

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Dennis Carter wants you to drop by the Stouffville Arena on Thursdays and try playing pickleball. He'd also like one of the tennis courts outside the Ninth Line rink turned into a pickleball court. Popular in the United States, the sport is also growing in Canada.

Are you ready for some pickleball?

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Dennis Carter wants the people of Whitchurch-Stouffville to know there's a new sports club in town.

While the sport of pickleball isn't new to Whitchurch-Stouffville, the Stouffville Pickleball Club is now officially up and running at the Stouffville Arena every Thursday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Citing the club has close to 80 members hailing from Whitchurch-Stouffville and even as far south as Scarborough, Carter noted the club has access to six makeshift courts on the Stouffville Arena floor.

And the timing for the club's creation couldn't come at a more appropriate time as he said the

sport, which has a solid foothold south of the border, is gathering momentum across Canada.

"Pickleball has a quicker learning curve than tennis and it's a faster game than tennis. My guess is there's close to 1,000 people who play the game in Ontario and around 5,000 in Canada and close to 100,000 in the United States," he said. "When the club started, within one week we had 80 people sign up. I know there are other people in Stouffville who will sign up as well."

Having played the game on a competitive level in tournaments in Canada and south of the border, Carter even went out on a limb to predict some 15 to 20 years from now the sport will be a part of the

Olympics.

The sport is attractive for participants due to several factors, Carter said.

'We need dedicated courts. A lot of the current members want to play the game outside on courts that can be used all the time.'

For starters, it's an activity which the entire family can play.

As well, the equipment used is minimal and it's simple and rela-

tively inexpensive.

In addition to the donning of gym apparel, a pickleball paddle and Wiffle ball are the only other requirements.

Anyone wishing to learn the game can pick it up within 30 minutes, Carter insisted.

While the Stouffville Arena serves as a good local playing facility in the short term, once Aug. 1 rolls around, the club will lose access as the ice will be put back onto the arena surface for the upcoming hockey campaign, said Carter.

This, Carter said, will pose a problem as there's no other local playing facility available.

Carter though is lobbying for some reconsideration from town council when it revamps the exist-

ing outdoor tennis courts and running track near the arena.

He noted plans call for the tennis courts to be expanded to four from the current three. He would like to see one designated for pickleball from May to October.

For this to happen though, Carter is hoping to extol the virtues of the game to the decision makers at town council.

"We need dedicated courts. A lot of the current members want to play the game outside on courts that can be used all the time," he said.

In the meantime though, Carter said anyone wishing to join the club or even to learn what pickleball is all about, can do so during their Thursday sessions at the Stouffville Arena.