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<b>TO:</b>	<b>INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT COMMITTEE</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>SPORT TOURISM STRATEGY</b>
<b>WARD:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT:</b>	<b>K. EATCH, TOURISM COORDINATOR</b> <b>K. DATEMA, MANAGER OF RECREATION AND CULTURE, FACILITIES</b>
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	<b>S. SCHLICHTER, DIRECTOR, ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT</b> <b>D. BELL, DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND CULTURE SERVICES</b>
<b>GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL:</b>	<b>B. ARANIYASUNDARAN, P.ENG, PMP, GENERAL MANAGER, INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT</b> <b>D. MCALPINE, GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE SERVICES</b>
<b>CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL:</b>	<b>M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER</b>

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### **RECOMMENDED MOTION**

1. That the Sport Tourism Strategy, funded by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, attached in Appendix "A" to Report to Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee dated October 2, 2024, be endorsed in principle.
2. That, in partnership with Tourism Barrie, a Sport Tourism Working Group be established to execute on the recommendations and actions identified in Report to the Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee dated October 2, 2024.

### **PURPOSE & BACKGROUND**

3. The purpose of this Staff Report is to provide Council with the details of the Sport Tourism Strategy and the recommendations of Staff on the strategy's implementation.

#### **Background**

4. Barrie relies on tourism as an important economic driver. Specifically, the *Economic Impact of Hotel Stays* is identified as a Key Performance Indicator of one of Barrie City Council's Strategic Priorities for 2022-2026: *Thriving Community*.
5. The tourism industry, recognized broadly as the visitor economy, embraces a vast number of related industries and suppliers, and contributes to most cities' economies. The visitor economy includes all overnight and day visitors to a destination from leisure, business and sports segments, as well as the activities and expenditures involved in supplying products and services for these

visitors by both the private and public sectors, such as accommodations, transportation, food service, attractions, events, and retail.

6. Sport tourism is the fastest growing segment in the tourism industry globally. It is a \$7.4B market in Canada, with Ontario accounting for the largest sport tourism destination in Canada (Sport Tourism Canada, 2021).
7. Tourism Barrie's most recent Annual Report for 2023 states that the total economic impact of sport tourism in Barrie for 2023 was \$48,989,482. On November 23, 2020, Council adopted the City's Tourism Master Plan, which included the development of "...a sport tourism strategy that identifies the structure and resources required to attract and host sport events that positively impact the Barrie brand and community via economic, social and sustainability outcomes" as one of its strategic directions.
8. On September 20, 2021, Council adopted the Tourism Master Plan – Implementation Program, which prioritized the development of a Sport Tourism Strategy that reflects city and regional assets and the Sport Tourism Assessment Template (STAT) Pro Report, developed by Sport Tourism Canada under the leadership of Tourism Barrie in 2019.
9. On May 16, 2022, Council adopted motion 22-A-057 regarding FedDev Funding for Sport Tourism Strategy – Resolution to Enter into Agreement, as follows:  
  
"That the Deputy Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute an agreement with the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev) for the receiving project funding in the amount of \$110,000 in support through the Tourism Relief Fund to complete a Sport Tourism Strategy."
10. In 2022, with funding support through the Tourism Relief Fund from the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, the City of Barrie issued a Request for Proposals to develop a Sport Tourism Strategy. The project was awarded to Sport Tourism Canada.
11. In 2023, after thorough assessment and analysis, Sport Tourism Canada provided the City of Barrie with the draft of the Sport Tourism Strategy (see Appendix "A") to substantially complete the project. Staff have been working on several tourism initiatives over the past year, including the 2024 Slo-Pitch Nationals and the 2024 Barrie Airshow, while working with Tourism Barrie and the consultants to finalize the project and implementation actions.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Methodology**

12. Sport Tourism Canada's methodology included a thorough inventory assessment, SWOT analysis, stakeholder engagement, focus group sessions, and interviews with City staff, Tourism Barrie representatives, and key local stakeholders.
13. The Sport Tourism Strategy also included consideration of the Tourism Master Plan, the STAT Pro Report, and Sport Tourism Canada's proprietary Sport Tourism Roadmap®, among other documents, plans and studies as provided.
14. In developing the composition of the proposed working group and each party's roles, City staff considered Tourism Barrie's active investment in advancing sport tourism in Barrie and leading the growth of the sector with staff sitting on the Sport Tourism Canada Board of Directors, by hosting

the sportbarrie.ca website, by offering the Sport Tourism Growth Grant for Local Sport Organizations (LSOs), and other strategic initiatives.

15. Additionally, Staff utilized the opportunity of hosting the 2024 National Slo-Pitch Champions that were held at the Barrie Community Sports Complex in August of 2024 to validate the relationship model proposed as part of the Sport Tourism Strategy between the City of Barrie, (Recreation and Culture and Economic and Creative Development) and Tourism Barrie in delivering sport tourism events. The event was deemed a success by Slo-Pitch National, the National Sport Organization (NSO) which hosted the event, stating that they would recommend Barrie as a premier sport hosting city in Canada to other organizations hosting sporting events.

#### Summary of Findings

16. As a result of Sport Tourism Canada's strategic analysis, the following ten (10) key findings are identified within the Sport Tourism Strategy:
- a) **Location** – The proximity to Toronto and gateway to Northern Ontario positions Barrie as a potential hub location for sport.
  - b) **Limited number of competition-ready facilities and facility capacity** – Barrie has a limited number of facilities suitable for provincial-level competition or the next level of competition, or these facilities are nearing capacity.
  - c) **Barrie lacks hotels** – Sport event hosting is limited in Barrie due to the number of rooms and quality of available hotels. More hotels, particularly full-service hotels, are required.
  - d) **Barrie is under-investing in sport tourism** – Relative to many communities of a similar size, Barrie is under-investing in sport tourism. Support is needed for marketing, bidding, hosting, and relationship support.
  - e) **Barrie lacks a conference / convention centre** – A conference or convention centre could support major sport events (e.g., volleyball) and provide much needed venue capacity. In addition, banquet and sport business meetings would become a possibility.
  - f) **Outdoor assets are underutilized** – Barrie's lakefront on Kempenfelt Bay sets the city apart from other sport host communities. Use of the lake / lakefront for active sport events seems limited and restrictive.
  - g) **Opportunity for public-private partnership** – Multiple LSOs and stakeholders indicated the desire for public-private partnerships for sport venues with the opportunity for corporate/community sponsorship or fundraising activities.
  - h) **Barrie is stronger with surrounding communities** – The communities in and around Barrie are working to enhance their existing sport venue offering. Partnerships with neighbouring communities could create win-win scenarios.
  - i) **Greater flexibility around zoning and bylaws** – The City of Barrie's zoning and regulatory environment could be more flexible to support sport hosting in non-traditional venues and spaces (e.g., industrial / commercial and/or lake use).
  - j) **Perceived lack of a centralized point of contact for all things sport** – There is a perceived lack of a central point of contact for sport event hosting that is costing the City opportunities. Centralized event hosting could reduce confusion.

17. Sport Tourism Canada identified within the Sport Tourism Strategy that as a result of the research, analysis and key findings, Barrie is currently best suited to host sport events at the regional and provincial levels. There is not enough hotel capacity, services, or quality, nor are there national-standard competition facilities to support most national-level and beyond events.
18. Implementing data and measuring tools at the local- / regional-level to measure economic and community impacts and standardizing their use will provide baseline information to focus investments in areas that provide the greatest growth opportunities and returns to the community.
19. Continuing to refine and improve the local- / regional-level sport tourism offering supports capacity building at the community level for Local Sport Organizations (LSOs) and contributes to building a strong foundation for future provincial, national or international growth, earning buy-in from LSOs and the sport tourism community.
20. The consultant's report identifies that for the City to establish a solid foundation for sport hosting in Barrie and to grow beyond the current regional and provincial level capacity, future development and investment in municipal sport assets, either new or updates to existing, should consider requirements from a sport tourism lens to ensure facilities meet the standards of provincial-, national- and international-level competition where appropriate.

#### Key Recommendations

21. To enable sport tourism success in Barrie, the Sport Tourism Strategy identifies the following six (6) recommendations as priority in addition to the recommendations made in the Sport Tourism Canada STAT Pro Report from 2019:
  - i. Invest people and money into sport tourism.
  - ii. Add new hotel product / capacity and conference facilities.
  - iii. Build sport venues to national and international competition standard.
  - iv. Develop an incentive program for rights holders (e.g. marketing and promotional support, grant programming, etc.).
  - v. Assess the agility of the City to respond to sport tourism opportunities (e.g. streamlined permitting process, accommodating insurance requirements).
  - vi. Focus on partnership and collaboration.
22. By focusing on these six (6) enabling recommendations, the City of Barrie and partner organizations in the sport tourism ecosystem will continue to improve Barrie's potential of being a choice sport host city in Ontario. The goal is to successfully compete provincially and nationally against other Canadian communities for a share of the increasing sport tourism market, and to contribute to the economic and social well-being of the city of Barrie and its residents.

#### Short-Term Actions for Implementation

23. Based on Sport Tourism Canada's assessment, City of Barrie staff and Tourism Barrie have determined that focus should remain on refining and improving the local- / regional-level sport tourism offering to establish a solid foundation for sport hosting in Barrie.
24. To deliver on some of the short-term actions, the City of Barrie and Tourism Barrie will establish a Sport Tourism Working Group composed of representatives of Tourism Barrie and supported by



staff from the Recreation & Culture Services Department and the Economic and Creative Development Department, and complemented by additional members including Local Sport Organizations and local sport experts, champions/stakeholders. The working group will meet regularly to discuss opportunities and ensure alignment among partners and will work to implement the Sport Tourism Strategy

25. To execute on the six (6) priority recommendations described in the Sport Tourism Strategy, the City of Barrie, Tourism Barrie, and the Sport Tourism Working Group will seek to undertake the following actions:

**ACTION: Develop a Sport Bid Guide for use of Local Sport Organizations**

**SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- v. Assess the agility of the City to respond to sport tourism opportunities (e.g. streamlined permitting process, accommodating insurance requirements, etc.)
- vi. Focus on partnership and collaboration

**DESCRIPTION:**

The Sport Tourism Strategy identifies the need to develop standard operating procedures for bidding on sport events. The Sport Tourism Working Group will work to create a sport bidding guide for LSOs, which will identify the roles of Tourism Barrie and the City, as well as resources available to LSOs. This guide will also include a bid package template, venue catalogue, and information on developing volunteer and sponsorship programs.

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** Sport Tourism Working Group

**ACTION: Explore Sport Tourism Grant Stream as part of the Recreation & Sport Community Grant Program**

**SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- i. Invest people and money into sport tourism
- iv. Develop an incentive program for rights holders (e.g. marketing and promotional support, grant programming, etc.)

**DESCRIPTION:**

Capacity potentially exists through the Recreation & Sport Community Grant Program to develop a sport tourism stream.

The Sport Tourism Working Group will review the mandate of the City of Barrie Recreation and Sport Community Grant and the Tourism Barrie Sport Tourism Growth Grant to identify gaps/opportunities to support Local Support Organizations in becoming competition-ready for sport hosting, or to fund in-competition or bid needs they want to pursue. The intent would be to explore dedicating a portion of the existing grant program funding.

Any associated recommendations would be brought forward to Council for consideration.

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** Sport Tourism Working Group

**ACTION: Develop Corporate/Community Sponsorship Program**

**SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- i. Invest people and money into sport tourism
- vi. Focus on partnership and collaboration

**DESCRIPTION:**

Barrie is privileged to have local sport champions who want to contribute to the success of sport tourism within the city. Establishing a sponsorship program will not only provide these local sport champions with an opportunity to get involved, but will also support the LSOs delivering the event.

This program will be made available to LSOs within the Sport Bidding Guide.

Additionally, a robust sponsorship program can offer benefits to more than just sport tourism; City-led events and festivals can also leverage the program to support varying projects.

The Sport Tourism Working Group will be responsible for investigating and developing a sponsorship program that will serve sport-hosting events as well as partner departments

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** Sport Tourism Working Group

**ACTION:** Develop a Sport Event Volunteer Program

**SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- iv. Develop an incentive program for rights holders (e.g. marketing and promotional support, grant programming, etc.)
- vi. Focus on partnership and collaboration

**DESCRIPTION:**

The Sport Tourism Strategy identifies that with a strong volunteer base, sport tourism can be a significant economic driver. A volunteer program can help to establish a sense of community, promote civic pride, and encourage further investment in sport facilities and other development. This volunteer program will be made available to LSOs within the Sport Bidding Guide.

Additionally, a robust volunteer program can offer benefits to more than just sport tourism. City-led events and festivals can also leverage the program to support varying projects.

Development of a volunteer program also aligns with one of the fifteen actions of the Community Safety and Well-being Plan: "The Barrie Public Library and partners will strengthen community by spearheading a coordinated effort to increase the number of active volunteers in Barrie."

The Sport Tourism Working Group will be responsible for investigating, coordinating with the Barrie Public Library, where appropriate to develop a volunteer program that will serve sport-hosting events.

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** Sport Tourism Working Group

**ACTION:** Implement Consistent Sport Tourism Impact Measures

**SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- ii. Add new hotel product / capacity and conference facilities.
- iii. Build sport venues to national and international competition standard.
- vi. Focus on partnership and collaboration

**DESCRIPTION:**

Implementing consistent use of data measurement tools to assess the impact of sport tourism events on our economy and community will ensure accountability and transparency in making future sport tourism decisions.

The Sport Tourism Strategy identifies several data points to be collected as part of any sport tourism event. Incorporating this collection and reporting from organizations in addition to other data points collected through Tourism Barrie and the City of Barrie on a consistent basis will create baseline measures and comparators for assessing future decisions on investment and resources.

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** Sport Tourism Working Group

**ACTION:** Foster Incremental Increases in Ranking for Sport Host City for Local / Regional Events

**SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- i. Invest people and money into sport tourism
- v. Assess the agility of the City to respond to sport tourism opportunities (e.g. streamlined permitting process, accommodating insurance requirements, etc.)
- vi. Focus on partnership and collaboration

**DESCRIPTION:**

The Sport Tourism Strategy included an assessment of sport host structures, human resources, venues, assets and more. It was determined that while Barrie is well-suited to host local / regional events for sports that have existing competition venues in Barrie, there are a few areas that can be strengthened or optimized.

The chart provided on page 47 in the Sport Tourism Strategy (see Appendix "A" to this report) shows Barrie's capacity for hosting local / regional events and identifies where Barrie excels in expectation, meets expectation, or does not meet expectation.

Using this information, the Sport Tourism Working Group will review the assessment and identify the actions needed to improve certain assets and develop a prioritized plan that considers a variety of criteria and potential funding sources for future recommendations as part of facility or other improvements.

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** Sport Tourism Working Group

**ACTION:** Large Sport Tourism Bids

**SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- i. Invest people and money into sport tourism
- v. Assess the agility of the City to respond to sport tourism opportunities (e.g. streamlined permitting process, accommodating insurance requirements, etc.)
- vi. Focus on partnership and collaboration

**DESCRIPTION:**

Larger competition level bidding is often completed two or more years in advance of the competition. Significant planning and lead time, in addition to committed investments and resources are needed to complete. Tourism Barrie as part of their sport portfolio takes part larger sport tourism attraction

activities such as trade shows and conferences on a regular basis. Further, Tourism Barrie has committed a portion of the recent increase in MAT to fund some of this bidding activity.

On an annual basis through the Sport Tourism Working Group identifying, and planning for opportunities for larger sport tourism bids should be completed. Tourism Barrie would then lead the bid process in-line with the standardized workflow and the identification of ancillary support and resources to determine any associated municipal approvals.

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** Sport Tourism Working Group

**ACTION:** Build Barrie's Sport Value Proposition

**SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- i. Invest people and money into sport tourism
- vi. Focus on partnership and collaboration

**DESCRIPTION:**

As the City continues to position itself as a premier investment destination through the work led by the Economic & Creative Development Department, the opportunity to extend that messaging to position Barrie as an attractive sport hosting city for local- / regional-level sport hosting in partnership with Tourism Barrie.

Leveraging the positive feedback from Slo-Pitch Nationals and other sport tourism events to promote Barrie's assets will build upon a robust Unique Selling Proposition.

Further, one of the recommendations identified in the Tourism Master Plan includes having Tourism Barrie lead the development of a Unique Selling Proposition for Barrie. This work is planned for 2025. A sport tourism value proposition would be considered part of this work.

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** City of Barrie, Tourism Barrie

**ACTION:** Strengthen Engagement and Support for Local Sport Organizations

**SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- vi. Focus on partnership and collaboration

**DESCRIPTION:**

The City of Barrie and Tourism Barrie will prioritize regular engagement with LSOs and sport tourism stakeholders to build relationships, define roles and processes between the Tourism Working Group, Tourism Barrie and the City of Barrie and deliver supports, information and resources. This engagement will also assist in building the capacity of LSOs for sport hosting and work to strengthen collaboration across the local sport tourism community and stakeholders.

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** City of Barrie, Tourism Barrie

26. The Sport Tourism Strategy identified recommendations that the City of Barrie can prioritize to ensure long-term success of sport-hosting at the local- / regional-level, as well as to establish a growth trajectory toward provincial- and national-level sport hosting success. Among the recommendations are:

- 
- a) Encourage the addition of new hotel product / capacity and conference facilities through strategic investment attraction methods, including, but not limited to, prioritizing targeted efforts specific to accommodations and conference facility developers and operators.
  - b) Build sport venues to national and international competition standards.
27. The addition of new commercial organizations, such as a hotel or convention centre are subject to the market conditions and private investment. The Economic & Creative Development Department will continue to work with Tourism Barrie and leverage market data intelligence to support and champion the business case for investment in hotel assets in the City of Barrie.
28. When planning future investment in City facilities that contribute to the sport tourism asset base, the City of Barrie can include considerations from the sport tourism perspective including the standards for provincial, national and international competitions. Identifying incremental investment, utilization, and impact to the local community would be included in considerations for decision-making.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT MATTERS**

29. There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters directly related to the recommendation.
30. The implementation of the Sport Tourism Strategy will need to consider environmental factors, with a specific emphasis on waterfront activities that do not have a negative impact on the health of Lake Simcoe.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

31. The following alternatives are available for consideration by the Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee:

**Alternative #1**

The Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee could choose not to endorse the Sport Tourism Strategy in principle and not pursue sport tourism as an economic driver.

This alternative is not recommended as sport tourism is recognized as an economic driver nationally and the City is home to several assets that could support greater sport tourism events. Endorsing the Sport Tourism Strategy and pursuing sport tourism as an economic driver has the opportunity to make greater contributions beyond the current impact of \$48,989,482 in 2023, which supports local business, increases investment in the community and ultimately job growth for the City.

The recommendation for in principle support does not require additional investment at this stage, and enables staff and Tourism Barrie to pursue opportunities to enhance sport tourism in the City. Any requests for investment will come forward independently for Council consideration where and when appropriate.

**Alternative #2**

The Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee could choose to not support the creation of a Sport Tourism Working Group.

This alternative is not recommended as a working group would support the current limited resourcing available at the City to prioritize sport tourism. Additionally, a working group demonstrates the importance of and strengthens collaboration among partners. A working group also provides the following benefits:

- Efficient use of expertise to deliver on sport tourism opportunities.
- Alignment among partners and stakeholders, ensuring all parties are informed of the latest relevant information.

**FINANCIAL**

32. There are no net new financial implications for the municipal tax base resulting from the proposed recommendation beyond the commitment of staff time.
33. As sport tourism continues to be developed, more investment will be required by the City, likely beyond what is generated by MAT revenues. This investment will be necessary for resourcing (among the Economic & Creative Development Department for strategic sport tourism development as well as the Recreation & Culture Services Department for facility management in addition to the high-level customer service required to be delivered to the hosts at the local, provincial and national levels) as well as capital investments. As staff work through the implementation of the Sport Tourism Strategy, any investment recommendations will be brought to Council for consideration.
34. Currently, sport tourism is collectively supported by the City with a Tourism Coordinator (funded by the MAT) and with Recreation & Culture Services staff, as well as by Tourism Barrie who has a staff member that supports sport tourism. There is no dedicated body that solely serves sport tourism within the City of Barrie staff complement.



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**LINKAGE TO 2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN**

35. The recommendation included in this Staff Report support the following goals identified in the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan:
  - a) Thriving Communities
  - b) Infrastructure Investments
36. Establishing a Sport Tourism Working Group to execute on the Sport Tourism Implementation Plan will achieve buy-in from the sport tourism community and establish a strong foundation for a growth trajectory toward provincial-level sport hosting and beyond. This aligns with the goal of creating and fostering programs and opportunities to support community wellness under the Thriving Community strategic priority of Barrie City Council.
37. Applying a sport tourism lens to future improvements and developments of sport hosting facilities will improve Barrie's position as an attractive sport host city for future opportunities. This aligns with the update and improved infrastructure goal under the Infrastructure Investments strategic priority of Barrie City Council.



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**APPENDIX "A"**

**Sport Tourism Strategy**



**Sport Tourism Strategy**

Prepared by:



Funded by:  
Federal Economic Development  
Agency for Southern Ontario

Financé par :  
Agence fédérale de développement  
économique pour le Sud de l'Ontario

Canada 

## Acknowledgements

Sport Tourism Canada, in partnership with The Data Jungle, GM Event Inc., and Toa Consulting, would like to thank the City of Barrie and Tourism Barrie for the opportunity to support the development of Barrie's Sport Tourism Strategy.

We would also like to acknowledge the traditional and unceded territories of all the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities in Simcoe County that have stewarded the lands and the waters for centuries.

**City of Barrie:** We would like to thank the City of Barrie for engaging in this important work and for their leadership, guidance, and oversight throughout the course of the project. The team included Darcy Brooke-Bisschop, Manager of Business Development, Economic & Creative Development; Kevin Datema, Manager of Recreation & Culture Facilities; with additional contribution and support from Stephannie Schlichter, Director of Economic & Creative Development; Kevin Bradley, Manager of Parks Planning & Development; Kristen Eatch, Communications Advisor, Access Barrie / Tourism Coordinator as of July 24, 2023; Dan Bell, Director of Recreation & Culture Services; and Susan Rockey, Business Development Officer. Individuals who participated in individual interviews include Darcy Brooke-Bisschop, Kevin Bradley, Kevin Datema, and Stephannie Schlichter.

