



EAST HANTS

Recreation Needs Assessment Final Report May 2012



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Mr. David Brown
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Municipality of East Hants
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Dear Mr. Brown

Re. Final Report – Recreation Needs Assessment

Please find attached are final report for the Recreation Needs Assessment.

The Needs Assessment report addresses both future requirements for recreation facilities and services and the Municipality's approach to delivering these services. The recommendations are based on community input as well as a significant amount of background information. The information that contributed to the analysis is documented under separate cover in the Technical Background Report.

I trust that the Recreation Needs Assessment will be a useful guide for Council and the Department of Recreation and Culture as you continue to develop parks and recreation resources for the residents of East Hants. It was a pleasure working with you and your staff while preparing the report.

Thank you

Sincerely



Jim Morgenstern, MCIP
Principal



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Study Purpose

The Recreation Needs Assessment is focused on two key questions: (1) are additional recreational facilities, programs and services needed now or in the next five years to serve residents in the Municipality of East Hants, and if so, what is the relative importance of the identified needs, and (2) is the existing model for delivering recreation services, which relies heavy on community volunteers, appropriate for the next five years, and if not, how should the service delivery model be improved?

Much of the information contributing to the findings documented in this report is outlined in a separate Technical Background Report. The Technical Background report includes an inventory of existing recreation resources; a socio-demographic analysis of the community and future population projections; a discussion of recreation trends and best practices and the input received from the community. This information is summarized below but the reader is referred to the Technical Background Report for detailed information.

The Recreation Needs Assessment provides direction for Council and staff on the provision of future recreation services. It addresses a number of specific community issues as well as recommending new approaches for service delivery. There will, however, be additional work required to confirm and refine recommendations in this report during implementation. Full feasibility studies of major projects were not undertaken. The scope of the needs assessment did not include an operational review and it is apparent that staffing implications, for example, will require further investigation. The Recreation Needs Assessment provides the framework for future recreation services in East Hants and the recommendations will be refined as implementation proceeds.

1.2. Study Process

The Recreation Needs Assessment was developed in four phases:

Phase One: documented current and anticipated future conditions in the Municipality of East Hants with respect to population, recreation services, leisure trends and best practices. It also included a review of the supply and use (where possible) of recreation facilities in the Municipality.

Phase Two: included the following public consultation activities: public meetings, focus groups, a survey for sport and recreation user groups, a survey for East Hants residents via the municipal website, and personal interviews with key informants and municipal staff.

Phase Three: involved our analysis and recommendations and included a working session with Council.

Phase Four: involved the preparation, review, and revision of the Recreation Needs Assessment report.



1.3. Planning Context Summary

The Planning Context for the study (fully documented in the Technical Background Report) is briefly summarized below. Relevant information is presented elsewhere in the document as it relates to specific recommendations.

1.3.1 Population Profile

East Hants is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Nova Scotia and continues to demonstrate significant growth. Between 1996-2001, population increased by 5.3% and a further 2.7% by 2006. In the 2006-11 period the population increased by a further 3.3% to 23,195. East Hants had the fourth highest increase in population in the Province¹.

From 1961 to 2006 population in the Shore/Central region remained stable while the Uniacke/Rawdon and the Corridor regions have experienced substantial growth. Population projections² anticipate steady population increase within East Hants until 2016, followed by a slight and steady decline until 2031. These projections were prepared prior to the ship building contract and renewed economic activity may result in higher levels of population. However, because the Municipality's tax base is predominantly residential, increased population may result in higher levels of demand without the accompanying revenue to enhance services.

Based on 1996, 2001, and 2006 census data, the 25-54 age cohorts represent the largest portion of the Municipality's population. Despite a slight decline between 2001 and 2006, the population of those 25-54 years of age increased significantly between 1996 and 2001. The 55 through 75+ age cohorts also illustrate steady significant increases over the ten year period. Collectively, these findings indicate that East Hants is host to a rather youthful population, reflective of the baby boom generation and increased longevity.

In 2006, there were 8,753 private dwellings in East Hants. Of those, 36.9% contained a couple without children, and 32.2% contained a couple with children. Married families represent the largest portion of family types in the Municipality.

Overall, the 2006 median family income for all census families was significantly higher than the Province (\$61,448 compared to \$55,412). The labor force participation rate was 67.5% which was higher than the Province's 62.9%, and the unemployment rate for the Municipality (6.7%) was lower compared to Nova Scotia as a whole (9.1%).

¹ The 2011 census data for total population only was released as this report was being finalized. For all other demographic data, 2006 is the most recent year available.

² Prepared by the Planning and Development Department in the 2008 East Hants Economic Study.



In summary, the socio-demographic profile of the Municipality of East Hants describes a growing, young family oriented community with strong employment and household incomes. All of the considerations suggest sustained, high levels of demand for recreation facilities and services.

1.3.2 Trends and Best Practices

Both the demand for particular services and the manner in which municipal recreation services are provided has changed significantly in the past ten years and we should expect this to continue in the future. Some of these changes reflect the popularity of different recreational activities. For example in most Canadian communities activities such as soccer, aquatics, and walking/hiking have seen major increases in participation while other activities, such as baseball and tennis, have declined. These trends were a consideration in the needs assessment as discussed in Chapter 3 of the report.

Shifts in the popularity of leisure time activities are not the only factor of relevance to this assessment. Two other significant considerations are the desired outcomes of community recreation and the roles played by the Municipality and volunteers. In the past ten years there has been a growing appreciation of the important role that recreation plays in the health of Canadian communities and this has been reflected in the priorities assigned to municipal recreation expenditures. Outcomes associated with health and physical activity have contributed to a much stronger focus on informal and unorganized leisure pursuits and facilities and services that engage a broader sector of the community. This is evident in the expansion of trail systems and changes in policies and programming. Another major change has been the relative role of the municipality and the community. Twenty years ago in many Canadian communities, and particularly those in rural areas, recreation was almost exclusively the responsibility of the community. Over time the municipality has adopted a more active role in providing recreation services directly and in supporting volunteer efforts indirectly. While recreation continues to be a shared responsibility between community volunteers and the municipality, most Canadian communities are seeing a shift in these roles with a larger municipal role in support of volunteers.

These trends are relevant to the East Hants situation and are discussed in depth in the Technical Background Report and summarized, as warranted, in this report.

1.3.3 Community Consultation

The community provided input to the needs assessment through three public meetings; focus groups and interviews with teens, community volunteers and pool users; invitations to submit briefs, an on-line survey for major recreation and sports organizations offering programs in East Hants; and a survey hosted on the Municipality's website. Complete results are outlined in the Technical Background Report. It should be noted



that while meetings and focus groups were well attended and there was a very strong response to the web site survey, the input does not necessarily accurately represent community perspectives or opinions. A number of groups with specific interests were very well represented at some of the public meetings and we expect are disproportionately represented in the web-site survey results. This was taken into account in the needs assessment.

The following were the most significant issues identified through the community consultation input:

- Requests for municipal support for two major indoor facilities: a bowling alley to replace the private business that recently closed and a curling rink.
- Strong support for the replacement and upgrading of the existing municipal aquatic facility
- Support for the ongoing expansion of recreational trails and active transportation initiatives
- A clear indication that volunteers responsible for developing, operating and maintaining community recreation facilities require additional support
- A request for a skateboard park from youth in the community
- Significant interest in expanded programming and support for the implementation of active living strategies.
- Requests for improved communication and marketing of recreational opportunities.

While these issues and opportunities for improvement were identified through community consultations, most residents were satisfied with recreation services. The community also appreciated the support and assistance available from the Recreation and Culture Department and frequently complimented staff for their role in supporting community projects.



2.0 THE MUNICIPAL ROLE IN RECREATION SERVICE DELIVERY

2.1 Overview

As noted earlier, this study has two major objectives – to determine recreational needs and to provide a preferred approach to recreation service delivery. To address these objectives, we must understand the municipal role in recreation service delivery. There is no accepted position on this among Canadian municipalities. While there is a consensus on the community benefits associated with recreation, the emphasis placed on specific benefits as reflected in priorities for municipal spending vary considerably. There is much less consensus on the preferred approach to delivering recreation services. The scope of these services, the municipal staff committed to recreation and overall expenditures vary widely. It is useful therefore to clarify the municipal recreation role in East Hants as an essential first step in outlining a future plan for these services.

The issue of the Municipality's role can be captured in the following three questions:

- What is the Municipality trying to accomplish by providing recreation services and what are the implications for municipal roles and responsibilities?
- How will volunteer organizations, boards and committees be involved in the delivery of recreation services and how must the Municipality support their efforts if they are to play this role?
- What must the Municipality do to more effectively manage recreation service delivery?

These three questions are closely related and together deal with a preferred approach to managing and delivering recreation services in East Hants. They are discussed in this Chapter of the report.

2.2 Recreation Service Outcomes

Outcomes describe what the Recreation and Culture Department hopes to achieve by providing resources for leisure services (parks, facilities, recreational and leisure programs). Outcomes are the benefits residents and visitors enjoy from the Department's efforts. It is recognized that achieving an outcome requires resources. Members of Council reviewed possible outcomes for the Department during this study. The following outcomes were assigned the highest priority for the Department.

- **Active and Healthy Community:** Providing opportunities for all residents in East Hants to have active and healthy lifestyles;
- **Community Development:** Fostering community development, creating stronger community organizations and community leaders;



- **Community Cohesion:** Providing opportunities for social interaction and building stronger, more cohesive communities;
- **Rewarding Leisure Time:** Providing opportunities for all residents to have enjoyable, rewarding leisure time activities;
- **Personal Growth and Development:** Providing opportunities for individual personal growth and development (e.g. building character, self-esteem and confidence).

2.3 Service Delivery Principles

Service Delivery Principles describe “how” services are delivered and the Municipality’s perspective on the appropriate approaches to providing these services. The Municipality has not formally adopted service delivery principles, however, previous plans and strategies capture many of the core concepts noted below. The Service Delivery Principles outlined below emerged from discussions with senior staff and Council as well as the consultants’ assessment of the current situation. If adopted as recommended, they will guide the Municipality’s provision of recreation service in the future.

- **Support for Volunteer Based Service Delivery** – local residents will play a lead role in the identification of needs and the delivery of services and the Municipality will provide the support required to ensure volunteer based service delivery is feasible and successful;
- **Meet Priority Needs and a Diversity of Interests** – services will be provided that respond to priority needs first, while at the same time ensuring that a broad range of community interests are addressed;
- **Quality** - all services will be provided in a manner that is consistent with accepted standards of service, safety and enjoyment, and consistent with available resources;
- **Partnerships** – opportunities to support service delivery by others or to share this responsibility will be actively pursued;
- **Continuous Improvement** – services will be evaluated on a regular basis and policies and plans will be developed to ensure they meet current and future needs of the community;
- **Communication and Accountability** – communication will be maintained with the community at all times to respond to concerns, share information and describe progress in meeting goals;
- **Equity** – the Municipality is comprised of many small, rural communities which are separated from the larger population centres in the corridor. While the same level of service will not be possible in all locations due to differences in population, all communities in East Hants will have access to appropriate recreation services and every attempt will be made to preserve the character and quality of life in smaller settlements through access to recreation opportunities;
- **Financial Viability** – service will be provided in the most cost-effective manner possible through community partnerships, effective management, appropriate fees and charges and policies.



While in many respects the current operations of the Department reflect these Service Delivery Principles, a subtle shift in emphasis is being recommended. To fully conform to these principles, the Department must:

- Redefine its relationship with the volunteer sector by providing more support and assuming some of the responsibilities that have traditionally been assigned to volunteers. This additional support is required if the volunteer sector is going to survive and continue to play a major role in recreation services.
- Adopt a much more active role in planning and policy making. While volunteers will continue to be the driving force behind recreation in East Hants, the Department must ensure that resources are used to their greatest advantage; efforts of volunteers are coordinated and complementary; priorities are clearly stated; municipal resources are invested in a way that yields the greatest community benefit; and, the safety and wellbeing of the community is protected.

This will require a somewhat different focus in some areas of traditional responsibility as well as a stronger emphasis in policy and planning matters. These issues are discussed in Chapter 4 of the report.

As noted Outcomes and Service Delivery Principles are the guiding framework within which recreation will be provided in East Hants. The Outcomes and Service Delivery Principles noted here were developed based on Council's input and comments received from the community but given their importance they warrant further discussion. They should be reflected in Department policies and documents and positioned as guiding statements for recreation. They should be reflected in Council's decision-making and the priorities adopted by the Department for recreation services. As such, the community should be engaged in an ongoing discussion and confirmation of the Outcomes and Service Delivery Principles.



3.0 RECREATION FACILITIES – NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A number of traditional sport and recreation facilities are currently available in East Hants. Concern was raised regarding the quality of facilities (particularly the indoor pool) and the programming/activities available, residents appear largely satisfied with the supply of sports and recreation facilities available for community use. The public expressed interest in two new major indoor facilities (bowling and curling), however, these were the only major identified gaps in the existing supply.

Our assessment of need for the recreation facilities identified by the community is the focus of this chapter. The discussion is organized in two parts: (1) major indoor facilities and (2) other recreation facilities and services.

3.1 Major Indoor Facilities

The Sportsplex and the Indoor Pool are the two existing major indoor facilities in East Hants. The consultation program identified the possible need for two additional indoor facilities – a bowling alley and a curling rink.

The Sportsplex is in the final stages of an extensive expansion that will allow for additional recreation opportunities and support a variety of community recreation needs. In addition to the facility's existing arena and two community rooms, the expanded Sportsplex includes a second ice surface, a field house that can accommodate three small soccer fields, a 400m walking/running track, a community meeting room with seating for 100; a board room capable of seating 25; full food service; a lounge area with couches, chairs, etc.; a room for coaches with video equipment and other features to assist with game preparations; and a pro shop. These additional facilities provide the community with a more than adequate supply of indoor ice and soccer fields for the period of the plan. The fieldhouse also provides additional programming opportunities (i.e. yoga, Pilates, lawn bowling, sport camps, etc.).

The existing indoor pool and the requested bowling alley and curling rink are discussed in this section of the report.

3.1.1 Scope of the Needs Assessment

This study is a broad based recreational needs assessment for the Municipality rather than a detailed feasibility study for specific major indoor recreation facilities. The distinction is important to understand the scope of work and the basis for preliminary conclusions and recommendations in this report.



A feasibility study would include a much more extensive market assessment, a detailed business plan with projected operating costs and revenues, and specific recommendations for the type of facility that should be developed and the associated capital costs. This level of detail is not included in the needs assessment; however, we have commented on these issues and, where relevant, provided a perspective based on our experience with comparable projects.

The Needs Assessment addresses the following questions:

1. If the proposed facility was provided would it meet an identified recreational need in the community?
2. What level of municipal involvement may be required to support the facility development?
3. With respect to the Municipality's preferred outcomes³ for recreation services, what priority should be attached to this facility?

3.1.2 Indoor Aquatic Facility

Information gathered from community and user group surveys, as well as, discussions with users of the existing facility, indicate that the East Hants Indoor Pool is an important community asset, but one that is in need of extensive repair and improvement.

The East Hants Indoor Pool

The existing aquatic facility is a 25 metre, 6 lane pool with a small lobby/reception area; change/washroom facilities; and a second level multi-purpose space with a viewing area and small kitchenette. The facility was originally constructed in the 1960's and severe deterioration of its steel superstructure resulted in its closure during the late 1980's. A new timber superstructure was built and the indoor pool was reopened in the early 1990's. A facility audit⁴ was conducted in 1999 which identified a number of necessary building improvements and upgrades. The cost of the facility recommendations in 1999 were about \$350,000. We understand that further capital investment is not a prudent strategy and the existing facility must be replaced, preferably within five years.

