

Harold MacNeil

██████████
██████████, Nova Scotia ██████████

29 June 2023

To: All East Hants Municipal Councillors and CAO

AQUATICS PROGRAM REGISTRATION AND
EAST HANTS MULTI PURPOSE CURLING FACILITY

I read the recent Aquatics Program Registration report of 2 June 2023 and to put it mildly I am/was dismayed and am/was left with a feeling of being very disrespected by Present and Past EHM Councils with the information contained in regards to the Aquatic Centre Registration of NON RESIDENTS at the expense of East Hants Taxpayers.

The Aquatic centre was purposely built to provide a service to East Hants Taxpayers and as a taxpayer I learn from the report that only 493 East Hants Residents or 46% make up the membership of the facility. The next learning moments is that there are 585 NON East Hants Users who make up 54% of the membership of the facility. This means using membership data that the \$19,000,000.00 cost of the Aquatic Centre was \$8,740,000.00 for residents of East Hants and \$10,260,000.00 for Non-residents. This was how the Gas Tax was actually used to benefit residents of East Hants?

The East Hants Curling Association had a community data base of over 450 East Hants taxpayers who supported a Multi-purpose Curling Facility: council members would not meet or call those on the list, but continually alluded that there was not enough support for a Curling Recreation facility. Now, the same reasoning council members, CAO and the past Recreation Director used to dispel the recreation curling project and deny funding was front and centre in their approval of the Aquatic Centre funding of \$19,000,000.00: 54% or \$10,260,000.00 was spent to support non-residents and non East Hants Taxpayers while denying an East Hants Recreation Group funding which was about 10% to 15% of the \$10.26 Million.

In regards to the East Hants Curling Association, there were many one on one meetings with councillors and staff, council presentations and written and verbal communications in which the non residents being supported by East Hants taxpayers information could have been provided to the community and the volunteer group. This very pertinent information was never provided to the community at large. This information would have had the community definitely question if the Aquatic Centre should have even been approved and constructed. So much said about spending East Hants taxpayers money in support of the community and there was no money to support the East Hants Curling Association and then \$10,260,000.00 spent on non-residents and ZERO for a curling facility!

This council recommendation in regards to the Aquatic Centre astonishes me and confirms the value placed on East Hants Taxpayers by EHM Councillors:

Move that Parks, Recreation, & Culture Committee recommends that Council maintains the current registration model for aquatics and recreation programs that does not prioritize registration for East Hants residents or membership holders at the East Hants Aquatic Centre.

I provide the data for the East Hants Curling Association in regards to membership for a one day a week organization that could substantially grow but is very limited/denied because of curling ice availability: Adults and Youth: 106, Non East Hants Residents eight (8) for a non resident percentage of 7.74% versus 54% for the Aquatic Centre.

I have reviewed the dMA Planning and Management Services report of 29 May 2012 and at no point in that report is it mentioned that NON-Resident Aquatic Membership was part of the Needs Assessment to determine the viability of an Aquatic Centre in East Hants.

The report details:

Recommendation: 3.1 – Replace existing indoor pool: 3.2 and 3.3 are additional comments.

Recommendation: 3.6 – Support East Hants Curling association and council working together to move the project forward: 3.7 is additional comments.

Recommendation: 4.1 – The Department ... support the efforts of community volunteers The facilitator role will be focused on the community development activities outlined in this report.

Recommendation: 4.3 - Council should endorse a comprehensive role.....focuses on both volunteer assistance and community development.

Recommendation: 4.4 – The Municipality ... should expand its community development role and responsibilities.

Recommendation: 4.5 – The Department ... meetings amongst parks and recreation associationsworking relationships ... among the associations.

Recommendation: 4.6 – When new projects are proposed by community ... consistent with priority outcomes 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.

I am corresponding with the Council because as an East Hants taxpayer I am totally dismayed with the present and past council decision making process. To not have very pertinent data out for public discussion is not permitting the tax payer to make good choices and to properly evaluate the project from a taxpayer point of view. Also, while East Hants Curling Association was continually denied funding much, much more funding was knowingly being expended for non East Hants residents. It is the taxpayer who pays the bills in East Hants. The follow on is that the community Needs Assessment and thus community input was ignored by council at the time.

First: I support the current aquatic facility being in East Hants, but as I have stated previously not at the cost of \$19,000,000.00 that I now come to find out after reading the Aquatic Report that 54% or \$10,260,000.00 was expended for non-residents of East Hants. Less spent on actual East Hants residents then non-residents.

