



MEMO

To: Recreation and Culture Standing Committee
From: Kari Kluge, Director of Recreation and Culture
Date: January 28th, 2025
Subject: Parsons Park and Rogers Arena Retaining Wall Update

During an inspection of Parsons Park in late summer 2024, staff identified issues with the retaining wall and seating area located between the Parson's Park ball diamond and the south end of Rogers Arena. These findings underscore the need for near-term attention to ensure public safety, compliance with building codes, and the protection of the arena's foundation.

The inspection revealed that the pathway and bleacher access at Parsons Field are shifting away from the arena building and toward the baseball diamond. This movement has also affected the retaining wall at the home team's dugout, which is being pushed out of place and encroaching into the dugout. These structural issues have been exacerbated by the deterioration of the cribbing and surface wood used in the seating area, which has exceeded its expected lifespan of 25 years and is now compromised.

Additionally, the design of the bleachers presents several safety hazards. While the individual step heights technically meet building code requirements, the cumulative drop from the top to the bottom creates a significant fall risk due to the absence of railings or barriers. This risk is further compounded by the lack of proper drainage from the arena roof, which channels water directly onto the ball diamond, particularly in the batter box and home plate area. The pooling of water on the field after rainfalls frequently creates unsafe playing conditions, often resulting in game cancellations and further highlighting the urgency of addressing these drainage and structural issues.

The bleachers were originally constructed to serve as a retaining structure for the addition to the arena, which includes washrooms access and the Junior A dressing room/entrance. If left unaddressed, the continued erosion and structural compromise of this area could jeopardize the foundation of this south addition to Rogers Arena.

To assess the situation further, staff engaged Tulloch Engineering, whose inspection confirmed the severity of the issues. Tulloch's findings indicated that the bleachers are structurally unsound and require a comprehensive reconstruction. They also highlighted the need to address the erosion of the retaining wall, which plays a critical role in supporting the foundation of the south end of the arena. Furthermore, they noted that the current design does not meet accessibility standards as outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

In response to these findings, Tulloch Engineering has provided a design plan that addresses these concerns. The proposed plan ensures compliance with AODA standards by incorporating accessible entrances to both sides of the field and viewing areas. It also includes solutions for proper water drainage to redirect runoff away from the field and the arena foundation, as the current drainage channels water from the arena roof directly onto the ball diamond, particularly in the batter box and home plate area. This has contributed to water pooling on the field, often creating unsafe conditions and necessitating game cancellations. Furthermore, the design features railings and appropriate step heights to mitigate fall risks, as well as options to access all spectator areas of the field, including the top and field-level viewing areas on the third base line and access to the spectator area on the first base line.

Staff are preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) based on Tulloch's technical drawings and 3D renderings (see below), with the goal to commence construction of the project in September. To minimize disruption to the Spring/Summer leagues, Staff are exploring options to ensure that play can safely continue at Parsons Park during the on-going construction at Rogers Arena this spring and summer. Temporary bypasses for the seating area are being planned to maintain access, and adjusted parking plans are under consideration to address the limited availability. To mitigate these challenges, users will also be encouraged to utilize street parking on Central Avenue and access the ball diamond via the Central Avenue entrance, in addition to the limited parking spots available in the shared parking lot with Rogers Arena.





Addressing these issues at Parsons Park is essential to ensure public safety, maintain compliance with AODA and building codes, and protect the structural integrity of Rogers Arena. Staff will be budgeting this project in the 2025 Capital Budget to ensure it can be completed this year. The estimated cost for this project is between \$100,000-\$150,000. Staff will also bring the plans forward to the Accessibility Committee for review and feedback.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Kari Kluke in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'KL' followed by a surname.

Kari Kluke
Director of Recreation and Culture