**Tourism Barrie:** We would like to thank Tourism Barrie for their guidance and support throughout the project, connecting with local sport organizations and stakeholders, organizing events like the Community Consultations on Sport Tourism Canada's behalf, and sharing important research and data from the tourism sector. We would like to specifically thank Kathleen Trainor, Executive Director, who also participated in an individual interview, and Pam Bothwright, Business & Sport Manager.

### Funding Partner:

We would like to thank the Government of Canada – Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) for funding this project through the Tourism Relief Fund.

### Funded by:

Federal Economic Development  
Agency for Southern Ontario

Canada 



City of Barrie  
Sport Tourism Strategy  
(Last Updated: 2024-03-04)

**Local Sport Organizations and Community Stakeholders:** Many local sport organizations, provincial sport organizations, multi-sport organizations, accommodations providers, and community stakeholders contributed to the Sport Tourism Strategy by sharing their insights, experiences, and ideas for the future of sport and sport event hosting in the future. In addition to the survey participants, the following stakeholders participated in interviews with the project team: Bill Sullivan, CEO, RTO7; David Laliberte, Manager of Athletics and Recreation, Georgian College; Gary Lynch, Manager of Sport and Athlete Development, Indigenous Sport & Wellness Ontario; Jamie Massie; Julian de Guzman and Peter Raco, Simcoe County Rovers; Tim Sample, Barrie Sports Hall of Fame.



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## Executive Summary

### *Introduction / Background*

In October 2022, the City of Barrie in partnership with Tourism Barrie embarked on a journey to create its first five-year Sport Tourism Strategy. The project supports the City of Barrie's Tourism Master Plan to "develop a sport tourism strategy that identifies the structure and resources required to attract and host sport events that positively impact the Barrie brand and community via economic, social and sustainability outcomes." (City of Barrie, 2020) The project was funded by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) Tourism Relief Fund and carried out by Sport Tourism Canada's consulting team with completion in March 2023.

### *Why is Sport Tourism Important?*

Sport Tourism is the fastest growing segment in the tourism industry globally and is a \$7.4 billion market in Canada (Sport Tourism Canada, 2021). A report by Sport Tourism Canada found that Ontario is the largest sport tourism destination in Canada, accounting for 33% of all sport tourism spending in the country. In 2019, Ontario hosted over 3,700 sport tourism events, attracting over 6 million visitors, creating more than 78,000 jobs in the province (Sport Tourism Canada, 2021 and Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, 2022).

### *The Benefit of Sport Tourism to Barrie*

Some of the key reasons why Barrie should consider sport tourism as an economic driver in the region include:

- Economic impact
- Destination marketing
- Community engagement
- Health and wellness
- Social and cultural exchange
- Sport development
- Infrastructure development

### *Approach / Methodology*

Sport Tourism Canada uses its proprietary Sport Tourism Roadmap© as the methodology to assess and develop a strategic approach to bidding and hosting for communities of all sizes. This Roadmap was designed to increase the understanding of a pathway for consistent and repeatable sport tourism success.

The project was divided into four (4) key milestones over a 6-month period, including: 1) Inventory assessment, 2) SWOT and stakeholder engagement, 3) Funding sustainability and the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT), 4) Final report and action plan.



### *Trends in Sport Tourism*

The sport event landscape has changed considerably over the past few decades and continues to evolve at a rapid pace. With the proliferation of the number of sports / disciplines, types of events, number of events, and the ever-changing conditions within which sporting events operate, sporting event owners and host cities have greater demands placed upon them than ever before.

Some of the emerging trends in sport, sport tourism and events specific to small- and mid-sized host communities include, but are not limited to:

1. Expanding definition of sport tourism	9. Investment in female sport
2. Everyone is jumping into sport tourism	10. Outdoor lifestyle sports
3. Sport as an experience	11. Pickleball
4. Flexibility in sport format and rules	12. Live streaming and distribution of content
5. Evolving technical requirements	13. Boosting physical security
6. Increasing sport event rights holders' expectations of host city	14. Government support is critical
7. Multi-year and/or multi-city hosting contracts	15. Agility of governance and operating models
8. Focusing on sustainability and social impact	

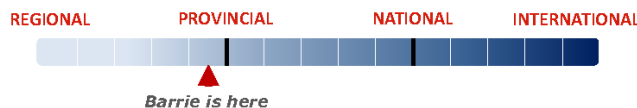
### *Summary of Key Findings*

From the strategic analysis, the findings are summarized as the following:

1. **Location** > Proximity to Toronto and gateway to Northern Ontario position Barrie as a potential hub location for sport, but the city is limited by current facilities.
2. **Limited number of competition-ready facilities and facility capacity** > Barrie has a limited number of facilities suitable for competition or the next level of competition, facilities are near capacity during prime usage hours and/or community programs and existing competitions would potentially be displaced to host sport events.
3. **Barrie lacks hotels** > Sport event hosting is limited in Barrie due to the number of rooms and quality of available hotels. More hotels, particularly full-service hotels, are required.
4. **Barrie is under-investing in sport tourism** > Barrie is under-investing in sport tourism. Support is needed for marketing, bidding, hosting and relationship support.
5. **Barrie lacks a conference / convention centre** > A conference or convention centre could support major sport events (e.g., volleyball) and provide much needed venue capacity. In addition, banquets and sport business meeting would become a possibility.

6. **Outdoor assets are underutilized** > The lakefront on Kempenfelt Bay sets Barrie apart from other sport host communities. Use of the lake / lakefront for sport events seems limited and restrictive.
7. **Opportunity for public-private partnership** > Multiple local sport organizations and stakeholders indicated the desired for public-private partnerships for sport venues and that private funding is available to support.
8. **Barrie is stronger with surrounding communities** > The communities in and around Barrie are working to enhance their existing sport venue offering. Partnerships with neighbouring communities could create win-win scenarios.
9. **Greater flexibility around zoning and bylaws** > The City of Barrie's zoning and regulatory environment could be more flexible to support sport hosting in non-traditional venues and spaces (e.g., industrial/commercial and/or lake use).
10. **Perceived lack of a centralized point of contact for all things sport** > There is a perceived lack of a central point of contact for sport event hosting that is costing the city opportunities. Centralized event hosting support could reduce confusion.

As a result of the research, analysis and key findings, Barrie is currently most suited to host events at the regional and provincial levels. There is not enough hotel capacity, services or quality, nor national-standard competition facilities to support most national or international events.



### *Recommendations > Ideal Sport Profile*

The "Ideal Sport Profile" outlines current state options and future state options for sport hosting for the City of Barrie. These are options specifically for sport event attraction with the goal of increasing the amount of sport tourism in Barrie. The recommendation for the City of Barrie is to adopt an ideal sport profile, focus investment, and explore what is realistic given their hosting strengths.

#### Ideal Sport Profile > Current State Options

- Option 1: More of the sports with a track record of hosting
- Option 2: High school championships
- Option 3: Adult and family participation events
- Option 4: Adult social sports / activities
- Option 5: Maximizing potential of Sadlon Arena



#### Ideal Sport Profile > Future State

Option 6: Youth Team Sports, namely Court Sports

Option 7: Pickleball

Option 8: Watersports

Option 9: Cricket

Option 10: Multi-Sport Games

#### *Recommendations > Enabling Sport Tourism Success*

In reviewing the STC Sport Tourism Roadmap©, the recommendations below have been made to support organizational capacity building and successful implementation of the proposed "ideal sport" profile. Building Barrie's capacity to bid and host is critical to its mid- and long-term success in sport tourism.

In addition to continuing with the recommendations made in the STC STAT Pro Report in 2019, the following six (6) recommendations are considered priority for success in sport tourism, including:

Recommendation #1 > Invest people and \$\$\$ into sport tourism.

Recommendation #2 > Add new hotel product / capacity and conference facilities.

Recommendation #3 > Build future sport venues to national and international competition standard.

Recommendation #4 > Develop an incentive program for event rights holders.

Recommendation #5 > Assess the agility of the City to respond to sport tourism opportunities.

Recommendation #6 > Focus on partnership and collaboration.

By focusing on these six (6) enabling recommendations, the City of Barrie and partner organizations in the sport tourism ecosystem will continue to improve Barrie's potential of being a choice sport host city in Ontario. The goal is to eventually successfully compete provincially and nationally against other Canadian communities for a share of the increasing sport tourism market, and to contribute to the economic and social well-being of the city and its residents.

#### *Conclusion*

The City of Barrie has emerged from the COVID shutdown with a renewed outlook on tourism and the potential of what sport tourism could bring economically and socially. Sport tourism is well-aligned with the culture of this outdoor recreation community, but it will not be an easy path to success. Many of the city's sport venues are not suited for national or international competition, hotels have limited capacity, and a rapidly growing population has put strain on existing infrastructure and sport / recreation facilities, all limiting Barrie's potential as a sport host community. With careful planning and deliberate investment in capacity, facilities



and infrastructure, Barrie can forge a new future and have a positive impact on the city and quality of life of its residents through sport tourism.

## Introduction / Background

Spearheaded by the City of Barrie, in partnership with Tourism Barrie, and supported by a FedDev Ontario Tourism Relief Fund grant, this project was launched to create a five-year Sport Tourism Strategy. The intended outcome of this project was to conduct a strategic analysis of sport tourism in Barrie and develop a realistic sport tourism strategy that would be suited to the city's current economic and political climate. This project supported the strategic recommendation within the City of Barrie's Tourism Master Plan to "develop a sport tourism strategy that identifies the structure and resources required to attract and host sport events that positively impact the Barrie brand and community via economic, social and sustainability outcomes." (City of Barrie, 2020) The project was carried out by a consulting team from Sport Tourism Canada between October 2022 and March 2023.

The goal of this report is to present the background / context, industry trends, current state of sport tourism in Barrie, venue inventory, strategic analysis and recommendations for the City of Barrie's success in sport tourism.

## Why is Sport Tourism Important?

Pre-COVID, Ontario's tourism sector was steadily growing, contributing \$38 billion CAD to Canada's GDP annually (Government of Ontario, 2019). Ontario's tourism industry was one of the hardest hit during the COVID-19 pandemic; some believe it will be one of the last provinces in Canada to fully recover and rebuild.

Sport tourism, however, was one of the first segments of the tourism industry to rebound during- and post-COVID. The mental and physical health and well-being of youth and adults became a priority despite lockdowns, creating an opportunity for communities to re-engage in regional and provincial sport events, positively impacting the sport tourism industry and local economy.

Sport tourism is the fastest growing segment in the tourism industry globally. The sport tourism market in Ontario is significant and has been growing steadily for years. Sport tourism generates approximately \$7.4 billion in economic activity across Canada annually (Sport Tourism Canada, 2022) and supports over 78,000 jobs in the province of Ontario (Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, 2022).



A report by Sport Tourism Canada found that Ontario is the largest sport tourism destination in Canada, accounting for 33% of all sport tourism spending in the country. In 2019, Ontario hosted over 3,700 sport tourism events, attracting over 6 million visitors (Sport Tourism Canada, 2021).

The sport tourism market in Ontario is diverse, encompassing a wide range of sports and events. The province hosts thousands of grassroots and community-level sport events, as well as major sport events or multi-sport games. Major events such as the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games, the Honda Indy Toronto, FIFA Women's World Cup, and the National Bank Open (tennis) attract significant numbers of overnight visitors and generate substantial economic activity. Ontario is also a host of many amateur sport events from the inter-community and invitational level of competition up to national championships on all sports, 52 weeks a year.

#### *The Benefit of Sport Tourism to Barrie*

Sport tourism could play an even greater role in Barrie's tourism industry. Sport tourism not only generates economic benefits, but also promotes social and cultural exchange, enhances community engagement and belonging, and fosters a sense of civic pride and identity.

Barrie has identified sport tourism as a way to "drive pandemic recovery, increasing accommodation occupancy and improving local spend on all ancillary uses while strategically and tactically setting the trajectory for long-term sport tourism programming throughout the city."<sup>1</sup>

Here are some of the key reasons why Barrie should consider sport tourism as an economic driver in the region:

1. Economic impact > Sport tourism generates significant economic benefits for Barrie. It creates jobs, increases revenue for local businesses, and attracts visitors who spend money on accommodations, food, transportation, and other goods and services.
2. Destination marketing > Sport tourism events can help raise the profile of Barrie as a destination for both domestic (regional, provincial and national) and international visitors. Hosting sporting events can attract media coverage and provide exposure for Barrie's attractions, hospitality, and community.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Barrie (accessed November 22, 2023). Bids and Tenders.  
<https://barrie.bidsandtenders.ca/Module/Tenders/en/Tender/Detail/a2907926-2870-4e6c-b310-24e71b8a3cb2>





3. Community engagement > Hosting sport events can provide opportunities for community involvement and engagement. Local volunteers can contribute to event operations, and residents can participate in events as athletes or spectators. This can help build a sense of community, promote civic pride, and encourage further investment in sport facilities and related services.
4. Health and wellness > Sport tourism can promote health and wellness by encouraging active living, physical activity, and sport development. Participants and spectators can engage in sports and recreational activities, which can have positive health benefits and promote healthy lifestyles.
5. Social and cultural exchange > Sport events can bring people together from different regions, cultures, and backgrounds. With Barrie's growing population and changing demographic, sport events can promote social and cultural exchange, facilitate the sharing of knowledge and ideas, and build bridges between communities.
6. Sport development > Events have the ability to inspire youth to get involved in sport. Sport event hosting can bring opportunities for athlete, coach and officials development, furthering the capacity, technical expertise and competitiveness of the city, local sport organizations and participants. In addition, sport event hosting can create opportunities for the development of sport programming.
7. Infrastructure development > Hosting sport events can provide opportunities to develop or improve sports facilities, transportation infrastructure, and other key infrastructure assets through new and diverse funding sources. These investments can benefit the community for years following the sport event, both in terms of infrastructure, but also quality of life for local residents.

This project aims to help Barrie capture a larger part of the rapidly growing sector of sport tourism and reap the benefits that sport hosting has to offer. This project directly contributes to the strategic direction in Barrie's Tourism Master Plan for "Building the Destination", with a focus on sport tourism sector development.

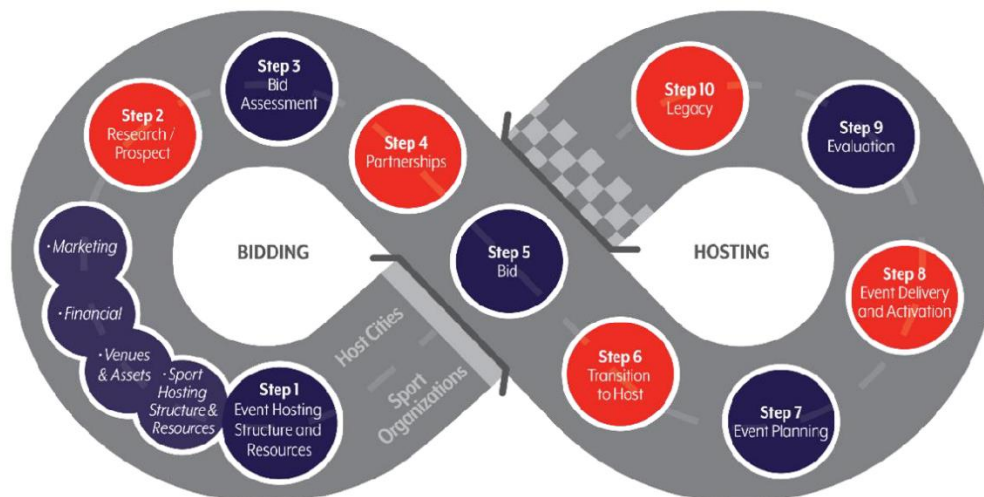
### Approach / Methodology

Sport Tourism Canada uses its proprietary Sport Tourism Roadmap© as the methodology to assess and develop a strategic approach to bidding and hosting for communities of all sizes. This Roadmap was designed to increase the understanding of a pathway for consistent and repeatable sport tourism success.



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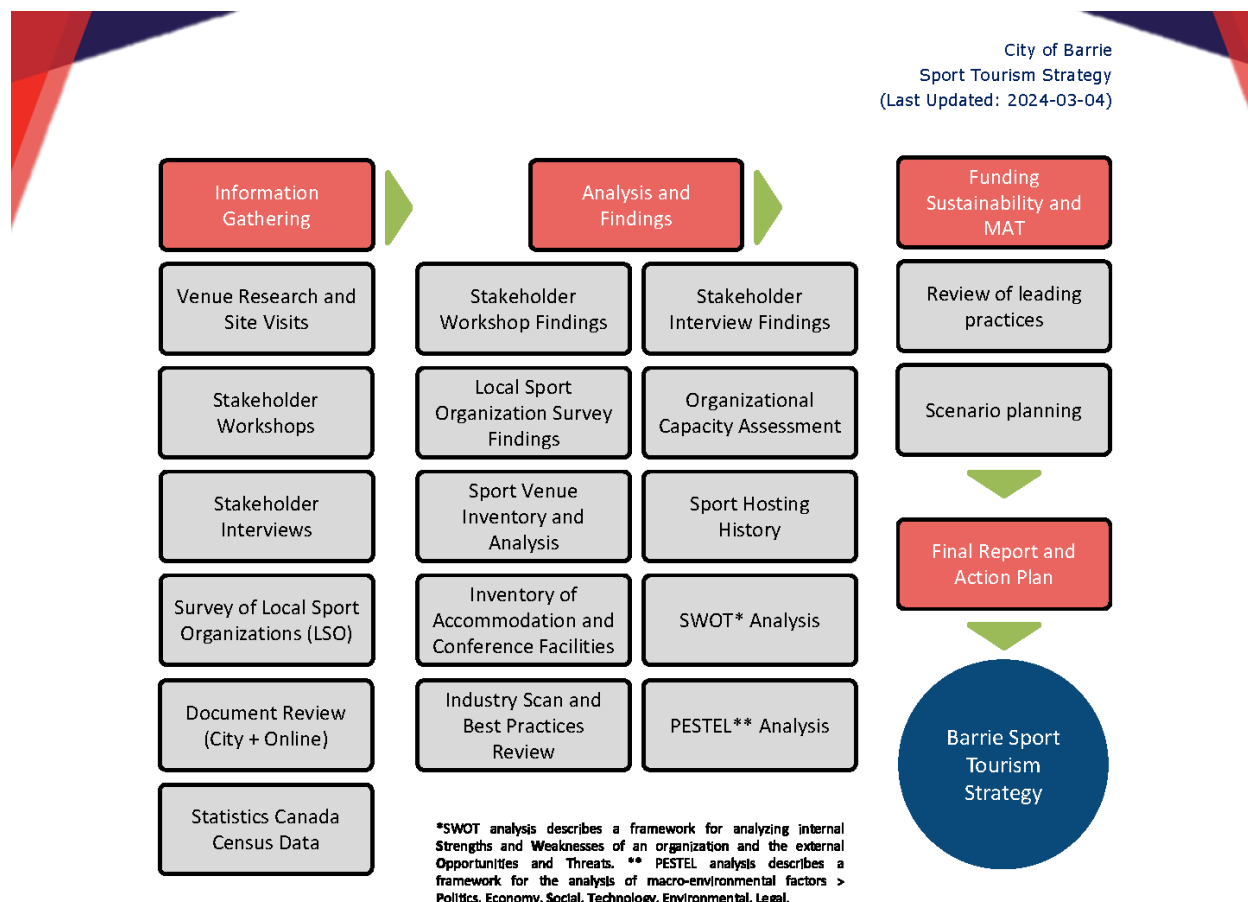
Barrie's Sport Tourism Strategy project was focused on Step 1 and Step 2 of this methodology, conducting analysis and making recommendations for Step 3 through Step 10 of the methodology as well.



The project was divided into four (4) key milestones over a 6-month period, including:

- 1) Inventory assessment
- 2) SWOT and stakeholder engagement
- 3) Funding sustainability and the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)
- 4) Final report and action plan

To achieve these milestones, several activities took place collaboratively with local stakeholders to create a comprehensive view of the City of Barrie's sport tourism environment:



## Profile of the City of Barrie

"The following section is intended to provide a profile of the City of Barrie. **Tourism, as it relates to the City, has evolved significantly since being recognized as a strategic direction, as well as, the development of the Tourism Master Plan (TMP).** Before analyzing Barrie's potential as a sport host community **in support of sport tourism objectives outlined in the TMP**, understanding some key figures and characteristics is important. This profile covers population and demographics, 2022-2026 strategic priorities, overview of the local sport organizations, key sport venues, accommodations and conference facilities, and the tourism sector and municipal accommodation tax.

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### *Population and Demographics*

The City of Barrie is located approximately 114 kilometres from Toronto on Kempenfelt Bay on Lake Simcoe and is home to 147,829 people (Statistics Canada, 2021).



According to Statistics Canada, Barrie's population has grown steadily in recent years. Here are the population figures for Barrie, Ontario, based on Canadian Census data (Statistics Canada, 2021):

2021: 147,829

2016: 141,434

2011: 135,711

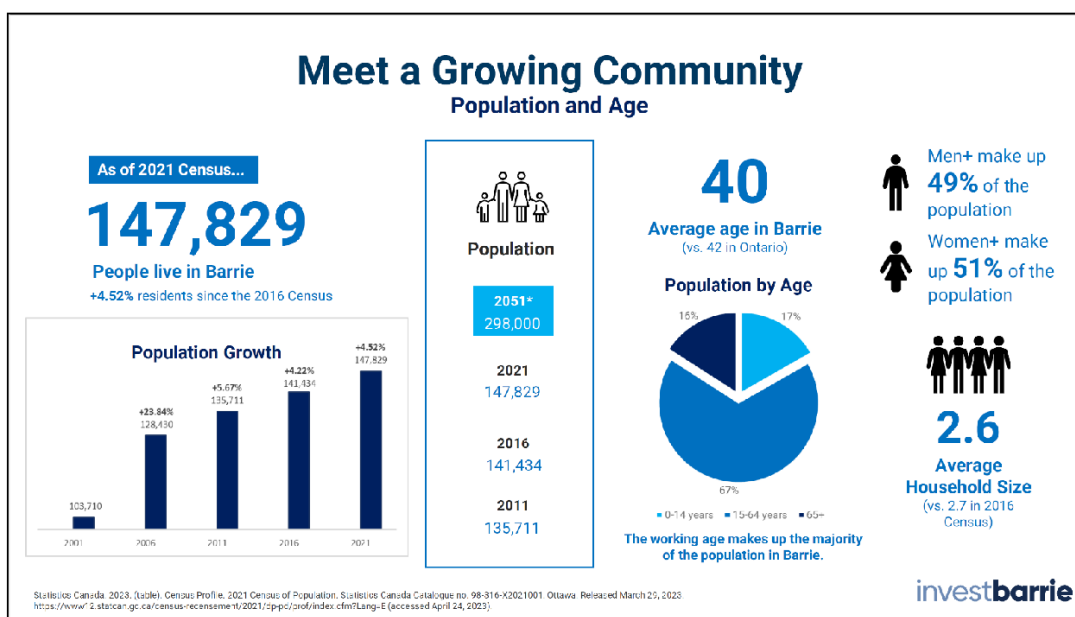
2006: 128,430

This represents a growth rate of ~4.2% between 2011 and 2016, and an estimated growth rate of ~4.5% between 2016 and 2021. Barrie is one of the fastest-growing cities in Ontario, and this growth is expected to continue in the coming years.

