

REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: July 7, 2025

FROM: Transportation and Engineering Department

DATE: June 24, 2025

SUBJECT: Regulations for Sports Activities and Equipment within the Municipal Right of Way

LOCATION: Town-wide

WARD: Town-wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the regulations for sports activities and equipment in the Municipal Right of Way identified in this report be passed.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- At the September 16, 2024 Council meeting the following resolution was approved, “That the general prohibition be lifted, in a limited fashion to allow identified sports (to be determined) on only specific types of roads and at certain times of day (to be determined) at the participants own risk, through a staff report that further informs Council on best practices in other jurisdictions.”
- To allow an opportunity for Oakville residents to provide input on the regulations to allow sports activities within the MRW, staff conducted a public engagement that included a town-wide online survey, in-person kiosks at community centres, and promotional materials on the Town’s website, social media and libraries. With consideration of the results from the survey, the recommended regulations by staff are included in this report.
- To further inform Council on best practices in other jurisdictions, staff conducted a second jurisdictional scan focused on enforcement practices, complementing the regulation-focused scan from the [September 16, 2024 staff report](#). Findings from the second jurisdictional scan are included in this report.

- The results from the Public Engagement Survey and the Jurisdictional Scan on Enforcement Practices are included in this report as Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

BACKGROUND:

At the September 16, 2024 Council meeting, staff recommended that “the playing of sports activities and equipment on Town roads continue to be prohibited per Traffic By-law 1984-1 and Municipal Right of Way By-law 2009-072.” However, two alternatives were proposed if Council chose to lift the general ban:

1. Lift the general prohibition in a limited fashion to allow sports activities with some general guidance.
2. Lift the general prohibition in a limited fashion to allow sports activities on only specific types of roads and at certain times of day.

As noted above, Council resolved to proceed with a limited lifting of the ban, pending further information on best practices from other jurisdictions.

Public Engagement Survey

To involve residents in shaping the regulations, staff conducted a town-wide online survey from March 17 to April 7, 2025. Additionally, in-person kiosks were set up at three community centres during the week of March 24, 2025. Staff from Transportation and Engineering and Municipal Enforcement Services were present to answer questions and promote community participation. Paper copies of the survey were also made available should participants elect to not submit the survey electronically.

Kiosk locations were selected based on wards with the highest volume of sports-related complaints in 2023 and 2024. These included Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre (QEPPCC) in Ward 1 and Sixteen Mile Sports Complex in Ward 7. Sir John Colborne Recreation Centre for Seniors in Ward 2 was included to ensure a balanced demographic.

Promotional materials were posted at public libraries, community centre digital poster boards, the Town’s social media platforms, and letters were distributed to school boards and resident associations. Councillors also received materials for inclusion in their newsletters. The materials included survey information, links and QR codes, and details on kiosk times and locations.

Jurisdictional Scan

The original jurisdictional scan, included in the September 2024 report as [Appendix A – Outdoor Sports Activities By-laws Comparison Table](#), compared by-laws in nearby municipalities. This report expands on that with a second scan, focused on enforcement practices, detailed in Appendix B of this report. Regulations from

municipalities that permit sports activities in their municipal rights-of-way are being used as reference by Oakville staff in the development of Town regulations. Staff reached out to the same eight municipalities in Ontario from the first scan as their practices and regulations are more similar to Oakville's and excluded the two that are in Quebec that were included in the first scan.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Survey Results

The survey received 850 responses. Questions were designed to guide the creation of regulations for allowing sports on Town roads. Each question also allowed for additional comments. A summary analysis of the survey results is included in this report as Appendix A.

- **Questions 1 and 2** identified respondents' relationship to Oakville and their postal codes. Only 0.27% were non-residents, a negligible impact.
- **Question 3** asked which sports should be allowed. Ball hockey (674 votes) and basketball (661 votes) received the most support. Soccer (440), badminton (397), and cricket (191) followed. Write-in suggestions included baseball, pickleball, football, and rollerblading. About 9% opposed permitting any sports.
- **Question 4** gauged general support. 84% of respondents were either supportive or somewhat supportive of allowing sports on roads.
- **Question 5** asked about preferred times for sports activities. The most popular option (328 votes) was 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. from May to October and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from November to April. About 15% proposed alternatives, while 3% supported unrestricted play.
- **Question 6** sought feedback on perceived benefits. Between 70% and 89% agreed with the listed benefits. 9% reiterated opposition.
- **Question 7** addressed concerns. Child safety was the top concern (81%). About 8% expressed no concerns in allowing sports activities on Town roads.
- **Question 8** provided space for additional comments. Some suggested implementing traffic calming where sports are allowed. 3% argued for no regulation, preferring discretion. Most comments echoed earlier answers.

