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New pickleball courts spring up in Acton

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The sport of pickleball continues to be a smash hit in Halton Hills, so much so that the number of players taking up the sport is more than the size of the facilities that the town has been able to provide.

Some relief came early last week when Mayor Rick Bonnette and some councillors were on hand for the unveiling of four new courts - two permanent playing surfaces and two more with portable nets - which provides plenty of opportunities for those playing in the summer when added to the six other outdoor courts at the Acton Arena & Community Centre.

The permanent courts are said to be the first of their kind in this area.

But Courtney Warner, director at large for the Halton Hills Pickleball Players' Group (HHPPG), said a lack of public gymnasium facilities

for winter play has forced many local residents to travel to the Milton Velodrome for their weekly exercise at the Mattamy Athletic Centre, where nine indoor courts are in use.

"We've had to cut our membership to 80 players because we can't accommodate any more," said Warner, who is hopeful that more gym space may become available when the new Norval church is built next to the new fire station in Georgetown.

Currently, the HHPPG, which is in its third year of operation, uses two indoor courts at the Living Hope Alliance Church in Georgetown for winter play.

Kevin Okimi, the town's manager of parks & open space, said options for multi-purpose outdoor courts could be in play as part of the new skate park project, although nothing has been finalized.

"What we're hoping for is when the town sees how

successful these courts in Acton have been, they'll model whatever they do at the Gellert on what's happening here," added Warner.

Pickleball is a combination of tennis, badminton and table tennis with court dimensions and rules that make it less strenuous on its participants than the aforementioned sports.

The HHPPG has several players in their 80s and the oldest active member is 88. A coaches' clinic was held last week on the new Acton courts last week involving a couple of professional instructors who provided some tips to players.

The group has also participated as coaches in town-organized summer camps for youths the past couple of years in order to introduce the sport to a new crowd.

"We're trying as a group to accommodate young people and non-retired people, but the way we're set up



Eamonn Maher photo

John Cassidy (right) of Milton sharply returns service during a game of pickleball on the new courts at Acton's Prospect Park as doubles' partner Ron Patey of Georgetown looks on. The popularity of the sport continues to grow and seniors aren't the only ones playing.

now, we're predominantly retirees," Warner added.

The club has made inroads in that area by hosting evening winter sessions at Centennial and Silver

Creek public schools, and an application has been made to the town to book those venues again so youths or adults who can't play during the day have

time set aside on week-nights.

For more info on the local group email cwarner@cogeco.ca or call 905-877-4642.

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