



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 26-084**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services
Resource Staff: Amy Elgersma, Director, Recreation & Leisure Services
Date of Meeting: March 10, 2026
Subject: Free Access to Sport Equipment in Parks

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 3. Build an Active and Connected Community

Goal: 3.1 Expand parks and recreation opportunities and participation.

Executive Summary:

The City of Kingston has the opportunity to partner with Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities and Equip Sport to pilot a program that provides free access to sports and recreation equipment in City-owned parks.

The Equip Sport Program is innovative and cost-neutral to the City as costs are covered by the sponsor, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. The program uses secure, technology-enabled equipment lockers installed in public spaces where users access equipment for free through a mobile application, use it on-site, and return it to the locker after use. The program removes common barriers to participation such as cost, lack of equipment and limited access to organized programming.

Subject to Council approval, a one-year pilot program would see the installation of a minimum of 30 equipment lockers across Kingston neighbourhood parks. All equipment, installation, maintenance, monitoring and insurance are fully funded through sponsorship by Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, with no capital or operating costs to the City. Following the one-year pilot, an option for a five-year agreement to continue the program would be available, at the same terms.

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Staff propose a pilot approach with a formal evaluation and reporting back to Council in Q4 2026 to assess usage, equity outcomes, operational considerations and the potential for a longer-term agreement.

Recommendation:

That Council authorize the Director, Recreation & Leisure Services to approve a 1-year agreement (Pilot), with successive renewal options of 3 years each with Equip Sport for the provision of free access to sports equipment in neighbourhood parks; and

That Council direct staff to report back in Q4 of 2026 with details and statistics on the Equip Sport program and status of renewal.

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Options/Discussion:**Background**

The Equip Sport Program aims to address barriers to entry in recreational sport through an innovative, sharing-based model that supports equitable access to recreation opportunities in parks. The program provides free, self-serve access to sports and recreation equipment in public spaces, encouraging spontaneous, unstructured play and physical activity.

Equip Sport, a Switzerland-based company, currently operates over 450 smart sport stations in more than 10 countries worldwide. Several Canadian municipalities have implemented the program, including Surrey, Ottawa and Vancouver. City staff have consulted with the City of Ottawa to understand program performance, operational requirements and community response.

Equip Sport's mission is *to catalyze and facilitate access to sport for everyone, anywhere, anytime*, with a vision of a global shift toward shared, accessible urban sport infrastructure. The program supports Council's Strategic Plan by reducing financial and social barriers to participation in sport and physical activity. The program promotes inclusive, neighbourhood-based recreation opportunities, encourages active use of parks, and supports equitable access to sport equipment for children, youth and families across Kingston.

Park Sites and Selection

Staff have developed a framework to guide the identification and selection of City of Kingston parks for inclusion in the Equip Sport pilot program. The framework is intended to ensure equitable access across the City, maximize participation and usage, and support safe, inclusive and welcoming environments for all users.

Park selection will prioritize locations in or near neighbourhoods with higher concentrations of children and youth. Access and inclusion are key considerations in site selection. Parks that are well-served by public transit and located within a reasonable walking distance of transit stops will be prioritized to reduce transportation barriers.

To ensure the equipment is well used, selected parks will include existing sport and activity infrastructure appropriate for informal and unstructured play. This may include basketball or pickleball courts, soccer fields or open turf areas, hard-surface spaces suitable for multi-use activities, disc golf or other informal recreation opportunities. Parks with good visibility and natural surveillance, supported by clear sightlines and regular use, will be favoured to enhance safety and appropriate use of the equipment.

The availability of comfortable spaces for caregivers will also be considered. Parks that include benches, picnic tables, shaded areas, or gathering spaces near play and activity areas help support supervision and encourage appropriate use of equipment by adults accompanying children and youth.

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Finally, staff will ensure the selected sites are geographically distributed across the City to provide equitable access across service areas and districts. Community Parks and other high-use City, or destination parks, where existing infrastructure and attendance levels are well suited will be considered to support broad participation.

Finally, site selection will balance these considerations to achieve City-wide coverage while advancing equity, accessibility and active use of Kingston's parks.

Implementation

The successful implementation of the Equip Sport pilot program will be a shared responsibility between the City of Kingston and Equip Sport.

The City of Kingston will be responsible for identifying and approving suitable park locations for the installation of equipment lockers, coordinating internal approvals and facilitating site access as required. City staff will also support community awareness of the program through existing communication channels and will monitor overall program performance and outcomes throughout the pilot period to inform future decision-making.

Equip Sport will be responsible for supplying, installing, maintaining and removing the secure sports equipment lockers. Equip Sport will provide the sports equipment associated with each location and will be responsible for ongoing maintenance, monitoring and equipment condition on a 24-hour basis. In addition, Equip Sport will provide usage data and reporting to support program evaluation and will maintain all required insurance and operational oversight for the duration of the agreement.

