

East Hants Curling Association  
1076C Hwy 2  
Lantz, Nova Scotia B2S 1M8

19 October 2023

East Hants Municipal Council/Councillors and CAO  
Municipal Office  
Lloyd E. Matheson Centre  
15 Commerce Court  
Elmsdale, Nova Scotia B2S 3K5

Dear Councillors and CAO,

This correspondence is a follow up to letter of 29 June 2023, EHM Council minutes of 27 July 2023 and telephone conversation between CAO Kim Ramsey and Harold MacNeil, 3:00 – 3:40 PM 5 October 2023.

This letter will not delve into the many issues discussed in the telephone call as they are listed in the letter of 29 June 2023 and as such will deal with the salient points of the conversation.

As a taxpayer and President of the East Hants Curling Association, I believe that there should be an East Hants Multi-purpose Curling Facility attached to the East Hants Sportsplex. The concept of a curling facility in East Hants has a history dating back 25 years and that story is well known.

The East Hants Curling Association is in its six year of operations and has been growing and has more community involvement every year. The greater community of East Hants is ready and wants an East Hants Multi-Purpose Curling Facility now and this should be in the mindset of EHM Council and as such in the current planning phases. The conversation indicated that there is a Recreation Infrastructure document, plan, program or Needs Assessment to be initiated soon: curling will play a prominent part in the future of East Hants.

The East Hants Curling Association has had three business plans finalized with a cost assigned and the last one was \$4,610,000.00 and as such would be ready to proceed as part of any Recreation Infrastructure Program or Needs Assessment. The EHCA is operational at present and as such would be ready immediately: the Multi-purpose Curling Facility would get the requisite community support and as such the project could begin to be ready by updating the Business Plan by Lindsays Construction and a new cost would be available.

The EHCA would be financially independent through fee payments and would work for membership of about 350 plus adults and youth of the community: this goal would be easily reached with a full time facility. The EHCA would not impact on any other provincial, municipal facilities as approximately 98% of present curlers only curl with EHCA and there are many curlers who got their start with EHCA and would not be curling otherwise. The facility would be multi-purposed so would serve the community in many other ways: there is synergy within the community for other uses.

The EHM Annual Budget has had surpluses in the last years and all, some or a share of the accumulated surplus should have been put aside for an EHCA Multi-purpose Curling Facility. There is

indeed a case to be made that if some or all of the surplus was put towards a new facility there would be no need for a tax levy and the funds would be available to pay for the facility.

During the conversation it was discussed about not dwelling on the past and at some time the EHM Council must also do the same: a paradigm shift; needs and times have changed greatly. There is the need for expediency as an East Hants Multi-purpose Curling Facility has been a goal for many community members past and present and to be “teased” with surveys, Business Plans, Council Presentations, etc does not go well for maintaining a forward movement when a Community Recreation Group see the goal posts and then the “goal posts” are not there and the question is “why not”?

The EHCA is dedicated to building a strong community and EHM Council is responsible to help build this recreation facility. The Municipality has a chance to step up and spear head a project that the community has been eagerly awaiting as a new recreation activity. A new East Hants Multi-purposed Curling Facility is highly anticipated by the taxpayers of East Hants: just come to the EH Sportsplex on Thursday morning, afternoon (youth and parents) and evening and have a conversation with the curlers.

In closing and following up on the conversation EHCA is expecting to see the following:

- that EHCA sponsored curling will be a part of the EHM Council Recreation Plans or Needs Assessment that is in the planning stages;
- that the EHM Council will have a paradigm shift and look at EHCA presently operating a successful curling program that is/was easily ready to go to the construction and facility operational phase;
- that EHM Council will expedite the East Hants Multi-purpose Curling Facility and initiate an update of the most recent business plan to ascertain cost;
- the ideal location for an East Hants Multi-purpose Curling Facility is attached to the EH Sportsplex for operational efficiency of both infrastructure and employees for both facilities. There is considerable potential synergy between the two facilities.

This letter is not meant to be read by council, filed for future reference, but is meant to kick start the process for a New East Hants Multi-purpose Curling Facility that will operate and stand on its merits and provide immeasurable benefits to the East Hants Community.

EHCA is ready to proceed and urge council to take the next steps to support the construction of an East Hants Multi-purpose Curling Facility by engaging with the curling community in our challenge and hopefully your challenge and 25 year objective to get the stand alone facility constructed.

Harold MacNeil, Taxpayer/President EHCA

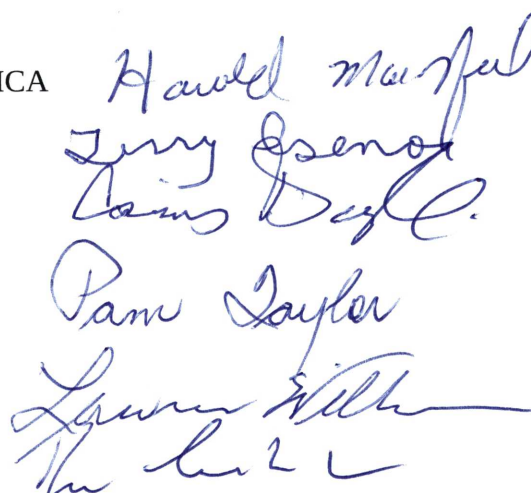
Terry Isenor, Vice President,

Caius Doyle, Treasurer

Pam Taylor, Secretary

Lawrence Williams, Director

Kevin Cruickshank, Director



Handwritten signatures in blue ink corresponding to the names listed on the left: Harold MacNeil, Terry Isenor, Caius Doyle, Pam Taylor, Lawrence Williams, and Kevin Cruickshank.

Harold MacNeil  
22 Acorn Avenue  
Lantz, Nova Scotia B2S 1Y4

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.**

(1)

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 associations ....working 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harold MacNeil". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Harold MacNeil, 22 Acorn Avenue, Lantz, Nova Scotia, B2S 1Y4  
East Hants Resident and Taxpayer