Discussions with staff and facility users indicate that the indoor pool is used beyond capacity. More importantly, however, the current pool features and design are badly outdated and do not provide opportunities for the full range of competitive, instructional, recreational and health programming associated with contemporary pools.

³ Outcomes are the products or benefits of the Municipality's investment in recreation services. Outcomes are discussed in Chapter 2 of the report.

⁴ East Hants Municipal Swimming Pool. Audit and Life Cycle Plan. Final Report. May 1999. Lewis Engineering.



General Aquatic Trends

Communities with many children and youth generally show high and growing demand for instructional aquatics. Many communities, but particularly those with growing numbers of older adults, experience increasing demand for “wellness” aquatics (e.g., lap swim, Aquacise etc.)⁵. Most aquatic activities share many of the characteristics of other popular activities: (e.g., accessible participation regardless of skill, age level or ability; relatively low cost and flexible scheduling for the participant). These characteristics point to increasing popularity and participation. Swimming (as a sport) remains the third most participated in activity by children and youth, following soccer and hockey⁶.

Benefits of Aquatic Activities

Research⁷ continues to emphasize the significant benefits associated with participation in aquatic activities and sports. Health Canada considers swimming to be one of the key physical skills, and a complete physical activity that engages all muscle groups and assists in the development of strong bodies, good posture, endurance, and flexibility⁸. In addition to these notable health benefits, participation in swimming⁹:

- Is a fundamental movement skill that builds overall motor skills, and assists participants in mastering the fundamentals of agility, balance, coordination, speed, and rhythmic movement;
- Has a low risk of injury due to minimal stress on bones and joints;
- Improves circulation and respiration, has a stress-reducing effect on the mind and body, and assists in managing weight;
- Encourages participation in a lifetime aquatic activities;
- Is a skill that can save the lives of yourself and others; and
- Is an activity that both individuals and families can enjoy.

Swimming is one of the most integrated sports in Canada, which will likely lead to relatively strong increases in future participation by disabled swimmers. SWAD (Swimmers with a Disability) Canada continues to pursue high performance swimming opportunities and development initiatives to attract and train athletes. Specialized aquatic programs are increasingly recommended as a form of therapy for older adults and others with acute or chronic conditions (e.g., for stroke recovery, cardiac care, flexibility for arthritis sufferers, etc.).

⁵ According to the *Aquatic Sport Council of Ontario* (2011), “Swimming consistently ranks amongst the most popular physical activities across all age groups seasonal or year-round. The only activities which rank higher are walking, running and biking”.

⁶ CFLRI 2010 Physical Activity Monitor Bulletin #2.

⁷ Canadian Red Cross Swim News Overview. Source: www.redcross.ca (updated March 1, 2011).

⁸ Canadian Red Cross Swim News Overview. Source: www.redcross.ca (updated March 1, 2011).

⁹ Canadian Red Cross Swim News Overview. Source: www.redcross.ca (updated March 1, 2011).



Trends in Aquatic Facilities

Aquatic facilities that are most popular today include a variety of aquatic components and opportunities (e.g., rectangular tank - 4 to 8 lanes; therapeutic pool; leisure components such as slide, lazy river, water-play features; and teaching components - zero depth entry, teaching steps, sufficient depth for all instructional levels). Such facilities are more versatile and used by a wider range of the population than more traditional lane facilities.

Leisure Pools are free form tanks with larger shallow entry pads to accommodate those with limited swimming ability or very young swimmers. The inclusion of splash pads, or spray toys and other fixed or removable amenities designed for young children are also increasingly popular among new aquatic facility designs.

Therapeutic Pools with warmer water, shallow depth entry, handrails and ramps/lifts are also becoming increasingly popular additions in new aquatic facility developments. As the population ages and older adults remain active well into their 80s and beyond, services that support low impact, aerobic activity will be in increasing demand. Reduced impact exercise programs are provided in warm water pools with a water temperature between 32°C and 35.5°C and a consistent depth (approximately 1 metre). This form of therapeutic recreation is extremely beneficial for those who are physically challenged due to injury or illness providing:

- A sense of safety and security (not as afraid of falling);
- Buoyancy for greater freedom of movement;
- Increased supply of blood to the muscles, improving oxygen delivery;
- Decreased swelling; and
- Aiding confidence that supports future non-water movement.

Sustainable building practices are increasingly common in aquatic facilities, and include use of recycled and recyclable materials, as well as, use of locally derived material or exterior finishes to reduce carbon footprints caused by shipping materials, natural day lighting, passive solar design and energy efficient equipment and fixtures for energy conservation.

The highest efficiencies for aquatic facilities are reached when they are combined with ice facilities. The additional capital cost of modern arena refrigeration technology has decreased significantly over the past decade and is becoming the development norm. Comparisons of arena/aquatic facility utility costs for older traditional and more modern technology (which uses heat retention and redistribution technology from ice making) can result in annual operating cost savings of \$100,000 or more annually. Further, the inclusion of



facility components that support increased revenue including party rooms, fitness areas, and other recreational spaces, assist in reducing the overall cost of operations.

Possible Space Program and Capital Costs

As noted earlier, a full feasibility study is not within the scope of this project. Consequently, the preferred facility design of a new indoor pool and capital and operating costs require further study. However, the Municipality is facing a number of major capital costs for proposed recreational infrastructure and some sense of the likely costs are important for future planning. The following is a general estimate of capital costs based on a possible space program for an indoor pool and general guidelines concerning costing.

The space program in Figure 3.1 is for a relatively modest, six lane pool with contemporary leisure features. At six lanes the main tank is smaller than the eight lanes that would be found in many municipal pools but would likely accommodate the community's requirements, particularly given the availability of a second tank and some provision for recreational amenities. The proposed pool includes a small multipurpose room, but no other complementary recreation features. The pool described in Figure 3.1 would be a customary indoor pool in a smaller municipality.



Figure 3.1: Indoor Aquatic Facility Detailed Space Program

Program Space	Area (sq.ft.)	Description
Main Tank:	3,200	Fitness Pool - 6 lane 1.8m x 25m lap pool
	1,200	Leisure Pool and Access Ramp into Main Tank
	3,000	Deck - circulation space
	7,400	Total net area
Warm Water/Therapeutic Tank:	350	Bench seating (101-104 degree F)
	300	Deck - circulation space
	650	Total net area
Change Rooms:	1,200	Family Change Room
	1,000	Female Change Room
	1,000	Male Change Room
	700	Storage Area
	3,900	Total net area
Multi Purpose Space	3,500	Program Room
	400	Equipment Storage
	3,900	Total net area
Pool Administration:	100	Aquatic coordinator office
	250	Guard room and first aid
	300	Staff room/shower/change
	650	Total net area
Lobby/Circulation	350	Reception
	200	Seating/Viewing Area
	750	Entrance Lobby
	100	Janitor/Storage
	50	Vending Alcove
	100	Public Washroom - Male
	100	Public Washroom - Female
	1,650	Total net area
Pool Support:	500	Pool Equipment/Facility Storage/Workroom
	300	Chemical/Delivery
	100	Bulk Chemical Storage
	650	Filtration room
	1,550	Total net area
Net Floor Area (75%)	19,700	
Gross Floor Area (100%):	24,625	25% support surfaces; walls and partitions, structure, circulation, unassigned storage, etc.

This is a modest facility that is strongly focused on core aquatic programming. While a full range of instructional programming will be available and the facility will provide an attractive venue for aquatic programming for all ages and interests, it is a “no-frills” concept. Additional space has not been allocated for



user conveniences, such as food service, childcare, or unassigned social space, and additional programming areas, and meeting rooms have not been provided. The proposed pool should therefore be seen as the minimum requirements.

The estimated capital cost of the proposed concept design is described Figure 3.2. A total construction budget of roughly \$9 million is indicated and a total project cost of \$11 million. This includes contingencies, furnishings, site development (assuming a site with no extraordinary constraints) and fees. Soft costs would include permits, inspections, etc. Land costs, legal fees, HST, if applicable, are not included. Additional costs should be anticipated if LEEDS designation (or the equivalent) was pursued. This is a very general estimate but provides a reasonable order of magnitude cost for a facility of this type if built today.

Table 3.2: Capital Cost Estimate

Capital Costs:	Cost Per sq. ft.	Gross Floor Area	Estimate \$	Comments
Aquatic Components	\$350	16,8755,	\$5,906,250	
Multipurpose/Administration/Lobby	\$275	7,750	\$2,131,250	
Sub-Total Building Construction			\$8,037,500	
Site Development 10% of Construction Cost			\$803,750	<i>Parking, roads, landscaping, site service. Assumes no unique conditions.</i>
Net Construction Estimate:			\$8,841,250	
Contingency (5%Design and 3% Construction)			\$707,300	
Furnishing and Fitments (10%)			\$884,125	
Soft Costs (5%)			\$442,060	
Net total:			\$10,847,735	
Consultant Fees: @10.0%			\$108,475	
Total Estimated Capital Cost			\$10,956,210	<i>Excludes land costs, legal fees, HST. Excludes capital cost escalation for inflation.</i>

Conclusion and Recommendations

Our conclusion addresses the three questions noted at the beginning of this section.

Recreational Need – There is no question that the existing indoor pool, which needs to be replaced, is meeting a recreational need in the community. Aquatics are one of the most popular recreational activities, teach an essential life skill, and attract participants from all age groups. The existing pool is well used and attracts users from throughout East Hants, despite the limitations associated with an aging facility, few contemporary features and virtually none of the amenities associated with modern pools. A well designed and equipped, modern indoor pool could serve many more residents and a wider range of interests. A contemporary aquatic facility, to a much greater extent than many other recreation facilities, can contribute to an active and healthy community.



Required Municipal Support – the East Hants pool, like virtually all municipally operated aquatic facilities, requires an ongoing operating subsidy. An ongoing subsidy will be required for a replacement pool. Depending on the type of pool and the features provided, much higher levels of use can be expected with a new pool and this should translate into increased revenues. However, a new pool facility will be considerably larger than the existing building so despite energy efficiencies, occupancy costs will likely be higher. In addition, more users generally require additional staff and increased revenues may not fully cover these costs. Higher operating costs, therefore, would be a reasonable assumption. A business plan should be prepared as part of a detailed feasibility study for a new pool to confirm these costs.

In addition to some increase in net operating costs, the Municipality will be faced with substantial capital costs to replace the indoor pool. A very preliminary estimate, as noted above, is about \$11 million.

Priority – An indoor aquatic facility addresses most of the desired outcomes associated with municipal leisure services and consequently is one of the highest priority facilities that can be provided. To a much greater extent than most major indoor facilities, an aquatic facility (of the type described here) can serve all community residents, regardless of age, physical condition or skill level. It is particularly well suited to serving older adults, including those with health conditions that would preclude involvement in other recreational activities. As such, it plays a significant role in promoting active living for this segment of the population. As noted, the pool has a specialized therapeutic function that is not customary in most recreation facilities. As a venue for teaching an essential life skill, it contributes to the personal safety of residents and the larger community.

In most communities, the municipality will be the only provider of indoor aquatic facilities and given the requirement for an operating subsidy, the facility will generally not be available unless provided by the public sector.

Recommendation 3.1: The Municipality should replace the existing indoor pool with a contemporary aquatic facility.

Recommendation 3.2: A feasibility study should be prepared to address three key issues: (1) a facility design and definition of recreational components and amenities that will best meet the broadest range of community needs in the most cost effective manner; (2) a business plan should be developed for the aquatic facility to confirm both capital and operating costs and establish a financing and implementation strategy, and (3) a preferred location.

Recommendation 3.3: The new aquatic facility should be reflected in future municipal capital planning as the highest priority major recreation facility.



3.1.3 Bowling

General Trends in Participation

Research¹⁰ indicates that bowling has experienced significant change since the 1960's when it reached its peak in popularity. During the mid-1960's, there were approximately 12,000 bowling facilities in the United States, and 70% of a bowling facility's business was driven by league bowlers who would commit to a 30 week membership and participation in tournaments. However, social changes led to a decline in league bowling and the number of bowling facilities. According to the United States Bowling Congress, participation in league bowling declined from nearly 3 million participants in 2004-2005 to just over 2 million in 2009-2010. As of June 2011, there were over 5,000 centers operating in the United States, a decline from 12,000 at the peak.

In 2009, the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute conducted a Physical Activity Monitor to examine sport participation rates among Canadian adults. Similar to findings in 2008, results of the Monitor indicate that, among sport participation trends from 2004 to 2009, less than 3% of respondents engaged in bowling. A similar study was conducted by Statistics Canada in 2005 (General Social Survey). The survey assessed the most practiced sports by Canadians and included a sample of 26,106 participants. Results indicated that 2.4% actively engaged in 10-pin bowling, and 1.7% actively engaged in 5-pin bowling. The same survey indicated that among children age 5-14 yrs, 1.5% engaged in 5 pin bowling in 1998 and by 2005 this percentage had declined to a level noted as too unreliable to be published.

Despite decline in bowling participation, recent developments indicate a renewed interest in bowling based on a very different business model. In the United States, between 25 and 50 new bowling centers have been built in the past several years¹¹. According to a national survey, throughout 2009, 2010, and the first quarter of 2011, 75% of bowling facilities across the United States noted that their operating revenues were either up, stable, or had decreased slightly¹². As many centers experienced loss in league play bowlers, the number of casual/open-play bowlers began to rise¹³. Open-play bowlers are not members of an organized league, but rather bowl at their own leisure. This type of participation is increasing in popularity, and open-play bowlers now comprise a significant portion of the customer base. This is likely due to the fact that open-play bowling requires no commitment and is less expensive than fees associated with league play.

Faced with a decline in the league/competitive play, bowling centers had to devise a strategy that would make the activity attractive and re-establish their market. The result was diversifying bowling facilities to

¹⁰ The White Hutchinson Leisure and Learning Group. "What's Happening to Bowling" (updated 2011). We know of no comparable statistics for Canada. The Executive Director of Bowl Canada, a not-for-profit national association comprised of 500 member bowling centers across Canada (6 of which are in Nova Scotia) indicate that membership in bowling is largely dependent on the market, the facility, and its location. The association was unable to provide any statistical data but noted that, anecdotally, participation in bowling remains steady with slight increases or decreases depending on the location.

¹¹ Hansell & Associates Inc. *Overview of the bowling industry* (2011).

¹² Hansell & Associates Inc. *Overview of the bowling industry* (2011).

¹³ Bowling Proprietors Association of America.



include features and components that would attract a broader variety of interests, and to appeal to a greater population. Five hundred centers across the United States updated their facilities, while others made adjustments to their food and beverage services, and began to provide other types of activities.

Most newly built facilities are designed with modern amenities that accommodate a wide range of entertainment interests. Compared to traditional, old style facilities designed solely for bowling, many centers today are constructed to include other recreational activities including video game arcades, go-karts, laser tag, climbing walls, mini golf, etc. In addition, new establishments often boast a feature destination restaurant and contemporary amenities that appeal to a variety of interests. Many bowling centers host special events such as birthday parties, Christmas gatherings, fun-raisers not only to generate significant revenue but also to introduce new customers to the facility.

These changes and the appeal of bowling entertainment centres for professional households, particularly families with children, may increase participation in the future¹⁴. However, these trends that suggest the re-birth of bowling may be counter-acted by technology. The ability to bowl virtually using video game systems provides home entertainment that is not only more comfortable, but arguably more affordable.

