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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. CMS24-023

Subject: Sport Plan Update – No. 5

Prepared by: Hailey Jones, Specialist, Sport & Community Development

Department: Community Services

Date: June 4, 2024

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS24-023 be received for information.

Executive Summary

This report provides a status update on work related to the Sport Plan since the Sport Plan – Progress Report No. 4 (CMS23-029) on June 20, 2023. This report outlines successfully implemented recommendations and events in alignment with the Sport Plan, as well as a high-level strategy for the continued implementation of the Sport Plan until the Sport Plan Update has been completed.

- The Town of Aurora receives provincial and national recognition for Sport Plan initiative.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in sport and recreation remain a priority under the Sport Plan.
- Sport Plan Update Request for Proposal (RFP) launched on April 13, 2024.
- Business calendar of executed Sport Plan initiatives (since June 2023) and upcoming education opportunities, topics and events developed in strategic alignment with the Sport Plan.

Background

On June 20, 2023, Staff presented CMS23-029 to Council. This update included information on gender equity, sport tourism, the launch of the Recreation & Healthy Active Living Leadership Course, a business calendar of executed Sport Plan initiatives (since January 2022) and upcoming events, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (D.E.I.)

initiatives, and the successful implementation of the Sport Plan using existing internal resources.

Analysis

The Town of Aurora receives national and provincial recognition for Sport Plan initiatives.

National and provincial organizations have recognized the work the Town has led through the Sport Plan. The Sport and Community Development Specialist was asked to present on this work, resulting in recognition and acknowledgement across the country.

1. Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) released an article in March 2024 recognizing the Town as a leader in gender equity across Canada. The article has been shared across multiple social media and web-based platforms highlighting the Town's multifaceted approach to gender equity.
2. The Sport and Community Development Specialist presented at the CPRA Gender Equity Conference in Hamilton, Ontario in October 2023. This presentation focused on the success of the recently launched Recreation & Healthy Active Living Leadership Course (PLF4M), and the six-point plan developed in partnership with Canadian Women in Sport.
3. Following the success of the October 2023 CPRA presentation, the Sport and Community Development Specialist presented at the Parks & Recreation Ontario (PRO) Conference in April 2024. The focus of this presentation used PLF4M as an example of how municipalities can commit to gender equity through leadership development for female identifying high school students.
4. The Town partnered with Seneca Polytechnic and Ontario Collegiate Athletic Association (OCAA) to host the OCAA Men's baseball Championship in October 2023. The Sport & Community Development Specialist played a key role in securing the bid, as well as providing sport tourism supports for the six colleges staying, eating and playing in Aurora.
5. True Sport is an initiative under the Canadian Centre of Ethics in Sport (CCES) umbrella that focuses on values-based and ethics-based sport and recreation. The Town's leadership course incorporated a True Sport component that enabled the students in the course to research and develop their own 'True Sport event' in the Town of Aurora. The Sport and Community Development Specialist is building a relationship between the Town and True Sport, and as a result of this relationship, the Town was asked to present during the inaugural National True Sport Champions Development Week in February 2024.

6. In March 2024, the Sport and Community Development Specialist participated on a panel for a Rugby Ontario development session. The focus of the panel was on Municipal Partnerships and Stewardship to which the Town was the only municipality asked to participate.

The Town's Sport Plan has been widely recognized for its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and innovative community development. Through strategic partnerships and active participation in local, provincial and national conferences, the Town has showcased its dedication to inclusive sport and recreation practices. An unforeseen benefit to these opportunities is the way in which Aurora's success has served as an inspiration for other municipalities, highlighting the importance of fostering equitable opportunities for all community members.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in sport and recreation remain a priority under the Sport Plan.

Under the direction of the Sport Plan, diversity, equity and inclusion remain an important component of providing recreational and sport opportunities to our community.