With more affordable housing than Toronto, direct access to the GO Train line, quality of life, and access to year-round recreational opportunities, the population growth has been noticeable; so too has the population demographic evolved.



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### *City of Barrie Strategic Priorities 2022-2026*

According to the City of Barrie's Strategic Plan 2022-2026, the following have been identified as strategic priorities:

#### **Affordable Place to Live**

- Encourage a range of housing options to make housing attainable
- Open for business environment to help encourage job creation
- Develop and attract talent to support our employers

#### **Community Safety**

- Support neighbourhood safety and crime prevention
- Address speeding and aggressive driving to ensure street / pedestrian safety
- Work with our partners to implement community safety and well-being plan
- Support community-based policing initiatives

#### **Thriving Community**

- Champion equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Create and foster programs and opportunities to support community wellness
- Foster growth in arts and culture
- Expand and maximize access to parks and recreation opportunities
- Continue to support a vibrant downtown



### Infrastructure Investments

- Make it easier to move around the city
- Fix roads that need attention
- Update and improve infrastructure
- Support active transportation and pedestrian connections
- Implement climate action plans

### Responsible Governance

- Support the services our community needs while keeping tax increases low
- Maintain focus on city core services
- Financial stewardship which includes finding efficiencies and innovation
- Advocating to other levels of government for support
- Ensure accountability and transparency

### Local Sport Organizations

A local sport organization (LSO) is a not-for-profit organization that delivers sport programs and services in the local community (outside of the city's offerings). LSOs are typically run by volunteers and may be affiliated with national or provincial sport organizations, such as Skate Ontario (PSO) or Swim Canada (NSO).

Examples of local sport organizations include community sports clubs and associations, teams, and recreational sports leagues. LSOs may focus on a specific sport or offer a range of sports programs to cater to the needs and interests of the local community.

There are a total of 69 local sport organizations based in Barrie. While there are 64 National Sport Organizations (NSOs) recognized by Sport Canada, Barrie is home to 41 Sport Canada-recognized sports. In addition to the Sport Canada-recognized sports, 28 other sport / recreation activities are located in Barrie (e.g., Cornhole).

The Sport Canada-recognized sports that have established organizations in Barrie include:

- |                        |                  |                 |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| • Alpine Skiing        | • Cross Country  | • Lawn Bowling  |
| • Archery              | • Skiing         | • Ringette      |
| • Athletics            | • Curling        | • Rowing        |
| • Badminton            | • Cycling        | • Rugby         |
| • Baseball             | • Equestrian     | • Sailing       |
| • Basketball           | • Figure Skating | • Shooting      |
| • Biathlon             | • Football       | • Snowboard     |
| • Bowling - 5 & 10 pin | • Golf           | • Soccer        |
| • Boxing               | • Gymnastics     | • Softball      |
| • Canoe and Kayak      | • Ice Hockey     | • Speed Skating |
| • Climbing             | • Judo           | • Swimming      |
| • Cricket              | • Karate         | • Taekwondo     |
|                        | • Lacrosse       | • Tennis        |





- Triathlon
- Volleyball
- Water Ski and Wakeboard
- Wrestling

Other sport / recreation activities that have a participant base in Barrie (not recognized by Sport Canada) include:

- Ball Hockey
- Baton
- Bridge
- Cheer
- Cornhole
- CrossFit
- Darts
- Disc Golf
- Dragonboat
- eSports
- Fishing (Sport)
- Flag Football
- Horse Racing
- Horseshoe
- Jiu-Jitsu
- Kickboxing
- Kiteboard
- Mixed Martial Arts
- Motocross
- Muay Thai
- Paddleboarding
- Pickleball
- Powerboating
- Quidditch
- Roller Derby
- Snowmobiling
- Snowshoeing
- Ultimate Frisbee

### *Key Sport Venues*

Opportunities to grow sport tourism are heavily correlated with the facilities a sport host community has to offer. Key venues and fields of play identified by the City of Barrie for review and assessment as part of the Venue Inventory included:

#### **Indoor Facilities:**

- Peggy Hill Team Community Centre (multi-use facility)
- Allandale Recreation Centre (multi-use facility)
- East Bayfield Community Centre (multi-use facility)
- Sadlon Arena (single pad)
- Eastview Arena (single pad)

#### **Outdoor Facilities:**

Barrie Community Sports Complex:

- 8 x Softball diamonds (lit)
- 2 x Baseball diamonds with permanent mounds (lit)
- 1 x Rugby Pitch (not lit)
- 1 x Football field (lit)
- 5 x Soccer pitches (not lit)

#### **City-Wide Outdoor Facilities:**

- Victoria Woods – Rugby Pitch (not lit)
- Huronia North Soccer Complex (9 junior soccer pitches – not lit)
- Lennox Park – 2 Baseball diamonds with permanent mounds (lit)

There are numerous other viable facilities in Barrie that could be considered for inclusion in the Sport Tourism Strategy. All schools (private and public) can be taken into consideration for both indoor gym space and outdoor field space, Georgian College



for courts, baseball/softball and a turf soccer field. The potential use of Lake Simcoe and the outdoor infrastructure and trail networks of Barrie are also venues with potential use. While not analyzed in detail as part of the venue inventory, these facilities were taken into consideration when developing the proposed strategy and recommendations.

### *Tourism Sector*

Tourism Barrie is Barrie's destination management organization and, in partnership with the City of Barrie, works on the long-term development of the community's travel and tourism sector. Tourism Barrie's role in destination management is to build marketing programs for the future in deliberate ways to grow the visitor economy, reach high-yielding and targeted customers at the right times, and respect the community's values that will elevate quality of life, leading to quality of place. Tourism Barrie's primary focus is to drive visitors to the region to an overnight stay in Barrie and to develop programs to increase the visitor economy in a positive and sustainable way, ultimately leading to increased visitor spend and investments in both tourism and the community more broadly.

On January 1, 2019, the City of Barrie introduced a 4% Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT). In 2022, the MAT generated \$1.3M in revenue, which was a 57% increase from 2021 (\$827,500). Barrie's tourism sector is supported financially in-part by the MAT, as Tourism Barrie acquires 50% of the MAT revenue. Tourism Barrie is operating with a limited budget compared to other municipalities of similar size. Tourism Barrie's portion of the MAT revenues is allocated to cover operating expenses and destination marketing costs, which leaves a limited budget to invest in sport tourism and business development. For more information about the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT), please see *Strategic Analysis > Funding Sustainability and the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)*. Please note that all facts and figures specific to this section have been provided by Tourism Barrie for the purposes of this report.

### *Accommodations and Conference Facilities*

The accommodations available in a city are a key component to sport hosting. Barrie is home to a number of hotels, motels, and Airbnbs.

The Barrie Hotel Supply & Occupancy Rates experienced a significant increase in 2016, with the addition of five (5) hotels, but were significantly and negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Several hotel projects that were being considered prior to COVID have since been postponed or were not proceeded with.

Some of the commercial accommodation properties in Barrie include:

- Allure Hotel and Conference Centre (161 rooms, 300 people max for events)



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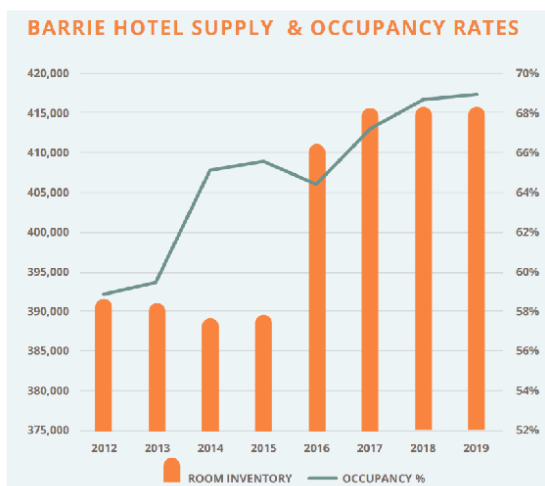
- Best Western Plus (79 rooms, 35 people max for events)
- Comfort Inn (58 rooms, no event capacity)
- Comfort Inn & Suites (88 rooms, 38 people max for events)
- Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriot (74 rooms, 10 people max for events)
- Four Points by Sheraton (78 rooms, 35 people max for events)
- Georgian Residence / Conference Centre (249 rooms, 1400 people for events)
- Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton (104 rooms, 60 people max for events)
- Monte Carlo Inn (82 rooms, 90 people max for events)
- Quality Inn (96 rooms, 40 people max for events)
- Super 8 by Wyndham (82 rooms, 60 people max for events)
- Travelodge by Wyndham (130 rooms, 50 people max for events)

The largest conference facilities (outside of Sadlon Arena) are at Georgian College, Liberty North, and the Allure Hotel and Conference Centre.

Barrie is also home to more than 600 active Airbnbs, which add significant accommodations capacity to the city. Airbnbs are included in the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT).

Pre-pandemic, Barrie's year-round occupancy rate was nearing 69%. Current occupancy rates are approximately 80% in the summer and 55% in the winter. April and November are the lowest occupancy rates.

(Source: City of Barrie > Tourism Master Plan, October 2020)



Tourism Barrie's Annual Report for 2022 stated that 596,221 people stayed in Barrie accommodation, equaling \$48.7M of economic impact in the City of Barrie. Barrie's hotel occupancy remains robust and inline, if not slightly higher, with other comparable cities in Ontario.



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CITY	HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATE	
	2022	2021
Barrie	65.8%	57%
Burlington	57.6%	44%
Sudbury	60%	48%
Kingston	57.9%	44%
Orillia	57%	53%
Kitchener-Waterloo	56%	38%

Barrie is a winter destination, but the 2021-22 winter season hotel occupancy continued in a decline over the 2018-2019 season, remaining at 55% for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 season. The decline was due in part to COVID and climate change, leading to unusually warmer winters resulting in a lack of a snow / ice base required for some winter activities. Barrie's leisure travel continues to drive occupancy rates in the peak summer and fall seasons. The city's advantage is that it is a destination and has a steady year-round hotel occupancy.

Barrie continues to see new tourism investments and businesses opening in 2023. Pre-COVID, the city was in discussions with potential hoteliers expressing interest to build new hotel product in Barrie. Also, several new tourism operators have expressed interest in delivering experiences around the waterfront.

Understanding hotel product, number of rooms, amenities and hotel occupancy rates throughout the year plays a significant role in determining Barrie's potential as a sport host community. For more information on Barrie hotels and accommodations and their suitability for sport tourism, please refer to the *Hotel Assessment Forms* provided by the City of Barrie project team. Please note that all facts and figures specific to this section have been provided by Tourism Barrie for the purposes of this report.

## Strategic Analysis > Industry Scan

The industry scan component of the strategic analysis involved the review and analysis of a large amount of industry data and secondary research. The scan identified industry and market trends affecting the sport tourism sector generally, as well as trends specific to small- and medium-sized communities.



### *Definition of Sport Tourism*

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is articulated as “the movement of people for personal or professional purposes outside of their “usual environment””.<sup>2</sup> This definition has evolved from the previous definition of tourism of “individuals who have travelled more than 50km with at least one (1) overnight stay...”. This new definition recognizes the benefits of overnight visitors, weekend excursionists, residents and non-residents alike visiting from local through international destinations.<sup>3</sup>

Sport Tourism Canada (formally The Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance) defines sport tourism more specifically, stating “sport tourism is any activity in which people are attracted to a particular location as a sport event participant, an event spectator, or to attend sport attractions or sport-related business meetings” (Sport Tourism Canada, 2017).

For the purposes of this analysis and strategy, the definition of sport tourism provided by Sport Tourism Canada (STC) has been applied. This definition has been further expanded for the purposes of this strategy to identify categories within sport tourism:

1. **Sport competition** – organized competitions in the form of matches, league games, tournaments, etc., that are sanctioned by a local, provincial or national sport organization or some other recognized sport governing body (e.g., Softball Ontario U15 Female Provincial Championships)
2. **Mass participation sport event** – organized events that are open to the public for registration, where the goal is participation, community, or health and wellness (e.g., CIBC Run for the Cure)
3. **Sport-related festivals** – festivals that promote community gathering and engagement in and around a sporting event. Such festivals could have multiple objectives, including increasing attendance at sporting events, drawing more tourists to a community during a sporting event, creating opportunities for community health and wellness by adding on a mass participation event, and/or using the sporting event as a platform for another cause (e.g., Barrie Dragonboat Festival)

<sup>2</sup> UNWTO Definition of Tourism: “Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents). Tourism has to do with visitor activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure.” (UNWTO, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> UN Statistics (accessed November 22, 2023). Operationalizing the basic concepts in tourism statistics <https://unstats.un.org/wiki/display/IRTSCG/B.2.%09Usual+environment+of+an+individual>



4. **Ancillary events and sport-related business meetings** – meetings and events that run alongside a sporting event or independently that have some sort of tie or affiliation to sport (e.g., Ontario Hockey Federation Annual General Meeting, Canada Sport Entertainment Expo)
5. **High-performance training facility** – While being the least intuitive related to sport tourism (as it is not an event, festival or sport business-related meeting), high-performance training facilities bring athletes, coaches, officials and support staff to a single geographic location for discrete periods of time or in permanence.

For more information on the different types of sporting events (i.e., subcategories or types of events within each of the groupings listed above), please see the *Categorization of Sporting Events > Event Classification* section below.

**What sport tourism is not.** Throughout community consultations and stakeholder interviews for Barrie’s Sport Tourism Strategy project, a theme emerged indicating that many individuals did not understand the difference between “sport” and “recreation”.

Sport is typically defined as a competitive physical activity that involves structured rules, often with the goal of achieving a specific outcome, such as winning a game or tournament. Sports may be organized into teams or played individually, and often involve specialized equipment or facilities.

Recreation, on the other hand, refers to leisure activities that are pursued for enjoyment or relaxation. Recreation may include physical activities such as hiking, swimming or cycling. Unlike sport, recreation is typically non-competitive and may be pursued individually or in groups.

While sport and recreation are distinct concepts, there is often overlap between the two. Many sports can be pursued recreationally, such as playing basketball with friends at a local park, while many recreational activities can be pursued in a more structured or competitive way, such as participating in a recreational volleyball league. It is important to understand the difference between the two, as building a pickleball court for recreational and community use has far fewer venue specifications and requirements than purpose-building the venue to host pickleball competitions. To build sport venues or facilities, indoor or outdoor, without the required specifications to host sport events is a lost opportunity for revenue generation, economic impact, and sport development in the community.

#### *Categorization of Sport Events > Event Classification*

Sport events can be categorized in numerous different ways, including segmentation by type of event, scope and prestige, size/complexity, single vs. multi-sport, location, etc. These categorizations help guide the direction of a sport tourism strategy and focus



resources to maximize the ratio between bid submissions and investment versus successful bids and sport hosting.

The most common categorizations are by “event classification” and by “type of event”.

### Event Classification

Events are typically classified into four levels ranging from local to international events. “Local / Regional” versus “International” refers specifically to the level of the governing body or the event owner in the broader sport event ecosystem.

Event classification does not often correlate with the number of events, the size of the events or even the foreseen economic benefits. A world championship event with a smaller pool of athletes, for example, may generate less economic benefit than a provincial hockey tournament with a greater number of athletes. The classification may have a direct correlation, however, to visitor perception of the city, media draw, ticket sales, etc.

As a host city progresses from local / regional events to national and international events, required capabilities around transportation, sponsorship assets and rights management, media and broadcasting, safety and security, and event operations protocol will become much more important.

The following diagram highlights event classification by local through international events, with relevant examples:



Categorizing events can also be done by defining the type of sporting event. For the purposes of the Venue Assessment and Barrie's Sport Tourism Strategy, events have been classified in the following way (also taking the levels as highlighted above into account):

	INTERNATIONAL	NATIONAL	PROVINCIAL
<b>MULTI-SPORT GAMES</b>	NAIG CanAm Police/Fire	Canada Games Canada 55+ Special Olympics	ON 55+ ON Games ON Para Special Olympics
<b>SINGLE SPORT CHAMPIONSHIP</b>	Pinnacle World Champ Other World Champ Para World Champ Pan Am Champ Pan Am Para Champ	Pinnacle National Champ Other NC or Trials Para National Champ CCAA Champ	ON Champ ON Para OCAA Champ
<b>TOURING COMPETITION</b>	World Cup Series Tour Exhibition Senior Continental World University Commonwealth	CHL Events	OHL Events
<b>AGE GROUP CHAMPIONSHIP</b>	IF Age Group Champ IF Age Group Cup IF Age Group Contin CF Age Group Champ	National Sport Organization (NSO) Age Group Championship	Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) Championship
<b>SPORT BUSINESS MEETING</b>	IF Congress Pan Am Congress	NSO Congress / Annual General Meeting (AGM)	PSO AGM Coach Conference Officials Conference
<b>OTHER COMPETITION</b>	Canadian Open Continental Cup	Mass Participation Annual invitational	Mass Participation Annual invitational

**Note:** High-Performance Training Centres that have a year-round, physical presence in a community and require facilities and infrastructure to maintain operations are not listed in the table above, but are considered as one of the five categories of sport tourism.

### *Trends in Sport Tourism*

The sporting event landscape has changed considerably over the past few decades and continues to evolve at a rapid pace. With the proliferation of the number of sports / disciplines, types of events, number of events and the ever-changing conditions within which sporting events operate, sporting event owners and host cities have greater demands placed upon them than ever before.

For all the above-stated reasons, cities across North America have adopted a more strategic approach to sport tourism, particularly event bidding and hosting. It is no longer feasible to take on a sporting event without careful consideration for host city capacity and capabilities, volunteer base, sport expertise, accommodations and



conference facilities, sport venues, financial investment, government support, environmental sustainability, legacy and anticipated community benefits in the long term.

Some of the emerging trends in sport, sport tourism and events specific to small- and mid-sized host communities include, but are not limited to:

1. Expanding definition of sport tourism	9. Investment in female sport
2. Everyone is jumping into sport tourism	10. Outdoor lifestyle sports
3. Sport as an experience	11. Pickleball
4. Flexibility in sport format and rules	12. Live streaming and distribution of content
5. Evolving technical requirements	13. Boosting physical security
6. Increasing sport event rights holders' expectations of host city	14. Government support is critical
7. Multi-year and/or multi-city hosting contracts	15. Agility of governance and operating models
8. Focusing on sustainability and social impact	

Each of these trends has a direct impact on Barrie and could/should influence decisions related to sport tourism, event hosting, infrastructure and investment. The emerging trends are further defined below.

1. **Expanding definition of sport tourism** > The definition of sport tourism has expanded beyond sport competition to also include mass participation sporting events, sport-related festivals, ancillary events to a sporting event and sport-related business meetings, and high-performance training facilities. Broadening the definition of sport tourism to be more inclusive of the above will create new opportunities for host communities not previously identified.
2. **Everyone is jumping into sport tourism** > Large and small communities alike are investing heavily in sport tourism across Canada. With more than \$7.4 billion in direct GDP contribution in Canada and growing, there is room for sport host communities of all sizes in the market. Economic benefits are being measured and highlighted, leading many communities to the investment in and set up of a sport tourism function. Responsibilities for this function could include destination development specific to sport tourism (not to be confused with leisure or recreation), sales, bidding, hosting and economic impact / evaluation of event success.
3. **Sport as an experience** > Traditionally, hosting a sporting event has been straightforward: gather volunteers, select an appropriate venue, organize accommodations, register teams / athletes and officials, and execute the event. Sporting events have evolved significantly since, with an emphasis shifting to "sport as an experience". Organizers are being asked to create engaging experiences for the athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, spectators, and the community-at-large

throughout the event. This experience extends beyond the sport venue to include the tourism offering in the host community. This approach to sport increases event complexity and host city efforts, namely in the areas of event delivery, media, broadcasting, sponsorship, marketing, and fan, participant, and community engagement.

4. **Flexibility in sport formats and rules** > Traditional sports formats have been adapting and changing to appeal to a wider multi-generational audience. Snow volleyball, air badminton, and 3x3 basketball are just to name a few. These new formats and rules offer opportunities for communities to explore “traditional sports” in non-traditional formats and venues, and at different times of the year. Formats that appeal to online audiences through social media engagement and viral content offer new and different ways to showcase the host city.
5. **Evolving technical requirements** > Facility infrastructure and capital investment take years, sometimes decades to plan for. Sport regulations and technical specifications for events, facility requirements, and societal pressures relative to diversity, inclusion and safe sport are evolving and putting demands on facilities at a pace much greater than the pace of facility maintenance, upgrades and retrofits. This evolution requires facility owners and operators to make additional investment to keep up with the requirements and demands of events to stay current and qualify as a host city in the sport event space.
6. **Increasing sport event rights holders’ expectations of host city** > Sport event rights holders have higher and higher expectations of host cities, as desired benefits and outcomes (e.g., sponsorship valuation, ticketing revenue, VIP/hospitality offering, etc.) increase. The need to demonstrate greater value and return on investment (ROI) is putting pressure on host cities and event organizers to professionalize or fail when it comes to bidding and hosting sporting events.
7. **Multi-year and/or multi-city hosting contracts** > Sport event rights holders are looking for more consistency and stability in their event hosting calendar and event hosting experience by asking host cities and sponsors to commit to an event for more than one year. Many “multi-year” host cities are being asked to host an event every third or fourth year.
8. **Focus on sustainability and social impact** > While environmental and fiscal sustainability of events has been in the forefront for decades, social impact and social justice have emerged as key priorities for event rights holders and host cities / nations. The demand for socially, fiscally, and environmentally responsible events is pushing host cities to reassess sporting event structure, facilities, operations, event formats, event financing, sponsors and community partners, and event execution. Social impact and civic duty have become differentiators for some events rights holders and host cities, leveraging events to address social issues such as truth and reconciliation, equal rights for racialized populations, clean water, affordable housing, education, and food programs.