Jurisdictional Scan

Most municipalities contacted in 2025 reported no major policy changes from the 2023 scan. Among the eight contacted:

- Hamilton, Toronto, and Ottawa allow sports activities.
- Milton, Burlington, and Mississauga do not allow sports activities.

- Halton Hills and Kingston neither expressly allow nor prohibit them.

Enforcement in all municipalities is typically complaint-driven and educational. Challenges include:

- Balancing recreation with safety (Kingston).
- Public misunderstanding of enforcement limits (Halton Hills).
- Equipment issues, e.g., identifying ownership or dealing with heavy installations (Toronto and Ottawa).

No charges were laid in 2024; municipalities reported high compliance rates, often due to discretionary enforcement.

Review of Other Municipalities' Staff Reports and Council Resolutions

In addition to reaching out to the municipalities with a questionnaire, Oakville staff also reviewed the staff reports in this topic from those municipalities.

- **Toronto** ([May 2016](#)): Adopted [By-law 775-2016](#) to allow portable, temporary hockey and basketball nets, limited to boulevard areas, not permitted to be placed in the vehicular or pedestrian travelled portion of the roadway, including sidewalks.
- **Hamilton** ([March 2017](#)): Enacted [By-law 17-040](#) to permit temporary playing of street hockey under specific conditions, such as types of roads, times of day, and no interference with municipal maintenance services. Disputes are referred to the City's Mediation Service Program.
- **Kingston** ([December 2022](#)): Council chose to deregulate by removing specific prohibitions, using general by-laws to address complaints (e.g., noise, traffic obstruction).
- **Mississauga** ([November 2024](#)): Staff proposed Kingston's deregulation model and noted other municipalities taking similar approaches (London, Oshawa, Vaughan). Council resolved to do further review on the by-laws. Prohibition remains in place.

Based on survey data and the jurisdictional scan, the following regulations could be considered to implement Council's resolution:

- **Permitted Sports:** Ball hockey and basketball only, as they received the most public support and are commonly allowed elsewhere. Equipment must be removed when not in use.
- **Permitted Roads:** Local residential roads only, excluding bus routes. Definitions follow the Town's Road Classification Map that will be made available on the Town's website, if approved, and updated as required. Other road types pose higher safety risks.

- **Permitted Hours:** Daylight hours and prohibited from 8 p.m. to 9 a.m. (May to October) and 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. (November to April). These hours generally align with public preference and ensure good visibility. Sunrise/sunset times are discouraged due to enforcement challenges.

A separate report on the update of the Traffic By-law 1984-1 is included in tonight's Council Meeting agenda. The above regulations have been included in the by-law update, should Council wish to pass this report. No changes are proposed to the MRW By-law 2024-002. Violations (e.g., traffic obstruction, service interference) will still be enforced under existing provisions.

Enforcement Approach

Historically, the Town of Oakville has not issued tickets for individuals playing sports on public roadways. Additionally, when minors are involved, Halton Regional Police are the appropriate authority to address violations. The Town has undertaken enforcement actions in instances involving the storage of sports equipment within the MRW, including the removal and/or issuance of penalties.

The proposed amendments aim to establish that the primary approach to enforcement will be education of the safe use of sports equipment. Enforcement will occur when activities take place outside of the designated permissible times. While investigations will continue to be initiated based on public complaints, service requests will be prioritized and addressed in order of safety risk.

By-law enforcement of storage of sports equipment within the MRW by MES would continue to be provided on a reactive basis, where officers may address a single complaint related to the storage of sports equipment, and all equipment within line of sight of the original complaint. Owners would still be directed to remove the sports equipment from the MRW due to safety and/or obstruction concerns.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

The public considerations in this situation are balancing the conflicting interest of those wanting to enable children and others to legally play sports on Town roads/sidewalks versus those wanting to avoid such activities due to nuisance concerns like noise, property damage, interference with traffic movement, and a genuine concern for neighbourhood safety.

(B) FINANCIAL

Municipal Enforcement Services and Roads and Works Operations will monitor impacts to case volume and staff resources and will incorporate personnel needs in future operational budget requests.

If additional claims are received by the municipality for property damage or injury arising out of the restricted lift of the prohibition, then that would be an additional cost to the Town.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

This report has been jointly prepared by Transportation and Engineering, Municipal Enforcement, and Legal, in consultation with Roads and Works.

Traffic By-law update, if required as a result of this report, will be prepared by Transportation and Engineering, in consultation with Legal.

(D) COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This report addressed the corporate strategic goal for an:
Engaged Community through the provision of provide an effective licensing and enforcement framework to maintain community safety, protection and enjoyment.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

There is no impact to climate change.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Results of Public Engagement Survey on Regulations of Playing Sports on Town Roads

Appendix B – Results of Jurisdictional Scan on Enforcement Practices

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