



Proposal

March
2025

Tillsonburg Sport and Recreation Advisory Committee



Proposal to the Sport and Recreation Advisory Committee

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club is to arrange for facilities, assist and promote the growth of pickleball as a sport for all ages in the Tillsonburg Ontario and surrounding region as well as fostering social interaction among its members.

Purpose of the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club

- Promote the sport of pickleball for all ages in the Town of Tillsonburg and area
- Develop and improve the skill levels of all players
- Provide opportunities for club members to interact socially and competitively
- Provide opportunities for club members to play outside of Town-run programs
- Where applicable, work with the Town of Tillsonburg Parks and Recreation Division to improve and expand pickleball-playing facilities in Tillsonburg

Introduction

Over the past 3 years, a group of dedicated pickleball enthusiasts have attended both the Sports and Recreation Advisory Committee and Town Council meetings to advocate for the development of 6-8 dedicated municipal outdoor pickleball courts in our town. Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in North America and Tillsonburg is no different. We felt it was essential to represent the best interests of our community. After much communication with the town they encouraged us to form a club which would provide one voice for the pickleball community.

One of the goals of establishing the club was to facilitate communication with the town, to share our vision as pickleball players and explore opportunities for collaboration to further grow the sport in Tillsonburg. In line with this recommendation, we organized a meeting at the Town Centre Mall in April 2024, which was well attended. By May 1st, 2024, the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club was officially formed, and our first Annual General Meeting was held. By the end of December 2024, the club had 141 members.

Since its formation, the club's Board of Directors has regularly met with the leaders from the Community Centre for information exchange, strategic planning and collaboration on all matters related to pickleball. This partnership has been positive and collaborative, and we are confident it will continue to be beneficial as we move into 2025.

At our Annual General Meeting members shared their ideas and expressed a desire to secure additional indoor play spaces. Finding suitable indoor locations on short notice proved to be a challenge, but we successfully arranged for indoor play at Annandale Public School twice a week. While this arrangement still does not fully meet the community's pickleball needs, we remain optimistic and committed to exploring further opportunities to increase available play spaces for our members.

Throughout our first year as a club, there have been several key accomplishments and highlights that we are proud to share:

1. **Ongoing Communication and Coordination with the Town of Tillsonburg-** We maintained consistent dialogue with town officials to ensure alignment and progress on pickleball-related initiatives.
2. **Collaboration with the Recreation Department-** We successfully requested and consulted with the Town's Recreation Department to create pop-up courts at Southridge and Memorial Parks, Fall 2024.
3. **Expansion of Outdoor Court Resources-** In addition to the painted lines on the pop-up outdoor courts, the Club invested in portable nets, which will enhance future outdoor play. These nets can be used by members for recreation play, lessons, and other activities.
4. **Streamlined Paddle Organization-** To ensure fair play and efficient use of the outdoor courts, the Club implemented a system for organizing paddles. Additionally, the club purchased balls that club members used throughout the season.
5. **Lessons for All Skill Levels-** We provided 132 lessons throughout the year, ensuring that all members had the opportunity to improve their skills and enjoy the sport.
6. **Social Events for Community Building-** The Club organized numerous social events, offering members opportunities to connect and build friendships.
7. **Leadership in Club Tournaments-** The Club took the lead in organizing our first Club Tournament in August 2024, and we worked in partnership with the Town for the Town's tournament held in September 2024.
8. **Membership with Pickleball Ontario and Pickleball Canada-** We proudly became a member in good standing with both Ontario Pickleball and Pickleball Canada which is 80,000 members strong.
9. **Creation of a Public Facebook Page-** The Tillsonburg Pickleball Club launched and coordinated a public Facebook page to keep the community informed and engaged.
10. **Development of a Club Website-** With assistance of Pickleball Ontario, the Club developed a user-friendly website to serve as a central hub for all information related to the sport and the Club.

11. **WhatsApp Communication for Members-** We created and manage a WhatsApp to keep all members up to date on important information, including:

- Information about Lessons for members.
- Local and Provincial pickleball news.
- Tournament information from surrounding areas.
- Regular Newsletters.
- Meeting and event notifications.
- Updates on ongoing socials such as a large potluck BBQ on a local farm.
- Promotion of Club and Town tournaments.
- Skill development clinics and drills

12. **Family Fun Day Event-** The Club organized a well-attended Family Day event in September 2024 to introduce pickleball to families and promote the sport in a fun, accessible way.

13. **Indoor Play at Annandale Public School-** The club successfully arranged indoor play at Annandale Public School Monday and Wednesday nights October 2024 to May 2025.

