

STA Member Profile

Ian Haras • District Parks Manager • City of Guelph • See pp. 12-13 for South End Community Park Facility Profile

What is your role?

As a Park Manager, I am directly responsible for the day-to-day operations for our parks and open spaces. Along with one other Park Manager, I develop and monitor the annual operation budget, contribute to the long term direction for the department, provide quality customer service when dealing with public inquiries and participate actively as a member of the Director's team in consultation with



Park Planners and Community Development Workers.

What kind of team do you work with?

Along with the other Park Manager, we directly supervise 5 lead hands with 13 full time staff year round with an additional 5 full time employees that transfer from arenas in the summer and about 60-70 temporary seasonal employees. I report directly to the Director of Parks and often collaborate with the Park Planners and the Community Development Workers. I also serve on several corporate committees and take part in many city-wide corporate initiatives.

What are you and your team responsible for?

We are responsible for all aspects of operations for the City's parks and open spaces. This includes, but is not always

limited to: turf maintenance on City owned properties, sports fields, play structures, garbage collection in parks, horticulture, special events, Farmer's Market, winter control in parks and facilities, trails, splash pads, amusement rides, washrooms, outdoor natural ice rinks, and greenhouse activities, to name a few.

What is your biggest challenge?

Trying to balance stakeholders and the public's varied wants and needs with a shrinking budget and increased inventory to manage.

What is the most satisfying part, what makes the job worthwhile for you?

Guelph is my hometown. I was born here, raised here, educated here and now work here. It has been interesting to see this City go through growing pains and it's nice to think that in some small way I can contribute to the development of my hometown. One of my first assignments when I came to work for the City was to design and supervise construction of a small park on an old industrial site. The park is now completed and knowing that that park will most likely be there for people to enjoy long after I'm gone is pretty cool! Also, I have always felt what makes a job worthwhile are the people you work with, and I am fortunate to work within a team of dedicated talented professionals who truly take pride in their work and cultivate an enjoyable work environment.

What is the biggest misconception about your job?

It seems that people think any request they make can be easily accommodated and



that their request is the only one that we have to deal with at the time. They have no idea of the many processes and limitations we have to work within every day to do our job.

What is your educational/employment background?

I have an Honours Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Guelph and I also took the Turf Managers' Short Course through the University of Guelph. Since graduating in 1992, I have worked at a golf course on the maintenance crew, as an irrigation designer for an irrigation distributor, and as a landscape architect in a design office before coming to the City of Guelph. When I first came to the City in 2002, I started in the Park Planning Division of the Parks Department and then moved to the Park Operations Division a year later.

Tell us about your family.

I live in Guelph with my wife Jody and a big black Labrador named Jade. We just

welcomed our first child, Colin, into our home in September.

What do you enjoy doing outside of the workplace? Hobbies, favourite past times?

I love to golf in the summer whenever I can get out, and play hockey in the winter. I enjoy the outdoors either camping or up at the cottage with my family or on my mountain bike.

What direction(s) would you like to see the industry, as a whole, move towards?

It is always hard to sell the intangible benefits that parks and open space provide to the public. We need to make the 'decision makers' aware that parks and open spaces are just as important as any other piece of public infrastructure and that the funding should reflect that.

What do you consider to be the biggest benefit of being a member of the STA?

I'm a fairly new member, but the

opportunity the association affords to exchange information with other members is invaluable. The more people I talk to the more I realize we all face the same challenges in our jobs and we can always learn from each others mistakes and successes. ♦



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