



February 28, 2017

To: Planning and Development Committee

From: Paolo Mari, President, Burlington Organized Minor Baseball "BOMBA"

Re: Sports Field Service Standard Improvement Proposal

Due to a pressing family commitment, I am not able to present my overwhelming support for the proposal in person. I submit this to the committee for their review and consideration.

In 2015, I stood before the committee and expressed my opposition to user fee increases without increases to service standards.

Since that time, our organization (Burlington Organized Minor Baseball Association "BOMBA") has experienced 42% participant growth in 2016 and currently 15% higher year-over-year growth in 2017. The 2016 season was challenging not only due to this growth but also due to conditions of the playing fields.

The City of Burlington (COB) has been working very diligently on improving the overall park experience for our members; however, the field conditions continue to be a major concern.

The focus of this document are the playing conditions for our youth athletes. In 2016, there were issues raised by officials, coaches, and parents concerning the condition of fields, maintenance of fields, and safety of play.



Throughout this document, I have inserted images from Ireland Park which were taken by myself on June 26, 2016. The images show a diamond with a grass infield that has been compromised due to a lack of maintenance. The condition of this diamond raised many debates internally at BOMBA and with COB staff about the safety of players and umpires on this diamond. The condition of Ireland and many other diamonds create a playing field that can cause injury to players. If a hit ball moves unexpectedly due to "patchy" grass or dead spots on the infield it



can cause various degrees of injury. The infield can also cause unstable footing for players and umpires causing injury.

This is not isolated to grass infield diamonds but also dirt infields. The conditions and maintenance of these diamonds can also create an environment that is undesirable for players. The mix of sand, gravel, and clay can make playing conditions unsuitable for baseball play potentially causing injury.

As mentioned in 2015, BOMBA hosts many high-profile baseball tournaments in Burlington. The Baseball Ontario Midget Eliminations are hosted by BOMBA utilizing mounded diamonds at Ireland, Millcroft, and Nelson parks. We again will host this tournament over the July 1st weekend in 2017. This tournament brings together the best 18U teams in Ontario to determine which team will represent the province at the National Championship. The overall feedback from other baseball associations is that our diamond conditions are inconsistent across the COB and not well maintained.

BOMBA also host the 12U Provincial Championship over the Labour Day Weekend. This past year we held the tournament at non-mounded diamonds at Sherwood, Maple, Ireland, and Nelson parks. Again, the feedback is inconsistent field conditions across the COB.

This is very similar to the feedback received in previous years.

I have discussed and reviewed the Sports Field Service Standard Improvement proposal and applaud the renewed efforts of Murray, Denise, and their teams to address the issues that many sports field users have been expressing over the years regarding service standards and field conditions.

BOMBA **fully supports** the proposal that will increase staff, equipment, and best practices to field maintenance. We feel strongly that Burlington sports fields have fallen behind other communities largely due to the lack of dedicated resources and sound practices, which are addressed in this proposal addresses.

We also feel strongly that the field users should not incur the burden of these additional costs until the field conditions are up to an acceptable standard and condition.

I would encourage Parks Staff to continue to educate BOMBA's coaches and volunteers on acceptable practices and maintenance that we can do to help improve the conditions.

I thank Staff for their efforts in preparing this proposal and the Committee for their time in reviewing and considering it. BOMBA feels it is a necessary step in the evolution of our playing fields.

Yours Sincerely,

Paolo Mari
President, Burlington Organized Minor Baseball Association