Proposed Bowling Facility in East Hants

This study's community consultation process identified a significant desire for a bowling facility to replace the private business that recently closed in East Hants. While those supporting a bowling centre in East Hants actively participated in this study process, there is no way of knowing how representative their views are of the larger population. Those in support of this new development felt that access to a local bowling center would provide the opportunity for family entertainment; would appeal to a broad range of interests, age groups, and skills sets; would provide recreational opportunities for individuals less interested in arena or field sports; and would cater to the Municipality's aging population. In East Hants, participation in bowling has declined since 2006-2007 due in large part to the closure of the Municipality's only bowling center. The East Hants Bowling Society (EHBS) reports that the 500-800 members in 2007 had declined to 350 members in 2010. However, the EHBS expects to recoup these members if a local facility is provided.

In 2010, the EHBS prepared a Strategy and Business Case¹⁵ for a bowling facility. Their proposal envisions a shared facility with the East Hants Curling Association at the former Lantz school site (approximately 4 acres of municipally owned land). The proposed bowling facility is a single story, 10,000-12,000 sq. ft. building that incorporates green building and energy components; is landscaped and has decorative design features; contains a refurbished, 12 lane system; with top quality equipment. Other features include: family/community activity space, canteen/lunch bar, and XRKade (video/fitness stations for youth and seniors).

¹⁴ The White Hutchinson Leisure and Learning Group. "What's Happening to Bowling" (updated 2011).

¹⁵ East Hants Bowling Society (2010). Strategy and Business Case: Community Bowling and Activity Center for East Hants Residents.



The Business Case identifies a variety of benefits associated with the proposed development at the former Lantz school site. A number of ownership options are proposed including some form of long-term land lease with the facility and equipment being owned by either a not-for-profit society, private enterprise, or a combination of several ownership options.

The proposed estimated capital cost¹⁶, including the land, landscaping/site work, building construction, and equipment, is \$1,180,000, however, it is hoped that the actual costs can be reduced through in-kind contributions and potentially the use of refurbished equipment. Capital funding is anticipated from senior levels of government (60%) and the Municipality (15%) with the balance coming from the community. Operating cost estimates, which include advertising, amortization, insurance, interest/bank charges, canteen, bowling supplies, maintenance (building and equipment), taxes, telephone, etc. total \$143,928. Sales are predicted to total \$149,619. The EBHS notes that the operation of the facility is likely to include volunteers to some extent.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Recreational Need – bowling was a popular recreational activity in East Hants prior to the closing of the private facility and the committed efforts of local residents to re-establish a facility in East Hants is evidence of the ongoing interest and support. As noted above, participation in bowling has declined significantly in North America since its peak in the 1960s and 70s and there is no indication that a strong resurgence should be expected. Bowling will not serve the number or diversity of residents of other recreational activities and sports, however, it will meet an expressed need in East Hants, at least for the 10 year time frame of this study.

Required Municipal Support. The manner in which the Municipality might participate in the development and operation of the bowling facility is not fully defined in the EHBS Business Plan. There is an expectation that the Municipality would contribute land and capital funds to the project. In most Canadian communities, bowling is provided by the private sector on a for-profit basis, however, there is presumably no reason why the Municipality could not contribute to the capital costs of a non-profit recreational bowling facility. The EHBS Business Plan suggests that an on-going operating subsidy would not be required from the Municipality but the information reviewed here suggests that this will not be the case.

As noted earlier, the scope of this study does not include the type of detailed financial analysis that would be customary in a feasibility study. This would be necessary to confirm the EHBS's assumption that the facility will not require ongoing operating funding from the Municipality. Based on the market and business trends discussed above, and the EHBS Business Plan, this assumption is questionable for the following reasons:

¹⁶ Based on information provided by the International Candlepin Bowling Association.



1. Bowling is a competitive business with a declining market base as evidenced by the number of traditional bowling alleys that have closed. We do not know to what extent profitability was a consideration in the closing of the East Hants bowling alley; however, we note that no private operator has come forward to take over the business.
2. Bowling centres that have survived and prospered in North America are positioned as family entertainment centres where bowling is one of many activities and where the occasional participant is the prime market. This does not appear to be the concept envisioned for the East Hants facility. The EHBS Business Case anticipates that the largest proportion of its sales (61 %) will come from league bowling; however, research indicates that participation in league bowling, even in areas of greater bowling interest, is declining. Compared to several decades ago when 70% of a bowling center's business was derived from league participation, today that percentage has declined to 40% as the result of decreased league play. While the EHBS Business Case appears to describe a proposed facility largely focused on league/competitive play, most new bowling facilities are less defined by competitive/league use and cater to more casual/open-play. Despite mention of additional activities being offered in the facility, the total sales of the Business Case does not envision non-bowling activities as a profit centre, and instead depicts a facility that caters primarily to bowling. To maintain sustainability, bowling centers today are generally built to be multi-entertainment facilities, and include additional activities (i.e laser tag, arcades, climbing walls, go-karts, etc.) to appeal to a broader range of interests. These types of ancillary activities are apparently not included in the facility concept or the operating cost and revenue projections.
3. The costs, both operating and capital, in the EHBS Business Plan should be confirmed. Equipment costs, maintenance and capital conservation costs should be further developed. Relying on general guidelines from the Candle Bowling Associations of the United States does not provide the level of certainty required for a decision on a major capital project. The business case must be based on local market conditions and cost parameters. We note for example that the capital costs are based on \$60/sq. ft. and this appears to be inclusive of fees, contingencies, soft costs, etc. This would appear to be a very competitive price.
4. The movement to the family entertainment concept and the significant competition for this consumer in today's marketplace suggests that this may be a very challenging business venture. Whether sufficient time and expertise is available in a largely volunteer organization to successfully operate this venture is a consideration.

These considerations suggest that there is a strong probability that the Municipality's initial investment in capital would be insufficient to create a sustainable community recreational resource. However, once established as a joint Municipal-community facility there will be considerable pressure to maintain the service even if ongoing municipal subsidy is required. The Municipality should be prepared to assume this risk if it supports the development.

Priority – Bowling is a physical and social activity that provides many of the benefits associated with other recreation programs and services. However, as noted earlier, it is very unusual for a municipality to provide a bowling facility as part of the community recreation inventory. While this does not preclude the possibility, it does speak to the issue of priority. Bowling is typically sustainable as a for-profit business and the public sector has therefore invested tax revenues and subsidy in other areas. Bowling also attracts a smaller proportion of the residents as active users than many other recreation activities and this may be a consideration in securing public funding. To the extent that the financial sustainability of bowling centres is



increasingly dependent on other family entertainment venues (go-carting; video gaming; mini-golf, banquets and special event rentals, etc.) they may be seen as competing with business interests in the community. If the operation receives a tax subsidy, this may be seen as unfair by these business interests. These considerations would suggest that bowling may be assigned a lesser priority than other publicly funded recreational activities.

In summary, notwithstanding the fact that the scope of this study did not include a detailed feasibility study, our analysis suggests that the long term demand for bowling as envisioned in the EHBS business plan is questionable, the facility will likely require an ongoing operating subsidy from the Municipality, and it would command a lower priority than other identified needs. On this basis, we would not recommend the project as part of the Municipality's future recreation projects. Council should confirm its position with respect to the project and advise the EHBS.

Recommendation 3.4: In view of the needs and priorities identified in this study and the strong probability that an ongoing operating subsidy will be required, the Municipality should indicate whether or not they are prepared to play a role in the development of a municipal bowling facility in partnership with the East Hants Bowling Society (EHBS).

Recommendation 3.5 If the Municipality is willing to consider a partnership with the EHBS, a decision concerning the Municipality's involvement should be contingent upon the preparation of a detailed and up-to-date business plan by the EHBS that provides a defensible projection of costs and revenues; clearly outlines the expectations of the Municipality as a partner; and provides a credible projection of future Municipality costs.

3.1.4 Curling

General Trends in Participation

Curling is a significant winter sport in Canada and general trends indicate stable participation. Results of the 2009 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute Physical Activity Monitor¹⁷ indicate that 4% of respondents engaged in curling between 2004 and 2009. According to the Canadian Curling Association, there are over 1000 member clubs across the Country, and over one million Canadians participate in the sport each year¹⁸. In Nova Scotia, there are over 30 curling facilities. There are indications of increasing interest in curling among youth, and growing demand from older adults and seniors. Growing interest among children and youth provides some support for the view that future growth can be anticipated.

Research suggests that curling may play a special role in community recreation systems in rural Canada and for women. Studies have found that for many women and girls in rural communities, curling provides an opportunity to participate in physical activity during the winter months, when arenas are dominated by men

¹⁷ Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (2009). Bulletin 08: Sport Participation Rates of Canadian Adults.

¹⁸ www.curling.ca



and boys, and other types of recreational facilities are limited. Studies¹⁹ have also described the special role of curling clubs in rural Canadian communities. Curling clubs play a significant social role in communities, particularly in smaller communities, because they function as a social gathering space. Participants indicated that their initial interest in the activity was influenced by family, friends, and co-workers. Many began curling because of school/youth involvement; a desire to remain physically active during the winter months; or in response to personal change (divorce, moved to a new community, etc.). However, the desire to continue to play after their initial experience was often attributed to the benefits associated with being a member of a curling club and the social benefits associated with the activity.

Despite interest in the sport and the benefits it may provide, societal change has had an impact on the sustainability of curling facilities, and this may be most pronounced in the rural communities where they play a special role. Aging populations, volunteer burn-out, lack of a stable economy, and fewer memberships to finance facilities, have been obstacles faced by many curling clubs. Other factors including lack of diversity within the sport, and an increasing divide between levels of proficiency (competitive vs. casual) have been challenges to the ongoing viability of curling clubs. Many clubs are working to address these challenges with such innovative programs and strategies as:

- Maintaining affordability;
- Identifying curling as a 'life-long sport' (e.g., from 'Little Rocks' for youth to Masters Curling);
- Developing coaching and leadership capacity;
- Responding to modern participant needs with flexible memberships and league play;
- Promoting the social benefits of club membership; and
- Updating the club's former image (closed, elite, white, male-dominated spaces) to socially diverse, community places.

Curling in East Hants

At present, the Municipality does not have a local curling facility. According to the East Hants Curling Association (EHCA), residents use facilities outside of the community primarily in HRM, Brookfield, Lower Sackville, and Colchester County. In addition to lack of a local facility, transportation challenges and distance to regional facilities were noted as limitations to participation.

Support for the provision of a local curling facility was indicated throughout the consultation process. Many residents felt that curling, along with bowling, is an activity that assists in creating a healthy community and can be enjoyed by individuals of all ages. According to EHCA, participation increased from 350 members in 2009 to 450 members in 2010, and information collected from local communities suggested increased

¹⁹ Mair, H. (2009) Curling and Community in Rural Canada. Sport Canada Research. University of Waterloo. SCRI Standard Research Grant.



interest in curling over the past few years. EHCA anticipated that curling participation among East Hants residents would continue to increase by between 16% and 20% over the next 5 years due to growing interest, increasing population, marketing efforts, low participation costs, and volunteer skills and support.

These considerations suggest that curling would be a viable community recreational program in East Hants.

Another consideration that may be relevant to a decision concerning a curling facility in East Hants is the impact on existing facilities in the area. Existing facilities in Brookfield and Sackville likely serve most of the current East Hants curlers, but some residents are likely also using facilities in Truro and possibly elsewhere. We contacted the Sackville facility for a perspective on the potential impacts of a new curling rink in East Hants.

The Lakeshore Curling Club located in Lower Sackville has been operating for 9 years and the facility is rented from HRM. The club is operated by approximately 9 staff members, 2 of whom are full time (the manager and an ice maker), and the remainder of whom are part time (bartenders and an ice maker). Discussions with the manager²⁰ of the Lakeshore Curling Club in Lower Sackville indicated an increase in participation over the past three years from 260 members in 2008, to approximately 330 today. The facility is currently not used to full capacity and it was noted that participation fluctuates on a yearly basis depending on a number of societal factors (i.e. broadcasting of major curling events, winter games being held in Halifax, etc.) that contribute to levels of interest. As previously noted, the Lakeshore facility is often used by East Hants residents, and it was estimated that they make up 10-15% of the total membership. While the provision of a curling facility in East Hants was expected to have some impact on the Lakeshore Curling Club, the manager noted the addition of a new, modern facility would increase interest in the sport and increase participation among neighbouring facilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Recreation Need: The information compiled for this study suggests that curling would meet an identified recreational need in the community and would be a viable activity. Trends indicate stable to modest increases in curling in Canada, there is a committed group of curlers in East Hants who are prepared to support the facility, and the preliminary business plan would suggest a community curling club would be a viable entity. Curling will not demonstrate the broad based appeal of many other recreational activities but it is a customary component of the community recreation system in many Canadian municipalities and may play a special role in rural communities.

Municipal Support: The business plan submitted by EHCA suggests the facility would operate without subsidy which would be customary for most curling clubs. The Municipality's support for the capital

²⁰ Personal communication with the Facility Manager. December 2011.



development would be consistent with the role that it might play in the development of other major recreation facilities and on this basis, would appear appropriate. Further development of the business plan is warranted before the Municipality entered into an agreement to support the facility.

In the further development of the business plan and planning for all future major indoor facilities, consideration should be given to the possible cost saving associated with co-locating a future indoor aquatic facility with the curling facility. The possibility of energy exchange between facilities could have a significant impact on the aquatic centre's operating costs.

Priority: Curling would command a lower level of priority than some other recreational activities on the basis of the numbers participating and potentially the narrow age range of those served. However, assuming steps are taken to reach out to the larger community and engage as broad a spectrum of users as possible, it would be similar to other facilities in the individuals served. The major impact on priority however would be the extent to which existing facilities in other communities are adequately serving East Hants residents and would be adversely impacted if these residents relocated to a new curling facility in East Hants. This issue should be addressed more fully as it does have an impact on the priority that should be assigned to the project.

Recommendation 3.6. The East Hants Curling Association (EHCA) should update its Business Plan to the satisfaction of the Municipality. The updated plan should address any issues requiring further investigation or confirmation and specifically deal with the impact an East Hants facility will have on curling clubs in neighbouring communities.

Recommendation 3.7. Based on the submission of an updated Business Plan, Council should indicate how it is prepared to support the efforts of the EHCA to provide a curling facility in East Hants.

3.2 Other Recreation Facilities and Services

In this section of the report we have discussed the need for recreation facilities, open space and programs that were identified through the community consultation program. To the extent possible we have reached conclusions concerning the need for additional facilities or services in the next ten years. However, this analysis is limited because of the absence of information. As discussed in Chapter 4 of the report, East Hants relies heavily on volunteers to provide and manage not only programs (which would be customary in most communities) but virtually all facilities and parkland in the Municipality. The Department is not directly responsible for planning and evaluating and recreation services in the Municipality, and consequently, the municipal data base for the needs assessment is very limited. The Department operates the indoor pool so detailed information is available for this facility. Detailed information is also available for the Sportsplex. However, for all other community run facilities and programs, very little information is regularly compiled or



evaluated. A complete, up-to-date inventory of the recreation facilities discussed in this section of the report is not readily available. There is no information in municipal records on the extent to which existing facilities are regularly scheduled for community use. No information exists on whether outdoor sports facilities are used to capacity in prime time. No information is available on total hours of programming available to the community; the extent to which programs are at capacity; unmet demands for additional programming, etc. The issue of the Department's future role in assembling information for the planning and evaluation of recreation services is discussed in Chapter 4. However, due to the absence of this information it is not possible to reach conclusions on the need for some facilities. Further, because no data independent of the community consultation input is available for analysis, our assessment was largely focused on facilities mentioned by residents who participated in public meetings and focus groups. It is possible, therefore, that some needs were not captured in this process.

