



# STAFF REPORT TO COMMISSION

**DATE OF REPORT** March 4, 2021

**MEETING TYPE & DATE** Cowichan Lake Recreation Commission of March 25, 2021

**FROM:** Cowichan Lake Recreation Division  
Community Services Department

**SUBJECT:** Unscheduled Health & Wellness Opportunities at the Cowichan Lake Sports Arena – Fitness Studio

**FILE:**

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## PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Commission about enhancing health and wellness opportunities at Cowichan Lake Sports Arena (CLSA).

## RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION

1. That the Cowichan Lake Recreation Commission continue to support curling in the curling rink at the Cowichan Lake Sports Arena.
2. That a fitness consultant be contracted for up to \$5,000, from current operating funds in the 2021 budget for function 405, to make recommendations on equipment, design and costing of a small fitness studio in Multipurpose Room A.

## BACKGROUND

On October 22, 2020 a delegation appeared before the Commission requesting consideration of the addition of unscheduled health and wellness opportunities such as a fitness gym, rock climbing wall, pool and winter pickleball courts. They would like to see a permanent public gym at the Cowichan Lake Sports Arena (CLSA) to encourage healthy lifestyles even if it means reducing the ability to offer other types of programs (i.e. curling).

The Commission requested that staff gather up all of the past reports and bring them back to the March 25, 2021 meeting.

CLSA underwent a 7.6-million-dollar renovation between 2009 and 2011. A fitness studio was included in the original plans for the renovation and was to be located on the second floor of the renovated building. Due to increased building costs and budget constraints, the fitness equipment portion of the renovation was cut from the project, however, the room itself was completed. What we now call MPR A and B were designed and built with expandable walls, a view of the mountains and a sprung floor – all with a fitness studio in mind.

From 2015 to 2019 the CVRD and its member municipalities (Municipality of North Cowichan, Town of Ladysmith, Town of Lake Cowichan and the City of Duncan) looked into a regional recreation planning initiative to assess the current state of recreation in the region and strategically plan for the future.

In the Phase 1 report, (Attachment D) under the summary of key findings, the lowest level of satisfaction with current recreation opportunities was expressed by Area I, Town of Lake Cowichan and Area F while “the majority of the top activity preferences from the resident survey reflected those that can be done without the need to join a league/team/program”. Trends suggested that

there will continue to be a demand for infrastructure that supports spontaneous/unstructured recreation.

On page 23 of the Phase I Report you will see that Area I residents felt that an aquatic facility, fitness studio and indoor track were their top three priorities for indoor facilities. Area F residents listed a climbing wall, indoor track and youth activity spaces as their top three priorities. The Town of Lake Cowichan's top three priorities were an aquatic facility and senior and youth activity spaces.

The Regional Recreation Phase IV report is attached (attachment E) for information only.

The long-term viability of curling has been in question over the years, leading to this space being considered as a possibility for fitness. A staff report was brought to the Commission on November 17, 2016 that discussed potential options for the curling rink. The report is attached here as Attachment A for your information. At that time the Commission decided to increase the consulting services expense by \$20,000 to allow for the 2005 PERC Report (attached here as Attachment B) to be updated so that they could make an informed decision based on current data.

The newly updated PERC Report (Curling Rink Study, attached here as Attachment C) was presented to the Commission in December of 2017 with a recommendation for Option 1.

Option 1 suggests that curling remain as the facility's primary use during the balance of the winter months. It was recommended that CLR and its' partners undertake a number of adjustments and enhancements to the operations of the facility to increase use of the curling ice as well as the dry floor space.

The Curling Club and Cowichan Lake Recreation (CLR) staff have been working as a team to grow the sport of curling in the Cowichan Lake area. Since 2017 the Monday night doubles league expanded into two draw times; we have hosted more Curl BC events; implemented social curling nights and "try it" curling opportunities. The Lake Cowichan School (LCS), through their joint use agreement, has a curling module in place for many of the PE classes so students, regardless of their ability to pay, have a chance to try curling which hopefully created a lifelong interest in this sport. We have increased the number of new curlers using the facility but at the same time have experienced a decrease in the number of long-time curlers as they are aging out of the sport. This has resulted in a slight increase in the overall number of curlers over the past three years even with COVID-19 arriving in 2020.

In the off season, the dry floor was divided into four quadrants with one area dedicated to fitness, two for pickle ball courts and one for a dedicated, decorated birthday party area. Fitness, pickleball and the birthday party spaces continue to be severely under utilized as registrations and bookings for this kind of use is very low.

