



## MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RE: Amherst's no-fee ice project recognized by Sport Nova Scotia

**AMHERST, Nova Scotia** – Amherst's three-year-old no-fee ice project is making a difference.

That's what Sport Nova Scotia believes and that was reflected when the organization presented the Town of Amherst with its Support4Sport Makes a Difference award during its annual gala in Halifax on June 1.

The program waives ice-time fees for youth organizations like Cumberland County Minor Hockey Association and the Amherst Figures Skating Club, hockey tournaments and figure skating workshops for youth and public skating for people of all ages.

It was implemented as a pilot project in 2016 in the hopes it would halt a decline in stadium usage while improving the health and well-being of the town's residents, particularly its youth.

"It's an honour to have this program recognized by Sport Nova Scotia," said Mayor David Kogon, who along with Recreation Director Bill Schurman accepted the award on the town's behalf.

"This program has made a difference. It has helped our citizens, particularly our youth, maintain an active, healthy lifestyle and is just one of the many reasons we believe Amherst is a great



**Facilities Co-ordinator Corey Crocker, Mayor David Kogon, Recreation Director Bill Schurman and Active Living Co-ordinator Tamara Porter show off the Support4Sport award the town received on June 1. (Tom McCoag / Town of Amherst)**



place to live, work and play.”

“It was a great endorsement for the work the community has been doing in relation to trying to encourage people to be more active and healthier,” Schurman added.

The aim of the project was to see organizations like minor hockey and figure skating pass on the savings they achieved by not having to pay for ice time to those who registered.

“That has happened,” Schurman said. “And it has resulted in those programs, which had been seeing declining registrations, being able to maintain or increase the number of participants.”

The town has also seen more hockey tournaments and figure skating events being held at the Amherst Stadium. As an example, Schurman pointed to Skate Canada, which held skating workshops in Christmas 2017 and again during the 2018 Christmas break.

The stadium has also seen an increase in the numbers of people attending public skating since the implementation of the program.

Following the first year of the initiative, a Dalhousie University research team that studied the project concluded it “was an overall success and is an example to other municipalities about how an investment in physical activity and youth is also an investment in both the health and economy of the community.”

The study also pointed out that during the first year, the program saved minor hockey about \$45,000 and saw 277 youth participate – an increase of 17 from the year before. The local skating club saved about \$19,000 and saw the number of participants in its program grow to 144 from 99 the previous year.

Surveys conducted in the second year of the program indicated that 88 per cent of the respondents felt the program was a good use of taxpayers’ money.

The town was nominated for the award by Skate Canada Nova Scotia. Its executive director, Jill Knowles, told the Amherst News the “no-fee ice (project) is an amazing initiative.”

“So many children have benefitted from that and it’s something that deserves to be recognized,” she said. “We want youth to be more active and Amherst is putting its money where its mouth is. It’s something more communities could do and it will be interesting to see if more communities follow Amherst’s example.”

While it remains a pilot project, it has the full support of Amherst town council, which recently approved a fourth year for the project when it included the no-fee ice program in its 2019-20 operating budget.

You can see a video on the project that was shown at the gala at: <https://youtu.be/aUTUZtyaTuE>



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Direct Inquiries to:  
Tom McCoag  
Corporate Communications Officer  
902-694-6265  
[tmccoag@amherst.ca](mailto:tmccoag@amherst.ca)

