

# Member & Facility Profiles

JAY TODD, DIRECTOR, PARK IMPLEMENTATION, DOWNSVIEW PARK

## Interview with Director Jay Todd

**What is your role with Downsview Park?** Director, Park Implementation. Downsview Park is a self financing crown corporation of the federal government charged with the task of developing 572 acres of the former Canadian Forces Base Downsview into a self sustaining park and community. Unlike traditional national parks, Downsview is building a park while being a park – a true work in progress.



**Jay Todd.** Director, Park Implementation. Downsview Park, Toronto.

**What kind of team do you work with?**

**What are you and your team responsible for?** We have a compact, dedicated team that looks after all aspects of park operations. Being a fledgling enterprise, we have chosen highly specific people to assist in the maintenance and development of the park. Of our four full time staff, we have developed a team with specific talents in turf and turf maintenance, irrigation, native plants and horticulture, and equipment and construction. This crew of four (plus eight seasonal students) maintains the park landscape and is in charge of horticulture, sanitation and events. Also included in this portfolio are 4 indoor artificial soccer fields, indoor beach volleyball, 2 outdoor artificial soccer fields, 1 outdoor artificial football/soccer field, 1 natural

soccer/sports field and up until last

year, 3 ball diamonds, a second natural soccer field

and 1 cricket pitch (these five fields were decommissioned as part of the master plan in developing the park).

**What is the biggest challenge in your job?** Our biggest challenge is opening as much of the park as possible for public use (200 acres of our 572 is the goal by 2012). Over the past few years, we have been removing old military buildings, sculpting the land, creating a 9 acre lake and sports fields at our Sports Centre as well as hosting numerous events and concerts. We are doing all this while making the site safe for patrons.

If you are interested in being featured in this column, please contact Lee Huether at the STA office.

**What is the most satisfying part, what makes the job worthwhile for you?** At the end of the day, you are one step closer to building Canada's National Urban Park, and while doing this you have a great team with you to reach that goal. We are very team oriented and from the top down, bottom up, everyone is part of that team.

**What is the biggest misconception about your job?** People hear the word director and they think of a desk jockey or paper pusher. Although I have those responsibilities, I am also a hands-on guy. I am on site on a regular basis with the crew, designers and contractors getting the job done.

**What is your educational/employment background?** My love of the outdoors and the environment led me into the field of horticulture. I'm a graduate of the Niagara Parks Commission School of Horticulture, which was truly the best experience and education of my life. Over the years, I upgraded my education through various courses at the University of Guelph, Centennial College in Scarborough and the Ontario Municipal Institute. This led me to various positions within the City of Scarborough and the City of Toronto to Director of Parks and Recreation with the Township of Scugog to my present position as Director at Downsview Park. I'm also involved with the Ontario Parks Association as Director, and belong to numerous other associations like STA and ORFA.

**Tell us about your family.** I live in Port Perry, a great little community north east of Toronto, with my wife Catharine and my two children. Kaitlin attends Georgian College and James... >>



## MEMBER PROFILE CONTINUED

... works in Port Perry. I don't know how I got to this stage but I'm far too young to have children this old!

**What do you enjoy doing outside of the workplace? Hobbies, favorite past times?** I know it may not sound healthy, but I find with the industry I'm in that my hobbies mostly revolve around my work. I belong to the North American Native Plant Society and the Toronto Field Naturalists. I speak to many different groups and although I don't have a lot of time for it, I do like to volunteer in the community and travel.

**How has the industry changed and in what direction(s) would you like to see the industry, as a whole, move towards?**

I have real concerns over the artificial turf industry and the speed at which these fields are being installed across Ontario. I know all the good reasons why we are installing synthetic turf fields but I also know that a well constructed, well maintained and well managed field can perform the same as artificial and in the long term, have better results for both the players and the environment.

**What do you consider to be the biggest benefit of being a member of the STA?** I find there is a great network of people in the association that you can call, get some advice, bounce around a few ideas and know that you have a solid group of professionals who can assist you in your decision making.

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# A CLOSER LOOK AT DOWNSVIEW PARK

**Name, location of facility and general information.** Downsview is a Canadian national urban park situated on 572 acres in the heart of Toronto. This multifaceted park, including the Downsview Park Sports Centre, offers 80 acres of indoor and outdoor sports fields and also caters to basketball, beach volleyball, squash, racquet ball, rock climbing and green go-carting just to name a few activities. We also house the Canadian Air and Space Museum and have a new 200 acre park with a 9 acre lake, trails, urban forest and urban agriculture in the construction phase. As part of our master plan, we are also developing five sustainable communities.

**What types of sports fields are on site?** Presently we have 2 artificial FIFA designed soccer fields, 1 CFL football/soccer field, 1 natural soccer field, 4 indoor fields (104'x165'), indoor floor hockey and 2 indoor beach volleyball courts.

**How many employees are involved with turf care at this facility?** We have a 4 person park maintenance crew who look after the sports centre facility and the rest of the park and 4 administrative staff who look after permitting and day-to-day operations of the Hangar facility which is part of the sports centre.

**How many acres of turf are maintained at this facility? How many acres of sports turf?** Maintained turf sits at about 250 acres. Of that, approximately 12 acres comprise our event centre, 40 acres our developing urban forest, 10 acres are sports fields and the remainder is under construction.

**What percentage of this acreage is irrigated?** Approximately 2% of the site administered by a two waterwheel type of irrigation.

**What is the primary type of turfgrass? Name of varieties.** We are using two mixes: 1) 25% Chicago II Kentucky bluegrass, 25% NuBlue Kentucky bluegrass, 35% J-5 Chewings fescue and 15% Top Gun perennial rye; and 2) 33% Top Gun perennial

ryegrass, 33% Top Gun II perennial ryegrass and 34% Goal Keeper perennial ryegrass.

**Is yearly overseeding part of your sports turf maintenance program?** We began our overseeding program in 2009 using a slit type seeder. We seed both spring and fall and mid-season if needed.

**How many times do you fertilize?** As needed. We perform soil analysis throughout the season, but in general treat our sports fields and event centre 3-4 times, and general park areas once a year.

**Do you aerate? Topdress?** We have a heavy clay/loam soil and compaction is always an issue, so we aerate 4-6 times or more if needed. We try to topdress, but this usually only happens in localized areas.

**The Pesticides Ban. Comments.** Because we are a federal facility, we do not fall under the provincial ban. That said, we are working towards being a sustainable site and use little or no pesticides. The only chemical we do use (under 10L) is glyphosate. Over the past two years, we have been using and testing organic fertilizers, mycorrhizae and other natural controls and nutrients.

**Are community user groups involved or have they been involved in the construction/maintenance of this facility? In what manner?** We have regular meetings with the community and as needed ones for special projects.

**How many hours per year are the fields permitted? Who permits them? Are the fields ever closed during the season to give them a rest? How much input do you have in the amount and timing of use?** The Hangar Operations staff permit our facility with close to 9,000 hours on our indoor fields and 2,800 hours on our outdoor fields. We host over 150,000 event goers at our event centre.



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