Based on the consultations for this study, East Hants residents appear to be satisfied with the existing supply of recreation facilities available in the community, although some issues regarding available programming were reported. While approximately one-third of online community survey respondents indicated dissatisfaction with the current recreation and leisure facilities, we anticipate a good deal of this was related to the desire for bowling and curling facilities. About one-half of respondents reported being satisfied or neither satisfied or dissatisfied, suggesting there is room for improvements primarily with respect to programming, awareness and promotion, and opportunities for informal, unorganized recreation rather than with the perceived absence of recreation facilities. Results of the online survey indicated that most sports and recreation groups felt the supply of facilities was adequate, but concerns were expressed with poor design/poor condition, inadequate spectator seating, facility scheduling challenges, and the quality of the facilities (i.e. outdoor playing fields).

The following discussion addresses possible needs identified through the community consultation program.

3.2.1 Skateboard Park

Residents feel strongly that there are not enough activities of interest for teens in East Hants. Outdoor facilities that meet youth needs for unstructured and spontaneous recreation, that appeal to youth by association with popular culture and media, that provide loose affiliation with an "in" crowd, and that provide elements of risk, excitement, and fun will continue to be popular among this age group.

Two initiatives are proposed to better meet the needs of youth. Additional programming of interest to youth is discussed in a subsequent section of the report. However, the provision of a major skateboard park was the single most important project identified by the youth who participated in the study process.

Skateboarding is a growing recreational activity requiring specialized facilities. Carefully designed skateboard facilities can address needs for unstructured recreation, and other needs for physical activity,



socialization, and recreation. As a result, skateboard facilities are becoming increasingly common components of Municipality's recreation inventories. There is a small skateboard facility provided by the Milford Recreation Association, however, most teens felt it is too limited to appeal to more advanced skateboarders, and a more modern, and sophisticated facility would be much more attractive, and better utilized. Discussions with East Hants youth indicated a willingness to be actively involved in maintaining a new facility, and in assisting with its planning and development. They also appreciated the fact that East Hants could only provide one major facility and were adamant that they would travel to a high quality facility wherever it was located.

The type of skateboard facility that would be developed is an important consideration. As noted above, the youth that we spoke to supported a major installation with amenities and designed for skill levels that would be of interest to serious users. This of necessity would be a centralized facility (only one could be supported in East Hants) and the teens indicated they would travel to use it. This has been the experience in other communities. However, given the significant capital expenditure associated with a major skateboard park, further consultation with youth and their parents would be advisable to confirm the demand and willingness to support a centralized facility. There may also be interest in smaller installations similar to the Milford facility at other locations throughout East Hants. We identified no demand for these facilities in our community consultations, but should a need be identified in the future, a small facility should be considered. However, these smaller facilities will not serve the same market as a major facility and will not replace the need for a major installation.

The Town of Windsor is currently in the process of developing a major new skateboard park with the active involvement of the community, and Chester provided a major park in 2008. The Lions Skate Park in Amherst, Nova Scotia is considered to be one of the better skate parks in Atlantic Canada. The planning was initiated in 2010 to provide more casual recreation space for the town's youth and was completed in 2011 at a cost of approximately \$370,000. This was a design build project with funding from the federal government as part of Recreational Infrastructure Canada; the Town of Amherst and the Province of Nova Scotia. Approximately \$67,000 of the total project costs was to be raised by the community through various fundraising efforts. The Youth Advisory Council was active in fund-raising events. The skate park is located adjacent to Amherst Stadium and boasts a number of features including a mini-bowl, rails of various height and shapes, as well as stairs, benches, islands and a custom quarter pipe. Since the parks grand opening in May of 2011, it has been well used by not only the youth of Amherst but also many surrounding communities as it has become a destination for skaters.

Conclusion

To address the need for unstructured and spontaneous recreation for youth, the Municipality should consider the development of a major, concrete skateboard facility of 5-7,000 sq. ft. Assuming a construction



cost of \$45/sq. ft.²¹, the initial capital cost is estimated at \$225-315,000. It is quite common for communities to fundraise extensively for the development of these facilities including partnering with “like-minded” business such as sport stores, etc. Consideration should be given to locating the proposed skateboard park in a community space adjacent to an existing recreation facility, or another location where noise and disruption impacts to neighbouring residences is minimized.

Recommendation 3.8: The Department in conjunction with youth and other community interests should initiate a process to plan, design and develop a major skateboard facility.

3.2.2 Community Centres and Community Halls

In East Hants, residents have access to a number of community centres and halls. For the purposes of this discussion, we have referred to community centres as spaces in other public or community buildings (such as firehalls and Legions) that are used for community programming and community halls as free standing buildings, primarily in rural areas, that are used for a variety of social events. There are over 30 of these facilities in East Hants, and this does not include space in municipal recreation facilities such as the Sportsplex or school facilities.

As is customary in rural communities, the only indoor community recreation space in many of the small population centres in East Hants is the hall. No information is available on their use, although based on site visits it appears that some may no longer be in use and we expect others are used very infrequently. The halls vary a good deal in size, quality and upkeep, with a few being in an advanced state of disrepair, but most being well maintained by committed volunteers. The design of the halls are more conducive to social activities than to the types of recreation programming that could occur in the space found in community centres.

These halls are an important part of their communities and in most cases provide one of few opportunities for community programming. While there is no apparent need for additional halls, providing residents with ongoing access to social and program space should be the Municipality's objective. Meeting this objective presents the following challenges.

For the community halls, their sustainability is questionable. These are older buildings and will require some ongoing investment for maintenance to ensure they are appropriate for community use. The Municipality has not undertaken a building assessment of the existing halls so the extent of this possible future investment is unknown. It is likely however that at some point the required investment will not be justified by the extent of community use. Changes in legislation may also impact these facilities. Very few would meet contemporary standards for full accessibility and in other jurisdictions changes to standards for serving food, occupancy levels and other considerations have rendered halls build decades ago no longer suitable for

²¹ Assumes a design/build process, contracted out to a recognized skatepark design firm.



community use. Finally there is the question of the willingness and ability of volunteers to continue to operate the halls. This issue is addressed further below with respect to additional requirements for municipal support.

Community centres are in a better position than community halls because the alternate use provides some guarantee they will be maintained. However, for both community halls and community centres, the adequacy for programming is a concern. Few of the community centres and virtually none of the halls provide programming space that meet the standards of contemporary recreation facilities (e.g. flexible, large enough to accommodate programs with a number of active participants, with flooring, wall finishes and design, lighting and amenities such as storage, washrooms/change areas, kitchen areas to accommodate a range of activities and programs including fitness classes, dance lessons, day camps, youth drop-in activities, arts programming, social and special events, etc.). In addition, many have some restrictions on access during daytime and weekend hours.

There is no information concerning the use of community centre/hall space in East Hants so current capacity and use is unknown. Department staff indicates that they seldom have problems finding space for programs, however, this perspective was not always shared by the public.

Conclusion

While staff indicate that they can usually find space for community programming, they acknowledge it is not always ideally designed for the activities that are hosted and access, particularly on weekends, can be a constraint. Furthermore, our analysis (discussed below) suggests a need for a broader range of active living programming, additional physical activity programming, and expanded programming for older adults, seniors and youth. This will place additional demand on available resources. In addition, to the extent that the community halls are not sustainable, the supply of community programming space may diminish. The Municipality, therefore, should adopt a strategy to ensure that an adequate supply of community programming space is available in the future. The strategy should have two major components: (1) an assessment of current community centres and halls and a plan for ensuring an adequate supply of facilities is available for future use, and (2) adding to the supply of well-designed multi-purpose programming space with current and future major recreation facilities.

A pro-active approach is required to ensure an adequate supply of community centres/halls in the rural area. This is preferable to waiting until the condition of existing facilities deteriorate to the point they are no longer useable or volunteers are no longer available to operate the centres. However, it is unlikely that all of the existing facilities or required or can be maintained and consequently choices will need to be made about how best to invest limited resources. . The goal should be to ensure that a facility suitable for programming is reasonably accessible to all residents. While in most cases this will probably be an existing community hall, it could be another community resource, such as a school or firehall, as long as community access is



guaranteed, or if warranted based on the assessment, it could be a new facility. We note that this was a major issue discussed at the public meeting in Mt. Uniacke. There were differing opinions expressed as to whether the community's requirements for multipurpose programming space were adequately addressed by the existing school, firehall and other community facilities or whether a new community centre was required. This assessment would address that issue and identified a preferred strategy to ensure the community had adequate long-term access to recreational programming space. If existing facilities controlled by other agencies, such as school boards, are the preferred approach to meeting the need for program space, new or improved partnerships agreements with the Municipality may be required.

The intent of the proposed assessment is to identify and designate a preferred in each service area to meet future recreation programming needs. Preferred facilities should be identified based on their location, physical condition, programming potential and community support. The following categories of criteria could be developed for this assessment:

- Structural Condition – the estimated cost of repairing current deficiencies and maintaining the facility for community use over the next ten years.
- Appropriateness for Public Use – the existence of or cost to provide full accessibility or conform to other characteristics traditional associated with public buildings (e.g. adequate parking; signage/visibility; security and safety of users, etc.)
- Size – the capacity of the areas available for public use
- Programming Potential – the range of community uses and programming that can be accommodated based on such considerations as ceiling height; design and coverings of floors and walls; amenities such as storage, change areas, food service, etc.)
- Accessibility – both geographically to the proposed service area and for community use during day, evenings and weekends.
- Volunteer Management – the existence, capabilities and willingness of a volunteer management group to operate the facility and potentially to take on greater use

The preferred facility based on this assessment should be identified as the area's designated community centre. The Municipality should support the designated facilities with investments in their upkeep and other support to enhance their viability. Facilities that are not sustainable based on the physical condition and community support or that are not required based on the availability of superior resources in the immediate vicinity, should be decommissioned and/or given a lower priority for municipal funding. Designated facilities should be eligible for enhanced funding (if required to support the physical structure or upgrades) and the volunteers should be targeted for assistance to ensure that they can continue to operate these facilities. Assistance for volunteer organizations and funding is discussed further in Chapter 4 of the report.



While not within the scope of the recreation needs assessment, it is worth noting that many rural municipalities in Nova Scotia and elsewhere are struggling with the challenge of retaining community services. Due to the ongoing decline in rural population as well as changes in service delivery models, many public and private services that were available in smaller rural centres in the past are no longer viable. These communities are losing their banks, service stations, post offices, libraries and many other services. The amalgamation of municipal units has often also resulted in the loss of local government services. There is a growing interest in new facility models that rely on shared space, innovative management and operating arrangements, and technology to address this issue. Multi-service centres specifically designed for rural communities may provide a viable means to provide some of the services that are being lost. It may be worthwhile therefore to expand the scope of this recreational assessment of facilities to explore a multi-service centre concept for rural areas of East Hants.

In addition to designating community recreation space in all parts of the Municipality as discussed above, multipurpose programming space is an essential feature of major indoor facilities. All major municipal recreation facilities should accommodate flexible, well designed multipurpose programming space. This space should be designed for flexible, multiple use and large enough to accommodate a variety of programs. Areas of 2,500-4,000 sq. ft. would be customary but larger spaces could be provided in larger facilities. In East Hants, programming space of this type is available at the Sportsplex. It should also be provided at the Aquatic Centre.

Recommendation 3:9: The Department should prepare a plan for the future provision of social and recreational space. The plan developed in conjunction with the volunteer organizations responsible for the management of community centres and halls will designate specific facilities as those best able to meet the community's long term needs. Designated facilities should be eligible, as required, for additional investment and the Department should work closely with the volunteer groups responsible for their operation to ensure their continued viability. As warranted, new or revised agreements for access to facilities controlled by other agencies should be established.

Recommendation 3:10: The redeveloped aquatic centre should include a multi-purpose programming area.

3.2.3 Gymnasia

Gymnasia can accommodate many of the activities associated with multipurpose programming areas but also have the ceiling height and equipment to accommodate sports such as basketball and volleyball. Gymnasia are necessary components of all community recreation systems.

At present, residents of East Hants have access to a sufficient supply of school gymnasia. Based on the consultation activities community access was not a major issue, although occasionally being bumped for use by the school and day time and weekend access were reported constraints. While not a gymnasium, the



fieldhouse at the Sportsplex can accommodate many of the activities that would traditionally be scheduled for gymnasia.

Experience in most communities indicates growing demand for gymnasium use because of the increasing popularity of basketball, volleyball, badminton, floor hockey (among other sports) for both league and unstructured participation. In addition, the wide-ranging, flexible programming of gymnasia make them key contributors to increasing activity levels in the community and improving population health and wellness. Furthermore, although the situation varies, it is customary in all municipalities to experience restrictions on community access to school space.

Another significant consideration with respect to gym time is the growing demand for daytime access to major recreation facilities in a society where leisure time is more flexible and daily schedules are less likely to be oriented around child responsibilities. These considerations, in combination with the flexibility of well-designed gym space to accommodate a wide range of community activities, have resulted in a significant expansion in the supply of municipally owned and programmed gymnasia.

Conclusion

Although residents are largely satisfied with their access to school gymnasia and these will continue to meet the majority of community needs, one full-size gymnasium operated by the Municipality or a community recreation association should be available to provide day-time use, cross-programming opportunities, and to address constraints associated with scheduling school facilities. We understand that the Municipality has provided a financial contribution in the past to guarantee enhanced community access to school facilities. This is a reasonable strategy and should be considered if the opportunity presents itself in the future, but does not eliminate the requirement for one gym that is available at all times for community use.

The gymnasium should not be built as a stand-alone facility. Its programming potential is enhanced when it complements other major indoor facilities. Furthermore, it can only be operated in a cost effective manner if part of a larger complex that already has staff and other amenities such as changerooms and washrooms.

The ability for the Sportsplex fieldhouse to fulfill this requirement should be investigated before building gymnasium space. Assuming the design of the facility can adequately accommodate gymnasia programming and the scheduling of the fieldhouse will provide adequate prime-time access for sports other than soccer, this would be the preferred approach to meeting this need.

If the fieldhouse is not an appropriate option, the gym should be provided with another major recreation facility. In East Hants, the preferred option is the Aquatic Centre.



Recommendation 3:11: One full-size gymnasium operated by the Municipality or a community recreation association should be available to provide day-time use, cross-programming opportunities, and to address constraints associated with scheduling school facilities

3.2.4 Outdoor Sports Fields and Tennis Courts

The Municipality has a significant supply of outdoor sports facilities including at least 14 ball diamonds; 17 soccer fields; and 6 outdoor tennis courts (see facility inventory in Technical Background report²²). As discussed above, this is likely an incomplete inventory. However, it is also likely that some of these facilities are in very poor condition and would not support league play. This information is not available. While there is no documentation regarding scheduled use and the extent to which these facilities are fully used in prime time, based on information gathered throughout the consultation process, they are not used to capacity.

We have compared the per capita supply of ball, soccer and tennis facilities in East Hants to other communities of a similar size²³. Despite the limitations associated with comparing communities in this manner because of the many intervening variables, these types of population based comparisons do provide a useful benchmark to help in the assessment, particularly in the absence of information on existing use. As illustrated in Table 3.3, the Municipality of East Hants is well supplied relative to comparative supply statistics²⁴. Indeed, East Hants is providing 2 to 3 times as many facilities as comparable municipalities.