If approved, the program will launch this spring.

Risk and Mitigation

As with any program located in public spaces, potential risks include vandalism, uneven usage across locations, or the loss or damage of equipment. These risks are mitigated through the use of secure, technology-enabled lockers that restrict access to registered users and support accountability through the mobile application. The program includes continuous monitoring and maintenance on a 24-hour basis, allowing issues to be identified and addressed quickly.

Equip Sport brings proven experience operating similar programs in urban environments internationally, which informs the design, monitoring and operational practices used in Kingston. In addition, the pilot-based approach allows the City to evaluate program performance, usage patterns, and risk management strategies before considering any longer-term commitment.

Analysis

Staff have reviewed the Equip Sport program and are not aware of any other Canadian or international provider that offers a comparable, all-inclusive model combining technology-

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enabled access, community-based sport equipment sharing, 24/7 monitoring and maintenance, data and usage insights, and turnkey installation and removal at no cost to municipalities.

Recreation & Leisure Services and Public Works staff will work collaboratively with Equip Sport to identify approximately 30 locations across Kingston for the installation of equipment lockers, ensuring geographic distribution and alignment with the park selection framework outlined in this report. Staff will also recommend the types of sport equipment to be placed at each location based on park characteristics, existing infrastructure and anticipated community needs.

The Equip Sport program operates under a sponsorship-funded model, with corporate partner, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, funding the equipment lockers and associated operations in exchange for limited brand visibility. In other Canadian municipalities, including the cities of Ottawa and Surrey, the equipment lockers display three logos: the sponsor, Equip Sport and the municipality. Sponsor branding is limited to a 25-to-30-centimetre decal space, with background design customized and approved by the City. The City's logo is always included on the station, and final approval by both the City and the sponsor is required prior to production. Images of the smart sport lockers with sample logos are included in Exhibit C. Any branding will be implemented in accordance with the City's existing sponsorship policy. While there is an option for municipalities to co-fund stations, staff are not pursuing this option as part of the proposed pilot.

Equip Sport collects limited user information to support program operation and evaluation, including name, phone number, email address, gender, age and anonymized data related to location, time, duration of use and type of sport activity. No personally identifiable information is shared without explicit user consent. Any information shared with partners is provided only in aggregated and anonymized form and cannot be traced back to individual users. The City's Information Systems and Technology Department, City Clerk's Department and the Legal Services Department have been consulted and will review all agreements with Equip Sport to ensure that the collection, use and the disclosure of personal information complies with applicable privacy legislation.

Equip Sport will bear the costs associated with replacement parts due to vandalism or theft. While a credit card is not required to register or access equipment, Equip Sport reserves the right to implement measures to mitigate these risks in consultation with the City, such as requiring end users to provide a credit card for equipment rental.

Exhibit A to this report provides an overview of the Equip Sport program, and Exhibit B provides a summary of frequently asked questions to support Council's consideration of the proposed pilot.

Public Engagement

Data insights guide the Equip Sport program including choosing station locations and optimizing equipment rotation, to scheduling maintenance and tailoring community engagement. This ensures the service remains efficient, inclusive and responsive to how people play.

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These insights help identify how, when and where people are being active, supporting smarter decisions around recreation planning and public space design. Such insights will provide information to improve community access and allow adjustments to be made quickly to optimize participation.

Climate Risk Considerations

While no climate risk considerations have been identified, when placing equipment lockers in parks, Equip Sport agrees to install and operate the Stations in a manner that respects and preserves existing natural features, such as trees, roots, shrubs and land. No hazardous substances will be permitted, and Equip Sport must comply with all federal, provincial, and municipal laws and regulations.

Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations

This pilot intends to remove the barriers to playing sports such as the cost of equipment and transporting gear. Stations will be located in central, accessible public spaces to make it easy for everyone to access equipment and play when they want. Each site is carefully assessed for safety and accessibility, from wheelchair access to inclusive facilities, so everyone feels welcome to play.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

The program is compliant with the City of Kingston Sponsorship Policy. Additionally, timing access to the lockers can be controlled to conform with park hours set by by-law. Staff will be looking to locate the lockers in parks that do not have a high element of sports fields and use so they do not conflict with permit holders and user groups.

Financial Considerations:

There are no direct financial impacts to the City of Kingston associated with this program.

- All equipment, technology, installation, maintenance, monitoring and insurance are provided by Equip Sport;
- Funding is provided through Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities; and
- City costs are limited to staff coordination within existing resources.

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Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A Program Overview

Exhibit B FAQ

Exhibit C Jumpstart Equip Sport Station Images