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Halifax Regional Council
April 4, 2006

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Carol Macomber
Carol Macomber / Acting Director, Recreation, Tourism and Culture

DATE: March 24, 2006

SUBJECT: Outdoor Skating Rinks

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Halifax Regional Council meeting of May 13, 2003, Item 10.7.3, Councillor Sloane - Outdoor Skating Rink. During the May 13, 2003 Council meeting it was moved by Councillor Sloane, seconded by Councillor Goucher, that Council request a staff report detailing ways to obtain funding from both the provincial and federal governments in support of outdoor skating rinks throughout the Halifax Regional Municipality.

BACKGROUND

According to Ice Dreams, a national program, the development outdoor ice rinks are an important part of Canadian history and culture. Hockey, curling, ringette and other traditional winter games were first played on outdoor ice surfaces like frozen ponds and backyard rinks. For generations these facilities have created opportunities for unstructured play, healthy outdoor physical activity and community-based sport. These initiatives build community relationships, involvement, pride and ownership.

Canadian children are facing a fitness crisis: children are spending more time in passive activities (an average of 56 hours per week); 40 percent of children ages 5 to 8 are classified as obese; 40 percent of children have at least one risk factor for heart disease; and juvenile diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain cancers are strongly related to physically inactive lifestyles.

DISCUSSION

Since the initial Council motion in 2003, fifteen outdoor ice rinks have been established in HRM. It is expected that the need and demand for these facilities will continue to grow. This increase can be partially attributed to the initial success and public support of the North end Rink, the first major outdoor rink installed in HRM. In addition, the George Dixon Community Rink attracted national media attention during the past winter.

Based on current success and high demand, coupled with capital cost pressures and increased operational requirements to install and run these facilities, HRM created an interdepartmental staff team to better coordinate the development of outdoor ice rinks in HRM. This group has been focussed on establishing a program to define the roles of HRM and communities in the process of building and maintaining outdoor ice rinks. To date, this staff team has identified:

- assessment criteria for site selection;
- the role of HRM;
- the role of communities;
- HRM operational requirements;
- insurance requirements;
- required HRM financial contributions;
- infrastructure requirements;
- required community capacity to manage such an initiative;
- potential funding sources to be accessed by communities - e.g. fund-raising, government funding sources, active Halifax Communities grants, etc.

The staff team is in the final stages of completing a comprehensive package and outdoor ice rink program to be presented to Regional Council for approval. Currently, each outdoor ice rink involves some degree of capital investment by HRM, depending on site characteristics and community need.

Additionally, each rink costs HRM approximately \$4,500 annually for operational expenses. To date, HRM has absorbed these costs in existing budgets, which has become increasingly difficult as demand continues to increase. Because of success to date in supporting those communities who have developed and implemented outdoor rinks, HRM will continue to support existing outdoor ice rinks in 2006-07. However, new funding sources are required if new outdoor rinks are to be considered for installation in 2006-07. RTC has requested additional funding for this program among a group of new initiatives identified under the Youth Council Focus Area.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct budget implications as a result of the material discussed herein.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES


There are no recommended alternatives

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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