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To: 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