Sport Plan gender equity initiatives include:

- Examining the Town's allocation policy through a 'Gender Equity' lens led to a more equitable approach to permitting and overall allocation of facilities. In April 2023, a local boys' ice hockey organization requested a reduction in ice rental fees. Instead of assessing this request in isolation, the Sport and Community Development Specialist, in tandem with the Manager of Business Support Services, considered various factors such as financial implications, permitting issues, and the overall impact on community sports in Aurora. This request also led staff to reexamine a partnership with the boys' teams for shared rink board advertising to support team sponsorships, which was then extended to include the girls' team. Within weeks, town staff proposed to Council to reduce ice fees for both boys' and girls' hockey teams at the same competition level and to expand the rink board partnership to the girls' team. This strategic approach resulted in direct cost savings for the girls' organization, enabling them to allocate more funds towards certifications and development of female coaches.
- Relaunching the Sport Equity & Inclusion Committee (SEIC) in October 2023 with representation from across the Aurora sport community. There are currently ten

committee members plus the Sport and Community Development Specialist. The committee meets every four to six weeks with regular communication on key topics between meetings. The committee has volunteered at multiple community functions, such as the 'Women in Sport Luncheon' on February 25 and 'Diversity on Ice' hosted by Aurora Black Community Association on March 11.

- Successful relaunch of the girls-only Recreation & Healthy Active Living Leadership Course (PLF4M) in February 2024 in partnership with Ask Online Canada. The course received Canadian Tire Jump Start funding and sponsorship funding (scholarship was developed as a legacy item from the IIHF women's hockey event hosted by the Town in 2023), resulting in PLF4M being offered at no cost to all participants. A combination of the reduced fee's, enhanced marketing strategies and positive story telling from PLF4M alumni, PLF4M reached capacity for the Winter 2024 session with a waitlist. Innovative partnerships with organizations such as York Region District School Board (YRDSB), SEEWHATSHECANDO, Coaches Association of Ontario, High Five and with Town's Anishinaabe consultant - Grandmother Kim Wheatley articulate the unwavering support from the community and beyond for the important work the Town is leading under the Sport Plan in gender equity and leadership development.
- Launching the inaugural 'Women in Sport Coaching Certification Weekend' in February 2024 resulted in 50 coaching certifications being earned over the course of two programs in a single weekend. In alignment with the Sport Plan, the Town has taken an active role in supporting women and girls on their coaching and leadership journey. In addition to covering certification costs associated with the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) certification on February 24-25, 2024, the Town expanded programming to include childcare supervision. Research shows that women and mothers are disproportionately impacted under the current coaching and certification structures as, "the issues influencing this trend are mostly institutional and societal. Some examples of institutional barriers include greater discrimination than coaches who are men, barriers to hiring and professional advancement, salaries, access to resources, and more. Societal barriers include sports and gender, networking and access discrimination. While creating programs to help prepare women for coaching and leadership roles within sport, the system itself must work to be more inclusive so that it appeals to and retains diverse women coaches." (Canadian Women in Sport). A celebratory post-event article was released and posted on Newmarket Today on March 12, 2024.

- Hosting the inaugural Women in Sport Luncheon in February 2024 with 39 female identifying individuals involved in sport and recreation in attendance. Hosting this luncheon during the 'Women in Sport Coaching Certification Weekend' was an opportunity to support the women in the room with further networking and support connections. A celebratory post-event article was released and posted on Newmarket Today on March 12, 2024.
- Developing a partnership with the Redbirds and Ontario Women's Lacrosse (OWL); resulting in the Town playing an important role of hosting two lacrosse officiating development camps on April 28 and May 11. April's camp focused on youth officials between 14-21 years old to provide an in-depth training session on lacrosse officiating. May's camp brought officials from across Ontario over the age of 14 to learn from one another in advance of the outdoor field season launching this spring. Partnering with a provincial sport organization (PSO) helps our community:
 - Understand how to stay active in sport beyond 'athlete' for sustained and increased participation;
 - Develop sport tourism opportunities;
 - Enhance local sport organizations (LSOs) relationship with their respective PSO and national sport organization (NSO);
 - Remove barriers such as transportation/travel/housing costs,
 - Promote the Town of Aurora as a sport destination.

