

From: Rob Ferris

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

To: CPSC <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