²² The inventory provided is not consistent with documentation of existing facilities listed in the "What's up East Hants" publication. For the purposes of this assessment, we have used the **minimum** supply of each facility type.

²³ These calculations were based on the 2011 population of 23,195

²⁴ Comparative supply levels are based upon Ontario ratios for communities ranging in size from 10,000 to 50,000 residents. Ontario data was used for two reasons: we know of no comparable information for Nova Scotia; and, more importantly, there are 36 communities in the Ontario sample providing a broader range of comparable size communities than would be possible in Nova Scotia. The source for this information is a special study that was undertaken by dmA based on a survey of all major Ontario municipalities (Municipal Recreation Facility Inventory Study. dmA Planning & Management Services, 2005).



Table 3.3: Comparative Facility Supply

Facility	East Hants Supply	Comparative Supply ²⁵
Baseball Diamonds	1:1,657 population	1:3,710
Soccer Fields	1:1,364 population	1:3,002
Tennis Courts	1:3,866 population	1:10,269

There was essentially no demand from the community for additional outdoor ball, soccer or tennis facilities. Two user groups indicated that they require additional facility time²⁶, primarily to improve the programs they currently offer, to meet demand for existing programs, and to support existing and new programming opportunities. Much of this demand could likely be accommodated by the existing supply of facilities if they were redeveloped and improved. The supply of outdoor sports fields and tennis courts was not raised as an issue by the participants at public meetings, focus groups or by the respondents to the web-site survey.

Throughout the consultation process, the existing outdoor sports facilities were commonly noted as being in poor condition and/or in need of improvement. Further, vandalism was a major concern. To the extent that sports fields were discussed in the community consultation program, the concern was the need to maintain and better utilize those that already exist. Discussions with staff, as well as, site tours of the outdoor sports fields indicate that many of these facilities are quite capable of serving their purpose, but have not been maintained to standards that allow for adequate use. Many of the fields are overgrown, in poor condition, and have been vandalized.

The condition of existing facilities is also a consideration with respect to tennis. While the per capita supply and community input indicated no demand, the supply is over-stated because the condition of the Milford courts makes two of the three unusable. These conditions also likely affect demand by discouraging informal tennis players or the development of a club. While the information available for this assessment cannot provide a conclusive answer, it is possible that tennis would be a viable program in East Hants if improved facilities were provided and the Department played a more active community development role in support of a volunteer tennis club (as discussed in Chapter 4 of the report).

²⁵ Source: "Municipal Recreation Facility Inventory Study" dmA Planning & Management Services, 2005.

²⁶ Tri –County Softball requested 10-15 additional hours per week of softball diamond use and 2-4 additional hours per week of school gymnasium use. Enfield Rugby Football Club requested 4 additional hours per week of outdoor soccer field use.



Conclusion

Compared to communities of a similar size, East Hants is well supplied with ball diamonds, tennis courts and soccer fields. Community input did not indicate demands that would justify the provision of additional facilities during the period of this plan.

There are however two significant issues that must be addressed. First, the information required to accurately determine current use and future demand is not available. At this time, there is no information in place that would indicate future requirements or, perhaps more importantly, if existing facilities are being used in the most cost effective manner. The Municipality does not have the data base required to plan for these facilities. This is a major problem and is discussed further in Chapter 4 of the report.

Second, in conjunction with establishing a reasonable data base for determining the number of facilities that are required, a comprehensive audit of existing resources and a strategy for upgrading and improving these facilities, if warranted by demand, is required. The audit should be undertaken by the Department (with external assistance as required) to assess the condition of existing ball diamonds and soccer fields; determine which, if any, merit upgrading based on their design, current condition and current and future user demand; ensure all facilities meet standards for safe community use; and consider the need to decommission facilities that are unsafe or are no longer required to meet community needs. With respect to facilities that may not be required in the future, the impact of the new indoor soccer facility on requirements for outdoor fields will be a major consideration. The audit must be undertaken in conjunction with a plan for future facility requirements, as discussed above.

Recommendation 3:12: The Municipality does not require additional soccer fields, ball diamonds or tennis courts for the ten year period of this plan.

Recommendation 3:13: In conjunction with the volunteer associations that manage facilities and the facility users, the Department should undertake a comprehensive audit of existing ball diamonds and soccer fields to identify facilities that should be upgraded and those that should be decommissioned.

Recommendation 3:14: In conjunction with the user groups. The Department should prepare a long range plan for future sports fields. Information must be compiled on current use and projected demand and a strategy put in place to ensure that appropriate facilities are available but also that the supply does not exceed demand so that volunteer and public resources are used to their best advantage.



3.2.5 Parkland, Open Space Areas and Trail Development

The primary focus on this study was recreational facility and service requirements. Detailed recommendations concerning parks and open space were not within the scope of the study. However, these aspects of the Municipality's leisure system have been addressed in other current and previous studies.

In 1999 the Municipality prepared a comprehensive Open Space Management Strategy. The Strategy created an inventory of existing resources, made recommendations for a number of parks, open space and trail projects and identified the need for a Parks and Open Space Coordinator as a pre-requisite for implementing the Strategy's recommendations. Council supported the staff position and a good deal has been done with respect to the Strategy's recommendations. The authors of the 1999 Strategy noted 'the scope of the Open Space Master Plan may appear vast and the effort implied intimidating'²⁷. This comment reflected the Strategy's ambitious work program and it was understood that implementation would take many years. This has turned out to be the case and while much has been done, there is still much to do and we understand that the Department's continues to implement components of the 1999 Strategy.

The Department is currently in the process of preparing a comprehensive open space inventory to provide an overview of resources and consolidate information for ease of access and use. This initiative will also identify the potential of individual properties for development, comment on management issues and upgrading considerations; and provide direction concerning future use. This is a very valuable undertaking and will complement the recommendations in this report. However, we understand that this work being undertaken by staff does not entail a comprehensive up-date of the 1999 Open Space Management Plan. This is likely required and should be considered by the Municipality to ensure open space resources are appropriately developed and can meet future recreational needs.

There are two other issues affecting parks and open space require attention. Current and future parks and open space resource must be managed and programmed. For East Hants as it further develops and expands its open space system, the challenge will be to ensure that the volunteer resources are available to assist with management and programs are available to encourage residents to make the best possible use of open space areas. Of particular importance is the support that will be available from the Municipality to assist volunteer community groups with park development and maintenance. Further Discussion and recommendations in Chapter Four of this report address both of these issues.

Recommendation 3:15: Complete the open space inventory and assessment study currently being prepared by staff and consider updating the 1999 Open Space Management Strategy as a guide for future open space and trail development.

²⁷ East Hants Open Space Management Strategy. Final Report. April 1999. Porter Dillon Ltd. p.iv. .



Recommendation 3.16: The Municipality should take steps to ensure volunteer resources are available to assist with the management of open space resources and programs and to maximize residents' enjoyment of these areas.

3.2.6 Support for Tourism and Economic Development

Support for Tourism and Economic Development is not a customary role for municipal parks and recreation departments but is appropriate in East Hants because of the extraordinary natural resources. In East Hants there is very close connection between local parks, recreation, and natural resources and tourism. The tourism potential is considerable and in many cases the same resources can serve both the visitor and the resident. Furthermore, many of the tourism resources (such as Burntcoat Head Park) are managed by volunteer associations so there is a direct connection to the Department's volunteer support function.

In most cases, it will be through this assistance to volunteers that the Department supports associations responsible for parks, open spaces, trails and other resources that serve both residents and visitors. However, the Department in conjunction with the appropriate tourism and economic development agencies and the volunteer associations operating resources with tourism potential should prepare a study to better identify tourism opportunities and how best to capitalize upon them. This investigation should initially focus on the Fundy Shore, where the opportunities seem to be most prevalent, but ultimately could address other areas within East Hants. The study would include

- an inventory of existing resources
- an assessment of their current conditions and opportunities for enhancement
- a review of marketing approaches and the manner in which the resources are promoted by the Municipality and by regional/provincial tourism authorities
- review of the role played by the associations managing these resources and any challenges they face
- recommendations for improving the appeal of these resources for both visitors and residents.

Primary responsibility for attracting visitors to the area should rest with local and regional tourism and economic development authorities. This is currently the case and should continue. However, if stronger links between local recreation and tourism staff and the volunteer associations are pursued, this will undoubtedly bring the Recreation and Culture Department in closer contact with those responsible for economic development and tourism. Consequently, it would be appropriate to clarify roles and responsibilities, particularly with respect to financing and implementation associated with any recommendations emerging from the study recommended here.

Recommendation 3.17: The Department in conjunction with the appropriate tourism and economic development agencies and the volunteer associations operating resources with tourism potential should



prepare a study to better identify tourism opportunities along the Fundy Shore, the Shubenacadie River and other areas of East Hants with resource-based tourism potential.

Recommendation 3.18: The future working relationship between the Department and those responsible for economic development and tourism should be clarified with respect to the planning, funding and implementation of any projects with joint recreation and tourism objectives.

3.3 Leisure Programs and Services

Community input to the study demonstrated interest in and support for a broader range of programs. This was expressed to some extent in the public meetings and focus groups but most strongly stated in the community survey. However, it should be emphasized that the survey was not statistically valid and may not accurately represent the views of the community. Consequently, additional investigation may be warranted before acting on these indications of program deficiencies. Notwithstanding this qualification, there was a clear indication from the survey that programming should be expanded. Over 65% of the online community survey respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “residents in East Hants, no matter what their interests, have plenty to do in their spare time” and over three quarters (76%) agreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “we are not participating in recreation and leisure activities as often as we would like”. When asked about limits to participation, over half (54%) of respondents felt that “programs/activities of interest are not provided”, and 26% reported “programs for adults” as an area of recreation they felt should be a top priority in East Hants over the next five years. Finally, the majority of respondents (65%) agreed or strongly agreed that “there are not enough recreation or leisure activities for older adults in the community” and a further 70% felt the same way about recreation and leisure services for teens. The observation concerning teens was not shared by the youth that participated in focus groups for this study and consequently should be investigated further before taking any action.

The following are increasingly popular program areas that would likely be supported in East Hants given its demographics, its projected growth, and the information gathered through public consultation activities. In all cases, the Department of Recreation and Culture is already pursuing these interests, often in partnership with other agencies. The Recreation Needs Assessment supports the current efforts and recommends additional efforts subject to available resources and as warranted, confirmation of the need.



Active Living Programs

The Municipality with the support of the Province has prepared an active living strategy. It identifies a number of programming (and other) initiatives to increase physical activity levels and address alarming increases in health related issues due to child obesity and physical inactivity. Active living programs were supported by the community and the ongoing implementation of the Municipality's Physical Activity Strategy is strongly recommended as a priority programming initiative.

Adult and Older Adult General Interest and Activity Programs

At present, many of the existing volunteer organizations in East Hants are focused on meeting the needs of individuals interested in organized sports. While the aquatic center provides a good range of physical activity opportunities (i.e. lane swim, low impact fitness programs for adults, arthritis water therapy, etc.) there are fewer programs available for adults who wish to engage in individual leisure pursuits. This is, and will continue to be, one of the most rapidly expanding areas of program demand, primarily because of the growing number of healthy older adults with time and resources to commit to leisure activities. Programs such as yoga, martial arts, and other adult fitness programs will become increasingly popular.

As with arts and culture activities (further discussed below), there are often opportunities to provide these programs in partnership with private business interests. General interest programs such as photography, arts and crafts, painting, gardening, nature appreciation, etc. will also be of interest to adults. The challenge associated with such programming is recruiting appropriate instructors and program leaders, working with them to market and deliver the programs, and finding appropriate facilities. The programs will be popular and once established will require limited ongoing involvement from recreation staff. In addition, they have the significant advantage of using existing space and potentially generating revenue for volunteer community organizations.

Arts and Cultural Activities

Activities such as painting, music, dance, drama, and pottery for youth and adults are frequently underrepresented in programming strategies relative to traditional sports and recreation opportunities. The degree to which such arts and cultural activities are currently provided in East Hants is uncertain, however; there may be some benefit to both the Municipality (by expanding its program variety) and to local independent arts instructors or businesses to identify opportunities to develop additional partnerships for arts and cultural programming.

Outdoor Recreation and Environmental Programming

Outdoor recreation and environmental programming are areas where trends suggest expanding interest in the future. Few communities could rival the opportunities in East Hants for these types of programs and activities. Similar to the provision of arts and cultural programming, this is another area where there may be



opportunities to partner with other organizations to provide community programs. Local volunteer or private sector outdoor organizations, for example, may be interested in partnering for outdoor adventure or other programs focused on nature appreciation.

Youth Programming

Youth programming is always an area of interest, and one that is at times difficult to effectively address. Many municipalities have been successful at initiating such programs as drop-in basketball that meets the needs for active participation on a relatively informal and unstructured basis. Other youth oriented programs that are currently popular include: introduction to skateboarding, homework clubs, and drop-in youth centers, among others. Having access to appropriate facilities is a major challenge for youth programming. The Sportsplex can address this in part and our earlier recommendations concerning multipurpose and gymnasium space are also important to ensure space is available for youth programming.

Partnerships are appropriate for many youth based programs, and community organizations such as the RCMP, the school districts, health, and social services agencies should be involved in the program development for youth. In addition, the resources of other providers can be used to assist with youth programming. In this regard, initiatives of provincial and national recreation associations focused on youth at risk may be of relevance. However, this is also an area where significant staff resources and support may be required on an ongoing basis, especially in the absence of dedicated and trained volunteers. Consequently, the Department's ability to support youth programming will likely be constrained by available resources.

Conclusion

To meet community needs and demand for expanded programs and activities, the Recreation and Culture Department should explore opportunities to partner with others in the provision of programs to address the following areas of interest: active living programs, introductory arts and cultural programs, adult and older adult general interest programs, outdoor recreation and youth. It should be emphasized that with the exception of the outdoor recreation and environmental programming, all of these opportunities for expanded programming depend on the availability of adequate community centre, multipurpose and gymnasium space, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Recommendation 3:19: The Recreation and Culture Department should explore opportunities to partner with others in the provision of programs in the following areas: active living, adult and older adult general interest; introductory arts and cultural programs, outdoor recreation and youth.



4.0 RECREATION DELIVERY SYSTEM

4.1 Introduction

In addition to assessing demand for recreational facilities and services, this Recreation Needs Assessment addresses issues associated with the way in which these services are delivered to the community. We have referred to this as the Recreation Delivery System. The issues addressed in this chapter of the report were identified through the community consultation program; input from municipal staff and members of Council and the experience of the consultant.

The findings from the consultation activities indicate general levels of satisfaction with existing leisure facilities and services. With the exception of the major indoor facilities discussed in Chapter 3, few community-specific projects and concerns were identified and organized user groups did not make a case for additional facilities. The level of supply of facilities and parkland was generally not an issue.

However, a number of issues associated with the manner in which the Municipality delivers parks and recreation services did emerge during the study process. From the community's perspective this largely focused on the future role of the volunteer, however broader issues associated with the Municipality's role; policies and procedures, particularly for supporting community based initiatives and program development and the attention paid to planning were also raised.

With the exception of the programs offered at the indoor pool and outdoor pools, day camps and a number of special events, the Municipality does not provide programs directly. The Municipality supports non-municipal agencies and volunteers in developing and operating community leisure programming which in most respects is the appropriate role. While, the Municipality's role as program facilitator will continue in the future, stronger partnerships are required with volunteers and other non-municipal providers to meet the program and activity needs in the community.