Sport Plan inclusion initiatives include:

- Hosting a three-part series with Melissa Knox of Sport Law entitled Maintaining and Creating Inclusive Environments. The sessions focused on how to create and maintain inclusive environments in sport, healthy active living and community programming. Melissa Knox is a lawyer experienced in civil litigation, employment, human rights, and sport law, and holds a master's degree in International Sports Law and spent time practicing international sport arbitration in Europe. All sessions were free and appropriate for all roles involved in sport, healthy active living and community programming. The first two sessions were held at Aurora Town Square on Saturday, October 14 2023, and the final session was delivered virtually on December 7, 2023.
- Hosting Fae Johnstone for a two-part series in November 2023 focusing on trans-inclusion in sport entitled Participation, Equity & Competition: An Inclusive Approach to Trans Athletes. Fae Johnstone is a trailblazing trans woman, queer

advocate and co-owner and Executive Director of Wisdom2Action, and President of the Society of Queer Momentum. Attendees learned from Fae how to be allies, and support trans athletes in sport, healthy active living and community programming. Both sessions were held virtually, free of cost, and appropriate for all roles involved in sport, healthy active living and community programming.

- Hosting Brock McGillis in May 2024 for two-part series called Inclusion in Sport. Brock McGillis made history as the first openly gay men's professional hockey player and has become a prominent advocate within the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Plus) community. His tireless efforts to reshape conversations around inclusion led to him receiving the inaugural Herb Carnegie Trailblazer Award in 2023, along with recognition as one of The Hockey News' 100 most influential figures in hockey for 2022, 2023, and 2024. Brock's sessions focused on best practices to ensure LGBTQ2S+ youth feel secure within a team or organization, creating and maintaining safe spaces for LGBTQ2S+ youth, adopting inclusive language and behaviors to embrace LGBTQ2S+ community members, and providing optimal support for the mental well-being of coaches and athletes.

Sport Plan leadership initiatives include:

- Coaches Association of Ontario (CAO) and the Town entered a partnership to host in-person National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) courses in Aurora from October 2023 to February 2024. NCCP is the cornerstone of coach education in Canada. Coaches of all 65 federally recognized sports receive their training and certification through the NCCP. NCCP is for coaches at every level and for those coaching every age of athlete. Certifications hosted in Aurora included NCCP Make Ethical Decisions and NCCP Planning a Practice. Each certification was five hours in length, and worth 5.5 NCCP points.

The initiatives listed in the section above are examples of how the Town is committed to elevating and educating our community under the work of the Sport Plan. Alongside our partners, we share the vision of York Region as a welcoming and inclusive community where diversity is celebrated and where everyone can develop to their full potential, participate freely in society, and live with respect, dignity, and freedom from discrimination.

Sport Plan Update Request for Proposal (RFP) launched in April 2024.

In 2023, the Town of Aurora took a significant step forward with the approval of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) Update, signaling a recommitment to enhancing the recreational landscape for residents. Building upon this momentum, it is now time to focus on updating the Sport Plan. Recognizing the dynamic nature of our community's sporting landscape, the Town acknowledges that the current Sport Plan, designed to provide guidance from 2015 to 2020, no longer adequately reflects the evolving needs of our local sporting organizations and the broader community.

While the initial Sport Plan has contributed to positive changes and opportunities, recent global events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and social justice movements within sports have reshaped the sport landscape in profound ways. These shifts highlight the urgency of revisiting our approach to sport and recreation to ensure inclusivity, safety, and alignment with contemporary values. Moreover, the strategic implementation of priorities outlined in the Sport Plan hinges on its alignment with the current needs and aspirations of our community. As we strive to promote healthy active living and ensure equitable access to recreational opportunities, we must also prioritize the development of coaching standards, best practices, and educational components. These initiatives are integral to fulfilling the Town's responsibility in facilitating meaningful and enriching sporting experiences for all.

