



Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

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REPORT #: CPS-26-009 **COMMITTEE DATE:** 2026-04-21
REPORT TO: COTW-General **DUE IN COUNCIL:** 2026-04-28
SUBJECT: Pickleball Courts – Update and Next Step

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council **RECEIVES** Report CPS-26-009;
- 1.2 Council **APPROVE** reimbursement to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club for costs related to sound mitigation measures, totaling \$13,748.17, at the Virgil Sports Park Pickleball courts, funded from the Capital Reserve; and,
- 1.3 Council **DIRECT** Staff to review and consider land use permissions for Pickleball within the Town's Zoning By-laws.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The report provides an update on the closure of the Virgil Sports Park pickleball courts for the 2026 season and outlines next steps, including identifying alternative play opportunities.
- Indoor and outdoor pickleball options remain available locally and in nearby municipalities, with staff coordinating with the Pickleball Club and Niagara Parks Commission to expand access.
- Future municipal court development is challenged by noise impacts on nearby residents, with current parks lacking suitable buffer distances.
- Staff recommend reimbursing the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club \$13,748.17 for prior contributions to noise mitigation at the now-closed courts.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update regarding staff actions and steps taken in relation to the closure of the Virgil Sports Park Pickleball courts. Additionally, this report identifies alternative opportunities and future considerations.

4. BACKGROUND

At its February 2026 Committee of the Whole meeting, Council considered the future of the pickleball courts at Virgil Sports Park. Due to litigation or potential litigation concerns, these discussions occurred in Closed Session in accordance with the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

Following these discussions, Council directed that the courts remain closed for the 2026 outdoor season and that Staff identify alternative outdoor locations to support pickleball play.

5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

As a result of the Council's direction, Staff undertook a review of what opportunities exist for community members to continue to play indoor and outdoor Pickleball within Niagara-on-the-Lake and within our neighbouring municipalities. Staff also began to understand what future opportunities exist within the community for municipally owned courts; engaged with the local Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club; and sought to further understand the impacts of pickleball on the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Existing Pickleball Opportunities

- **Indoor:** Opportunities to play Pickleball remain available within Niagara-on-the-Lake. Indoor options currently include booking time at the Town's Community Center for public use, or joining the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club and participating in its scheduled indoor times. The club currently uses the community center and other local facilities that are able to accommodate indoor play. Staff reviewed to determine whether the Town's arenas might be suitable for indoor play; however, the complexity of installing and maintaining the required lines and competing pad time with other user groups has proven difficult to coordinate. Other indoor pay-to-play opportunities also exist within both Niagara Falls and St. Catharines.
- **Outdoor:** At this time, the Niagara Parks Commission owns and operates four outdoor pickleball courts within Niagara-on-the-Lake. They are located at Queenston Heights Park, within Queenston. These courts are not free; however, seasonal memberships or daily rental options are available. The 2026 rates are \$65 for a season pass that includes parking, or \$5 for drop-in play.

In Niagara Falls, a new 6-court complex was built, within a 10-minute drive of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Border. Additionally, Niagara Falls offers 10 other municipal parks that contain dual-lined courts able to accommodate both pickleball and tennis. All these courts are operated on a first-come, first-served basis.

St. Catharines also offers 9 outdoor courts on a first-come, first-served basis. Several other courts are located in other regional municipalities, with further information available on their respective webpages.

Stakeholder Coordination

To assist with a coordinated approach, staff have engaged with representatives of the Parks Commission and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club to bring the two organizations together to discuss what mutually beneficial opportunities may exist. Following a meeting between Town Staff and the Parks Commission, where contact information was shared for further follow-up, the Town stepped back, allowing the Parks Commission to reach out and discuss.

The Town further worked with the Pickleball Club to identify additional opportunities to play indoors at the Community Center.

Future Opportunities for Pickleball

At this time, staff have reviewed various articles and datasets to determine an appropriate distance to place a Pickleball court from a residential area, with the goal of reducing noise conflicts. While nearly all available information and studies are not scientific, there is general consensus that it may be most appropriate to locate a Pickleball court a few hundred metres from a nearby residential area. Staff have reviewed our current parks and, so far, concluded that an ideal location for a court that would provide between 200 and 500 metres from residences is not available without disrupting current sports fields or amenities. As future parks are built and staff consider renewal opportunities within existing parks, Pickleball court opportunities can remain a focus.

To assist further with ensuring future Pickleball courts are placed adequately and in proper locations, Staff are recommending a review of Town zoning provisions be conducted to assess appropriate locations for the future installation of pickleball courts. As the Town has seen a slight increase in residents wanting to build courts on their private property, the preparation of specific provisions related to pickleball will also help to ensure minimal disruption to neighbouring lots.

Reimbursement of Sound Mitigation Measures

When the Virgil Sports Park Pickleball courts reopened in the summer of 2024, the Town completed a capital project to install noise-reducing panels. At the time, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball club contributed \$13,748.17 as a donation towards the project. With the closure of these courts, the Club has inquired about having the donation returned. Staff have reviewed and find this request reasonable.

6. STRATEGIC PLAN

The content of this report supports the following Strategic Plan initiatives:

Pillar

1. Vibrant & Complete Community

Priority

1.2 Economic Development & Community Partnerships

Action

1.2 b) Community Partnership

Pillar

1. Vibrant & Complete Community

Priority

1.3 Strategies & Masterplans

Action

1.3 a) Strategies & Masterplans

7. OPTIONS

7.1 **Option 1:** Receive Report, Approve Reimbursement to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club, and direct staff to review and consider land use permissions for

- Pickleball within the Town's Zoning By-laws. **(Recommended)**
- 7.2 **Option 2:** Receive this Report, Do Not Approve Reimbursement; however, direct staff to review and consider land use permissions for Pickleball within the Town's Zoning By-laws. *(Not Recommended)*
- 7.3 **Option 3:** Receive this Report, Do Not Approve Reimbursement and do not direct staff to take further action towards the future of pickleball within Niagara-on-the-Lake. *(Not Recommended)*

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Reimbursement to the Pickleball Club in the amount of \$13,748.17 is proposed to be drawn from the Capital Reserve.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental impacts associated with this report. Future site evaluations will consider environmental and land use compatibility as part of any proposed pickleball facility developments.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

Given the high level of community interest, ongoing communication will remain important. The Town will continue to provide updates through established communication channels as Staff advance work related to alternative locations and long-term solutions.

11. CONCLUSION

Pickleball remains an important recreational activity in Niagara-on-the-Lake, with growing participation throughout the community. Council's direction to close the Virgil Sports Park courts for the 2026 season reflects the need to balance recreational opportunities with neighbourhood compatibility and evolving best practices.

Reimbursement for noise-reducing panels (\$13,748.17) recognizes the efforts made by the Pickleball Club, while ongoing collaboration and continued analysis will support the identification of appropriate long-term solutions.

12. PREVIOUS REPORTS

N/A

13. APPENDICES

N/A

Respectfully submitted:

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