These considerations suggest that the Department must restructure its role, provide greater support to volunteers and assume responsibilities for essential responsibilities (such as planning) that cannot realistically be assigned to volunteers.

The following are traditional activities for recreation departments that rely heavily on volunteers to offer community parks and leisure services. While the Department is currently involved in many of these activities, our assessment suggests that a stronger role will be required in the future:



- Planning: As discussed below, an ongoing planning process is required to support effective decision-making. Effective planning allows the Department to take the lead in identifying and anticipating needs - both in specific service areas (e.g., wellness, arts, culture) and among various groups in the community (e.g., youth, seniors, new Canadians). Currently, the Department's responsibilities in this area are unclear, and there are very few tools available to promote effective planning.
- Community Outreach: As a community developer, the Department must have an ongoing, visible presence in volunteer recruitment (for both existing and new areas of interest), promotion/publicity, information-sharing, partnership development etc.
- Training/Transfer of Skills: A strong and regenerative volunteer base is essential to a community development approach. Volunteers and volunteer organizations will increase their capacity to provide more/better leisure services if they are provided with the appropriate skills. As a community developer, the Department is responsible for anticipating needs in this area - and particularly new requirements resulting from changes in the service environment - and providing the training necessary to transfer required skills to individual volunteers. In addition the Department will be required to provide volunteers with the tools and knowledge necessary to participate in planning and evaluation activities.
- Facilitating Relations with Other Agencies: On behalf of volunteers or volunteer organizations, the Department should be prepared to liaise with other organizations/agencies, other levels of government etc. for a variety of purposes such as convening meetings, dealing with funding applications, setting up training programs, etc. At the local level, the Department must facilitate relationships between agencies and community groups to expand joint programming initiatives and access to facilities and resources.
- Information Clearing House/Referral: As the local agency with primary responsibility for leisure services, the Department is the preferred "information clearing house" for all matters related to community leisure services. The Department must maintain up-to-date information available to the volunteer sector. Further, the Department has a role to play in ensuring that the volunteer organizations delivering services are aware of new policies and initiatives affecting their programs (e.g. funding; active living; subsidy programs for low income individuals; etc.)
- Program Services: Support with implementing programs is required (e.g. assistance with preparing promotion/publicity material, help in designing and evaluating programs, finding appropriate facilities, etc.), as well as assistance and encouragement to expand programming into new areas or adjust programs to reflect new approaches.

Not all of these functions will be relevant to all volunteer organizations as some will have sufficient resources and experience to handle them independently or they will not be relevant to their programs and services. Further, it is expected that as volunteers develop their services and levels of expertise, they will assume increasing responsibility for these functions, thereby allowing the Department to focus on new initiatives. We have explored the need for a stronger Municipal role in each of these areas in the discussion that follows.



The following issues are addressed in this chapter of the report:

- Municipal Program Role
- Support for Volunteer Organizations
- Planning and Policy Requirements
- Marketing and Communication

4.2 Municipal Programming Role

As noted above, The Department's service delivery model should focus on the two identified community development functions, the primary intent of which is to develop community capacity and ensure leisure services are effectively delivered through the efforts of community volunteers. When fulfilling these functions, the Department is facilitating the provision of recreation programs rather than acting as the direct provider. This is appropriate and the Department's role in the vast majority of community programming is that of a facilitator.

There are, however, situations where the Department will assume a direct programming role. In these cases, the Department should assume responsibility for all aspects of a program including design, delivery, staffing and evaluation. While most programs will be provided through community development, direct program delivery would be appropriate if:

- There is an immediate need to respond to continually high levels of community demand and no other provider is available;
- For reasons of liability or required skills the Department is the preferred program provider;
- Programs contribute to important or essential outcomes that are not being met through other providers - such as preventative health and wellness, safety or environmental protection (e.g., learn to swim, water safety, life skills, environmental awareness); or
- Through direct program delivery, the Municipality can realize revenues that can be used to offset the cost of programs requiring a subsidy.

Currently, the Department's direct programming is largely focused on aquatics, day camps and special events. These types of direct programming are appropriate and should continue. There may be other areas where an expanded supply of direct programming will be warranted in the future, particularly if a new aquatic facility provides complementary programming space. Consequently, direct programs that meet the criterion noted above should be expanded where possible.

Recommendation 4.1 The Department's primary programming role should be to act as a facilitator and support the efforts of community volunteers who will take a lead role in the development of community



programming. The facilitator role will be focused on the community development activities outlined in this report.

Recommendation 4.2 The Department should only act as a direct program provider where there is no other qualified or willing provider, essential outcomes can only be achieved through direct provision and/or revenues can be realized to offset subsidies for other programs.

4.3 Support for Volunteer Organizations

4.4.1 Introduction

Policies and other initiatives in support of volunteers are essential to fulfill the Department's community development role. As previously discussed and as noted through the public consultation process additional assistance is required by volunteer organizations.

The delivery of recreation and leisure services in East Hants relies heavily on volunteer organizations. Not only are volunteers responsible for programming (which would be customary in most municipalities), they are often responsible for the development and maintenance of recreation facilities. Busier lifestyles among other factors have resulted in nation-wide volunteer burnout and unwillingness to commit time to volunteering. This is not a new issue in East Hants. The August 2005 Recreation Needs Assessment identified challenges facing East Hants' volunteers and this study indicates they have become even more pronounced in 2012. Results of our consultation activities identified the following key issues:

- **Recruiting and retaining** volunteers was commonly noted as an ongoing and increasing challenge. 47% of community survey respondents felt there are not enough volunteers in East Hants to provide a good range of high quality sport, recreation, arts, and culture programs for the community. Among recreation facility user groups, volunteer retention and leadership (75%), and difficulty with volunteer recruitment (67%), were commonly noted as issues concerning their organizations ability to provide recreational programs.
- **Lack of support** was also a common theme that emerged throughout the consultation process. Almost 70% of community survey respondents felt volunteers need additional help from the Municipality. A further 62% and 51% respectively felt that community residents and businesses could provide more support to volunteers. It was suggested that additional support from these various sectors could be provided through: educating residents about the need for, and expectations of volunteers; increase awareness of volunteer opportunities; provide more incentive to entice residents to volunteer; leadership and financial support from the Municipality; increased recognition and appreciation of volunteers to increase their motivation to do so; and increased private and corporate financial/sponsorship support.
- **Misconceptions concerning the role volunteers.** Information from public input and online surveys indicate that many residents are unaware of the significant role volunteers play in providing recreation services for the community, and often overestimate the support from the Municipality. Fewer



volunteers has also resulted in additional responsibility being handed down to long-term volunteers which has perhaps led to the assumption that becoming a volunteer requires more time and effort than residents are able to give.

- **Insurance and financing** has become an obstacle for many volunteer organizations, and was noted as an issue by many volunteer groups in East Hants. As noted in the Technical Background Report, because many volunteer organizations are involved in the development and management of facilities, they require a comprehensive insurance package which can be financially challenging, particularly for groups who produce limited revenue.

These problems, in varying degrees, were identified by both categories of volunteer contributing to recreation and parks in East Hants: (1) the associations operating and maintaining facilities and parks and the (2) volunteers offering programs. We have discussed the Municipality's relationship with volunteers with respect to the two inter-related but different functions – volunteer assistance and community development.

4.4.2 Volunteer Assistance

This is a traditional volunteer support and facilitation role that all parks and recreation departments must perform to maintain a healthy and vibrant volunteer sector. Volunteer assistance is focused on supporting organizations in their day to day operations. It is different from community development (discussed below) because it a secondary and supportive role while when acting as a community developer the Department provides leadership and direction and actively builds the capacity of volunteer organizations.

Despite strong support for their existing relationships with the Department, volunteer organizations in East Hants reported a number of concerns, including most frequently the challenge of volunteer recruitment, fundraising difficulties, and problems with marketing and promotion. These are typical issues facing the volunteer sector in Canada. Community interest and trends also clearly indicate the need for more and different types of programming. These considerations suggest the Department should expand its support to existing volunteer organizations.

Table 4.1 describes typical initiatives that might be undertaken to assist existing volunteer organizations. Most of these initiatives are currently in place, or partially in place, in East Hants and should continue.



Table 4.1: Volunteer Assistance

Municipal Responsibilities	Approach/Activities
Standardize procedures for maintaining regular contact with voluntary organizations and for providing administrative and operational assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assistance might involve providing guidance for establishing new groups, helping with promotion and publicity; identifying grants, helping to prepare funding applications; making arrangements for the use of facilities, etc. ▪ Ensuring communication and contact between the municipality and volunteer organizations with regular meetings and a single source of contact
Encourage other sectors of the community to support volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage business and service clubs to sponsor volunteer groups and/or donate services
Provide short term financial assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a community-funding policy for this purpose (as discussed elsewhere in the report).
Recognize the efforts of volunteers who serve the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased recognition enhances the individual volunteer's appreciation of his/her role, encourages sharing of resources among groups, stimulates volunteer activity, promotes private sector assistance and promotes community awareness of programs offered by volunteers.

4.4.3 Community Development Strategy

The Department's community development role goes beyond support for existing organizations to focus on expanding the skills and capabilities of existing volunteers and building new volunteer organizations and leadership in the community. While there are many definitions of community development, it generally implies a pro-active role in facilitating change at the local level and building capacity within new or existing organizations to deliver programs and services. As discussed in Chapter 2, these are important outcomes supported by Council. Community development requires staff to take the lead in identifying and responding to needs and issues, to advance support in resolving issues, and to initiate processes and/or practices that will expand the community's capacity to work more effectively in meeting its own needs.

This is likely a more important role in East Hants than in other municipalities because of the reliance on the volunteer. Supporting volunteers, as discussed above, is an important activity but it does not necessarily contribute to a sustainable resource. Volunteer development builds community capacity and ensures that trained, skilled and committed volunteers are available in the future.

Community development activities are also the true expression of the Municipality's partnership with the community for service delivery. In Chapter Two of the report we discussed outcomes and service delivery principles that should guide leisure service delivery in East Hants. In some communities, these outcomes and service delivery principles would be achieved because Council would ensure that municipal staff did so.



This is not the case in East Hants. Because the service is delivered through volunteers, the volunteers will have a good deal to do with outcomes and service delivery principles. Consequently, if Council wants to ensure that services are focused on outcomes such as a healthy community or are delivered in the most cost effective manner, this must be achieved through the volunteers. The Department therefore must work with the volunteers to make it so. This is community development.

The Department also has critical a role to play in supporting the renewal of the volunteer sector. This goes beyond supporting existing volunteers to working with volunteer groups to ensure that new members are recruited, trained and assume organizational responsibilities.

Finally, to a much greater extent than has been the case in the past, volunteer organizations are being affected by external practices, policies and legislation. Liability insurance is an obvious example, but there are many other provincial and national initiatives affecting sport and recreation that deal with inclusion; access for low income individuals; coaching; physical activity and health benefits, etc. In some cases, these initiatives can be sources of funding or support for skill development. The Department must ensure that volunteers have access to these. However, these initiatives also often speak to new approaches to service delivery that may be resisted by volunteers. In the past decade gender equity in sport is an example of a provincial and national initiative that had consequences for local recreation that were not always enthusiastically embraced. In these cases, the Department has a more challenging (and much more time consuming) task to work with volunteers to introduce change.

Table 4.2 describes the types of community development approaches that would be appropriate in East Hants. These approaches, while represented in some of the Department's activities, require additional attention in the future. These activities are discussed further in subsequent sections of this chapter.



Table 4.2: Community Development

Municipal Responsibilities	Approach/Activities
Develop policy that will facilitate the effective working relationship among volunteers and ensure efforts are complementary instead of competitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination around fees and facility allocation are discussed in a subsequent section of the report.
Provide planning and market assessment assistance for proposed projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Department should work directly with and support the efforts of volunteers to regularly assess their needs and priorities and to put in place strategies to meet those needs in the most cost effective manner. Planning requirements are discussed further in a subsequent section of the report.
Help volunteers to get established in new program areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Find suitable facilities for new programs. ▪ Assist with promotion and marketing of new programs. ▪ As programming in the Municipality develops, the policy might provide "seed money" for initial program development expenses (e.g., to contribute to equipment costs, publicity and organizations costs). This funding would be limited on the expectation the group would be self-sufficient in an agreed-upon timeframe.
Encourage volunteers to participate in training programs to improve effectiveness of their activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate the availability of appropriate programs. ▪ Investigate interest in training programs among voluntary organizations.
Organizational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide assistance to volunteer organizations, directly or through referral to other agencies, with constitutions, governance, executive development and training, executive recruitment, fund-raising, etc.
Volunteer sector coordination, planning and service assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist and facilitate initiatives whereby all community volunteers come together and coordinate activities with the objective of fostering and promoting a community-wide program of recreation. ▪ Ensure that the programs of individual organizations are coordinated and focused on community-wide objectives and priorities.

Recommendation 4.3 Council should endorse a comprehensive role in support of volunteers for the Recreation and Culture Department that focuses on both volunteer assistance and community development.

Recommendation 4.4: The Municipality should continue to provide assistance to established volunteer organizations and should expand its community development role and responsibilities.

The volunteer assistance and community development roles demand that effective lines of communication exist between the Department and the volunteers. The volunteer associations reported a need for improved communication among associations and, to a lesser degree, with the Department. This should be investigated further by the Department. The possible advantages of formalizing this relationship should be explored. At minimum, regular meetings might be organized with the executives of volunteer associations. Other communities have had success with community wide coordinating councils or boards that collectively



represent the interests of the volunteers. Assuming an umbrella organization of this type was not an additional burden on volunteers but instead produce tangible benefits, it may have merit in East Hants.

Recommendation 4.5: The Department should facilitate regular meetings amongst parks and recreation associations to resolve issues and take advantage of opportunities associated with the working relationship with the Department and among the associations. Opportunities to create a more formal relationship should be explored.

4.4.4 The Relationship Between Volunteer Recreation Parks and Associations and the Municipality

In the discussion that follows, parks and recreation associations refer to volunteers that provide community parks and/or recreational services for the benefit of Municipality residents. These associations differ from sports groups (such as minor hockey) in so far as they have assumed responsibility for the management of community infrastructure – a park or a recreation centre. While we appreciate that in some cases these will not be owned by the Municipality, they are provided for community recreational uses. Furthermore, the volunteers manage this infrastructure on behalf of the Municipality insofar as some of the tasks undertaken by these volunteers would, in many other communities, be done by municipal staff. This is a special type of arrangement that sets these volunteers and their organization apart from those that run a sports or recreation program.

The relationship between these volunteer associations and the Municipality should be restructured in two important respects. First, the Municipality through the Recreation and Culture Department should formalize relationships with these associations. Second, the Municipality should provide additional financial assistance by establishing a cost-sharing approach where certain core functions would be funded by East Hants.

The Department should consider structuring an agreement with the volunteer parks and recreation associations to clarify and further define aspects of the volunteer development role discussed above. At the core of this agreement is an understanding that the municipal-volunteer association relationship is a partnership whereby the Municipality invests in the associations as a cost effective means to provide services and the associations operate in a manner that ensures the investment results in a level of service that justifies the expenditure.

In some communities this relationship is formalized in a formal agreement or memorandum of understanding.