9. **Investment in Female Sport** > In March 2023, Canadian Tire Corporation (CTC) announced its new Women's Sport Initiative (WSI), committing 50% of its overall multi-million dollar sponsorship dollars to women's professional sport by 2026. The initiative "also includes a dedicated media fund to increase the visibility of women's sport across top broadcast, digital and social platforms" (Canadian Tire, 2023). This commitment to gender equity and inclusion in sport from grassroots through professional sport is not the only recent major investment in women's sport. In October, the Government of Canada also committed \$25.3 million of renewed funding for gender equity in sport (Women and Sport, 2022). The ripple effect on sport tourism will be notable with a big bump in the number of sport events, leagues, and teams seeking communities to host and call home.
10. **Outdoor Lifestyle Sports** > Given the shutdown of indoor sport venues during the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor sports such as hiking, golf, and mountain biking saw massive spikes in participation. For sport host communities with trail and water assets, outdoor amenities and infrastructure, and good seasonal conditions, outdoor recreation areas have the potential to be transformed into new sport venues for sport events.
11. **Pickleball** > Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in North America. As the sport continues to grow and mature, so too do the opportunities to host competitions and events. Many municipalities have been struggling to keep up with local demand, converting tennis courts, curling rinks and the like into multi-use spaces to accommodate pickleball for recreational play. As technical specifications for competitive pickleball courts evolve, communities that think beyond recreation could benefit greatly from this sport's growth.
12. **Live streaming and distribution of content** > New distribution models such as on-demand and live web streaming are adding to the mounting pressures on amateur sport and sporting events. Video production and live broadcast, albeit a foundational component of professional sporting events, has become more commonplace in the amateur sport world since the COVID-19 pandemic. Event organizers are now being asked to incorporate live web streaming, broadcasting and video production into standard event operations.
13. **Boosting physical security** > Traditionally, event security has been synonymous with the physical safety and security of venues, fans and athletes. While many communities shrug off the topic, sport federations and event owners are placing higher and higher demands on event organizers to keep safety and security top of mind. Event organizers are being asked to respond to and ideally prevent security issues pre-, during- and post-event. This increase in demand and sophistication of security services is also pushing event organizers to strengthen connections and ways of working with local law enforcement, security services, and first responders.
14. **Government support is critical** > Event funding and capital investment for facilities can be highly politicized, but it is a critical component of sport and sport



tourism. The fragmented nature of tourism requires government ministries and agencies at all levels to work together and collaborate in new ways. From economic development to education to natural resources to indigenous affairs to transportation and the arts, host cities and sport event organizers and the event overall would benefit from dedicating resources to public policy review, government lobbying, relationship management, and stakeholder engagement.

15. **Agility of governance and operating models** > In a fast-paced world where technology, trends and consumer preferences can change overnight, sport host communities are interested in keeping pace by creating more agile governance, decision-making structures, operating and funding models for sport hosting, and supporting infrastructure development. Decisions regarding permits, small facility improvements or large infrastructure builds can require months or even years to advance. Bureaucracy, red tape and subsequent delays in timelines could ultimately be a deterrent for sporting event owners seeking host cities.

## Strategic Analysis > Venue Capacity Assessment and Gap Analysis

Barrie is a growing community with a strategic location for sport tourism. As a sport tourism destination, Barrie is relatively new and has been working to identify opportunities to attract or develop sport events that can help support the tourism industry and support the development of social capital in the area.

Sport tourism has been identified in previous studies by the City of Barrie and Tourism Barrie including:

- Sport Tourism Assessment Template (STAT) Pro report completed in 2019 by Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (now Sport Tourism Canada)
- City of Barrie Tourism Master Plan (2020) by FLOOR13, KWL Advisory, GM Event Inc.
- Tourism Barrie Strategic Plan (2021-2023) by FLOOR13
- Barrie City Council Strategic Plan (2022-2026)

As with any sport host destination, an objective assessment of the sport and recreation facilities can provide focus and support event attraction that maximizes the 52-week nature of sport tourism while utilizing existing and built infrastructure assets in the city. A more proactive approach enables Barrie and the stakeholders within the sport tourism ecosystem to work more purposefully to attract or develop sport events for specific outcomes.

As sport tourism continues to grow in its importance as a driver of key benefits and impacts, the competition is increasing. Barrie is competing against host cities in Ontario and across Canada, and to ensure that effort is targeted to yield optimal results, knowing where the city is today in terms of hosting capacity is critical.



### *Purpose of the Venue Capacity Assessment & Gap Analysis*

The purpose of the venue capacity assessment and gap analysis is to establish the existing sport hosting facilities that are suitable to serve as host competition and training venues for sport events. The City of Barrie provided a list of venues to be included in this analysis. This analysis will inform the master planning for future sport and recreation facility development and help to identify the specific sports or events for future strategic event attraction.

The outcome is a series of findings and recommendations for consideration of the City of Barrie, Tourism Barrie and all stakeholders in the sport tourism ecosystem in Barrie.

### *Venue Capacity Assessment Methodology*

The venue assessment component of the Sport Tourism Strategy project included document review and research provided by the City of Barrie and those from rights holder organizations related to the technical standards for hosting by sport and for multi-sport games. Documents reviewed included:

- Sport Tourism Assessment Template (STAT) Pro report completed in 2019 by Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (now Sport Tourism Canada)
- City of Barrie Tourism Master Plan (2020) by FLOOR13, KWL Advisory and GM Event Inc.
- Tourism Barrie Strategic Plan (2021-2023) by FLOOR13
- Barrie City Council Strategic Plan (2022-2026)
- Sport Tourism Canada Sport Events Directory (2022)
- Hosting standards for provincial and national sport organizations

Additionally, there was a draft of the Review of the Sadlon Arena Expansion completed by Sierra Planning and Management in 2023 in advance of its public publishing date for the team's consideration.

In-person site visits to assessed the current state of both indoor and outdoor sport facilities in Barrie and their suitability to serve as host venues by sport. The following facilities were identified by the City of Barrie for review and assessment.

#### Indoor Facilities:

- Peggy Hill Team Community Centre (multi-use facility)
- Allandale Recreation Centre (multi-use facility)
- East Bayfield Community Centre (multi-use facility)
- Sadlon Arena (single pad)
- Eastview Arena (single pad)

#### Outdoor Facilities:

Barrie Community Sports Complex:

- 8 Softball diamonds (lit)



- 2 Baseball diamonds with permanent mounds (lit)
- 1 Rugby Pitch (not lit)
- 1 Football field (lit)
- 5 Soccer pitches (not lit)

City-Wide Outdoor Facilities:

- Victoria Woods – Rugby Pitch (not lit)
- Huronia North Soccer Complex (9 junior soccer pitches – not lit)
- Lennox Park – 2 Baseball diamonds with permanent mounds (lit)

Measurements of each facility were taken, limited in some cases due to snow cover on outdoor fields, and information was gathered on the fields of play and photographs were taken of each facility.

The venue information gathered is included in the *Venue Forms* provided by the City of Barrie project team.

*Key Findings*

For Barrie to make future decisions about sport tourism and hosting at various levels of training, competition and sport business meetings, a consideration of event classifications is key to differentiating between events. Not all events bring similar returns, and a classification system will assist in future master and strategic planning.

As part of the venue assessment, sport events have been classified according to the chart provided in the *Categorization of Sport Events > Event Classification* table which includes examples of events for:

- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| • International             | • Touring Competition    |
| • National                  | • Age Group Championship |
| • Provincial                | • Sport Business Meeting |
| • Multi-sport Games         | • Other Competition      |
| • Single Sport Championship |                          |

There is a distinction between championships, which are the pinnacle events for various levels and competitions, and which may be invitational, annual or even exhibitions. All levels of play are different in scope from training camps, professional development or meetings which can also bring benefit at different times of the year.

In many Canadian and Ontario cities, sport and recreation facilities that were built before 2000 did not necessarily include sport hosting as an element of the project. As the sport tourism landscape has become more competitive, for host cities and other groups that are financing, building and operating sport facilities, hosting has become a financial consideration as has the notion of hosting for economic and tourism opportunities and the public good.





For Barrie, it is important to consider the accommodations required to attract and successfully host sport events at the provincial, national and international levels. Events and teams will often seek full-service hotels that can provide 3-4 meals per day in addition to flexible accommodations for single, double and sometimes quad occupancy. Barrie does not have this type of hotel offering available and while out of scope for this project, further study is strongly recommended.

With no intervention or additional investment in sport and recreation facilities, the following is a general assessment of the venue capacity for Barrie, Ontario as of March, 2023.

### *Indoor Venues*

#### Sadlon Arena

Sadlon Arena is the largest multi-use arena and entertainment facility in Barrie and is the only field of play that currently meets the standards for international and national single sport competition in hockey and curling. It also has the potential to host training and competition in figure skating and dry floor sports based on the field of play requirements. This facility could host training immediately, however, the amenities outside the field of play (front and back of house) limit the size and scope of the competition that can be hosted based on the technical requirements of competition.



Sadlon Arena serves as the home arena for the Barrie Colts of the Ontario Hockey League, for mid-sized concerts and entertainment events, and exhibitions and trade shows for Barrie.

At the time of this report, there are several options being considered for potential capital redevelopment of Sadlon Arena with implications on future sport hosting capacity. Given the current seating capacity of Sadlon Arena, the national and international sport events it is able to host are limited.

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#### Allandale Recreation Centre

The Allandale Recreation Centre is a multi-use facility that serves community recreation needs and is also home to the Mariposa School of Skating.

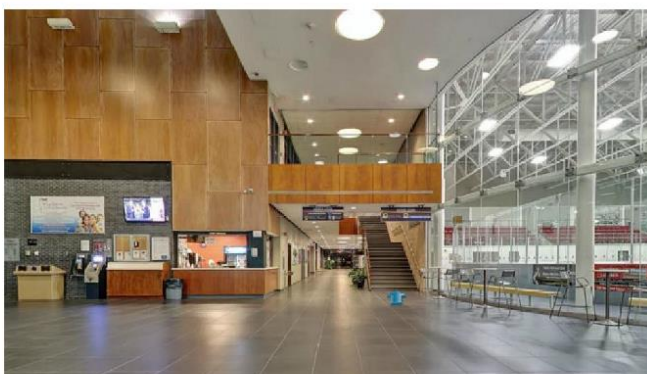
Given the international size pad in the Blue Arena, Allandale has the capacity to continue to serve as both training and competition venue in figure skating and short track speed skating. The Red Arena and pool do not meet the technical standards for competition in ice or aquatic sports but can serve as host facilities for youth training or regular competitions.



#### Peggy Hill Team Community Centre

The Peggy Hill Team Community Centre is a multi-use recreational facility that features two arenas, a 25-metre pool with short course swim lanes and a dividable gymnasium.

The arenas do not meet the minimum requirements for hosting national competition given the size of the ice pad and serve as community recreation and invitation type competition venues. The gymnasium can be a training venue for some gym-based sports but is limited as a competition venue due to spectator capacities and currently has markings for basketball, volleyball and pickleball.

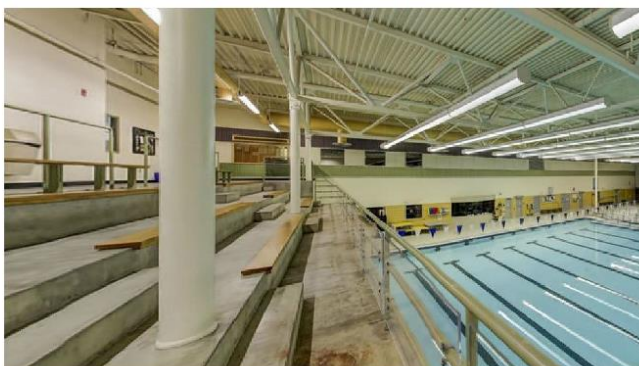




### East Bayfield Community Centre

The East Bayfield Community Centre is a multi-use recreation facility that includes two arenas, a gymnasium and a 25-metre, 8-lane pool.

The arenas at East Bayfield are smaller than the technical requirements for ice sports and therefore the facility is not suitable for provincial or above championships. However, the venue can serve as both training and competition venue for local ice sports and dry floor sports.



The gymnasium is lined for badminton, basketball, volleyball and pickleball and can be divided into two but has limited spectator capacity. It is suitable as a training venue and competition venue for local level sport events.

The pool is 25 metres in length and has markings and starting infrastructure for eight lanes. Given the lack of a full warm up pool, this facility is suitable for local swim club training and local meets only.

### Barrie Curling Club

This 7-sheet curling club has served the community and members of the club since 1952. Given the limited spectator capacity, this venue can serve as a host venue for local and regional bonspiels and some provincial competitions.

### Eastview Arena

This single use recreation facility has an international-sized ice pad which can serve hockey, figure skating and short track speed skating. Given the limited spectator capacity, Eastview Arena is suitable for hosting training and serving as an ancillary venue for local and regional competitions.

### *Outdoor Venues*

### Barrie Community Sport Complex

The Barrie Community Sport Complex is located outside the core of Barrie in Minesing and features ten lit baseball diamonds and several rectangular fields, one of which has lights for night-time training and competition. The BCSC is also home to Vintage Throne Stadium, the home of the Barrie Baycats of the Intercounty Baseball League and the Barrie Rugby Club.

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This multi-sport facility has many fields of play however there is limited infrastructure on the property and therefore rights holders would require temporary structures for ancillary requirements such as locker rooms, meeting spaces, media work areas, doping control and minor officials / statistics.



#### Lennox Park Baseball Diamond

The Lennox Park complex includes three lit baseball fields, two which are full size. The facility is in a residential area and while the fields of play meet the technical requirements for distances, spectator capacity is limited and there are no supporting structures to make them suitable for provincial competitions or above.

#### Huronian Park North Soccer Complex

The Huronia Park North Soccer Complex includes nine mini soccer pitches which are suitable for local or regional competitions at the mini soccer levels.

#### Georgian College Athletic Facilities

J.C. Massie Field is a FIFA one-star certified synthetic turf field for football, soccer, and rugby. It has lighting and a digital scoreboard and is suitable for hosting inter-college competitions and championships and provincial level competitions and training camps.



### *By Sport Type Assessment*

The following chart identifies for each sport type the potential for new sports with additional investment and the investment necessary to host higher levels of competition:

L – Local/Regional  
P – Provincial  
N – National  
I – International  
N/A - No Current Capacity

VENUE	SPORT	LEVEL OF COMPETITION	INVESTMENT REQUIRED	IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
<b>ATHLETICS</b>				
No Venue	Track and field	N/A	Athletics facility required for multi-sport games  LSO Feedback: To build an indoor / outdoor track and field facility	Recommend building in Recreation Facility Master Plan
Temporary	Cross Country	L	Map potential cross-country sites	Use trails or golf courses
<b>AQUATICS</b>				
East Bayfield Community Centre	Swimming	L	Transition to training facility if new aquatics facility is developed  LSO Feedback: 50m pool (8 lanes required for provincial competition, 10 lanes required for National competition; additional 25m pool required, 50m pool preferred for warm-up/cool-down), dive tank	Limited hosting capacity beyond inter-club; does not meet depth requirements for artistic swimming, water polo or diving
<b>DIAMONDS</b>				
Barrie Community Sport Complex – Vintage Throne Stadium	Baseball	L/P/N	Increase change room, office and auxiliary room capacity  LSO Feedback: Change rooms, press-box, scoreboards, improved playing surface, netting, concession, safe/secure entrance, covered dugouts/bullpens, washrooms, medical rooms, media rooms	Suitable for national competition with added infrastructure

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VENUE	SPORT	LEVEL OF COMPETITION	INVESTMENT REQUIRED	IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Barrie Community Sport Complex – Dana (#16)	Baseball	L/P	Added seating and event infrastructure	Suitable as secondary venue for provincial level competition
Lennox Park A	Baseball	L	Parking	Not suitable for provincial competition
Lennox Park B	Baseball	L	Parking	Good for age group play
BCSC 7-10 & 12-14	Softball	L	Increase change room, office and auxiliary room capacity; added seating	Good tournament set up but lacks infrastructure and services for events and spectators
Georgian College	Softball	L	Spectator seating/amenities required; review lighting Lux levels	Not suitable for provincial competition
<b>FIELD (RECTANGULAR)</b>				
Georgian College J.C. Massie Field	Football Lacrosse (Field) Rugby Soccer	L/P	Ensure field is 136.56x60 metres with support facilities, spectator seating and operational spaces to comply with Canadian Football specifications.  LSO Feedback: End zone shorter than regulation length for CFL, washrooms, running water, clubhouse (e.g., for teams during halftime), changerooms, increase seating capacity, medical treatment area, locker room space	Synthetic surface was snow covered during site visit, so measurement not taken; training venue for national and international events and host for qualifying rounds
Barrie Community Sport Complex	Football Rugby Soccer (5)	L/P/N	Increase change room, office and auxiliary room capacity  LSO Feedback: Turf field, grandstand required	Suitable for provincial and some national competition with added infrastructure
Huron Park North Soccer Complex	Soccer (9)	L	Full size fields required	Good site for youth jamboree type participation events
<b>GYMNASIA</b>				
Georgian College Gymnasium	Badminton Basketball Volleyball	L/P/N	May require temporary surface for badminton and line marking for pickleball; Soccer (Futsal) potential	Good ceiling height and amenities in facility with spectator seating
East Bayfield CC Gymnasium	Badminton Basketball Pickleball Volleyball	L/P	Increase spectator capacity	Limited spectator capacity for anything beyond recreational use



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VENUE	SPORT	LEVEL OF COMPETITION	INVESTMENT REQUIRED	IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Peggy Hill Team CC Gymnasium	Basketball Pickleball Volleyball	L	Increase spectator capacity	Good for recreational use and inter-community competition
<b>ICE</b>				
Sadlon Arena	Ball Hockey Broomball Curling Figure Skating Ice Hockey Lacrosse (Box) Ringette	L/P/N/I	Event level enhancements for team, officials and operational spaces; press level capacity for minor officials, event discipline and working media  LSO Feedback: Increase seating capacity, more change rooms,	Review project currently underway for capital improvements; international hosting capacity in some smaller events due to limited seating capacity
Allandale Recreation Centre	Ball Hockey Figure Skating Ice Hockey Lacrosse (Box) Ringette Speed Skating	Blue – L/P/N Red – L	International size ice surface (Blue Arena); potential for crash protection measures for speed skating	190' arena length (Red Arena) not suitable for hosting at provincial level or above
East Bayfield Community Centre	Ball Hockey Ice Hockey Lacrosse (Box) Ringette	L	Tournament and spectator experience elements for youth and masters participants	190' arena length not suitable for hosting at provincial level or above
Peggy Hill Team Community Centre	Ball Hockey Ice Hockey Lacrosse (Box) Ringette	L	Tournament and spectator experience elements for youth and masters participants	190' arena length not suitable for hosting at provincial level or above
Eastview Arena	Ball Hockey Ice Hockey Ringette	L	Adapted spectator seating around perimeter and concessions	190' arena length not suitable for hosting at provincial level or above

## Strategic Analysis > Current State Assessment

The Current State Assessment is a summation of the findings from interviews, community consultations, local sport organization survey, document review, sport venue inventory and analysis, SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), and Organizational Capacity Assessment. This comprehensive review aimed to provide greater insight into the current state of sport tourism in Barrie, and ultimately lead to insights and recommendations to advance sport tourism in the region.



Below are some of the key themes and findings emerging from the current state assessment activities.

*Stakeholder Interviews, Survey and Community Consultations* > The Sport Tourism Canada team conducted 11 interviews, a survey with local sport organizations, and three community consultation sessions as part of the Current State Assessment.

**Survey respondents represented...**

**40** sport  
organizations

**26,300+**  
athletes, coaches  
and officials

**25** sports

**Competitive  
and recreational  
sports**

**Single and multi-  
sport activities**

**ALL** age  
categories



The following themes emerged from the interviews, survey and community consultation regarding the current state of sport tourism in Barrie. Please note that a theme constitutes a topic or comment that has been mentioned three or more times throughout the project's consultation process.

Perceptions of Barrie as a Sport Host Community

1. Barrie is a city that offers a great recreational lifestyle year-round.
2. Growth of the city has outpaced the development of much-needed infrastructure, facilities and programming (including sport and recreation).
3. Demographics of the city are changing, and facilities and programming are not evolving in step with the changing demands of local residents.
4. The city's economy has been moving away from heavy manufacturing, which is shifting city planning and zoning.
5. Relative to some other communities, the City of Barrie does not appear to be as flexible with re-zoning applications (e.g., for use of non-traditional spaces for sport hosting) and/or development of privately-funded sport facilities.
6. GO Train has created new opportunity for Barrie as a sport host community, but the schedule is still geared towards commuters to the GTA and not tourists coming to and from Barrie.
7. Municipal council viewed as public supporters of sport.



8. The city has a lot of strategies and plans related to sport, tourism, parks and recreation, greenspace usage, trails, etc., some of which could be better aligned to build momentum and support faster.
9. Staff turnover within the city has slowed progress in the area of sport tourism.
10. Good range of sport facilities, but capacity is maxed out; some facilities are built for recreational usage, but fall short on technical specifications and supporting amenities to be considered for sport events and competition.
11. Police and security presence in the city for amateur and competitive events (during events and after at hotels) could be increased.
12. The process to engage in sport event hosting (from sales / opportunity through bidding to hosting) is not clearly defined, at least not to anyone from the local sport organization community attempting to host an event.
13. Residents are hesitant to support sport with taxpayer money when the city is short on recreation facilities for local residents and are dealing with social issues such as homelessness, crime in the downtown core, etc.

