out many new and golfers last year. Of all years, the City would have done well with keeping River Road open during 2020.

Sincerely,

Valerie Clark  
London, ON

**From:** Jim Russell  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2021 10:26 PM  
**To:** SPPC <sppc@london.ca>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road Golf Course

SPPC,

I have been a member of the city run golf courses for at least 10 years. It seems that every year it is the same thing. The city run courses have lost money and everybody is threatening to close River Road. Like that is the solution. In all the years I've been a member of the city courses I have never heard anybody try to define what the real problems are with River Road. Without defining the real problems you can never come up with any real solutions. I don't know how anybody can put the blame on a golf course.

I have heard the city run golf courses lost money again last year with a record number of rounds played. River Road did not even open its doors and it's getting blamed again. The city run courses will continue to lose money as long as those managing the courses continue to turn a blind eye to the real issues.

Sincerely,

Jim Russell

**From:** Allen Lobsinger

**Sent:** Friday, February 12, 2021 12:00 AM

**To:** SPPC <sppc@london.ca>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Recommendation to cease operations at River Road golf course.

To the Strategic Priorities and Planning Committee:

As a membership user of the City of London Golf System, I am concerned about the recommendations to close and dispose of River Road golf course. I think as the attachment letter suggests, recommendations should be considered to how to make River Road a viable part of the System. Not a closure!

After looking at the recommendations, charts, graphs and revenues and expenditures, I was at a loss to understand why River Road was closed for the 2020 season. No revenue (\$26) but maintenance expenses created a much larger deficit than previous years.

I am confident that the Committee will make an informed decision for the future of municipal golf in the city of London.

Allen Lobsinger

**From:** herbertp.m herbertp.m  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2021 1:44 PM  
**To:** Recreation <[Recreation@london.ca](mailto:Recreation@london.ca)>  
**Cc:** Lehman, Steve <[slehman@london.ca](mailto:slehman@london.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] River Road Input

I have been a member of the London Municipal Golf courses for many years. Last year with the closing of River Road and the increased number of golfers, golfing on the London courses became a frustration. Getting tee-off times was a nightmare. Trying to getting a tee-off time within one minute of the time we were to call, and all the morning tee-off times were gone. How could all the tee-off times be booked in one minute? I have a feeling your staff worked with some members to block book tee-off times ahead of time. How else can you answer my concern? The bottom line for me is - I will not join the Municipal courses this year as I am not prepared to experience the same frustration in booking tee-off times unless you open River Road and allow more choice of tee-off times as I had never experience getting tee-off times in previous years. . There are many other courses around London that will welcome my money. I have a 3 plus percent increase in my municipal taxes and yet you can't keep River Road open. A course I spent much of my time playing

No River Road - No membership or playing by me.

Regards: Paul Herbert

## MEMO

---

**Date:** Thursday, February 4, 2021

**To:** Strategic Policy and Priorities Committee, City of London

**From:** Lori Da Silva, CEO, RBC Place London

**Subject:** RBC Place London Board Appointment Recommendation

---

### **Recommendation:**

Reappoint Mr. Garrett Vanderwyst to the RBC Place London Board of Directors for a two-year term February 1, 2021 to November 30, 2022.

### **Background:**

Mr. Vanderwyst was first appointed to the RBC Place London Board in 2020 for a one-year term. Mr. Vanderwyst has been an active board member during his first year representing the business community with a focus on sustainability. Mr. Vanderwyst's background and experience in the agricultural community in SW Ontario and community connections is an asset to the RBC Place London Board of Directors.

Mr. Vanderwyst has an Honours B. Comm Agriculture from the University of Guelph and grew up working with his family's agribusiness operation and currently share-crops as a hobby. Since 2017, Mr. Vanderwyst has been focused on the sustainability business sector and is currently the owner of Argent Electrical Inc and Vice President of AMBER Energy Co-operative. In addition, Mr. Vanderwyst is currently a member of the Elgin Federation of Agriculture and serves as a Director for Libro Credit Union.

In 2012, the London Convention Centre Corporation now operating as RBC Place London By-Law was updated and approved by Council. Section 4 of the By Law addresses the composition of the Board of Directors. Paragraphs (1) through (4) identify the sectors which are to be represented on the Board. The sector representation is important to ensure good relationships with the communities that drive a high percentage of conventions to RBC Place London.

*Section 4 reads as follows:*

- (1) The Board of the Corporation shall be composed of the Mayor as a member ex officio and ten members appointed by Council:*
- (a) two of whom shall be Members of Council;*
  - (b) six of whom may be engaged full-time in or otherwise representative of one of the following sectors of the community:*

- (i) hospitality;*
  - (ii) travel and transportation;*
  - (iii) health care;*
  - (iv) business;*
  - (v) marketing or public relations;*
  - (vi) digital media;*
  - (vii) sports;*
  - (viii) agriculture or agri-foods; or*
  - (ix) education;*
- (c) one of whom shall not be engaged either full-time or part-time in any sector mentioned in clause (b) or (d); and*
- (d) one of whom may, but need not, be a member of the not-for-profit corporation Emerging Leaders London Community Network.*

*(2) Council shall nominate individuals for appointment under subsection (1).*

*(3) If an individual engaged in a sector mentioned in clauses (b) or (d) of subsection (1) is nominated to the Council, the Council shall first satisfy itself that the individual can generally represent the sector and can fairly serve the best interests of the Corporation and the sector having regard to the individual's personal interests.*

*(4) Expressions of interest of individuals in serving as directors may be solicited:*

- (a) by advertising in a newspaper having general circulation in the municipality;*
- (b) by a posting on the Corporation's and/or the City's website; and/or*
- (c) in any other manner determined by the Council, acting reasonably;*

*and the Civic Administration shall submit a list of names of interested individuals to Council, who shall consider such individuals prior to making its nominations.*

RBC Place London Board members can serve up to a maximum of 6 years on the Board with terms not exceeding 36 months.

c.c. City of London, Clerk's Office  
RBC Place London Board of Directors