- Ensuring all facilities and parks are available for general community use and are addressing priority parks and recreation needs as determined by Council; at minimum this would require full community access and procedures to guarantee public accountability.
- Adopting appropriate procedures to manage risks and liabilities (e.g., associated with the rental of a building or the use of a park for licensed functions or special events; ensuring appropriate insurance coverage is in place; ensuring that all staff working at such functions have been trained, etc.);
- Maintaining and improving facilities and parks in accordance with Municipal guidelines and requirements. This would involve staff routinely inspecting the facility to ensure operating equipment and the physical structure is appropriately maintained for safe community use and to maintain the equipment and systems in the most cost effective manner;
- Ensuring operations are consistent with Council approved policies respecting community programming, user fees, etc.
- Identifying the Department's responsibility for ensuring communication and liaison to regularly share concerns and discuss the working relationship between the Municipality and the volunteers and, perhaps more importantly, among volunteer groups. These meetings can be a forum to share program ideas, resolve conflicts, investigate joint projects and avoid duplication and poor use of resources; coordinate schedules and fund-raising, etc.
- Confirming the Department's responsibilities for Volunteer Assistance and Community Development as discussed above.

Of course, this partnership assumes a supporting role by the Municipality and this must include financial support. This is addressed in part thorough the community funding programs (as discussed below). However, it also requires new funding arrangements whereby the Municipality agrees to assume a greater share of the costs associated with the core responsibilities of the volunteer associations. The definition of core responsibilities must be determined through discussions among the volunteers, staff and Council. In our view, it would be appropriate if the core responsibilities included insurance; the cost of safety inspections and compliance for CSA approved playgrounds; a contribution to capital conservation costs for associations operating designated community centres or halls (as discussed in Section 3.2.2), cutting grass and garbage pick-up for parks (partially offset through fees to users of sports fields). Depending on the division of responsibility that is adopted, it is reasonable to assume that additional staff resources will be required, particularly in the area of parks maintenance, to allow the Municipality to fulfil its core responsibilities. The volunteer associations would retain responsibilities for minor maintenance of parks and facilities; operations; funding of capital developments such as playgrounds, etc. This partnership would respect the principle of community involvement in the provision of parks and recreation facilities while removing an increasingly insurmountable financial burden from volunteers who are operating major recreation resources for the community's benefit.



The Department should explore the development of such an agreement with the volunteer parks and recreation associations and identify core functions of these associations that should be eligible for additional financial support from the Municipality.

Recommendation 4.6: The operational and management relationship between volunteer parks and recreation associations and the Municipality should be clarified to protect both parties from liability, maximize the effectiveness of the Municipality's investment in parks and facilities and ensure that the community's needs are met to the greatest extent possible.

Recommendation 4.7: A new funding formula should be put in place where the Municipality supports core functions of the parks and recreation associations.

4.5 Planning and Policy Requirements

Planning and policy making are the Municipality's responsibilities. Only the Municipality can adopt a community-wide perspective on recreational needs and priorities. The Municipality has the responsibility to ensure all resources (volunteer and staff resources; funding from local and senior levels of government) are used effectively. The Municipality can adopt the broad perspective necessary to ensure that all community groups and interests are treated fairly and work cooperatively for the community's benefit. Effective planning and policy making are the tools available to ensure this happens.

The need for improved planning and policy in East Hants was clear based on the input of stakeholders and the observations of the consultant. User groups report working at cross-purposes because a consistent and coordinated approach to scheduling facilities, setting fees and resolving conflicts is not in place. The number of abandoned outdoor sports fields and recreation facilities that have fallen into disrepair suggests resources have not always been well invested in the past.

The planning and policy recommendations will ensure that Council and Department staff have both the information and the tools necessary to effectively deploy limited resources, to evaluate services and ensure they are fulfilling community needs, and to support the efforts of the volunteers who are the Municipality's partners in the delivery of recreation services.

4.5.1 Planning Requirements

To effectively plan for the delivery of recreation services a number of tasks must be undertaken and tools available (e.g. an inventory of facility supply, capacity and use, changing membership and participation rates of recreation and sports groups, research on trends and best practices, demographic analysis, evaluation of current services and community satisfaction, identification of local issues, challenges and opportunities). In



East Hants, such practices and documentation are limited and, in many cases, non-existent. The absence of this information makes planning a very challenging process and ultimately limits effective planning and the cost effective investment in recreation services. The following discussion addresses these requirements.

Planning Data Bases

The Municipality should establish a database to provide a solid and defensible basis for future planning and decision-making. At minimum, the Municipality should undertake the following activities:

- Review and update the current inventory of municipal parkland and open space resources to ensure accuracy and completeness;
- Annually update the inventory of culture and recreation facilities and parkland to note improvements and redevelopments and additions;
- As the population changes in the future, update per capita ratios of facility and parkland supply;
- Identify measures to determine the capacity and use of facilities and ensure that scheduling procedures that are adopted provide data in this format. (This requires cooperation and a scheduling system that encompasses volunteers, and/or the Department assuming a larger role in this activity);
- Meet annually, in advance of capital budget submissions, with all user groups to review plans for facility and parkland improvements or development and to discuss the needs and issues of the user groups;
- Continually monitor best practices in the field through participation in conferences, visiting new/innovative projects, and monitoring professional journals and umbrella organization websites to keep abreast of trends in the field. Ensure staff has appropriate training and professional development opportunities to support management functions.

These tasks will contribute to an ongoing database useful for planning and decision-making, which is not currently in place in East Hants. To establish an effective data base for planning, will require a good deal of effort particularly in the initial stages. However, without this information, the Municipality has no foundation for future decisions concerning capital investment or the deployment of staff resources for programming and community development. This clearly is not a cost effective way to manage community recreational resources.

Recommendation 4.8: The Municipality should adopt the procedures required to generate a database for long-range planning of facilities, programs, and services.

Long Range Planning

This report recommends a stronger role for the Department in long range planning and management of parks and recreation resources. The Needs Assessment is the first step in this process, and the outcomes, service delivery principles, and detailed recommendations of this study will help Department and other municipal staff and Council to plan for the future.



The recommendations will also help staff to determine priorities and assess the viability of projects that are proposed by community members and stakeholder groups, and potentially other partner agencies. Only those projects that are consistent with the principles and recommendations outlined in this plan should be supported by the Municipality, and the Municipality's level of commitment should be determined on the basis of meeting demonstrated needs and the Municipality's standards for facility and service provision.

Recommendation 4.9: When new projects are proposed by community and stakeholder groups, only those that are consistent with the priority outcomes, principles, and recommendations of the Needs Assessment should be supported by the Municipality.

Recommendation 4.10: The Municipality should update the Recreation Needs Assessment every five years.

Process for Assessing Partnership Proposals

Currently in East Hants community groups are advocating for the development of a curling facility and a bowling alley and looking to the Municipality for support. In the future we should expect other groups to come forward with proposals for major facilities which they feel should be developed in partnership with the Municipality. Partnerships can enhance the supply of community leisure services in a cost effective manner, however, that Municipality's participation should be based on a careful review of the partnership's benefits and consistency with its mandate. In East Hants, there are no formally adopted, agreed-upon parameters to evaluate municipal involvement in these types of partnerships. Current and future proposals should be evaluated against criteria developed by the Municipality establishing the requirements for municipal participation in the partnership.

A formal evaluation process is recommended. Proposed partnerships that meet the Municipality's requirements should be governed by comprehensive, binding agreements to guarantee that the needs and responsibilities of all parties are understood and respected. The following items are important to consider and evaluate prior to entering partnerships with other sectors of the community, including non-profit, private, public or quasi-public:

- **Community Access:** Community access should be guaranteed and the agreement should include specifics concerning the availability, cost, scheduling, and conditions of use of the facility by the various partners. In addition to being accessible, the facility or service must meet the needs of individuals or groups that reflect the Municipality's mandate and priorities. If the Municipality makes an investment in a facility that it does not own, the agreement should guarantee long-term access (i.e., minimum 25 years).



- **Cost-sharing:** For shared facilities, the Municipality's contribution to the capital and operating costs should reflect the facility's ability to meet the current and future needs of East Hants' residents for facilities and programs that the Municipality is mandated to provide. For all facilities, cost sharing should include consideration of capital conservation costs.
- **Management and Operations:** Management and operations models may vary by type of facility and type of partner. In all cases, however, management models should be clearly specified and should represent the most cost-effective use of each partner's expertise and resources.
- **Feasibility and Financial Accountability:** For major indoor and outdoor facilities, a detailed feasibility study and proposed business plan should be prepared, to ensure all relevant community needs will be met and to demonstrate long-term financial feasibility. For facilities receiving ongoing financial support, financial accountability is required in the form of annual financial reports or similar documentation.
- **Community Benefit and Consistency with Outcomes:** The Municipality must balance its contribution to capital and operating costs against the value of the service that is being provided to the community. The outcomes of the investment, therefore, must be measurable and, to do this, mechanisms must be in place to gauge the contribution the partnership has made to community residents. This should be evaluated on a continuing basis.

The issue of community benefits and consistency with outcomes is a particularly important consideration because it should be the first question addressed by Council. Not every project brought before Council by community interests deserves its support. In some cases, it will be clear from the outset that the project is not consistent with Municipal priorities. While the easiest course of action in these cases is to encourage the volunteers supporting the project, this is counter-productive for all involved if it simply leads to a prolonged discussion with little possibility of municipal support.

Recommendation 4.11: The Department should adopt a formal process and criteria for evaluating proposals brought forward by external groups to enter into partnerships with the Municipality for the development of major facilities, programs or services.

4.5.2 Policy Requirements

There are a number of policies that are required to support the community development role envisioned for the Recreation and Culture Department. Some of these – such as a volunteer development policy – have been discussed previously. We also understand that the Municipality is working on a number of health related policies such as “smoke free sports fields”. All policy initiatives affecting healthy living and lifestyles are supported. This section of the report discusses two additional areas for policy development. The most



significant are policies dealing with funding and fees. In addition, a facility allocation policy should be developed.

User Fees and Charges

The Department currently sets program and rental fees for the facilities that it directly controls, such as the aquatic centre, but not for other recreation facilities in the Municipality. The operators and owners of community recreation facilities should of course be responsible for setting fees and charges, however, this is an area where a coordinated approach across the Municipality is called for and where the Department therefore has an important role to play. There are two issues: (1) establishing an agreed upon policy framework for setting fees, and (2) encouraging a consistent approach to adopting fees that serves the interests of all facility providers.

A policy framework for fees will articulate a rationale for the fees that are charged (e.g. the purpose of fees; the considerations affecting the setting of fees; criteria or considerations that would govern eligibility for subsidy, etc.) The Department should initiate and facilitate a discussion of fees with the providers of recreation facilities to document a policy framework that describes a rationale for existing fees and an approach to setting fees in the future. Initially this need not be an ambitious undertaking. Instead, the purpose would be to consult with facility providers and users to compile some baseline information on fees and charges; explore the capacity to adjust fees without adversely impacting existing programs and to document principles that should govern fees (e.g. affordable access; the most efficient use of resources; the requirement to recapture some proportion of the cost of providing the service, etc.)

As noted above, an important consideration in the development of an effective fees policy is to establish the fundamental principles upon which the policy will be based. In our view, the over-riding principle should be affordability. An appropriate basis for the policy, therefore, is to maximize revenues from users that can support the cost of maintaining facilities and providing services without unduly restricting access. Of course, a policy based on this principle requires safeguards and procedures to ensure residents in the community that face serious financial constraints are not prohibited from participating. Guidelines to provide support for residents in financial difficulties should be reflected in the policy.

As the Department works on a fee policy with volunteer facility providers, it may be helpful to compile information to compare existing costs with revenues. To the extent that this review suggests a gap in revenues relative to costs, the issue should be raised with the users. Some municipalities adopt a revenue recovery target (e.g. 50% of costs will be recovered through fees). These are generally arbitrary and it is often difficult to defend different targets for different facilities. In our view, the focus should not be on the target, but rather ensuring that fees are set in a manner that does not unduly restrict community use. Fees charged should attempt to recover a significant proportion of operating costs without unduly restricting community access to programs. Of course, the costs incurred by facility providers are directly related to the



level of service provided to users, and this should be an issue to discuss with user groups during the development of a fee policy. If users are unwilling to address a significant gap between revenues and costs with increased fees, they should understand that this will be reflected in the level of service (e.g. sport field maintenance).

In time these initial steps and discussions with volunteer facility providers may lead to the development of a comprehensive user fee policy. A comprehensive policy framework based on the principle of affordable access, and detailed advice on its implementation is outlined in a document prepared by Parks and Recreation Ontario²⁸. This could serve as a guide should the Department pursue a more detailed fee policy in the future.

The second issue deals with a coordinated approach to fees and charges. This was an issue raised by the current providers of outdoor playing fields. Because there is an over-supply of playing fields in East Hants, if a volunteer group wants to charge a nominal fee to help offset the cost of maintenance, the sports group has the option of using another field where the provider may have other revenue sources and does not need to charge fees for the use of the field. This is inefficient and ultimately frustrates any attempt to make the best use of available resources in the community. A more coordinated and consistent approach that did not jeopardize the recreation program but provided some revenue to offset the costs incurred by the volunteer organizations providing the facilities is clearly preferred.

Recommendation 4.12: The Department should initiate and facilitate a discussion of fees with the providers of recreation facilities to document a policy framework that describes a rationale for existing fees and an approach to setting fees in the future as well as an approach to ensure fees are coordinated in a manner that best serves the interests of the community.

Community Funding Policy

The Municipality has a number of funding programs that support community volunteers providing leisure services. The most significant are the District Recreation Fund and the Community Grant Program Fund. These are necessary and appropriate mechanisms to provide financial support to volunteers operating community recreational resources. In large part, we believe that the current funding programs are appropriate. However, some restructuring and/or additional clarification may be warranted. The following refinements are suggested:

Demonstrated Need, Priority and Consistency with Municipal Outcomes

To be eligible for consideration, the project funded under the District Recreation Fund should be consistent with the recommendations, principles, and priorities of the Municipality as outlined in the Needs Assessment

²⁸ Parks and Recreation Ontario. Policy Development Framework for Affordable Access to Recreation Services. 1999. Prepared by dmA Planning and Management Services.



and other approved planning documents. If, for example, a community group was interested in developing a facility that is not consistent with trends, where there is currently an oversupply of facilities, or where declining participation is anticipated, the proposal should be rejected. Given that the funds available will always be limited, priorities consistent with Municipal outcomes or other approved Council directions should be demonstrated before funds are granted.

For major contributions, a feasibility study or business plan should be in place to support the grant application and other sources of funding should be investigated before the funding application is considered.

Support for New Programs and Services

Start-up funding for new organizations/programs should be identified as a short-term grant opportunity. The funding could be used for a number of purposes, including purchase of equipment, access to facilities, staff assistance, marketing or organizational assistance and advice. However, it should be clear this is a short-term investment to help establish a self-sufficient program that can serve residents for a number of years. This funding should only be provided in response to a business plan. The business plan would demonstrate the financial viability of the project and the anticipated benefits to the community. Financing would generally be provided for the short term (2-3 years) on a declining basis. The business plan should demonstrate on-going viability after the start-up period.

Alternate Approaches to Funding

The Municipality may wish to consider alternate approaches to funding for situations where the existing programs are not well suited. A number of municipalities have introduced programs where they financially support community groups wishing to upgrade existing or develop new facilities or undertake park improvements on a cost shared basis or in the form of a no-interest loan. These types of financial assistance can create very effective partnerships for facility development and upgrades.