In collaboration with community partners, local sporting organizations, and key interested groups, the Town of Aurora is poised to embark on a journey towards a revitalized Sport Plan—one that reflects our collective vision for a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving sporting community. Through collaborative effort and unwavering commitment, we can continue to serve and empower every member of our community in their pursuit of health, recreation, and personal growth.

The RFP states that the Sport Plan Update is to be completed prior to October 30, 2024.

Business Calendar of executed Sport Plan initiatives (since June 2023) and upcoming education opportunities, topics and events in strategic alignment with the Sport Plan.

Completed Sport Plan Initiatives: June 2023 to June 2024

YEAR	MONTH	INITIATIVE	DETAILS
2023	July	Sport Tourism	Hosting: Rugby Canada: U18 Training Camp
	October	Mayor's Roundtable of Sport	Coaches Development in Aurora
		Sport Tourism	OCAA Baseball Championship: Hosted by Seneca College in Aurora
		Workshop	Coaches Association of Ontario: NCCP, Make Ethical Decisions
		Educational Session	Sport Law: Maintaining and Creating an Inclusive Environment in Sport 1
		Educational Session	Sport Law: Maintaining and Creating an Inclusive Environment in Sport 2
	November	Educational Session	Wisdom2Action: Trans Athlete Awareness - Active Roles in Sport
		Workshop	Coaches Association of Ontario: NCCP, Make Ethical Decisions
		Workshop	Coaches Association of Ontario: NCCP, Planning a Practice
		Presentation	Canadian Parks & Recreation Association: Gender Equity Conference
		Committee	Sport Equity & Inclusion Committee Meeting
		Educational Session	Wisdom2Action: Trans Athlete Awareness - Supportive Roles in Sport
	December	Educational Session	Sport Law: Maintaining and Creating an Inclusive Environment in Sport 3
2024	January	Workshop	Coaches Association of Ontario: NCCP, Make Ethical Decisions
		Mayor's Roundtable of Sport	Reconnecting in 2024; Q&A with Mayor Mrakas
		Sport Plan	Sport Plan Update: Work Begins
		Committee	Sport Equity & Inclusion Committee Meeting
		Workshop	Coaches Association of Ontario: NCCP, Planning a Practice
	February	Gender Equity/Workshop	Coaches Association of Ontario: NCCP, Make Ethical Decisions - Women's Only
		Presentation	True Sport Initiatives at the Town
		Committee	Sport Equity & Inclusion Committee Meeting
		Gender Equity	Recreation & Healthy Active Living Leadership Course: Winter 2024 Begins
		Gender Equity	Women in Sport Luncheon
		Gender Equity/Workshop	Coaches Association of Ontario: NCCP, Planning a Practice - Women's Only
	March	Presentation	Ontario Rugby: Panel discussion regarding Municipal relationships for LSOs
		Presentation	Aurora Sport Hall of Fame Board of Director Meeting
		Gender Equity	CPRA: 'Gender Equity in Aurora' Article Released
	April	Presentation	Parks & Recreation Ontario Conference: Leadership Course & Gender Equity
		Presentation	Rugby Ontario Panel: Partnerships & Stewardship
		Sport Tourism / Gender Equity	Ontario Women's Lacrosse: Referee Clinic
		Sport Plan	Sport Plan Update: RFP launched
		Committee	Sport Equity & Inclusion Committee Meeting
	May	Gender Equity	Recreation & Healthy Active Living Leadership Course: Winter 2024 Concludes
		Presentation	Recreation & Healthy Active Living Leadership Course: Presents to Council
Sport Tourism / Gender Equity		Ontario Women's Lacrosse: Referee Clinic	
Sport Plan		Sport Plan Update: RFP Awarded	
Educational Session, LGBTQ2S+		Brock McGillis: LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion in Sport and Recreation	
Gender Equity		Recreation & Healthy Active Living Leadership Course: Winter 2024 Celebration	