#### Perceptions of the Sport Environment in Barrie

14. Barrie has a strong sport community – volunteers, technical experts, event organizers and private financiers and sponsors that are willing to back sport in Barrie.
15. Barrie has demonstrated that it is a city that supports local sport and recreation; the city seems averse to displacing local residents for sport event hosting.
16. Semi-professional teams in Barrie are committed to growth of the sport and of the franchise. These teams want to contribute to Barrie's success, but Barrie's current sport infrastructure and commitment to investment infrastructure upgrades and new builds may limit the potential of the team(s), and thus the sport in the region.
17. Barrie is a gateway community to Northern Ontario, and in some cases is the closest community to Northern Ontario with viable competition facilities.
18. Georgian College offers a lot as a potential partner in sport hosting, however, the College is maxed out on venue capacity. Future facility expansion and new build is a possibility, but would require the entire community's support.
19. Barrie could better leverage sport hosting to support facility upgrades and new build.
20. Relationships in the sport ecosystem can continue to be improved upon.

#### Perceptions of Sport Venues and Accommodations

21. Accommodations is the number one reason why Barrie is losing bids to other sport host cities.

22. Barrie does not have an adequate number of hotel rooms to host events above a certain size, nor the quality of hotels (3+, 4- or 5- star) to attract events that demand more services and amenities from hoteliers (e.g., most national and international event rights holders).
23. Barrie's hotels are charging less than they need to per night. Deep discounts to hotel prices will only prolong much needed upgrades and improvements to the properties.
24. Barrie has embraced Airbnbs as part of the city's available accommodations.
25. Barrie is investing in some sport facilities for community use, but seems to be limiting investment to add amenities that would elevate the venue to competition-ready standards (e.g., no washrooms, no running water, no shade, reducing field size, limiting number of seats, etc.)
26. Many sport events also bring conferences, banquets or meetings with the event. Barrie has no conference or convention centre, limiting the event size to 300 participants (reception style only), unless the Sadlon Arena or Georgian College gym are rented as a banquet facility.
27. Many sports are struggling to find venues that meet technical specifications, required size (e.g., # of courts, rinks, etc.), desired amenities, and/or venue availability to host events.
28. Barrie's private sector seems quite keen to contribute to new venue build (both sport venues and hotel / banquet venues).
29. The bylaws and regulations related to waterfront and lake usage for events is restrictive and is limiting Barrie's sport host potential.

For more detail behind the Current State Assessment, please refer to *Appendix - Results from Survey with Local Sport Organizations*.

## Strategic Analysis > SWOT

**SWOT Analysis >** The following is an abridged version of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats specific to sport tourism in Barrie. This SWOT was derived from the collective feedback and insights from the document review, stakeholder interviews, community consultations, survey of local sport organizations, venue inventory and analysis, etc.

### STRENGTHS

- Located on Kempenfelt Bay on Lake Simcoe
- 114 km from Toronto and 89.6 km from Toronto Pearson International Airport
- Far enough from Toronto to be considered its own attraction and destination





### STRENGTHS

- Affordable destination to host events relative to Toronto
- Outdoor assets are plentiful (e.g., 88 km of public trails within the city limits)
- Offers opportunities for year-round outdoor activities
- Home of multiple junior and semi-professional teams, some willing to invest
- Georgian College has seven varsity teams, notable sport facilities, accommodations, and meeting and conference space
- Barrie has a number of suitable venues and event experience for ice hockey
- Constructing an 8-court Pickleball complex, totaling 16 courts across the city
- Only city in Simcoe County with an 8-lane synthetic track (Maple Ridge Secondary School)
- Sport Complex and Midhurst Sport Fields, two outdoor synthetic turf fields
- Collaboration between city and Tourism Barrie to explore sport tourism
- Tourism Barrie's understanding of sport tourism is strong
- Tourism Barrie's "Sport Barrie" website centralizes requests for sport hosting
- Centralized booking system for venues through the City of Barrie website
- Invest Barrie has some strong ideas for future development
- Diverse dining options in the city
- Airbnb product and capacity add to available accommodations (~600+ units)
- High interest from Local Sport Organizations to engage in more sport hosting
- Dedicated and active volunteer base
- Deep sport technical knowledge and close ties to professional leagues in Barrie

### WEAKNESSES

- Proximity to the GTA can lead to limited stays for overnight visitors from GTA
- City sport venues have limited capacity for hosting sport events
- Many venues do not meet technical standards to host beyond existing events
- Poor/limited amenities at existing facilities, particularly outdoor facilities
- City growth outpacing the new facility build and/or retrofits (10+ years away)
- Facilities and sport offering not fully aligned with evolving demographics
- No high-performance sport facility
- Georgian College has quality sport facilities, but limited capacity
- Minimal venue capacity, except possibly mid-week
- Lack of year-round training facilities and fields (e.g., domed fields)
- "Land crunch" when looking at expanding sports fields
- Multiple private investment offers for sport facility builds rejected
- Restrictive use of lake due to restrictive insurance policy / coverage
- Minimal capacity for parasport (specifically wheelchair sport)
- Reliance on school gyms, but unable to use private or Catholic school gyms
- Limited seating capacity at the largest facility, Sadlon Arena



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- Unmet demand for more alcohol licenses, minimizing revenue opportunities
- Minimal to no banquet / trade show / conference facilities
- Limited capacity (and lack of) quality hotels (2- and 3-star only)
- Among all hotel properties, there are only eight kitchenettes
- Building a case for 4- or 5-star hotels without demonstrated need is difficult
- Approach to sport tourism drawing a hard line around Barrie city limits
- City staff role for tourism and events has been vacant for some time
- Very low \$\$\$ allocation for sport tourism relative to similarly-sized cities
- City perceived as valuing recreation / leisure over sport
- City perceived by local sport organizations as not wanting to partner
- No centralized volunteer database specifically for events
- Lack of clear sport tourism bid and hosting process / roles and responsibilities
- Visitors are skeptical to visit the downtown core of Barrie
- Bylaws mismatch strategic objectives in tourism (e.g., use of waterfront)



## OPPORTUNITIES

- Great natural geography and year-round recreational activities
- Under-utilized outdoors spaces (e.g., trails, lake, beachfront, etc.)
- GO Train line direct to Toronto and GTA communities could expand schedule
- Alignment between stakeholders and opportunity to partner
- Desire for local sport organizations and city to partner through sport council
- Demand for venues in line with changing city demographics (e.g., cricket)
- Multiple sports looking to increase number of venues / facilities
- Closest location for major competition venues to Northern Ontario
- Semi-professional franchises want to stay and invest in the sport
- Most central location between two Indigenous sport zones in Ontario
- Unmet demand for a conference centre
- Local private financiers want to invest in sport and sport infrastructure
- Public-private partnerships could be the quickest path to new facilities
- Local businesses and hotels are keen to support sport events
- New hotels are slated for the region (or were pre-COVID)
- Adjacent communities and sport events hosted nearby interested in partnering
- Call for new host cities for professional women's soccer teams
- Major investment nationally in women's sport (e.g., Canadian Tire)
- Georgian College offers tourism and recreation post-secondary programs which could boost volunteer base and talent recruitment in the industry
- Major games bids / sport event hosting can support infrastructure development through provincial and federal funding
- City of Barrie is committed to equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility
- Invest in temporary amenities at venues (e.g., mobile dressing rooms)
- Increase usage of the waterfront via water sport activities / events
- Right selection of events can have high social impact and community support
- Many events available for hosting during shoulder season (April & November)
- Located in proximity to GTA, creating opportunities for event spillover, exhibition games, acclimatization, etc.
- Toronto hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup
- Downtown core has great potential for revitalization
- Barrie could leverage neighbouring communities with sport venues
- Mayor and council generally viewed as public supporters of sport



### THREATS

- COVID-19 recovery and bounce back is still relevant in the tourism industry
- Population growth exceeding Barrie's ability to keep pace with the demand of the community needs (e.g., sport and recreation facility development)
- City recreation planning strong, but seems to be minimizing sport importance
- Perceived hesitation to new infrastructure downtown or along waterfront
- Communities of the same size are putting more \$\$\$ into sport tourism
- Neighbouring communities building sport / recreation facilities (e.g., Innisfil)
- Other communities have greater staffing complements for sport events
- Labour shortages especially in terms of securing part-time and seasonal staff
- Sport event hosting partnerships exist between other communities, not Barrie
- Stakeholder relationships in / around Barrie shows little recent improvement
- Buy-in needed from residents for the success of sport tourism overall
- Risk of semi-professional teams exiting Barrie due to quality / lack of facilities
- Local transportation system not adding new routes anytime soon
- Hotel properties seem hesitant to put in further investment
- Increased crime downtown and perception of it being unsafe
- Lower police presence than desired by events to ensure physical security
- Climate change affecting winter sports and snow quality / reliability
- Barrie zoning and bylaws are restricting sport event potential in the city
- Social issues are mounting, raising questions about where funding should go
- Private and Catholic schools limiting gym usage, reducing capacity in Barrie
- Local experiences and tourism offerings could be stronger

Overall, stakeholders identified that Barrie has some strengths that position the city for success in the sport tourism sector. There are also many opportunities that the city could capitalize on to position itself as a true sport host community. Presently, however, there are some perceived weaknesses and threats that need to be addressed and overcome, as they could have a direct impact on Barrie's ability to succeed and grow as a sport host community. The next section, the Organizational Capacity Assessment, explores these strengths and weaknesses specifically in the context of hosting capacity and expectations a sport event rights holder has of a sport host community.

### Strategic Analysis > Organizational Capacity Assessment

Organizational capacity in the context of sport tourism refers to the ability of organizations in the sport host ecosystem, such as the city, destination management organizations, sport venues, local sport organizations, volunteer base, hotels,



restaurants, and attractions to effectively plan, manage, and deliver sport tourism events and support tourism products and services. It involves having the necessary resources, skills, knowledge, and systems in place to meet the needs and expectations of the sport event rights holders and visitors, as well as to achieve the goals of the city, Tourism Barrie and stakeholders involved in sport tourism.

Organizational capacity encompasses a range of factors (in alignment with the STC Sport Tourism Roadmap©), including:

1. **Sport Host Structures and Human Resources** > Having a skilled and motivated workforce and volunteer base to bid on, plan, manage, and deliver sport tourism events, as well as the organization structure(s), processes and workflows to carry out all sport tourism related activities.
2. **Venues and Assets** > Having the necessary physical infrastructure, such as sport venues, supporting / ancillary amenities, accommodations, conference and meeting facilities, restaurants, transportation, and attractions to support sport hosting.
3. **Financial** > Having adequate funding to support the attraction, sales, bid process, development, planning, preparation, delivery and evaluation of sport events and related sport tourism offerings.
4. **Marketing** > Having effective marketing and promotion strategies to attract sport events, participants and spectators to Barrie, to promote Barrie as a sport tourism destination, and to support product development locally that would support the sport tourism segment.
5. **Other** > Referring to additional systems, mechanisms and ways of working that have a direct impact on sport tourism and event hosting success (e.g., information management, partnership and collaboration, innovation, regulatory environment, etc.)

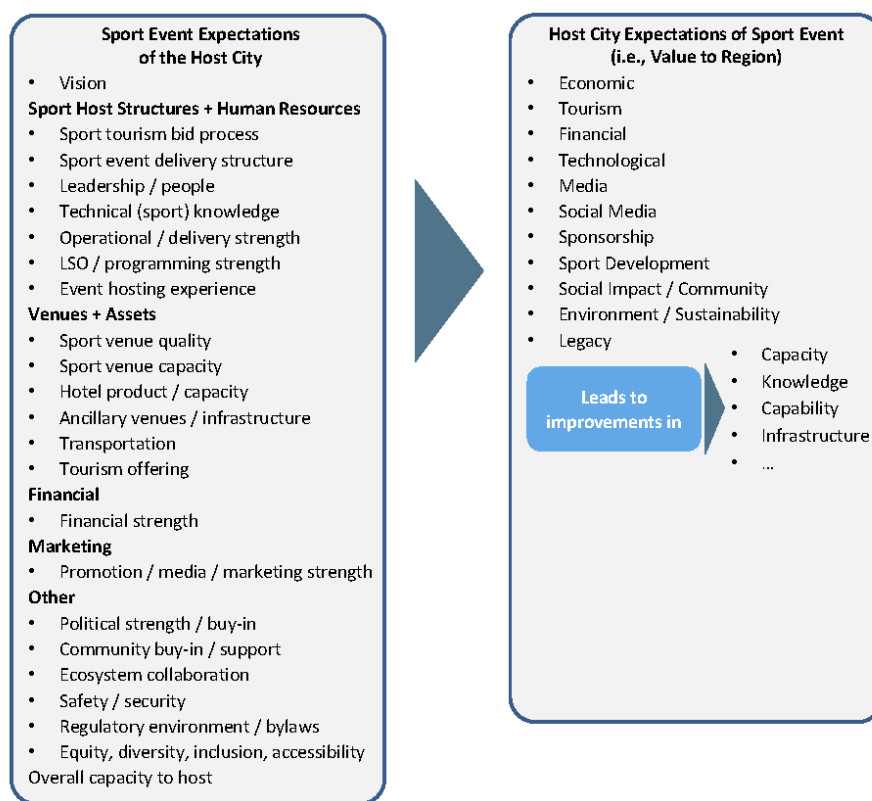
By strengthening organizational capacity, the City of Barrie and supporting organizations in the sport tourism ecosystem can improve their ability to meet the needs and expectations of sport event rights holders, organizers, volunteers, participants, and spectators to compete provincially and nationally, and to contribute to the economic and social well-being of the City of Barrie and its residents.

#### *Host City vs. Sport Event Expectations*

Before assessing any host city's approach to sport tourism, it is imperative to identify and articulate the expectations of both sport events and host cities. Expectations are numerous, but not static or consistent between event rights holders. Each event brings a different set of expectations based on the type and size of the event, as well as the

maturity, experience and product offering of the host city. Practically speaking, hosting a local ultimate frisbee tournament for a weekend comes with a different set of expectations than hosting the IIHF World Junior Hockey Championships.

In the case of Barrie, organizational capacity was assessed relative to the list of expectations sport event rights holders / owners have of host cities, and vice versa. These expectations vary depending on the level of event (as identified in the Event Classification section of the report). These expectations have been identified through leading practice research and industry norms, which are an input to the development of Barrie's Sport Tourism Strategy:



### *Organization Capacity Assessment*

Barrie as a sport host community was assessed against the five key areas of the sport tourism roadmap and the general expectations of sport event rights holders (e.g., National Sport Organizations, Provincial Sport Organizations, Games Councils, etc.). Based on the information gathered throughout the project and our understanding of the

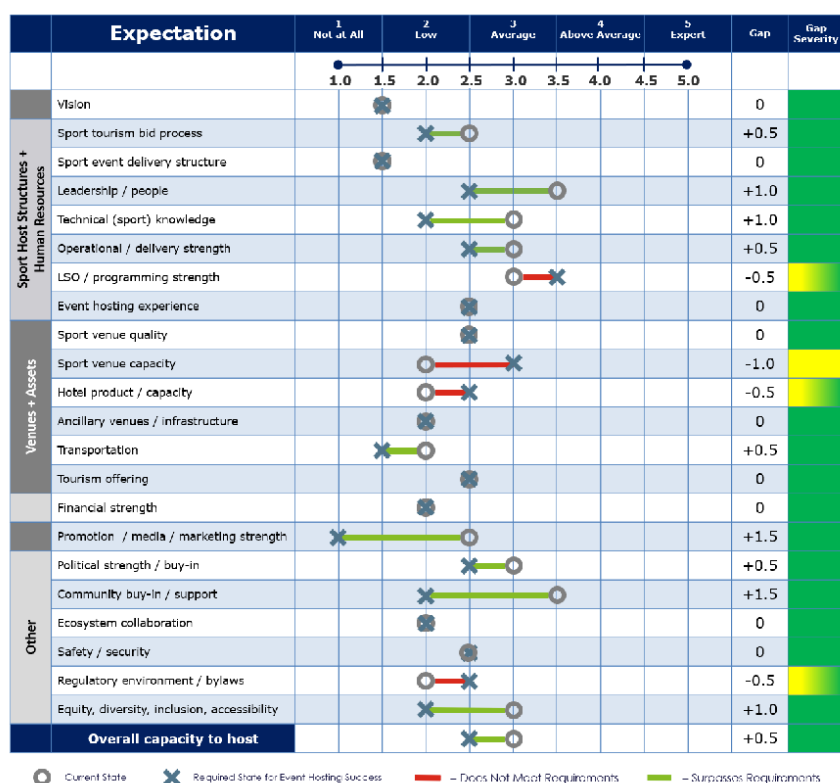
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needs of sport event rights holders at the various levels i) local / regional, ii) provincial, iii) national, and iv) international levels, Barrie rated below.

#### Barrie's Capacity to Host Local / Regional Events:

Local / regional events are those that attract sport participants from the surrounding region. The goal is overnight visitation, but it may not be a guarantee with regional events. The expectations of local / regional event rights holders of the host city are the lowest of any event type.

Barrie scores well across all sport event rights holder requirements. The capacity of local sport venues is the expectation that may be the most challenging. Expectations about hotels and accommodations can be low, but a higher quality of hotel may also entice people to stay in town rather than head home. Local / regional events require much more local sport organization (LSO) involvement, as the LSO typically provides the technical knowledge, volunteer base, onsite staffing of the event, and often any bid applications or requirements. Barrie is well-suited to host local / regional events for sports that have existing competition venues in Barrie.

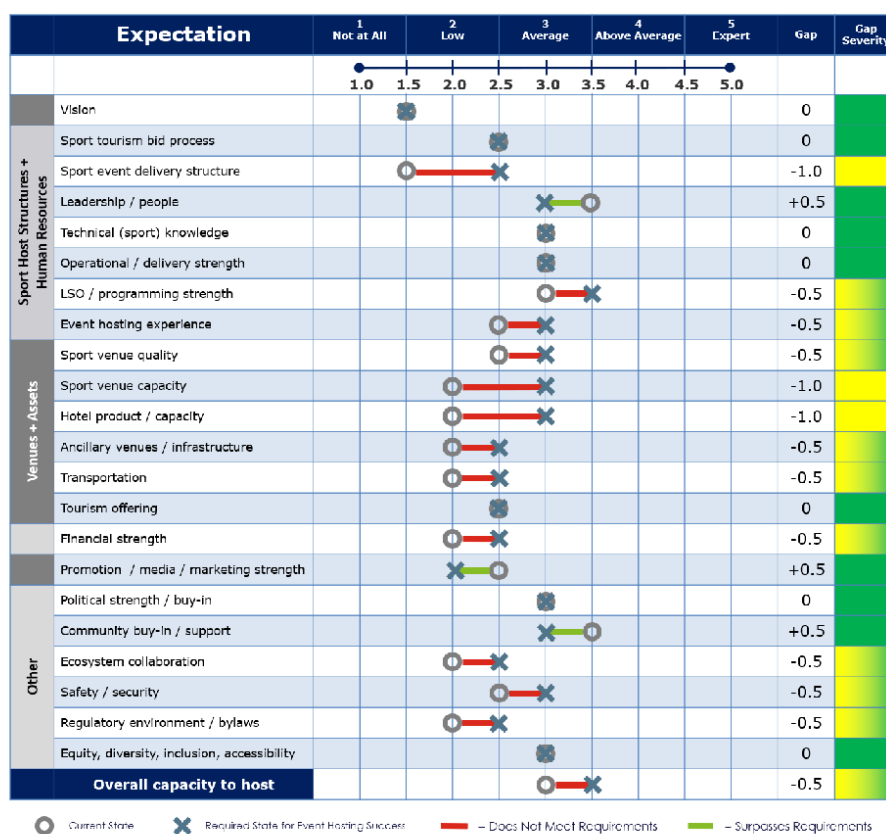


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### Barrie's Capacity to Host Provincial Events:

Provincial events are those events that draw participants and spectators from across Ontario. Ideally, athletes would participate in the event and some local tourism offering, potentially staying an additional night or two. Requirements of provincial event rights holders start to increase, to a degree that is largely dependent on the sport and type of event.

Per the assessment, Barrie can meet or come relatively close to meeting most requirements. For these events, there would be a much heavier reliance on the LSO to support event delivery. The more knowledgeable and experienced the LSO with event delivery, the more it mitigates the gap for "Sport event delivery structure". For provincial events, the LSO would largely provide the technical knowledge, volunteer base, onsite staffing of the event, and often any bid applications or requirements, but if the event is a provincial championship, the Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) may offer some staffing and support for the event. Barrie is well-suited to host local /



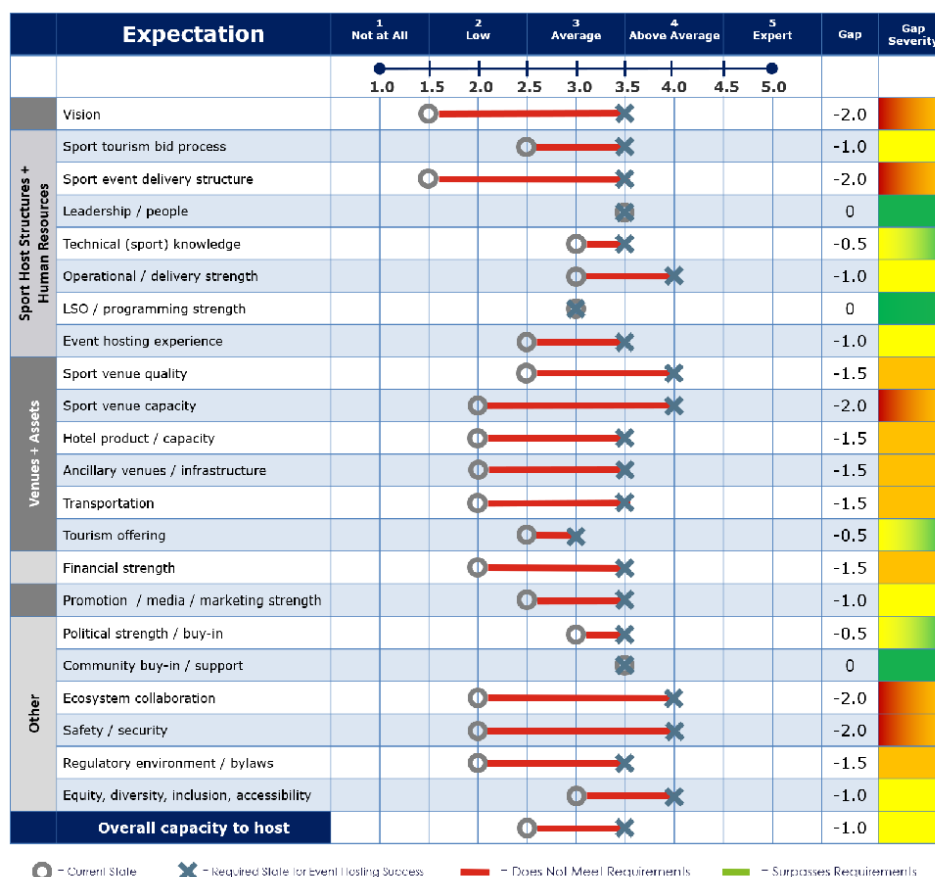


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regional events for sports that have existing competition venues in Barrie. Executing a provincial event well opens up opportunities to host the same sport (potentially different age groups) year-over-year.