District Funding

District Recreation Fund grants are currently allocated on a district basis relative to assessment. While this provides a mechanism to ensure that funds are distributed geographically in a prescribed and presumably politically acceptable manner, it may not reflect the needs of the community. We understand in some cases, allocated funds are not used and in other cases there are insufficient funds to support desirable projects. From the perspective of meeting community recreational needs and making the best use of limited resources, a funding program based on demonstrated need and the willingness and capability of community residents to support recreational programs would be preferred. The Department should investigate alternative criteria for allocating funds based on community need for discussion with Council.

Ultimately a Community Funding Policy should be a tool for Council to achieve important community objectives. The policies should provide Council with the opportunity to strategically invest in community projects that might not otherwise proceed as well as a sound rationale for consistently and equitably



rejecting proposals of limited merit or that are not consistent with the Municipality's plans, or recreation goals and objectives. This overall objective may be better served with the suggested modifications to existing practices.

Finally, we understand that in East Hants the community funding policies have been adopted by Council but are implemented by staff. We strongly support this approach. The intent and effectiveness of community funding policies can be undermined if Council insists on playing a direct role in the administration of the policy. It is appropriate therefore that Council set the policy and rely on staff to administer funds in accordance with the policy.

Recommendation 4.13: The Municipality's current approach to funding community recreational interests is supported and should continue however refinements that may contribute to the more effective use of available resources should be investigated.

Facility Allocation

A number of municipalities have adopted policies to govern access to facilities in situations where demand exceeds supply. These policies are adopted to ensure facilities are allocated in a manner that is fair and equitable but also that supports desired outcomes. This is not an issue for most facilities in East Hants because the demand for current facilities is unlikely to exceed supply. However, given this oversupply of facilities it would be appropriate to adopt policies that ensure the use of existing facilities is maximized in a manner that reduces operating costs. For example, if a revised schedule will allow all ball diamond use to be accommodated on fewer diamonds and consequently some facilities can be decommissioned or at least maintained at a lower (less expensive) standard, this should be done. Staff should review this situation with current facility providers and adopt policies as appropriate.

Recommendation 4.14: The Department should work with volunteer associations to adopt facility allocation policies that will make the best use of available resources.

4.6 Marketing and Communication

Marketing and communication was a common theme in the consultation process. Over 70% of survey respondents reporting they are "not always aware of the programs and services that are available". In addition, conversations with key informants and focus groups indicated concerns with the Municipal website.

A key communication vehicle for the Department is the recreation information guide (What's Up East Hants) available in print and on-line. The guide provides an overview of opportunities by community district. For each district, a list of sports and recreation associations; parks, trails and playgrounds; service groups and community associations; schools; and churches is provided, with contact information and a brief description of each. These district overviews are also complemented by a map in which recreation facilities;



community/church halls; legions; libraries; fire departments; etc. are illustrated. This recreation guide provides an excellent inventory of resources. Not surprisingly there are major challenges associated with keeping contact information up-to-date, particularly for a print resource in a community so dependent on volunteer service providers. In addition, while the recreation guide does an excellent job of describing the organizations and facilities provided in each district, it includes little detail about specific activities and events being offered and no easy way for residents to get involved. Nonetheless, the guide is valuable and appears to be appreciated by the community.

The major marketing and communication limitation is the absence of current information about actual activities or events and an easy way for residents to register or quickly access additional information, particularly if the event or program is operated by a volunteer organization. Improvements to the website would appear to be the best opportunity to address this limitation. The Municipality's website has a page dedicated to the Recreation and Culture Department with a message from the Department's Director; a description of the Department's primary responsibilities; and a list of staff. The website includes a link to the Municipal pool page which provides a description of the facility and includes links to copies of brochures and schedules. A link to an events and attractions page is also provided. While the website is a useful resource for direct programming, it is much less useful both in terms of content and interactive links for all other recreational services. Improvements should be explored in this area.

Recommendation 4:15. The Department should explore opportunities to improve their website to provide additional information about programs, activities and resources offered by volunteers in the community.



5.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

5.1 Introduction

Table 5.1 outlines an implementation strategy for the study. For each recommendation, the table lists priorities and where relevant and feasible, estimated capital costs.

Table 5.1 indicates general priorities for the key directions. Those that address an immediate need or correct a current problem are high priorities (H) and should be acted upon immediately. Medium (M) priorities should be addressed in the next two to three years. Low (L) priorities deal with long-range needs or are policy issues that can be addressed over time. While these recommendations should be addressed in the next ten years, it is possible that they will not be fully implemented within a 10-year time frame. In a few cases, the recommendations involve ongoing planning or monitoring activities that will continue through the study's timeframe and beyond. These are not assigned a priority but are identified as Ongoing (O).

It must be noted that while we have assigned priorities to recommendations on the assumption that all will be implemented within 10 years, this would be an extremely ambitious undertaking. There is a good deal to be done and it is very unlikely that staff will have the time and resources to implement all of the recommendations in the timeframes proposed in the implementation strategy. In a number of cases we have identified recommendations where external assistance could be retained to assist with implementation. Consulting budgets have been identified in these cases and consideration should be given to using consultants to ensure the work can be completed in a timely fashion.

The cost estimates are very general estimates to be confirmed with further study. Land acquisition costs are not included in these estimates. All costs exclude grants, community fund-raising or other contributions.



Table 5.1: Facility & Service Needs Assessment

FACILITY & SERVICE NEEDS ASSESMENT			
Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Priority	Comments
Recommendation 3.1: The Municipality should replace the existing indoor pool with a contemporary aquatic facility.	\$11 million	M-L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost is a general estimate of capital as described in the report. Costs exclusive of external funding and community fund raising. Priority reflects the timeframe when the facility may be developed. A feasibility study (discussed below) is the immediate priority.
Recommendation 3.2: A feasibility study should be prepared to address three key issues: (1) a facility design and definition of recreational components and amenities that will best meet the broadest range of community needs in the most cost effective manner.; (2) a business plan should be develop for the aquatic facility to confirm both capital and operating costs and establish a financing and implementation strategy, and (3) a preferred location.	\$15,000-\$25,000	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual cost will depend on terms of reference. Budget assumes work is done by a consultant.
Recommendation 3.3: The new aquatic facility should be reflected in future municipal capital planning as the highest priority major recreation facility.	Council responsibility	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Recommendation 3.4: In view of the needs and priorities identified in this study and the strong probability that an ongoing operating subsidy will be required, the Municipality should indicate whether or not they are prepared to play a role in the development of a municipal bowling facility in partnership with the East Hants Bowling Society (EHBS).	Council responsibility	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Recommendation 3.5: If the Municipality is willing to consider a partnership with the EHBS, a decision concerning the Municipality's involvement should be contingent upon the preparation of a detailed and up-to-date business plan by the	\$10,000	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priority assumes that council supports the project as per recommendation 3.4. Budget assumes the business plan is prepared by a consultant



<p>EHBS that provides a defensible projection of costs and revenues; clearly outlines the expectations of the Municipality as a partner; and provides a credible projection of future Municipality costs.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 3.6: The East Hants Curling Association (EHCA) should update its Business Plan to the satisfaction of the Municipality. The updated plan should address any issues requiring further investigation or confirmation and specifically deal with the impact an East Hants facility will have on curling clubs in neighbouring communities.</p>	<p>To be determined</p>	<p>H</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost of updating the business plan will depend on the issues to be addressed. This may be undertaken without external assistance.
<p>Recommendation 3.7: Based on the submission of an updated Business Plan, Council should indicate how it is prepared to support the efforts of the EHCA to provide a curling facility in East Hants.</p>	<p>Council/Staff responsibility. Costs to be determined.</p>	<p>M-L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority assumes the development will depend on financing and this will delay development
<p>Recommendation 3.8: The Department in conjunction with youth and other community interests should initiate a process to plan, design and development a major skateboard facility.</p>	<p>\$225-315,000</p>	<p>H</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs exclusive of external funding and community fund raising.
<p>Recommendation 3.9: The Department should prepare a plan for the future provision of social and recreational space. The plan developed in conjunction with the volunteer organizations responsible for the management of community centres and halls will designate specific facilities as those best able to meet the community's long term needs. Designated facilities should be eligible, as required, for additional investment and the Department should work closely with the volunteer groups responsible for their operation to ensure their continued viability. As warranted, new or revised agreements for access to facilities controlled by other agencies should be established.</p>	<p>Staff Cost \$15-20,000 for facility audit.</p>	<p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will require some time to complete and has been assigned a moderate priority. The planning and policy work could be undertaken by staff, consulting assistance may be warranted given the sensitivities that surround the assessment. external assistance is likely required for the facility audit. The budget will depend on the scope of the assessment and the number of facilities to be inspected. The identified budget assumes a cursory level of investigation largely based on site inspections and available documentation. .
<p>Recommendation 3.10: The redeveloped aquatic centre should include a multi-purpose programming area.</p>	<p>\$1.25 million</p>	<p>M-L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumes a 5,000 GSF multipurpose room and storage. Capital costs to be confirmed but based on new construction at \$250/sq. with no allowances for fees, LEED certification, fitments and furniture, site development etc. Priority reflects anticipated construction schedule for the new aquatic centre.



<p>Recommendation 3.11: One full-size gymnasium operated by the Municipality or a community recreation association should be available to provide day-time use, cross-programming opportunities, and to address constraints associated with scheduling school facilities</p>	<p>\$2.25 million</p>	<p>M-L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumes a 9,000 GSF gym, storage and ancillary spaces. Cost assumes a new facility is required. Capital costs to be confirmed but based on new construction at \$250/sq. with no allowances for fees, LEED certification, fitments and furniture, site development etc. Priority reflects anticipated construction schedule for the new aquatic centre; if the fieldhouse met this need it could be acted upon immediately.
<p>Recommendation 3.12: The Municipality does not require additional soccer fields, ball diamonds or tennis courts for the ten year period of this plan.</p>	<p>Staff Responsibility</p>		
<p>Recommendation 3.13: In conjunction with the volunteer associations that manage facilities and the facility users, the Department should undertake a comprehensive audit of existing ball diamonds and soccer fields to identify facilities that should be upgraded and those that should be decommissioned.</p>	<p>Staff Responsibility</p>	<p>H</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work could be undertaken by staff or an external consultant. If a sports field consultant is retained, a budget in the order of \$10-15,000 might be anticipated.
<p>Recommendation 3.14: In conjunction with the user groups. The Department should prepare a long range plan for future sports fields. Information must be compiled on current use and projected demand and a strategy put in place to ensure that appropriate facilities are available but also that the supply does not exceed demand so that volunteer and public resources are used to their best advantage.</p>	<p>Staff Responsibility</p>	<p>M</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3.15: Complete the open space inventory and assessment study currently being prepared by staff and consider updating the 1999 Open Space Management Strategy as a guide for future open space and trail development.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p> <p>\$30,000</p>	<p>H</p> <p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open space inventory activity is currently underway by staff. Budget is an estimate for updating the Open Space Strategy using consultants and assuming that the staff inventory update is completed in advance. Actual budget will depend on the Terms of Reference. .
<p>Recommendation 3.16: The Municipality should take steps to ensure volunteer resources are available to assist with the management of open space resources and programs and to</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>O</p>	



maximize residents' enjoyment of these areas.			
Recommendation 3.17: The Department in conjunction with the appropriate tourism and economic development agencies and the volunteer associations operating resources with tourism potential along the Fundy Shore should prepare a study to better identify tourism opportunities along the Fundy Shore, the Shubenacadie River and other areas of East Hants with resource-based tourism potential.	To be determined	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of reference are required to determine the budget
Recommendation 3.18: The future working relationship between the Department and those responsible for economic development and tourism should be clarified with respect to the planning, funding and implementation of any projects with joint recreation and tourism objectives.	Staff responsibility	M	
Recommendation 3.19: The Recreation and Culture Department should explore opportunities to partner with others in the provision of programs in the following areas: active living, adult and older adult general interest; introductory arts and cultural programs, outdoor recreation and youth.	Staff responsibility	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs should be developed as resources permit. Additional multipurpose space may be required to accommodate expanded programming.

RECREATION DELIVERY SYSTEM

Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Priority	Comments
Recommendation 4.1: The Department's primary programming role should be to act as a facilitator and support the efforts of community volunteers who will take a lead role in the development of community programming. The facilitator role will be focused on the community development activities outlined in this report.	Staff responsibility	H	
Recommendation 4.2: The Department should only act as a direct program provider where there is no other qualified or willing provider, essential outcomes can only be achieved through direct provision and/or revenues can be realized to offset subsidies for other programs.	Staff responsibility	H	



<p>Recommendation 4.3: Council should endorse a comprehensive role in support of volunteers for the Recreation and Culture Department that focuses on both volunteer assistance and community development</p>	<p>Council Responsibility</p>	<p>H</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4.4: The Municipality should continue to provide assistance to established volunteer organizations and should expand its community development role and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>H</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4.5: The Department should facilitate regular meetings amongst parks and recreation associations to resolve issues and take advantage of opportunities associated with the working relationship with the Department and among the associations. Opportunities to create a more formal relationship should be explored.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>H</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4.6: The operational and management relationship between volunteer parks and recreation associations and the Municipality should be clarified to protect both parties from liability, maximize the effectiveness of the Municipality's investment in parks and facilities and ensure that the community's needs are met to the greatest extent possible.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>O</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship will emerge from the volunteer assistance and community development strategy and will be formalized over time. This should be initiated in the short term but may not be finalized for some time.
<p>Recommendation 4.7: A new funding formula should be put in place where the Municipality supports core functions of the parks and recreation associations.</p>	<p>Council/Staff Responsibility</p>	<p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new funding agreement for core functions should be explored in the short term and be put in place within the next 2 -3 years. • Costs to be determined.
<p>Recommendation 4.8: The Municipality should adopt the procedures required to generate a database for long-range planning of facilities, programs, and services.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project will require the cooperation of volunteer service providers. It should be put in place as soon as possible but a moderate priority is appropriate given other recommendations.
<p>Recommendation 4.9: When new projects are proposed by community and stakeholder groups, only those that are consistent with the priority outcomes, principles, and recommendations of the Needs Assessment should be supported by the Municipality.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>H</p>	



<p>Recommendation 4.10: The Municipality should update the Recreation Needs Assessment every five years.</p>	<p>\$30-40,000</p>	<p>M-L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumes update is undertaken by consultants. Lower costs can be anticipated if update is undertaken at regular 5 year intervals
<p>Recommendation 4.11: The Department should adopt a formal process and criteria for evaluating proposals brought forward by external groups to enter into partnerships with the Municipality for the development of major facilities, programs or services.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>H</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4.12: The Department should initiate and facilitate a discussion of fees with the providers of recreation facilities to document a policy framework that describes a rationale for existing fees and an approach to setting fees in the future as well as an approach to ensure fees are coordinated in a manner that best serves the interests of the community.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project will require the cooperation of volunteer service providers. It should be put in place as soon as possible but low priority is appropriate given other recommendations.
<p>Recommendation 4.13: The Municipality's current approach to funding community recreational interests is supported and should continue however refinements that may contribute to the more effective use of available resources should be investigated.</p>		<p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project will require the cooperation of volunteer service providers. It should be put in place as soon as possible but a moderate priority is appropriate given other recommendations.
<p>Recommendation 4.14: The Department should work with volunteer associations to adopt facility allocation policies that will make the best use of available resources.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project will require the cooperation of volunteer service providers. It should be put in place as soon as possible but a moderate priority is appropriate given other recommendations
<p>Recommendation 4:15 The Department should explore opportunities to improve their website to provide additional information about programs, activities and resources offered by volunteers in the community.</p>	<p>Staff responsibility</p>	<p>H</p>	