Important upcoming Sport Plan initiatives:

- The Town is currently examining the opportunity to host a series of gender equity workshops with local facilitators on supporting female athletes, coaches and administrators in sport. The focus of these sessions will be:
 - Building a positive climate for coaching female athletes
 - Coaching the female athlete for long-term development
 - Retaining and attracting female coaches
 - What coaches need to know about the unique needs of female athletes
- A partnership with Central York Girls Hockey Association (CYGHA) will host Kendra Fisher on June 7 for a keynote to address mental health and team dynamics in sport. Kendra is a former Team Canada hockey player and missed out on the Olympics due to mental health. This event is a great example of the partnership between the Town and CYGHA as we collaborate in our shared commitment to promote mental health awareness and fostering a culture of inclusivity within the sports community. By joining forces, all involved amplify impact and demonstrate the power of unity in driving positive change. We aim to create safer, more supportive environments where every athlete feels valued, respected, and empowered to thrive both on and off the field of play. The event is free, appropriate for anyone involved in sport above the age of 14 and will be hosted in-person at St. Andrew's College. Through engaging discussions and the inspiring story shared by our guest speaker Kendra Fisher, attendees will deepen their understanding of the challenges athletes face and the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive environment within sports communities.
- The Town of Aurora received participACTION funding to launch the inaugural LeadHer Day. LeadHER Day offers girls aged 8 to 13 in Aurora an inclusive space to connect and thrive. On June 7 at the AFLC, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., girls will enjoy swimming, art, physical activities, and nutrition sessions led by all-female identifying staff. The goal is to foster confidence, friendship, and healthy habits while empowering girls to play, learn, and grow, thus creating a brighter future for all. Additionally, the Town is collaborating with CICS (Canadian Immigration Centre for Community Services) to reach newcomer girls for this opportunity.
- The Town of Aurora received participACTION funding and will partner with several community organizations to host the inaugural "Aurora PRIDE Luau," an interactive Pride month event scheduled for June 26. In collaboration with You Can Play and York Pride, individuals and families are invited for an evening of celebration, unity, and support for LGBTQ2S+ community initiatives. This event

aims to foster inclusivity, promote diversity, enhance opportunity for healthy active living and make a positive impact within our community.

In conclusion, the upcoming Sport Plan initiatives represent a significant commitment by the Town to promote diversity, inclusion, and mental well-being within the sports community. These initiatives reflect the Town's commitment to creating safer, more supportive environments where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered to thrive both on and off the field of play.

Advisory Committee Review

Not Applicable.

Legal Considerations

There are no legal implications.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Communications Considerations

The Corporate Communications Division provided significant communications support for various Sport Plan initiatives. Many initiatives in the Sport Plan have a communications and marketing plan to ensure awareness and drive participation and engagement from the community. The tactics for each initiative vary but include social media campaigns, webpage creation and updates, advertising campaigns, graphic design for print and online materials, and media relations.

Once the Sport Plan Update work begins, Communications will be involved in the creation of a comprehensive communications plan, creating and reviewing social media messages, creating and updating web pages, strategy discussions, creation of media articles, community outreach tactics, creation of graphic design components (ads, social images, web banners, posters) and more.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendation from this report does not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

The work on the Sport Plan supports the Strategic Plan goal of *Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all* in its accomplishments in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

Encourage an active and healthy lifestyle.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may provide further direction.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this report offers a comprehensive update on the progress made since the last General Committee's Sport Plan Progress Report in June 2023. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is a cornerstone to ensuring that our community feels safe to participate, and a sense of belonging while living healthy active lives.

Attachments

Not applicable

Previous Reports

CMS20-009 Sport Plan – Progress Report, March 3, 2020

CMS20-023 Sport Plan Progress Report No. 2, September 22, 2020

CMS22-002 Sport Plan – Progress Report No. 3, January 11, 2022

CMS23-029 Sport Plan Update – No. 4, June 20, 2023

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on May 16, 2024

Approvals

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer