

This is a request to appear before City Council on December 9th & 10th, 2019. I will be discussing the redevelopment of the Regent Par III Golf Course. My name is: Lauren Gamble. My address is: [REDACTED]. My phone number is [REDACTED].

The following is a written summary of what I will be presenting:

My name is Lauren Gamble and I am here tonight to oppose the redevelopment of the Regent Par III Golf Course into a recreation hub; particularly in respect to the removal of the urban forest to do so.

According to a CBC 2019 News article Regina city administration reported that the financial outlook in Regina is tough. The population is rising & financial reserves are low. The City said that property taxes are the main source of money for the city, but costs are overtaking the amount of money being brought in.

An earlier CBC News article, reported that the City of Regina hiked taxes by 6.49 per cent in 2017. This was the biggest property tax hike in decades. The city also approved a two per cent increase to the water utility rate that year. In 2018 and 2019 property tax went up 4.3% placing each of those years in the top 25% property tax hikes for the last 2 decades.

In this problematic financial environment the City of Regina is considering spending 3 million dollars on a recreation hub on the Regent Par III land. In the process, the plan is to destroy much of the urban forest to put in a multi sports field. If a recreational field was really needed there are much more financially responsible ways to go about doing so.

It appears that a great deal of the money would be spent to unnecessarily cut down hundreds of mature trees on the golf course land and build a sports field. There are far better locations in Coronation for a recreation hub including the ACT Ball Diamonds and the Pony Park Diamonds which are already underutilized and void of trees. Evidence based research suggests that conserving trees is key to mental health as well as carbon reduction.

According to Chris Sale, Senior City Planner the golf course land is the only land the City will even consider for a recreation hub in Coronation. Sale claims that City Council already made the plan to take out the trees and turn the golf course into a recreation hub. He claims that Coronation, North Central and Regent Park are underserved for these things. He goes on to point out how taking the field out of the hub plan would weaken the entire plan. Further he claims that a sports field will increase activity and provide an opportunity for neighbourly interactions and safety.

Sale went on to veto the idea of using the ACT or Pony Park diamonds as the location for the hub citing reasons that primarily revolved around the diamonds being heavily used, the need for numerous diamonds in one location for tournament use and because it would take more public consultation to do this.

Sale's reasons for having to place the hub on the golf course are weak for many reasons. First, the value of saving an urban forest on Treaty 4 land is paramount particularly when the field can easily be moved 50 feet to the north.

However, to counter some of Sale's points we put forth the following:

Our community group spoke to a representative of Baseball Regina. The representative informed us of something we already knew and that was that until 3 years ago these diamonds were rarely if ever used. This was around the time the City decided to develop the golf course land. The representative also told us that it is not necessary to have a bunch of ball diamonds in one location for tournament purposes and that in fact people who play in ball tournaments are used to moving around to various fields and don't consider it a problem at all. This was contrary to what we were being told. Also, Pony Park is underutilized.

The city claims they need the ACT Ball diamonds because there are 5 of them making it good for tournaments. According to a Baseball Regina representative whom our group spoke with 4 weeks ago 5 or more diamonds are not a necessity for a tournament and in fact it is the norm to have numerous diamonds in various locations being used for a single tournament. It is not any kind of hardship and it is in fact what is expected by teams. Needing the 5 ACT ball diamonds in one place for tournaments is therefore just one more excuse being used by the city to destroy the trees and as it turns out it isn't true according to experts in the area of baseball.

Outside of Coronation there are too many possibilities for the building of multiple diamonds to name all. A few still in the north end would include Maple Ridge Park, Rochdale Park and Lakewood Park. All located in Twin Lakes an area underserved for ball diamonds with only 2 in the entire neighbourhood. In other areas there is Pacer Park, Optimist Park, Columbus Park, Currie Field, McMurchy Park, and Sangster Park just to name a few.

The City's Master Recreation Plan claims it wants to cut the number of ball diamonds in the City in half so that there would be 1 ball diamond per 2,500 people. Coronation already has 16 ball diamonds or 1 ball diamond per 465 people which is nearly 6 times the number the city recommends.

We spoke to a representative of baseball Regina and he said:

Ball teams expect to have numerous locations sometimes more than 12 teams play at one time

With all of the other diamonds in Regina the ACT diamonds are not absolutely essential to the world of baseball in the City

The ACT diamonds were not used for many years and only began to be used again around 3 years ago which is the same time the City started to look at the golf course for redevelopment.

Wouldn't it be great if you could turn that ball diamond space that is nothing but bleak gravel 10 months of the year into a recreational sports field space that the disadvantaged children living in

the adjoining social housing could look out on from their apartments and that they could enjoy? Multiple ball diamonds could be kept and there would still be room for a sports field (as determined through Google Earth). Wouldn't that make a whole lot more sense than removing hundreds of established trees from the urban forest at the golf course? Not only logically but also financially.

There are other areas of land in Coronation Park where it would cost far less to build a recreation hub because hundreds of trees would not have to be removed. If the ACT Ball Diamonds are used for the hub the cost to tax payers would be far less. The diamonds are located 50 feet from the golf course and not a single tree would need to be destroyed to convert this land and the expense to tax payers would be slashed. The Pony Park diamond location would also work well and cost taxpayers far less.

Ironically, the City of Regina Master Recreation Plan says we need to get rid of half of the ball diamonds in the city because there are too many. The ACT would be a good place to start.

To destroy the golf course urban forest at great expense to taxpayers because the city wants to put a recreation hub there is financially irresponsible. The City would be spending money to destroy trees when that is unnecessary. A "hub" does not need to be void of trees. In a growing city there is even more need for connection to nature. Show our youth that we are preserving our trees and not turning a blind eye to the research around climate change.

For these reasons and others I am opposed to building a multi purpose field on the Regent Par III Golf Course land.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'L.G.' followed by a long horizontal flourish.