#### Barrie's Capacity to Host National Events:

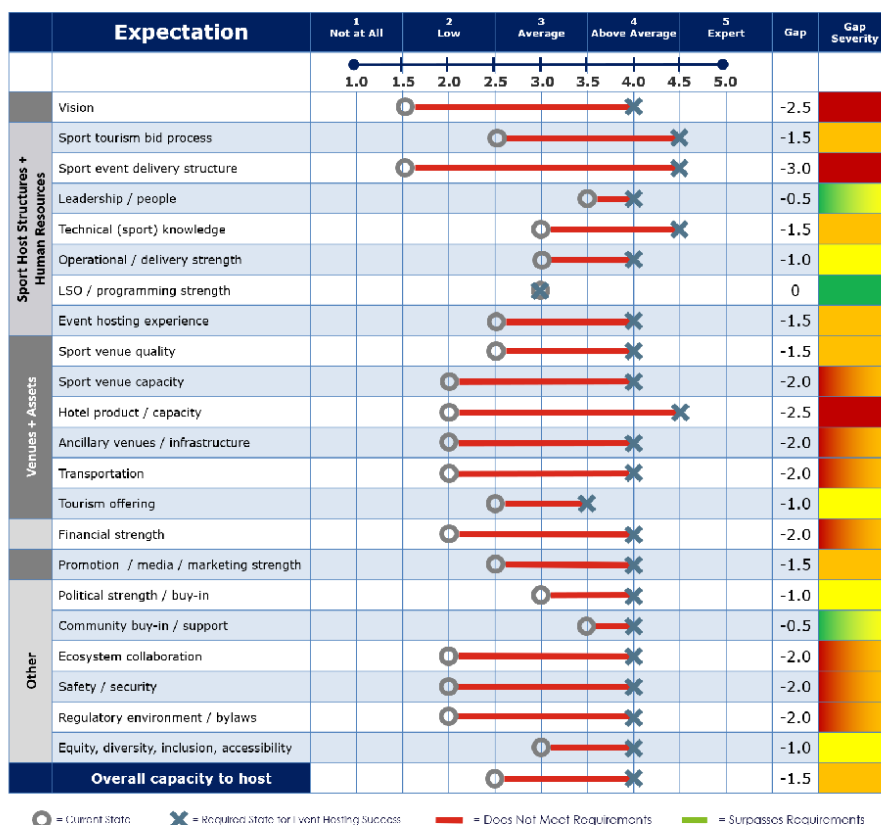
Entering into the national event scene brings an elevated level of requirements from event rights holders. While Barrie may be able to carefully target a few select events, the assessment of the event needs versus what Barrie can realistically deliver is imperative. From the sport's expectation of the city's multi-year vision for their sport, to the investment from the city into the bid and event delivery, to the fluidity of the bid process, to quality of accommodations and supporting services for event organizers and participants, to transportation to and from the airport, etc., the demands are high.



### Barrie's Capacity to Host International Events:

International events are those that attract an international audience – participants and spectators. International events vary substantially in their size and complexity. For a sport like wrestling, for example, hosting a high school championship places much more demand on facilities and hotels than an international world cup stop. Some international events may bring only 150 people to the city, however, the media exposure and opportunity to build event experience for bigger events is huge.

This level of event requires someone to lead the local organizing committee who has deep technical knowledge and event planning experience in the sport. They must be respected by both the national and international federation. Delivery of the event must be flawless. The support of municipal and provincial government and Indigenous leaders is key. Safety and security requirements increase substantially, as do the demands of the venues for anti-doping spaces, multiple change rooms, medical treatment rooms, fibre optic internet for broadcasting onsite, etc.



## Strategic Analysis > Funding Sustainability and the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)

### *Sport Tourism Funding Landscape*

#### Canada

The funding for sport tourism in Canada is varied and inconsistent. With the increased importance of attracting sport events in Canada as a means of driving economic and tourism benefit, funding for major sport events has been a challenge for host communities and host organizations, who lead the bidding for and hosting of sport events in Canada.

The Canadian Sport Policy is due to be renewed in early 2024. The policy identifies priorities for the sport system in Canada and helps to guide how federal, provincial and territorial governments advance sport. The ultimate outcome of this strategy is to ensure that sport “has a positive impact on the lives of Canadians, our communities and our country.”<sup>4</sup>

The Canadian Sport Policy has five broad objectives or classifications to help “increase the number and diversity of Canadians participating in sport”:

- Introduction to sport: Canadians have the fundamental skills, knowledge and attitudes to participate in organized and unorganized sport.
- Recreational sport: Canadians have the opportunity to participate in sport for fun, health, social interaction and relaxation.
- Competitive sport: Canadians have the opportunity to systematically improve and measure their performance against others in competition in a safe and ethical manner.
- High performance sport: Canadians are systematically achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition through fair and ethical means.
- Sport for development: Sport is used as a tool for social and economic development and the promotion of positive values at home and abroad.

The sport tourism sector contributes to at least three of these classifications in Canada including competitive sport, high performance sport and sport for development. In some cases, introduction to sport and recreational sport activities can fit within the definition of sport tourism.

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<sup>4</sup> Canadian Sport Policy: Government of Canada (Canadian Heritage) - <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-canada.html>



The Hosting Program, administered by Sport Canada, provides financial assistance to sport organizations that host the Canada Games and international sport events in Canada. It is noteworthy that this funding assistance is provided to national sport organizations, multi-sport organizations or franchise holders (such as the Canada Games Council, Aboriginal Sport Circle or Arctic Winter Games) and not directly to host communities.

The five components of the Hosting Program are:

- International Major Multi-sport Games
- International Single Sport Events
- International Multi-sport Games for Aboriginal Peoples
- International Multi-sport Games for Persons with a Disability
- Canada Games

In some jurisdictions in Canada, the economic development agency for a region, like FedDev Ontario, has provided funding, however this is not consistent across all regions of the country.

Federally, there is no tourism funding available at the time of this report's completion specifically for the attraction and hosting of sport events.

#### Ontario

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport provides funding to sport events through two key areas: by making strategic investments in the hosting of international amateur sporting events and delivering the Ontario Games program, which includes the Ontario Winter/Summer Games, Ontario 55+ Winter/Summer Games and Ontario Parasport Games.

The Province of Ontario allocates \$3 million annually through the Ontario Sport Hosting Program through project-based funding to help applicants deliver national and international amateur sport events in Ontario. Several events in the Barrie area have received financial support in 2023 with the Air Nation Horseshoe and Horseshoe Slopestyle/Big Air Canada Cup and 2023 National Canada Cup Mountain Bike Championships all receiving provincial funding.

There is no dedicated tourism funding assistance within the Province of Ontario, however enabling legislation in 2017 allowed Ontario municipalities to develop a destination marketing program under which providers of transient accommodation in the municipality are required to pay a portion of their revenue to an eligible tourism entity for the promotion of tourism. This allowed municipalities across Ontario to develop and implement a Municipal Accommodation Tax or MAT.



## *Sport Tourism Funding in Barrie*

### Current State

The City of Barrie approved a mandatory MAT that took effect on January 1, 2019. The amount of the MAT in the City of Barrie is 4% which is payable on accommodation for a period of less than 30 nights provided by a hotel, motel, inn or Airbnb.

Tourism Barrie is the designated "Tourism Entity" and receives 50% of the MAT annually which is projected to be \$625,000 in 2023. Of this amount, only a small portion is currently allocated specifically to sport tourism.

Tourism Barrie's annual budget for sport tourism is \$20,000 and the City of Barrie does not have a specific line item designated to support either bids or planning and delivery of sport events. However, the City of Barrie has supported bids in the past for single and multi-sport events.

### Policies

The City of Barrie website provides the context for the collection and distribution of municipal accommodation tax.<sup>5</sup>

There has been no history of investment by the City of Barrie to support sport tourism. This is not unique to Barrie as the past two decades have placed all levels of government in a reactive position with bids being won and sometimes imposing pressure of time, financial capacity and reputation on the host city.

***At the current levels, Barrie can at best expect to maintain the status quo, which is an under-funded sport tourism sector and continuing to be reactive to opportunities that arise.***

### **Municipal Accommodation Tax**

On December 1, 2017, the Province of Ontario enacted the Transient Accommodation Regulation 436/17, which provides the necessary provisions for municipalities across Ontario to implement a Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT).

City Council approved a mandatory MAT that took effect on January 1, 2019. Similar to many Ontario municipalities, the City of Barrie has a 4% Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) on accommodation for a continuous period of less than 30 nights provided by a hotel, motel or inn. The MAT is 4% tax payable for the purchase price of the room rental accommodation and all guest invoices will include a separate line identifying "Municipal Accommodation Tax". If the business is an HST registrant, HST is also payable on the MAT portion. Meeting room rentals, food and beverage, room services, internet and phone charges are all excluded from the tax but must be itemized separately.

**Tourism Barrie** acts as the City's "Tourism Entity" as defined in Regulation 436/17 and receives 50% of the MAT as outlined in the conditions of the legislation. Tourism Barrie also collects the MAT on behalf of the City of Barrie. All operators of properties subject to collecting the MAT must register with Tourism Barrie. The MAT fee collected must be remitted to Tourism Barrie within 30 days after the month's end. Any late remittance will be charged a 1.25% interest rate per month for late charges. For a period of seven years, accommodation providers are required to retain all records and documents necessary to enable an accurate determination of the MAT.

<sup>5</sup> Reference: <https://www.barrie.ca/business-economy/municipal-accommodation-tax>



New revenue opportunities are required if Barrie intends to be more proactive and intentional about which events it targets and bids for, and for what outcomes.

While there is little or no desire to increase the *burden* on the residents of Barrie to absorb the costs associated with attracting and hosting sport events that bring benefits to the city, the competition in the sector is increasing.

Amateur sport in Canada is delivered largely by volunteers and the events that are hosted, among bringing impacts that enhance the quality of life for residents, also generate significant revenue for the local organizations that deliver sport programming. This group are key stakeholders in the sport tourism ecosystem.

#### Sport Tourism Funding Best Practices

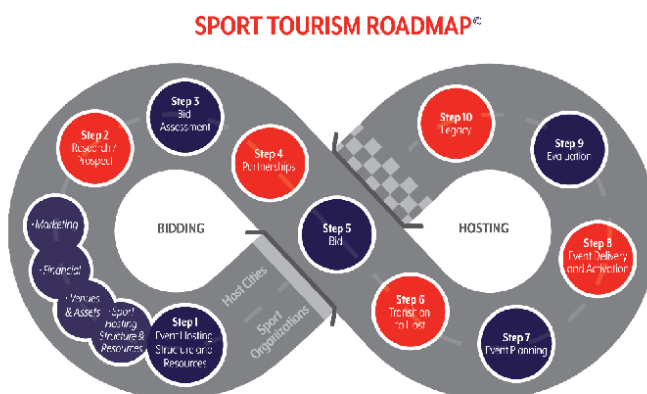
In Canada, sport tourism, including both attraction of events and the planning and delivery of those events, has been off the sides of desks and in some cases, on kitchen tables. With the increasing competitiveness of the sector, and the sophistication required to ensure that the safety, financial and reputational risks associated with hosting major events is not left to chance, we can do better.

Sport tourism is not an “at all costs” endeavour, but neither can it be at no cost.

Host cities that follow a planned and repeatable approach to sport tourism have benefitted from taking a more strategic approach to the resources required to sustain the existing events on the annual calendar and those that can generate incremental spending in the community that grow local and provincial economies. Tourism Barrie undertook a Sport Tourism Assessment Template (STAT Pro) exercise in 2019 by Sport Tourism Canada that provided an independent and objective assessment of the city and its readiness as a sport tourism destination. In that report, the Sport Tourism Roadmap was introduced (see below).

In the STAT Pro Report, Step 1 “Event Hosting Structure and Resources” represents 40% of the score in the 10-step cycle.

Host cities in Canada that are best in class have the budget in place to support the human and



financial resources required for all ten steps as this is the foundation of the sport tourism program for any city.

If sport event hosting or sport tourism is a priority for the city, funds that are core to the ongoing operation do not originate from the MAT or destination marketing program.

These funds can be used to “grow tourism” through three customer groups:

- Primary Customer – Rights holder or event owner who selects the host city for their event.
- Secondary Customer – The potential visitor who is a participant, spectator or fan who can choose to attend the event.
- Tertiary Customer – Every resident of Barrie and surrounding area who can attend and help to animate the experience for all participants.

Based on best practices of other Canadian municipalities, the core multi-year operational budget for any successful sport tourism program looks like the below sample:

BUDGET CATEGORY	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	NOTES
<b>Administration and Wages</b>	150,000	175,000	180,000	185,000	190,000	Rent, equipment, staff and contract resources
<b>Research and Networking</b>	20,000	25,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	Memberships, research materials, conferences
<b>Bid Development</b>	15,000	20,000	25,000	30,000	35,000	Bid costs, design, writing and production
<b>Marketing and Communication</b>	40,000	35,000	30,000	25,000	20,000	Website, social media, in-market communication, trade show activation
<b>Market Development</b>	20,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	Capacity building, recognition, stakeholder management
<b>Accountability</b>	20,000	25,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	Measurement and reporting
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$265,000</b>	<b>\$305,000</b>	<b>\$320,000</b>	<b>\$325,000</b>	<b>\$330,000</b>	

This budget framework is presented for discussion purposes and line amounts depend on the roles and functions of the sport tourism unit that focuses each day developing new sport event hosting opportunities and supporting the successful delivery of each event in Barrie. Regardless of where the sport tourism unit is based (Tourism Barrie, City of Barrie or another new or existing organization), the budget should be retained for the exclusive purpose of sport tourism development (bidding) and hosting.

Based on the current capacity of the Barrie MAT fund, revenue to support a successful and sustainable sport tourism program will require more than one revenue source. While attracting or developing sport events that will drive new business and attract visitors is important, hosting successful events that can be activated to increase benefits for Barrie, the business community and all residents is equally important.

Other financial factors to be considered include:

- Financial policies – Each of the partners should engage in a process to explore the terms and conditions associated with event funding and other supports including:
  - Financial guarantees required as part of the bid process to secure hosting rights for some sport events.
  - Consistent facility access policies and fees and any in-kind support provided to event organizers or rights holders to provide clarity in the offer to the primary customer that can be made by Barrie as a sport tourism host destination. This is a competitive space and other Ontario cities are looking at reducing or removing barriers to rights holders selecting their city.
- Event reserve – Will it be possible for annual surpluses or other revenues designated for sport tourism to be retained for future use? If so, what are the terms and conditions for both allocating to the reserve and disbursing in the future.
- Bid funding and opportunity costs – The annual operating budget, in its recommended form, does provide for a baseline amount to generate incremental sport hosting activity. It is recommended that each of the partners and stakeholders within the Barrie sport tourism ecosystem examine the terms for any incremental activity that may exceed the current budget levels, to not lose out on opportunities for new business once budgets have been allocated in a given fiscal year.
- Financial sustainability – While this operating model is proposed for a shorter term, the strategy for attracting and hosting sport events extends beyond the initial term of the sport hosting unit. Each of the partners should begin discussions during the implementation phase to ensure that the future sustainability of the sport hosting office remains top of mind to achieve longevity as infrastructure is further developed to support new hosting opportunities.

#### Impact-Informed Sport Tourism

Many sport event strategies identify the intended results for sport event hosting but do not allocate the required resources to measure each event or, more importantly, the cumulative impact of sport events by year and year over year. The nature of sport event hosting is transactional in that the industry tendency is to move from one project



to the next while not investing in the measurement to assess the true impact of sport events.

### Impacts

It is common in sport tourism in Canada and globally for sport groups to be focused on developing their competitive model and the specific sport or discipline and tourism directing attention primarily to their industry key indicators. Sport tourism has the opportunity and the responsibility to align the efforts of sport, tourism, economic development, community development, and other functional areas so sport hosting is understood and intentionally resourced to deliver specific impacts or outcomes.

There are varied event impact models in Canada. Sport Canada has developed the *Canadian Sport Hosting Rationale* and Sport Tourism Canada has developed the *Sport Tourism Economic Assessment Model (STEAM)* and *STEAM Pro* to measure economic impact in both predictive and post-event phases. Also, based on global best practices on sport event evaluation, Sport Tourism Canada has developed a model that allows for the integration of both the supply side (sport event rights holders) and the demand side (host communities and organizations). The *Sport Tourism Event Evaluation Report (STEER)* is a resource for hosts and rights holders to look more broadly on the impacts of sport tourism.

The impact categories prescribed by Sport Tourism Canada's STEER Model include:

- Economic (direct spending)
- Image (future spending)
- Social (community well-being)
- Sport (participation and performance)
- Environmental (protecting our future)

Within each of these categories, the following impact areas are recommended for consideration by Barrie to both inform future event development but also to measure the performance of each event and report on the results annually by sport and by region.

AREA	INPUT	OUTPUTS
ECONOMIC	Participants	Number of participants % out of town participants Average length of stay
	Spectators	Number of spectators % out of town spectators Average length of stay
	Media / VIP	Number of media % out of town Average length of stay
	Organizer Expenditure	Operational spending
	City / Province Expenditure	Capital investment projects

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	Economic	Increase to GDP, Wages & Salaries, Taxes, etc.
<b>IMAGE</b>	Broadcast/Stream	Unique broadcast views (by session) Broadcast countries or territories Broadcast media value equivalent
	Traditional Media	Number of accredited media Number of event related stories by market % of stories related to Barrie
<b>SOCIAL</b>	Community Engagement	# residents engaged in the event
	Volunteers	Number of volunteers Number of volunteer hours/per person Number of volunteers from equity groups
	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	% participants from equity seeking groups Ability to ensure volunteer participation is diverse; and/or cultural training for volunteers is identified as a priority
	Skill Development	Number of people trained in new skills
	Cultural Promotion	Local performers or animators Culinary sector impact (customers/meals) Cultural showcase numbers
<b>SPORT</b>	Sport Development	Legacies to PSO / local sport organizations Direct investment to sport programs
	Sport Participation	% inspired to participate in sport
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL</b>	Environmental Promotion	% attendees positive change in behavior
	Transport	% public or active transportation
	Waste	% waste diverted from landfill
	Energy	% energy from renewable sources
	Procurement	% of contract awarded locally % event food and drink sourced locally

The impacts selected by Barrie should be used during the concept development phase to forecast the potential for each event and inform decisions on funding and resource allocation. Following each event, the post-event report card will lead to greater transparency and showing value for money and benefit in each impact area. With planned and proactive communication, this can ensure the buy in from all sport user groups and residents to see the benefits of each event, beyond just the economic impact.

For this or any impact model to be effective, a commitment is required on the part of all stakeholders to measure these for each event at the national level or above. This will help to shift the event hosting culture from an operational perspective to a legacy perspective.

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### Economic Impact

To provide context on the economic opportunity for Barrie for specific sport events, the below chart provides a sample of post-event economic impact results from sport events across Canada. These outputs were developed using the STEAM Pro, which relies on primary data collection from organizers and attendees. The table below demonstrates the type and size of events that Barrie could potentially host (or something similar).