Secondly: The report supported an East Hants Curling Facility at Recommendation 3.6 and 3.7. The report identified CURLING in Articles 1.3.3, and pages 21, 22, 23.

The support that was given to East Hants Curling Association was \$600,000.00 after much meetings and community input and far less then then what was needed in order to obtain Provincial and Federal funding at the time. This potential \$600,000.00 support was as I find out today \$9,660,000.00 less then was assigned for NON-RESIDENT, NON TAXPAYING Aquatic Centre users. The most recent request for funding was denied for the provided reasons of not having funds to pay and with the background

information now present this decision is quite frankly disrespectful and embarrassing to me as an East Hants Resident and Taxpayer.

East Hants Curling Association at the time was looking for funding to facilitate the process of having an East Hants Curling Facility constructed in East Hants for up to 400 curlers that is very, very comparable to the 493 tax paying users of the Aquatic Facility. There was the issue of keeping the tax levee below \$10.00, East Hants could not afford an East Hants Multi-purpose Curling Facility: denying a community group funding while knowingly spending 500% more money on a facility to accommodate NON East Hants Residents. The cost of a curling facility was \$4,610,000.00 or 24.26% (minus Provincial and Federal funding) of the \$19,000,000.00 expended on the Aquatic Centre

I would like this letter presented at council meeting and I would request answers from Council Members, not staff, to the following questions:

- Why was the dMA Planning and Management Services report of 29 May 2012 not utilized in regards to the East Hants Curling Association.
- Why were the recommendations for the support of an East Hants Curling Facility not supported when it was known that 56% of the money \$10,620,000.00 of the \$19,000,000.00 was going to support NON EAST HANTS RESIDENT, NON EAST HANTS TAXPAYING users of the Aquatic Centre.
- Why was the Recreation Needs Assessment not renewed after five years which would have been the year 2017.
- Why the East Hants Curling Association made of dedicated volunteer(s) group and potential 400 curling members not given consideration/re-consideration for funding once the final Aquatic Centre Construction Cost and implications in regards to NON East Hants Residents was known. Was this because there was a pool in place from Confederation Year 1967 and therefore all cost considerations and changes in time and follow on community needs: be damned?

My final request is that I be provided with the Total: Revenue, Expenses and the additional cost to East Hants Taxpayers by Financial Year for the operation of the Aquatic Centre.

East Hants Curling Association background funding requests:

25 August 2009 – East Hants Municipal Funding for \$737,333.33 (one third of \$2,212,000.00)

10 May 2012 – East Hants Municipal Funding for \$801,666.66 (one third of \$2,405,000.00)

May 2020 – East Hants Municipal Funding for \$1,536,666.66 (one third of \$4,610,000.00)

December 2022 – East Hants Municipal Funding for \$920,000.00 (20% of \$4,610,000.00 in support of Federal Government Green and Inclusive Buildings (GICB) Program. Denied presentation, in that there was no money for the project: would have been hard to say no?

The above numbers were present at the same time of East Hants Municipal budget surpluses of: Period 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 of \$4,473,757.00. Surplus could/would have paid Municipal Funding portion.

Lastly, as a community volunteer and a long time advocate for an East Hants Multi-purpose Curling Facility I am so, so very disappointed to come to the realization of just how I and the volunteer organization were treated and kept in the dark in regards to the financial realizations of the Aquatic Centre. The follow on decision that East Hants Municipal taxpayers could pay for NON RESIDENTS to play in the East Hants Community at taxpayers expense, but a volunteer group in East Hants looking to improve the community was not supported as per the recommendations of the dMA Planning and Management Services report of 29 May 2012. I now know there was/is inherent in MEH Council a bias present and I have now experienced councillors past and present provide service to non-residents and

not support an East Hants volunteer organization and taxpayers that was/are working to improve the community.

With the information above and the fact that there was indeed funding to support an East Hants Curling Facility, it is now just time to plainly put in motion the process to fund and construct an East Hants Multi-purpose Curling Facility that has been wrongly denied in the past.

The undersigned is a 70 year old volunteer, active community member and it is so discouraging/depressing/distasteful/frustrating that I have to spend time writing this letter. I obviously see an injustice toward East Hants community members and taxpayers in regards to the process to build the Aquatic Centre and not support the East Hants Curling Association by elected EHM Councillors.

For transparency, I am a member of the EHCA BOD/President

Awaiting reply,

Harold MacNeil, [REDACTED]
East Hants Resident and Taxpayer