14. **Junior Pickleball Coaching-** We are providing free coaching to the junior Pickleball Programs held at Westfield Public School in partnership with the Town of Tillsonburg's Recreation Department in Spring 2025.



Participants at one of the summer tournaments



Club social events

Proposed ideas for the Town of Tillsonburg
Pickleball Court Lines on the Tennis Courts

We deeply appreciate the Town's investment in building three dedicated courts, which have been a wonderful addition to our community. As you know from the data you have collected, the new courts have been heavily used since the day they were opened.

The popularity of Pickleball has been increasing with each passing week. The indoor Pickleball programs run by the Town are always sold out, as are those programs offered by Stonebridge and the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club.

Given the above, there is absolutely no doubt that there will be an increased demand for outdoor court space in 2025. It seems clear that the existing three outdoor courts will be insufficient to meet the demand for play.

Our Town needs more pickleball courts, however, we know that building new courts is an expensive endeavour. A far less expensive option to building more pickleball courts would be to simply insert pickleball lines on the existing tennis courts. Painting both tennis and pickleball lines on newly built and newly resurfaced courts is a widespread practice across both Ontario, and North America. The multi-purpose court usage would be one of the most inexpensive options to deal with the Pickleball court capacity issue.

Further, this proposed course of action is supported by the data that the Town collected last year regarding the use of the Pickleball Courts and the Tennis courts. This data showed that the court usage by Pickleball players vs. Tennis Players was roughly 4-1.

With respect to the above idea, we propose the following:

- With the use of lighter noninvasive paint, paint each of the existing tennis courts with pickleball lines.
- With the new lines on each tennis court, we can accommodate 2 pickleball courts on one tennis court.
- The Club would provide the portable nets.
- Tennis players will always have the first opportunity on the courts unless we are hosting a tournament that would require more courts. In that case ample notification would be given to the tennis community.
- The club will also provide, at the expense of the club, a stainless-steel equipment storage container that would be vandal-proof with a keypad. This equipment storage unit would have space to store; nets, balls, brooms, squeegees, and a first aid kit. This would be situated within the pickleball courts.

Proposed ideas for the Town of Tillsonburg
Pickleball Court Lines on the Tennis Courts

The efficiency and benefits of multi-use courts

Given the increasing population and the rise in pickleball participation, it makes sense to optimize our existing resources within our town to accommodate these changes.

Multi-use courts offer several benefits:



Financial Responsibility: By utilizing courts for multiple sports, we can provide more recreational opportunities without the need to invest in separate facilities for each sport. School boards have been utilizing this process in gymnasiums for years. **This helps maximize the value of taxpayer dollars which is very important. \$\$**



Efficient use of Space: Multi-use courts allow for versatile recreational space that can support a range of activities, making the best use of available land and ensuring that the communities needs are met.



Encouraging Local Activity: Currently, many Tillsonburg residents are travelling to neighboring communities to play pickleball which means they are spending their money in other towns. By providing local multi-use courts, we can keep players in town and support our local economy. We all know how important it is to **“shop local”!**



Proposed ideas for the Town of Tillsonburg **Pickleball Court Lines on the Tennis Courts**

Many municipalities across Ontario are adopting multi-use courts to address the growing demand for recreational spaces. Communities such as North Bay, Port Rowan, Stratford, Fort Erie, Thamesford, Uxbridge, Severn, Norfolk County, Brantford, Vaughan, Mississauga, Cambridge, and Zorra Township (which is currently fundraising for the development of multi-use courts) have embraced this model to serve a wide range of recreational needs.

Population Growth and Changing Demographics

According to the 2021 Census, Tillsonburg experienced a population growth rate of 17.3% between 2016 and 2021, which significantly outpaced both provincial and national growth averages. Looking ahead, Tillsonburg's population is projected to increase by an additional 18.6% between 2021 and 2026, and another 18.6% from 2026 to 2031. This means that between 2016 and 2031, the town's population will grow by approximately 10,331 people, with much of this growth occurring in the 25-75 age range. As our population continues to expand, there will be increased demand for recreational spaces that can serve diverse interests.

The Growing Popularity of Pickleball

In recent years, the popularity of pickleball has exploded. The Canadian Sports Information Research Centre reports that pickleball participation in Canada has surged by 57% since 2022. This trend is indicative of a shift in recreational preferences, with more people of all ages seeking easy-to-learn, low-impact sports like pickleball.

While tennis remains a beloved sport, its participation growth in Canada has been relatively modest, at just 7.1% during the same period. This demonstrates that the demand for pickleball facilities is outpacing that for tennis, highlighting the need for communities to adjust their recreational spaces accordingly.