*Note: events highlighted in green have been made public and those highlighted in yellow have not, and therefore the name has been masked to show the general nature of the event as well as protect the privacy of the data/event.*



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**Economic Impact Assessments Generated by STEAM PRO - Excerpts for Barrie**

Event Name	City	Prov.	Size/Scope	Initial Expenditure	GDP	Economic Activity	Jobs	Taxes
ICF Canoe Sprint World Champs.			International	\$6,692,000	\$6,922,000	\$15,038,000	143	\$2,399,000
Road National Championships			National	\$438,000	\$466,000	\$1,007,000	7	\$170,000
Black Gold Rodeo			Regional	\$624,000	\$713,000	\$1,495,000	11	\$230,000
Provincial Winter Games			Provincial	\$2,033,000	\$2,362,000	\$4,896,000	47	\$980,000
Provincial Summer Games			Provincial	\$2,476,000	\$3,005,000	\$6,130,000	55	\$1,312,000
Provincial Jr. B Provincial Championships			Provincial	\$309,000	\$349,000	\$738,000	6	\$130,000
Provincial Scotties			Provincial	\$295,000	\$356,000	\$667,000	4	\$109,000
Junior & U-23 Canoe Sprint World Champs.			International	\$5,288,000	\$5,889,000	\$12,161,000	94	\$2,330,000
FIL Women's Lacrosse World Cup			International	\$2,390,000	\$2,516,000	\$5,517,000	41	\$1,256,000
Provincial Special Olympics			Provincial	\$302,000	\$332,000	\$690,000	4	\$102,000
AAC National Dog Agility Championships			National	\$580,000	\$689,000	\$1,382,000	8	\$240,000
World Mixed Doubles & World Seniors Curling			International	\$745,000	\$679,000	\$1,474,000	12	\$301,000
RBC Cup			National	\$1,327,000	\$1,235,000	\$2,756,000	23	\$789,000
Esso Cup			National	\$436,000	\$432,000	\$932,000	6	\$166,000
Provincial Curling Championships			Provincial	\$445,400	\$531,000	\$989,000	6	\$157,000
CheerExpo National Championships			National	\$1,511,000	\$1,494,000	\$3,117,000	24.1	\$641,000
Triathlon Festival (TIF & Pan Am Cup)			International	\$939,000	\$1,030,000	\$2,080,000	12.9	\$397,000
CCA Junior Curling Championships			National	\$548,000	\$577,000	\$1,240,000	11	\$252,000
Provincial Volleyball Championships			Provincial	\$4,496,000	\$4,697,000	\$10,124,000	75	\$2,236,000
Petro-Canada Sport Leadership Sportif Conference			National	\$401,732	\$786,777	\$1,500,000	7.1	\$211,442
World Under-17 Hockey Challenge			International	\$2,069,494	\$1,826,718	\$3,000,000	13	\$474,487
Provincial PeeWee Hockey Championship			Provincial	\$414,868	\$330,230	\$650,910	3.2	\$124,990
Provincial Exhibition & Stampede			Regional	\$3,673,301	\$3,064,334	\$5,726,884	27.5	\$4,720,005
Under-14 Alberta Provincial Tier 2 Soccer Championship			Provincial	\$343,000	\$359,000	\$695,000	3	\$100,000
Regional Stampede			International	\$5,091,993	\$3,981,642	\$8,040,381	31	\$1,200,000
Foamfest and Canada Day Event			Regional	\$946,786	\$895,113	\$1,772,077	9	\$233,843
Canadian Ringette Championship			National	\$2,705,884	\$2,501,950	\$5,131,156	23	\$702,516
Little Native Hockey League			Provincial	\$6,511,013	\$5,218,927		61	\$2,000,000
Provincial Winter Games			Provincial	\$5,733,004	\$5,276,713	\$9,514,969	29.7	\$1,179,005
Provincial Summer Games			Provincial	\$3,389,384	\$2,960,000	\$5,523,738	19	\$793,000
Volleyball Canada Nationals			National	\$13,122,677	\$12,922,027	\$24,754,862	119	\$3,419,005
UTL World Triathlon			International	\$5,253,690	\$4,828,648	\$7,421,399	38	\$1,297,919
Alberta High School Football Championship	Fort McMurray	AB	Provincial	\$130,906	\$109,345	\$212,658	1	\$35,697
Mixed Curling World Championship	Kelowna	BC	International	\$750,000	\$792,225	\$1,211,400	7.3	\$250,403
Provincial Basketball Provincial Championship			Provincial	\$1,878,190	\$1,461,047	\$2,959,685	19	\$522,142
Sto-Pitch Nationals	Leduc	AB	National	\$624,423	\$493,557	\$994,981	3.8	\$158,757
Curl 4 Canada			National	\$1,553,000	\$1,540,417	\$2,912,000	13	\$392,661
Ontario Winter Games	Orillia	ON	National	\$2,443,531	\$2,128,594	\$4,244,843	25.6	\$684,000
Special Olympics Canada Summer Games	Antigonish	NS	International	\$7,235,296	\$5,108,347	\$12,648,114	49	\$1,975,456
Provincial Winter Games			Provincial	\$3,672,392	\$3,459,438	\$7,351,175	38	\$1,336,778
STIHL Timbersports Canadian Championship	Wasaga Beach	ON	National	\$1,941,704	\$1,871,912	\$3,551,094	20	\$572,914
Scotties Tournament of Hearts	Penticton	BC	National	\$5,046,018	\$4,362,812	\$8,016,190	43	\$1,424,606
Accelerate Acro Convention			Provincial	\$610,582	\$525,171	\$596,888	4	\$126,807
BMX Canada Cup			National	\$146,730	\$115,584	\$137,889	1	\$32,541
Petro-Canada Sport Leadership Sportif Conference			National	\$791,915	\$711,989	\$1,262,036	6.3	\$199,932
Rip Curl Nationals	Vancouver Island	BC	National	\$955,894	\$773,728	\$1,489,065	8.3	\$279,075
Provincial Mixed Doubles Curling Championship			Provincial	\$165,753	\$143,857	\$264,957	1.2	\$50,535
Novice Hockey Tournament	Dawson Creek	BC	Provincial	\$80,500	\$54,538	\$123,062	0.5	\$20,929
Dynamite Volleyball Tournament	Dawson Creek	BC	Provincial	\$61,087	\$43,166	\$95,361	0.4	\$16,430
Memorial Cup			National	\$11,558,182	\$8,595,192	\$21,333,508	90	\$3,710,320
National Youth Track & Field			National	\$1,235,924	\$299,328	\$2,043,070	9	\$846,006
Skate Canada International			International	\$3,307,179	\$2,972,805	\$5,249,989	23	\$891,880
Little Native Hockey League Tournament			National	\$6,437,714	\$4,850,539	\$10,614,348	48	\$1,999,609
Canadian Dragon Boat Championship			National	\$1,808,014	\$1,299,591	\$2,617,620	13	\$485,369
Tough Mudder			National	\$2,170,150	\$1,743,321	\$3,453,177	13.6	\$641,060
Provincial Winter Games			National	\$3,578,992	\$2,935,911	\$6,080,477	34.6	\$950,938
Provincial Winter Games			Provincial	\$3,609,925	\$3,021,675	\$5,837,233	17	\$799,319
Provincial Winter Games			Provincial	\$1,355,184	\$1,223,415	\$2,135,298	8.5	\$336,112



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### *Sport Tourism Roles and Responsibilities*

The sport tourism ecosystem includes stakeholders from a wide range of groups who are either directly involved in the attraction or development and delivery of sport events as well as groups that are enablers and some who are casually involved. Below is an overview of the stakeholders that make up the sport tourism ecosystem in Barrie:



The following table provides potential roles for consideration specific to the future development and implementation of a long-term and sustainable sport tourism program for Barrie:

<b>City of Barrie</b>	Municipalities that are successful in the sport tourism sector provide clear intent on the importance of the sector for the development of: economy, image, community (social, sport and cultural) and the environment. With this direction, host cities are enablers of sport events (existing and new) from concept development through the legacy phase. The City of Barrie can set the policy and funding framework to ensure the existing events are able to achieve growth and new events are aligned with public policy objectives and financial realities. Sport tourism is a municipally led initiative in Canada, and a customer-focused approach leads to positive and consistent results. Sport tourism requires investment in both capital infrastructure, operational financing and solutions to manage the hosting fees or financial risk associated with some events.
<b>Tourism Barrie</b>	Destination marketing or management organizations exist at the municipal and provincial levels and can be inside government or at arms-length. For sport events to lift the profile of the host destination, it is imperative for destination organizations to be involved in event development while also leveraging each event for the promotion of the destination and associated tourism assets. This will enable events to be successful by building attendance and animating the visitor experience in and around Barrie. Ultimately the destination and tourism sector will be supported through the promotion of the destination brand and can drive consistent impacts 52 weeks per year.



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**Local Sport  
Organizations**

The group that champions event development concepts is most often a local sport organization that is a standing association within a sport or a local bid group which is often ad hoc, and purpose driven. The local sport organization must also consider legacy first as the leaders within a sport at the community level.

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**Venues  
(Sport and  
Recreation Facility  
Operators)**

Venues are the sport and recreation facilities and associated structures that support the successful delivery of an event. They may be municipally owned or be part of other infrastructure including university and colleges, private facilities and tourism assets such as hotels and meeting spaces. The venues and their operators play a key role in managing the dislocation of other business or displacement of regular users which can be better managed proactively with nearby facilities and municipalities. Availability and cost are key considerations for host venues as rights holders are comparing multiple communities and adaptability is a key driver of success in winning business.

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**Accommodations**

The accommodations sector is a key partner in both housing and feeding sport event participants. Having access to large blocks of rooms with full-service amenities at reasonable rates will ensure success. Given the current gap for full meal service at most properties in Barrie, providing recommended meal solutions as part of the overall offering will be important for Barrie to be successful in attracting national and international sport events.

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*The Strategy Landscape in Barrie*

Regardless of the governance or operational model for sport tourism, the reality is that this function cannot operate in isolation and must ensure alignment with existing strategies, policies and financial realities.





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#### City of Barrie Tourism Master Plan (2020)

The Tourism Master Plan recommends that 100% of MAT funds be allocated for “the direct benefit of tourism marketing and administration, soft product development, bid funding and other tourism centric projects.”

This plan also prescribed several recommendations for the market sector development of sport tourism in Barrie including:

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Develop a sport tourism strategy that identifies the structure and resources required to attract and host sport events that positively impact the Barrie brand and community via economic, social and sustainability outcomes.
- 2.2 Develop policy and sustainable funding mechanisms to assist with attracting and hosting new sports events that draw on the City's existing hosting resources, including local sport facilities and the expertise within local sports organizations.
- 2.3 Develop a Barrie sport hosting Unique Selling Proposition that can include created or homegrown events, attracted events, sport business meetings and training camps to leverage the proximity to the GTA and access to the rest of Ontario.
- 2.4 Develop a sustainable Sport Tourism structure that includes all stakeholders and ensures regular and ongoing communication and shared purpose.

The importance of sport tourism as an opportunity for Barrie was identified in the plan with Sadlon Arena as the most event-ready facility for small national and international sport events.

#### Tourism Strategic Plan (Tourism Barrie 2021-2023)

The sport market was identified in this plan with amateur and college level tournaments and events referenced specifically as potential growth opportunities. Sport tourism is a 52-week a year sector and if approached intentionally, can contribute significantly to business and the community.

Also referenced in this plan was the opportunity to better leverage the MAT for tourism and long-term sustainable funding. With limited funding currently for sport tourism, exploring this tourism segment creates new opportunities for revenue development.

The sport tourism sector fits well with the strategic direction identified in this plan noted below:



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#### Sadlon Arena Expansion Review (2023)

As identified in the Sadlon Arena Expansion Review, there is agreement that the Sadlon Arena represents the value of the multi-use sport and event centre (MUSEC) for Barrie in the attraction and hosting of major sport events.

This review also identifies some limitations of the Sadlon Arena structurally and operationally as there are limited event days year over year. The Sadlon Arena can be used more with a varied mix of sport events to ensure the contribution to the community and local economy is maximized.

Any potential expansion of capital improvements to the Sadlon Arena should include the potential for future sport tourism and the greater good of community vibrancy in balance with the main tenant. Ultimately, rights holders for sport events are seeking in-venue opportunities for revenue but also experiential elements at event level, for spectators in the bowl and on concourses and for media and VIP at press level.

#### Barrie City Council Strategic Plan (2022-2026)

To ensure alignment between the future of sport tourism and the City of Barrie, all sport tourism strategies, objectives and tactics should support one or more of the strategic objectives that include:

- Affordable Place to Live
- Community Safety
- Thriving Community
- Infrastructure Investments
- Responsible Governance

Sport tourism can be an enabler for much more than economic benefits but not as an afterthought. Intention and purpose will be key to ensure the connection between future sport tourism and the objectives for the City of Barrie and all residents.

As the City of Barrie renews the Asset Management Plan, both the Facilities Asset Management Plan and the Recreation & Culture Asset Management Plan should include an assessment of future hosting opportunities based on the current state for each venue and by sport. This can also apply to the future multi-use facilities planned for Barrie.

### Strategic Analysis > Summary of Key Findings

One could summarize from this strategic analysis that:

1. **Location >** Barrie is a growing community within proximity of Toronto. If it can create an offering of quality sport venues and facilities that meet or surpass competition standard, Barrie has strong potential to be a sport tourism and high-performance hub (potentially the closest hub to Northern Ontario). The current facilities (both due to specifications and standards) do not offer much growth potential.
2. **Limited number of competition-ready facilities and facility capacity >** Barrie has a limited number of facilities suitable for competition or the next level of competition, and the facilities that exist within the community are at or near capacity. Creating event-ready facilities through minor upgrades and supporting long-term capital investment in sport facilities is critical to the short-, mid- and long-term success of any sport tourism strategy for the City of Barrie.

3. **Barrie lacks hotels >** Sport event hosting is limited in Barrie due to the number of rooms and quality of available hotels. Sport event rights holders have stringent requirements for hotels, number of rooms, number of conference and meetings rooms, amenities and available services. Sport tourism success in Barrie will be reliant on hotel capacity and quality.
4. **Barrie is under-investing in sport tourism >** Relative to many communities of a similar size, Barrie is under-investing in sport tourism. Support is needed for marketing, bidding, hosting and relationship support. The allocation of MAT is not sufficient for human resources, bid fees, grant / incentive programs or destination marketing. Sport tourism cannot move ahead without more concerted financial investment.
5. **Barrie lacks a conference / convention centre in its product offering >** A convention centre facility would support events (such as wrestling, volleyball, basketball), providing much needed venue capacity. In addition, Barrie would be able to host the conventions, congresses, banquets and business meetings that accompany many sport events.
6. **Outdoor assets are underutilized >** Natural setting on Kempenfelt Bay, outdoor recreation assets, and year-round recreational activities (such as kiteboarding, sailing, cross-country skiing, ice fishing) set Barrie apart from other sport host communities. The waterfront, however, is felt to be underutilized and restricted in terms of access and use for sport events. It is one of Barrie's greatest sport tourism assets.
7. **Opportunity for public-private partnership >** Given the use of Barrie sport venues and facilities is nearing capacity, including those of Georgian College and local schools, multiple different local sport organizations and stakeholders indicated the desire for public-private partnerships to get more sport venues operational in the city. Private funding partners are available and interested in investing.
8. **Barrie is stronger with surrounding communities >** The communities in and around Barrie are working to enhance their existing sport venue offering. While some view those communities as "competition" relative to sport tourism, in fact, these communities have limited accommodations, restaurants and broader tourism offering. If Barrie approached these communities as partners and created win-win scenarios, there is the potential to grow Barrie's sport tourism product and offerings over time.
9. **Greater flexibility around zoning and bylaws would benefit the city's competitive position as a sport host community >** The City of Barrie's



zoning and regulatory environment are seemingly restrictive and less agile relative to some other communities chasing sport tourism. Zoning and bylaws including their culture, processes and procedures within the city could be improved to speed up decisions. Reassessing the approach to insurance for events on and around the lake could also be beneficial to increasing the number and type of events the city can host.

10. **Lack of centralized point of contact for all things sport** > Several stakeholders in the city described instances of “abandoned sport tourism and event opportunities” because of a lack of a central point of contact for sport. The City of Barrie has a centralized system for booking facilities, but has limited visibility to Georgian College, school facilities or private sport facilities. A sport host website has been set up by Tourism Barrie to funnel inquiries and provide some base information. Marketing of the region is supported by Tourism Barrie and further communications to community are supported by the City of Barrie. A single point of entry and process to support assessment of event feasibility, bid preparation and event hosting does not currently exist.

### Recommendations:

Based on all the research, feedback, analysis and insights, the following recommendations are designed to support the City of Barrie and the various stakeholders in sport and tourism to forge ahead and build a foundation for the future. The first set of options are specific to the “Ideal Sport Profile”, both in the current state and ideal future state.

#### *Ideal Sport Profile > Current State*

Based on the **current state** of readiness (facilities, accommodations, capacity, etc.), Barrie can host a multitude of various events that would satisfy the sport tourism objective outlined in this report with a continued focus on local- and regional-level sport hosting.

#### Option 1: More of the sports with a track record of hosting

Barrie is home to a number of sports with established clubs and adequate facilities for regional / provincial events. Sports that have a proven track record of hosting have the potential to contribute to Barrie’s sport tourism success in the short term, providing the necessary event hosting experience, demonstrated suitability of venues, and local sport expertise. As an example, Barrie is well known and respected for their organization of youth hockey tournaments. Building off this



experience and hosting more youth hockey tournaments is an option, recognizing the need to balance user displacement. Other youth sports like baseball, softball, soccer, and figure skating are examples of sports where Barrie has adequate facilities and experience to host such sport events at the regional and provincial level, and as such should also be taken into consideration.

#### Option 2: High school championships

Barrie is home to a number of schools (public, private and Catholic) with suitable gymnasiums for sport events. While this recommendation requires a strong partnership with the various school boards and athletic associations, there exists an opportunity to host sport events during the shoulder seasons. Given the limitations in the number of rooms available in Barrie, event organizers must be realistic about the size and scope of the event that can be hosted. For this reason, regional high school championships are recommended and some provincial championships with lower participant numbers can be considered.

#### Option 3: Adult and family participation events

Participation events are those events with open registration that encourage broad community participation. Some examples of participation events include running events, triathlons, cycling events, Tough Mudders, etc. These events bring two demographics: 1) adults with a "work hard, play hard" mentality with higher disposable income that may "stay and play" post-event, and 2) multi-generational / young families with children, parents and possibly grandparents participating and travelling to Barrie. Many participation events do not require a "venue" as much as they require appropriate competition "space". This is a great opportunity to make use of Barrie's lakefront and plentiful outdoor assets and trails.

#### Option 4: Adult social sports / activities

Adult social sports and activities, less high performance and more recreational-competitive (such as cornhole, ball hockey, slo-pitch, disc golf, and pickleball), can also attract a large number of participants with the propensity to spend at local restaurants, bars, and attractions. The nature and demographics of some adult social sports create opportunities for mid-week competitions, use of non-traditional indoor and outdoor spaces, and event scheduling at off-peak hours. This is a great opportunity for a community like Barrie that may be tight on venue availability.



#### Option 5: Maximizing potential of the Sadlon Arena

The Sadlon Arena is the most event-ready venue in Barrie, and thus the most equipped to potentially host more provincial- or national-level sport competitions. Barrie has an opportunity to revisit the Sadlon Arena in terms of what is and what could be hosted in the arena, in its current state. Maximizing use of one of Barrie's prime assets is key to short-term growth.

#### *Ideal Sport Profile > Future State*

Based on the **ideal future state** of readiness (facilities, accommodations, capacity, etc.), Barrie can host a multitude of various events that would satisfy the sport tourism objective outlined in this report with a continued focus on local- and regional-level sport hosting.

#### Option 6: Youth Team Sports, namely Court Sports

In an ideal future state (i.e., more / better accommodations, more / better facilities, more financial and human resources capacity and support for bidding and hosting, etc.), Barrie would be encouraged to both continue and expand on the portfolio of youth team sport events / tournaments. Replicating a model that has already proven successful and adding a complement of new / other sports, particularly court sports (e.g., basketball, volleyball, badminton, etc.) would have significant economic impact and benefit to community. The availability of appropriate courts or facilities would be required. Some communities are taking the approach of an investment in convention centre facilities and / or conversion of manufacturing facilities and warehouses to accommodate court sports. An investment in temporary flooring (e.g., volleyball courts that can be installed for competition, then disassembled and stored for future use) could be a game changer for venue capacity in the city.

In addition, investment in retrofits and upgrades to existing facilities – both the field of play and supporting amenities (e.g., change rooms, media centre, accessibility requirements, public restrooms, etc.) – would position Barrie to attract more and higher calibre youth team sport events.

#### Option 7: Pickleball

Pickleball is a sport the City of Barrie is investing in. Barrie is ahead of the curve relative to other municipalities and pickleball court development (e.g., Painswick Park). Current plans indicate, however, that proposed facilities are geared toward local, recreational usage, however, and not for competition. The investment in the





pickleball facilities, if augmented to competition standards (e.g., competition-sized courts, change rooms, restrooms, running water, shaded pagodas and picnic areas, etc.) could have a substantial economic impact and return on investment for the City of Barrie. Tailoring the city's offering to both participation and competition could position Barrie as the Pickleball hub for the region, as well as event centre for provincial events.

#### Option 8: Watersports

Time and time again, community members and stakeholders cited Kempenfelt Bay and the waterfront as Barrie's greatest tourism feature and recreational asset. The lake and lakefront are largely underutilized, particularly for sport events. Sailing, kiteboarding and other sports that rely on water (e.g., triathlon) are all strong options for Barrie, drawing overnight visitation and minimizing impact on existing sport and recreation venues. The City of Barrie would need to reassess how they support the development of events on the lake and lakefront, particularly relative to insurance, event operations, and safety.

#### Option 9: Cricket

Cricket is a popular sport in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), driven by the region's large South Asian community, many of whom have immigrated from cricket-playing countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Caribbean.

According to a survey conducted by the Ontario Cricket Academy in 2019, there are approximately 100,000 active cricket players in the GTA, and the sport is played at all levels, from youth to senior leagues. The survey also found that there is a growing interest in cricket among non-South Asian communities in the GTA, reflecting the increasing popularity of the sport worldwide.

The GTA has a strong infrastructure for cricket, but with very few venues north of Aurora. With the changing demographics of residents in Barrie and the over 8,000 Indian students that attend Georgian College annually, the opportunity and demand for cricket in Barrie continues to grow. Adding a cricket facility opens up opportunities for sport tourism in Barrie through league expansion and event hosting.

#### Option 10: Multi-Sport Games

Barrie is in a great central location to host provincial multi-sport games, but lacks accommodations capacity and suitable sport venues. While the most ambitious of the recommendations, the potential impact on community and ability to fast track

infrastructure development is notable. Multi-sport games bring significant provincial and federal investment in infrastructure and legacy to the community. In order to successfully bid for a multi-sport games, however, Barrie would need to invest in a competition standard athletics facility and also an aquatics centre (with both a 50m race pool, as well as a 25m warm up pool). These are the two key venues missing from the mix to successfully host a multi-sport games.

These options are felt to have the most potential for Barrie as a sport host community. These recommendations, if achieved, will support Barrie in achieving its sport tourism objective, as well as the overarching City of Barrie Tourism Master Plan.

#### *Ideal Sports Tourism Visitor Profile*

To coincide with the Ideal Sport Profile above, the development of an Ideal Visitor Profile can support the economic goals of hosting such events and activities. Two sample Ideal Visitor Profiles include: i) out-of-town youth sport / event participants including the individual(s) who accompany the participant to the competitions or events, ii) adult sport / event participants.

It is common for out-of-town youth sport / event participants to have at least one family member, if not the whole family, accompany them to the sport / event. The participants combined with those who accompany them stimulate the local economy by filling hotel rooms, increasing expenditure at restaurants, and encouraging engagement in local recreational and entertainment activities. Often these visitors are seeking upgraded and full-service accommodations.

Adult sport / event participants also stimulate the local economy as mentioned above but can have a greater impact as they usually stay in the area longer and have more disposable income to enjoy higher quality accommodations, restaurants, and entertainment options. This reinforces the need to consider investment in

upgraded and full-service accommodations. Additionally, these participants do not necessarily put strain on traditional sport / event hosting venues. One example of this

Slo-Pitch Nationals	
Attendees	1,600 players, 750 spectators
Party Size	2.2 people
Overnight Stays	3.7 nights
Operational Costs	\$56,000
Visitor Spending	\$567,000
Economic Activity (local)	\$814,000

comes from a recent economic impact assessment of the Slo-Pitch Nationals.

