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**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