



Supporting Physical Activity & Youth through No Fee Ice Rentals

DATE: August 9, 2016

- As part of the Ice Allocation Policy, Amherst Town Council has committed to and enhanced its continued support and investment towards physical activity and youth.
- This pilot project for the 2016-17 ice season will see ice rental fees waived for youth programs (age 18 and under), which includes the Amherst Skating Club and Cumberland County Minor Hockey Association (CCMHA). The pilot project will be funded through the Town's Operating Reserve. Based on last year's ice use, approximate savings of \$40,000 for CCMHA programs and \$18,000 for Amherst Skating Club programs.
- The conditions of this pilot project are that youth organizations who qualify for waived ice rental fees will pass the ice cost savings directly to their individual members, resulting in reduced registration fees. The anticipated savings could range anywhere from \$75-\$350 depending on the participant and the program.
- Individual participants from Amherst and Cumberland County will receive the direct financial benefit from this pilot. The project is also expected to affect
 - Affordability of programs increasing participants
 - Increased utilization of the Stadium Ice (i.e. use of non-traditional ice times to practice & for program development)
 - Increased enrolment numbers, increased tournament teams & profile increasing potential economic impact etc.
- The pilot project anticipates a return to the local economy, through potentially drawing more participants and their families, fans, and prospective visitors to the Amherst area thus creating economic benefits to the Town merchants.
- The Town currently provides free public skating, free access to indoor and outdoor walking tracks, funding support to the YMCA for free family swims & subsidized lessons, free use for regular sports & recreational events at the Robb Complex, and daily maintenance to Town outdoor recreational facilities for multiple uses including soccer and football, all as part of the Town's overall *Municipal Physical Activity Strategy*.
- Family-first programming, activities and events is an integral piece to the Amherst Recreation Department's planning strategy. Waiving ice rental fees to youth programs is expected to be one of several methods to motivate and support families involved and interested in Town recreational opportunities.



- Making the active choice the easy choice is part of our work. Removing barriers to physical activity provides inclusive programming and is part of health equity - “the systemic barrier has been removed”.
- The pilot project of ice rental fees to youth programs is an enhanced effort to champion physical activity and healthy lifestyles, physical health and well-being. Additionally the project aligns with the four goals outlined in the *Municipal Physical Activity Strategy*:
 - Goal # 1 - Increase physical activity in children, youth and seniors
 - Goal # 2 - Reduce barriers to increase physical activity
 - Goal # 3 - Building a Physical Active Environment
 - Goal # 4 - Increase Awareness through Communication
- The pilot project is anticipated to maintain and potentially increase youth program enrolment as a result of affordability and accessibility for users. As outlined in the Town’s *Recreation Master Plan (2016)*, increasing programming and participation is a key driver to a more healthy community.
- The pilot project is anticipated to create a positive community influence in relation to healthy living and recreation. Its objective is in support of several provincial, regional and national position papers including:
 - *Town of Amherst Recreation Master Plan (2016)*
 - *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia (2015)*
 - *Breaking the Bank: Study of Minor Hockey Becoming too Expensive for Many Canadian Families (2015)*
 - *The Biggest Risks in Keeping Kids Indoors (2015)*
 - *Nova Scotia Health Profile (2015)*
 - *Municipal Physical Activity Strategy (2012)*
 - *Trends and Issues in Canada and in Sport (2010)*
 - The *High Five* Canadian Recreation and Sport Opportunities Standard
 - *CHB Health Plan and Strategy*
 - *Moving toward a Tobacco-Free Nova Scotia*
- The Town recognizes that increasing physical activity and raising awareness of the positive benefits of physical activity will have long lasting effect on the health of the entire community.
- The policy also sets out requirement to comply with the provisions of municipal alcohol and smoke free places policies and bylaws. The Town wishes to achieve consistency with the Municipal Alcohol Project (MAP) and this pilot offers opportunity to demonstrate leadership on this issue.
- The Town of Amherst in partnership with Provincial Services - Communities, Sports and Recreation Division will develop an evaluation piece for the pilot project in April 2017, following the 2016-17 ice season.