The dry floor was rented out for big events such as a First Nations Health and Wellness Fair, Lake Cowichan District Minor Hockey AGM and Awards Banquet and the Chamber of Commerce Spring Fling. CLR as well as BC Hockey uses this space for off ice conditioning for hockey camps. Overall usage of this facility was increased in 2018 and 2019 and then the pandemic hit and usage dropped because curling was cancelled. We did not host any Curl BC events, or allow rentals, and adult programming for high intensity fitness and group pickleball games were restricted.

## ANALYSIS

The delegation that appeared before the Commission on October 22, 2020 has since requested, through a letter to the Town of Lake Cowichan Mayor and Council, consideration of a permanent retrofit to two sheets of ice in the curling rink to allow for alternate unscheduled recreational

opportunities. As discussed in the November 17, 2016 staff report this idea has some challenges that are still valid and applicable today. One concern is that Curl BC events, while bringing a large amount of economic spinoff to the community, cannot typically be hosted in a facility with less than four sheets of curling ice.

Recently, the CLR Commission made a recommendation to the CVRD Board to approve a supplemental request for a \$10,000 contribution to the installation of a bouldering wall at LCS school. This funding has been approved and is pending the completion of a service agreement between School District #79 and the CVRD and the installation of the bouldering wall. CLR, as well as the community will have access to the bouldering wall for programs and events in the future therefore eliminating the need to pursue the idea of installing a bouldering wall in the curling rink.

CLR currently has six indoor pickleball courts in our community halls that are used year-round and two indoor courts in the curling rink that are used between March and September. The CVRD has an outdoor two-court pickleball facility next to the Honeymoon Bay Hall and the Town of Lake Cowichan has a six-court outdoor pickleball facility in Lake Cowichan.

Staff understand the need for a fitness studio in Lake Cowichan as in the past, businesses like Lisa's Fit Stop, The Track and Curves have opened and then closed for reasons unknown at this time. Because the fitness space has already been created as part of the renovation project, having a publicly funded fitness studio at CLSA, is achievable with equipment and proper staffing in place.

CLR currently owns 14 spin bikes, an elliptical trainer, assorted hand weights, mats and some smaller fitness equipment. This is the equipment currently in quadrant B on the curling rink dry floor.

There are risk management and liability concerns linked to unscheduled public use of commercial fitness equipment 24/7 as requested. It is recommended that staffing of the fitness studio be required during all hours of operation.

Staff feel that curling can remain in the community. With the addition of the new bouldering wall at LCS, a new fitness studio at CLSA, and the abundance of indoor and outdoor pickleball courts, the health and wellness needs of the Cowichan Lake area would be well covered.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Staff recommend that a fitness consultant be hired for up to a cost of \$5,000 funded out of the 2021 operating budget to make recommendations on equipment, design and costing of a small fitness studio in Multipurpose Room A. Staff can then bring a second report back to the Commission with all of this new information and funding options in time for the 2022 budget planning process.

#### **COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS**

Staff, on behalf of the Commission, would respond to the delegation's request.

#### **STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable

#### **GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS**

☐ Not Applicable

- ☐ Communications & Engagement
- ☐ Community Services *(Cowichan Community Centre, Cowichan Lake Recreation, South Cowichan Recreation, Arts & Culture, Emergency Management, Facilities & Transit)*
- ☒ Corporate Services *(Finance, Human Resources, Legislative Services, Information Technology, Procurement)*
- ☐ Engineering Services *(Environmental Services, Recycling & Waste Management, Water Management)*
- ☐ Land Use Services *(Community Planning, Development Services, Inspection & Enforcement, Economic Development, Parks & Trails)*

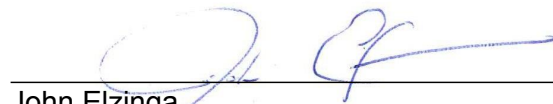
Prepared by:

Reviewed by:



Linda Blatchford  
Manager

Not Applicable  
Not Applicable



John Elzinga  
General Manager

Reviewed for form and content and approved for submission to the Committee:

Resolution:

Financial Considerations:

☐ Manager, Legislative Services

☐ Manager, Finance

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A – Staff Report November 17, 2016 “Alternative Uses and Options on Converting the Curling Facility

Attachment B – Curling Rink Study, February 5, 2005

Attachment C – Curling Rink Study December 2017

Attachment D – Regional Recreation Phase I Report January 2018

Attachment E – Regional Recreation Phase IV Report Final Draft June 2019