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In 2023 Pickleball Canada commissioned a national research company to look at pickleball participation levels in Canada. In 2023 it was found that more than 1.37 million individual Canadians are playing pickleball at least once per month, with more than half playing four or more times per month.

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Proposed ideas for the Town of Tillsonburg

Dedicated Court Times at the newly created courts on Hardy Ave.

The skill levels among our members vary depending on their experience and their personal goals. Some players are seeking fun and casual play, while others are looking for more competitive opportunities. As players develop their skills through lessons and practice, they often seek higher levels of play that are still enjoyable and engaging.

Our club is well-equipped to meet these diverse needs. We have the expertise and resources to organize dedicated play times for players at all levels, and we recognize the importance of providing seniors and beginners with specific times to enjoy the game at their own pace.

We propose the following schedule and structure to the Town of Tillsonburg:

- **Monday-Friday 8am-12pm:** Organized play based on skill levels, including: *Learn to play, Intermediate, Advanced, Seniors*
- **2-3 evenings a week:** Organized play for recreational and competitive levels.
- **Ladder play and Leagues:** The Club will organize ladder play and leagues (men's, women's, mixed) for different skill levels.
- **Skill Development Clinics:** We will provide regular clinics designed to help players to improve skills, with particular focus on beginners to encourage growth of the sport.
- **Open Court for Public Play:** We propose that one of the three courts to be designated for open, public use, on a daily basis. If not in use by the public, the club can utilize the third court for organized play.
- **Tournaments:** The Club will host tournaments throughout the year, further enhancing the visibility and appeal of the sport within the community.
- **Open Houses:** We will offer a minimum of five, no-charge open houses each year to encourage public participation and promote club membership.
- **Liability Insurance:** The Club will provide additional liability insurance for its members through Pickleball Canada.
- **Court Maintenance and Oversight:** The Club will serve as an extra set of eyes on the condition of the courts, reporting any necessary repairs, instances of vandalism, or misuse of the courts. We will maintain a set of rules to ensure the courts are being used appropriately and not for other activities.



In light of the population growth in Tillsonburg now and in the very near future and the rise in pickleball's popularity, the Town of Tillsonburg should consider the conversion of existing tennis courts into multi-use courts. This would be a cost-effective solution to meet the growing demand for pickleball facilities, while also efficiently utilizing our recreational space. By making this investment, Tillsonburg can provide residents with more opportunities for physical activity, enhance community engagement, and retain more spending within the town.

Pickleball is a sport that encourages physical activity and fosters community engagement. It's simple rules and accessibility make it a great choice for people of all ages and abilities, from children to seniors. By expanding pickleball opportunities locally, Tillsonburg can promote an active, healthy lifestyle for its residents and can then bring tournaments into town which will attract economic well-being and an increased vibrancy to our community.

It's not talked about much but pickleball or the availability of pickleball in a community has become a deciding factor for people wanting to move somewhere new and out of the city. Tillsonburg has already proven itself to be ideal for anyone wanting to move somewhere new and exciting, safe, clean, filled with activity and possibility. More pickleball courts will certainly make Tillsonburg even more viable as the perfect place to live in Canada!



Free lessons for members



Game on!!!



Last day of the 2024 Season

Summary of this proposal


I think we can all agree that Pickleball is the fastest growing sport not only in Tillsonburg or Canada but in all the world!

Pickleball is here to stay and will be around for a very long time and the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club would like to be responsible and proactive to help the sport grow in Tillsonburg in the most effective and efficient manner possible for everyone involved.

As a club we would like to highlight three points in this proposal.

- **We are very grateful to the Town of Tillsonburg for everything they have provided for us so we can play this sport that we and everyone else loves so much, Thank you!**
- **We ask that we have more courts to play on and the most economical and practical way of doing this for the town and for the taxpayers is to put pickleball court lines on the tennis courts located on Hardy ave.**
- **We ask that we can have dedicated court times as indicated in this proposal. With the very large and growing number of people wanting to play we find this to be an essential ask. Almost all sports in town are organized by the town or a club and it only makes sense. In order for us as a club to make the game of pickleball more pleasurable for everyone, having it organized is imperative.**

The Tillsonburg Pickleball Club looks forward to discussing how we can work together to make this vision a reality for Tillsonburg, the beautiful town we all are proud to call home.

Thank You  from all us at the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club!
CONNECTED. ENRICHED. INSPIRED.

Tillsonburg Pickleball Club Board Members

Diane Peacock- President
Carolijn Verbakel - Vice President
Andy Wilcox - Treasurer
Carla Cameron
Karen Northgraves
Brian Prendergast
Peter Northgraves