In many communities, there is a desire to only focus on attracting larger-scale or televised events, as they have significant economic impact and media exposure opportunities for the community. While many national and international events are outside the capabilities of what Barrie could currently host, there are some within current capabilities and others within reach with minimal modifications. Not a suggestion for bidding, but to provide some context, some examples of the type of economic impact these events can generate (taken from some recent economic impact studies) include:

Event	Overall Economic Activity
RBC Cup (Hockey)	\$2.8 million
Canadian Ringette Championships	\$5.1 million
Scotties Tournament of Hearts (Curling)	\$8-10 million
Memorial Cup (Hockey)	\$21.3 million
RBC Cup (Hockey)	\$2.8 million
Canadian Ringette Championships	\$5.1 million

Some communities focus on smaller events that are easier to manage, may or may not require bidding to host, and have small operational budgets. These events still attract out-of-town visitors and generate reasonable economic impact for the host community. Some examples of these types of events include:

	Youth Girls Volleyball Tournament	Novice Hockey Tournament
Attendees	360 players, 240 spectators	280 players, 840 spectators
Party Size	2.7 people	3.7 people
Overnight Stays	1.4 nights	1.9 nights
Operational Costs	\$4,300	\$8,100
Visitor Spending	\$60,000	\$72,000
Economic Activity (local)	\$76,000	\$99,000

From a non-traditional event perspective, there are a lot of creative opportunities worth exploring which could take advantage of the natural environment in and around Barrie. An example of this is the 5K Foam Fest that travels across Canada which took place in Barrie on July 22, 2023. A recent economic impact assessment of this event demonstrated a local economic activity of \$1.8 million.

In an ideal state, it is highly recommended to round out the visitor experience to incorporate other activities for either non-competing visitors (e.g., family fun activities) or for the teams / participants themselves. Knowing that an ideal state would like to deliver an "upgraded" demographic and a longer length of stay, serious consideration needs to be paid to the overall experience which includes venues, accommodations, food & beverage options, and other activities outside the field of play to achieve this goal.

#### *Building Organizational Capacity and Enabling Sport Tourism Success*

In alignment with the STC Sport Tourism Roadmap©, the recommendations below have been made to support organizational capacity building and successful implementation of the proposed "ideal sport" profile. Building Barrie's capacity to bid and host is critical to its mid- and long-term success in sport tourism.

In addition to continuing with the recommendations made in the STC STAT Pro Report in 2019, the following six (6) recommendations are considered priority for success in sport tourism, including:

1. Invest people and \$\$\$ into sport tourism
2. Add new hotel product / capacity and conference facilities
3. Build sport venues to national and international competition standard
4. Develop an incentive program for event rights holders
5. Assess the agility of the city to respond to sport tourism opportunities
6. Focus on partnership and collaboration

By focusing on these six (6) enabling recommendations, the City of Barrie and partner organizations in the sport tourism ecosystem will continue to improve Barrie's potential of being a choice sport host city in Ontario. The goal is to successfully compete provincially and nationally against other Canadian communities to contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of Barrie and its residents.

#### *1. Recommendation > Invest people and \$\$\$ into sport tourism*

Building capacity for sport tourism requires financial investment – investment for human resources, for bid preparation, for facility upgrades and enhancements, for marketing and promotion of the destination as a sport host community.

The funding models for sport tourism in Ontario and Canada are varied. They range from responding to opportunities in an ad hoc way with no funding, through to being very strategic and investing in sales efforts strategically in planned and

purposeful ways. The latter allows communities to better target events that will meet their financial and social impact goals.

Given that Barrie is considering sport tourism as a way of meeting economic, image, community (social, sport and cultural) and environmental objectives, a range of options are being presented for consideration. Successful host cities typically have integrated models that allow for proper financing and predictable outcomes for event rights holders.

#### Future Funding Model: Option 1 – City Funded and Led Sport Tourism

Option 1 would see the establishment of the sport tourism unit within the City of Barrie corporation with staffing, administration and event funding being funded within the city budget. This would result in the addition of at least one (1) full time employee who would lead the strategic development, event bidding and tactical support to bidding and organizing groups. The order of magnitude of the budget would be up to \$500,000 for operating (including salary and benefits), marketing and bid development for single sport events. For multi-sport event bids and event or hosting grants, these amounts would be outside of the sport tourism budget.

OPTION 1 – City Funded and Led Sport Tourism	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to city strategies and plans</li> <li>• Connection to city departments / facilities</li> <li>• Efficiency of working within city structure</li> <li>• Connection to city staff and Council</li> <li>• Communication channels to user groups and residents</li> <li>• Proactive management of displaced user groups</li> <li>• Links to neighbouring communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disconnection with tourism and destination marketing / management</li> <li>• Decision-making not as nimble</li> <li>• Funding allocation process may not be customer-centred</li> <li>• Ability to react may be limited due to number of priorities for the city</li> <li>• Potential for reallocation of budget within the city structure</li> <li>• Limited ability to create reserves</li> <li>• Does not allow for advisory or community involvement in operational or funding decisions</li> </ul>

#### Option 2 – Tourism Barrie Funded and Led Sport Tourism

Option 2 would see the continuation of the sport tourism function residing within the Tourism Barrie structure. There would be an incremental funding allocation to Tourism Barrie that would originate from the City of Barrie budget or from the 50% of the MAT that is not currently directed to Tourism Barrie. This would involve at least one full-time staff with the responsibility for sport tourism. The budget would

also be in the \$500,000 range for operating, bid development and marketing again for single sport events. Any multi-sport events would require involvement from the City of Barrie as they use significant infrastructure and resources including city staff.

OPTION 2 – Tourism Barrie Funded and Led Sport Tourism	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to tourism industry providers</li> <li>• Connection to local sport organizations</li> <li>• Agility to respond to opportunities</li> <li>• Arms-length from city government</li> <li>• Connection to Tourism Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Management of the annual calendar of activities in Barrie</li> <li>• Marketing of each event to residents and potential visitors</li> <li>• Similar process to win sport events as business events and other meetings</li> <li>• Maximize opportunities over entire year</li> <li>• Decision-making process is quick</li> <li>• Efficiencies with Tourism Barrie staff</li> <li>• Tourism Barrie accountable through service-level agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step removed from Council and senior staff of the City of Barrie</li> <li>• Would require some level of commitment from city on access and cost of city-owned facilities</li> <li>• Not directly involved in facility master planning</li> <li>• Would require some advisory and oversight measures from city and other stakeholder groups</li> <li>• Lack direct communication channels to all residents</li> <li>• Could create pressure on user groups based on facility access</li> <li>• Access to city services not guaranteed</li> </ul>

#### Option 3 – External Organization Funded and Led

Option 3 would see the identification of an existing agency or development of a new agency to be funded to lead the sport tourism unit. This would see the same budget requirement of up to \$500,000, however, there may be incremental costs associated with set up of a new structure and agency. The sport tourism function for Barrie would require more effort as with a shared leadership approach, clarity in planning and responsiveness to opportunities is less than with an existing organization.

OPTION 3 PROS AND CONS	
PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agility to respond to opportunities</li> <li>• Arms-length from city government</li> <li>• Clean-slate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No direct connection to city or tourism strategies</li> <li>• Lacks accountability</li> <li>• Lacks financial authority</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No standing with sport tourism stakeholders</li> <li>• No connection to facility operators</li> <li>• No connection with accommodations providers</li> </ul>
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#### Option 4 – Status Quo

If Barrie was to maintain the current structure and operating model, the amount of sport tourism funding would be far below other host cities and would not help to make the city more attractive to future sport hosting opportunities. This outcome is not recommended, as it is neither beneficial in the long-term, nor supportive of delivering results in the short-term.

#### *2. Recommendation > Add new hotel product / capacity and conference facilities*

Adequate hotels, meeting spaces and conference facilities are important for sport tourism destinations to accommodate the influx of athletes, officials, and spectators during major sport events. Hotels provide convenience, accessibility and full service to visitors, which can enhance the overall experience of participating in and attending the event. Many sport event rights holders have minimum accommodation requirements that Barrie currently does not meet. New hotel product with a large capacity of rooms, a variety of rooms including suites and kitchenettes, full-service restaurant and catering, conference facilities and other desirable amenities is a key step in establishing Barrie as a premier destination for sport tourism.

The need for a conference / convention centre in Barrie to support sport hosting is high. With the potential for conferences and trade shows, sport business meetings like Annual General Meetings or awards banquets, and sport events (including basketball, volleyball, wrestling, fencing, and more), a conference / convention centre is an investment worth pursuing.

- 2.1. Build the business case and develop an investment strategy for a conference / convention centre. Discuss the opportunity with local investors and tourism stakeholders and determine if a city, private-public, or private conference facility best fits with Barrie's vision for the future.
- 2.2. Assess the opportunity for varied hotel product (e.g., higher quality of hotel product in Barrie, hotels with kitchenettes, etc.) and increased number of hotel rooms. The right hotels will attract a different demographic of visitor for sport events, as well as create new opportunities for sport hosting.



- 2.3. Initiate a process to assess the potential for new full-service hotel properties that can support Barrie's future sport hosting aspirations. (Retrofit of existing properties is not off the table, but accommodations capacity and added services are both required to support future sport hosting needs).
- 2.4. Consider providing financial incentives (e.g., tax breaks, subsidies) and reducing regulatory barriers to help attract new hotel developers and financiers.
- 2.5. Work with hotel properties to encourage or incentivize facility upgrade, improve overall service standards, add amenities, and develop training specific to servicing sport events and teams.

### *3. Recommendation > Build sport venues to national / international competition standard*

Barrie is a growing community with increasing demands for sport and recreation facilities from residents. To attract sport events to Barrie, and thus bring economic and social benefit to the community, Barrie needs to invest in "purpose-built sport venues" that meet national, ideally international, event standards.

If Barrie were to target specific venue development opportunities, the following are suggested:

- 3.1. Take full advantage of the current Sadlon Arena Expansion Review, as this facility is the most event-ready venue for national and international competition. These improvements include event level enhancements for teams, coaches and team support staff, and officials in operational spaces, as well as increased press level capacity for minor officials, event workspaces and working media, plus the potential increase in spectator capacity.
- 3.2. Examine the feasibility of a new aquatics facility that while serving the needs of the growing community of Barrie will also be capable of hosting meets at the provincial level and potential for future multi-sport games.
- 3.3. Investigate the need and potential development of an athletics facility. Without this facility, there is not potential to host summer multi-sport games. This would also create an opportunity to develop athletics and para-athletics events if built to provincial and/or national level technical specifications.
- 3.4. For future arena development, ensure that all ice pads are a minimum of 200' x 85' so that they can host provincial level competition and



above. Keep in mind the other ancillary services and facility requirements, including male, female, and gender inclusive locker rooms for both players and officials, room for medical treatment rooms, doping control facilities, etc.

- 3.5. Source the temporary infrastructure required to build out existing facilities and ensure they can meet the technical requirements of provincial and national events. These include trailers for dressing rooms, meeting spaces, washrooms, running water, operational and technical spaces, broadcast / media centres, and doping control.
- 3.6. Develop future sport facilities to match the shifting demographics of the city of Barrie, so that the sport and recreational offerings also enable the hosting of a variety of sport competitions and championships (e.g., cricket).
- 3.7. Consider an indoor dome for field sports and/or court sports like tennis and pickleball. Most local sport organizations we spoke to stated that event potential was limited in shoulder season months without a domed facility. A domed field facility could support football, rugby, soccer, softball, baseball, cricket, among other sport.

#### *4. Recommendation > Develop an incentive program for event rights holders*

Sport tourism incentive programs offer financial, infrastructure, marketing, and value-in-kind incentives to make a host city more appealing for a sport event rights holder. These incentives help cities successfully bid for and host major events, ultimately beating out competitor host cities, boosting the local economy, and enhancing the city's reputation as a premier sport tourism destination.

Opportunities for sport hosting incentives include:

- 4.1. Develop and implement a Sport Event Grant Funding Program that provides grants on a cyclical basis to local sport organizations to develop bids and carry out successful delivery of sport events.
- 4.2. Financial incentives beyond the grant program like value in kind, reduced rental fees, and subsidies from the Municipal Accommodation Tax, etc. to event organizers and/or event rights holders. These incentives can help to offset the costs of organizing the event and make the destination more attractive for hosting.
- 4.3. Offer marketing and promotional support to event organizers and event rights holders such as assistance with advertising, public relations, and media relations. This can help to build awareness of the event and the destination among potential visitors.



- 4.4. Offer discounted transportation services to event organizers and attendees. This can help to make Barrie more affordable and accessible for visitors, particularly those traveling from out of town.

*5. Recommendation > Assess the agility of the city to respond to sport tourism opportunities*

Relative to some other cities and sport host communities, Barrie is falling behind relative to perceived ability to adapt to and capitalize upon sport tourism opportunities. Some communities have completely streamlined applications and permitting, insurance requirements, and zoning applications.

- 5.1. Develop a clear process, including roles and responsibilities among all stakeholder groups to carry a sport tourism opportunity from bid, through hosting, to post-event evaluation.
- 5.2. Permits and regulations: Offer streamlined permit processes and regulatory frameworks that make it easier for event organizers to plan and execute the event. This can help to reduce the time and resources required to organize the event and make Barrie more attractive as a sport host city. Alcohol permits is one example of permits where either the process or number of permits issued could be increased to support sport event hosting.
- 5.3. Zoning: Assess city zoning and re-development applications in areas of the city that could allow for new facility construction and/or conversion of existing spaces to sport facilities. These facilities do not need to be city-owned. Prepare a list of potential sites for prospective owners/investors in private sport facilities.
- 5.4. Insurance: Assess insurance requirements and stipulations for use of outdoor recreation areas and Lake Simcoe for sport events. The more accommodating the city can be relative to insurance, the more opportunity Barrie has to host outdoor sport events.

*6. Recommendation > Focus on partnership and collaboration*

Barrie is a community full of stakeholders that stand behind sport and sport tourism. From the public school board to Georgian College, semi-professional teams to private investors, Barrie is poised to succeed through partnership and collaboration.

- 6.1. Be deliberate about relationship management. Identify key stakeholders and explore opportunities for partnership and collaboration authentically. This includes with school boards, schools, local sport organizations, government agencies, funding partners, hotels and resorts, etc.



- 6.2. Partner with Georgian College and their major funders. Post-secondary institutions bring a lot of infrastructure, people capacity and economic benefit to local community. Explore opportunities for cooperative facility usage, facility development, bid development, event delivery, etc.
- 6.3. Establish a sport business network with major investors, philanthropists, corporations and private equity groups in and around Barrie. This group of individuals is keen to engage. Barrie would benefit greatly from public-private partnership or supporting private investment, as it would accelerate Barrie's ability to carry out a more robust sport tourism strategy.
- 6.4. Develop a process to engage stakeholders and community in a planned and repeatable way. Consider relaunching the Sport Council. Give local sport organizations a voice and a seat at the table.
- 6.5. Expand Barrie's boundary for sport tourism to include events at facilities outside of Barrie's city limits. Recognizing the lack of hotel product in neighbouring communities is important. Partnership demonstrates commitment to success in the region. Consider joint bid applications and deliberate partnerships and collaborations.
- 6.6. Develop a central volunteer database for the benefit of all organizing committees.

## Conclusion

With sport tourism being the fastest growing segment in the tourism industry globally, and one of the fastest segments to rebound following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is only logical for the City of Barrie to assess its potential and devise a strategy for sport tourism success.

From economic impact to infrastructure development to social impact, health and wellness of a community, numerous benefits result from an investment in sport tourism. While sport tourism is well-aligned with the culture of this outdoor recreation community and promises many benefits, it will not be an easy path to implementation. Many of the city's sport venues are not well-suited for competition beyond what they currently host; Barrie's hotel product is aging and offers limited capacity and services for sport events; and a rapidly growing population has put strain on existing infrastructure and sport / recreation facilities. All of these factors limit Barrie's potential as a sport host community.



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The insights and recommendations presented within this report aim to support Barrie in its journey into this tourism segment. With careful planning and deliberate investment in capacity, facilities and infrastructure, Barrie has the potential to forge a new future and positively impact the city, quality of life of its residents, and create a legacy for generations to come.



## Appendix 1 – List of Identified Local Sport Organizations

SPORT	NAME OF LOCAL SPORT ORGANIZATION(S)
<b>Alpine Skiing</b>	Horseshoe Resort Mount St. Louis Moonstone Snow Valley Ski Resort
<b>Archery</b>	Wolfs Den Sports
<b>Athletics</b>	The Running Room South Simcoe Dufferin Track & Field Club
<b>Badminton</b>	Barrie Badminton Club
<b>Baseball</b>	Barrie Baycats Barrie Integrated Baseball Association Barrie Minor Baseball Association Nouvelle Alliance (Club Badminton ESCNA)
<b>Basketball</b>	Barrie Royals Basketball Club Christian Youth Basketball League
<b>Biathlon</b>	Hardwood Ski & Bike (Biathlon Ontario member for Barrie/Orillia Area) Highlands Trailblazers Biathlon Club (Biathlon Ontario member for Barrie/Collingwood Area)
<b>Bowling - 5 &amp; 10 pin</b>	Bowlerama Barrie
<b>Boxing</b>	Empire Mixed Martial Arts & Fitness (Boxing Ontario Member Club) Uptown Boxing Club (Boxing Ontario Member Club)
<b>Canoe &amp; Kayak</b>	Barrie Canoe & Kayak Club Barrie Dragon Boat Festival
<b>Climbing</b>	Alt Rock
<b>Cricket</b>	Barrie Cricket League
<b>Cross Country Skiing</b>	Friday Harbour Hardwood Ski & Bike Scenic Caves Nature Adventures - Nordic Skiing Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre
<b>Curling</b>	Barrie Curling Club
<b>Cycling</b>	Simcoe County Mountain Bike Club Barrie Cycling Club

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SPORT	NAME OF LOCAL SPORT ORGANIZATION (S)
<b>Equestrian</b>	Legacy Lane Stables The Paddocks on Horseshoe Seven Summits Equestrian Woodwind South
<b>Figure Skating</b>	Barrie Skating Club Mariposa School of Skating
<b>Football</b>	Huronian Stallions Football Club
<b>Golf</b>	Allendale Golf Course Bear Creek Golf Club Heritage Hills Golf Club Innisbrook Golf Course Shanty Bay Golf Club Simoro Golf Links Springwater Golf Course Tangle Creek Golf & Country Club The Wilds at Cedar Valley Golf Course
<b>Gymnastics</b>	Barrie Kempettes Gymnastics Club Legacy Acrobatics Northern Stars Gymnastics Vertical Zone Trampoline Club
<b>Ice Hockey</b>	Barrie Ball Hockey Club Barrie Christian Hockey League Barrie Colts Barrie Colts AAA Zone Barrie Minor Hockey Association Barrie Women's Hockey Association
<b>Judo</b>	Crown Hill Martial Arts
<b>Karate</b>	Barrie Karate Barrie Ryusei Karate Club Lewis' Karate Schools
<b>Lacrosse</b>	Barrie Masters Lacrosse Club Barrie Minor Lacrosse Association Barrie Bombers (Junior C)
<b>Lawn Bowling</b>	Barrie Lawn Bowling Club
<b>Ringette</b>	Barrie & District Ringette Association
<b>Rowing</b>	Barrie Rowing Club





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SPORT	NAME OF LOCAL SPORT ORGANIZATION (S)
<b>Rugby</b>	Barrie Rugby Football Club
<b>Sailing</b>	Barrie Yacht Club
<b>Shooting</b>	Barrie Gun Club *Members Only
<b>Snowboard</b>	Horseshoe Resort Mount St. Louis Moonstone Snow Valley Ski Resort
<b>Soccer</b>	Barrie Cardinals Soccer Club Barrie Futsal Club Barrie Soccer Club Huron District Soccer Association Simcoe County Rovers (League1 Ontario)
<b>Softball</b>	Barrie & District Girls Softball Association Barrie & District Ladies Slo-Pitch League Barrie Slo-Pitch Association
<b>Speed Skating</b>	Barrie Skating Club
<b>Swimming</b>	Barrie Trojan Swim Club
<b>Taekwondo</b>	Barrie Taekwondo Club Legacy Taekwondo
<b>Tennis</b>	Barrie Community Tennis Club Barrie North Winter Tennis Toronto Beach Tennis Club
<b>Triathlon</b>	Barrie Baydogs Triathlon Club
<b>Volleyball</b>	Barrie Elites Volleyball Club City of Barrie Georgian Cubs Volleyball
<b>Water Ski and Wakeboard</b>	Flawless Wakes
<b>Wrestling</b>	Kempfenfelt Bay Athletic Club

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## Appendix 2 – List of Survey Respondents

NAME OF LOCAL SPORT ORGANIZATION(S)			
1	All World Sports	21	Barrie Rugby Football Club
2	Barrie & District Girls Softball Association (BDGSA)	22	Barrie Skating Club
3	Barrie 3-Pitch	23	Barrie Soccer Club
4	Barrie AAA Zone	24	Barrie Speed Skating Club
5	Barrie and District Ringette Association	25	Barrie Ultimate League
6	Barrie Badminton Club	26	Barrie Women's Hockey Association (BWhA)
7	Barrie Baycats	27	BTS Sports
8	Barrie Colts	28	Cheer Pride All Stars
9	Barrie Cricket League Inc.	29	Cheer Sport Sharks Orillia
10	Barrie Disc Golf Club	30	Georgian College
11	Barrie Elites Volleyball Club	31	Georgian College, eSports
12	Barrie Integrated Baseball Association	32	Georgian Cubs Volleyball Club
13	Barrie Men's Slo-Pitch League (BMSP)	33	Gold Hockey Development (GHD) Purple Cobras
14	Barrie Minor Baseball	34	Huron Stallions Football Club
15	Barrie Minor Hockey Association (BMHA)	35	Little Kickers Simcoe County
16	Barrie Pickleball Club	36	Mariposa School of Skating
17	Barrie Public Library, Dragon Boat	37	Quidditch Canada
18	Barrie Recreational Evening Co-ed Slowpitch League (BRECS)	38	Shanty Bay Golf Club
19	Barrie Rowing Club	39	Special Olympics
20	Barrie Royals Basketball Club	40	Sunday Night Coed Slo-Pitch League

