



Report to Council

Department: Community Services
Division: Community Services
Date: August 24, 2020
Prepared by: Doug Sweet, Director of Com. Services/Deputy CAO
Report Number: Community Services-2020-04
Subject: Reopening of Town of Essex Indoor Recreation Facilities
Number of Pages: 8

Recommendation(s)

The following recommendations are provided for Council's consideration:

- a) That Community Services Report CS-2020-009 entitled "Reopening of Town of Essex Indoor Recreation Facilities" **be received**; and
- b) That Council approve the opening of the Harrow Arena, McGregor Community Centre, Colchester Community Centre, Maedel Community Centre, and the Essex Centre Sports Complex-Shaheen Room as of Tuesday September 8th as per the provinces Stage 3 reopening plan and guidelines; and
- c) That Council concur with Administration following the Town's Ice Allocation Policy when allocating ice at the Harrow Arena while repairs occur at the Essex Centre Sports Complex.

Purpose

To provide Council with an update for stage 3 resumption of services at Town of Essex indoor recreation facilities.

Background and Discussion

On Sunday March 15, 2020 Essex Council at their emergency meeting mandated the closure of all town indoor recreation facilities as a precaution to the ongoing spread of the coronavirus. On March 17, 2020, the Premier of Ontario declared a state of emergency throughout Ontario related to COVID-19 under s 7.0.1 (1) the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

Following the Provincial directive of March 17th, the Town also declared a state of emergency and closed all municipal facilities to the general public, rental users and all user groups throughout the entire municipality.

In anticipation of the Province announcing that the Windsor-Essex region will move into stage 3 of the reopening plan, staff have met in an effort to prepare various scenarios to re-design our services in order to meet the new regulations as set out in stage 3. Consideration has been given to information provided in various guidance documents, advice from the local health authority, and understanding the community expectation and demand. Other balancing factors, included, but are not limited to financial viability, placement of activities within our facilities and protecting the safety of staff and the public.

The information below summarizes the Ontario regulation as it pertains to the services that can now be offered at the facilities under Stage 3:

Facilities for Sports and Recreational Fitness Activities

- Examples of facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities include gyms, fitness studios, and community centres.
- Physical distancing must be maintained, except if playing a team sport or as needed for personal training.
- The total number of people permitted in areas containing weights or exercise machines is limited to the number of people that can maintain physical distancing of at least two metres, which cannot exceed the indoor gathering limit of 50 people.

- The total number people permitted in classes or organized activities at any one time is limited to the number of people that can maintain physical distancing of at least two metres, and cannot exceed the indoor gathering limit of 50 people or the outdoor limit of 100.
- Assigned spaces are strongly recommended for organized fitness classes (e.g., by marking circles on the floor to designate where each person should exercise).
- Gathering limits do not apply in all other areas (e.g., pools, tennis courts and rinks).
- Equipment must be cleaned and disinfected between user sets or at the end of a game.
- Any washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers or similar amenities made available to the public must be cleaned and disinfected frequently.
- Steam rooms and saunas are not yet permitted to open.

Team Sports and Live Sporting Events

- Prolonged or deliberate contact while playing sports is not permitted.
- Team sports in which body contact between players is either an integral component of the sport or commonly occurs while engaged in the sport (e.g., wrestling, judo) are not yet permitted, unless the approach can be modified to prevent prolonged or deliberate physical contact.
- Amateur and recreational sports leagues may resume so long as they do not allow prolonged or deliberate physical contact between players or if they have modifications to avoid physical contact between players.
- Leagues must contain no more than 50 participants total. If participants in a league exceed 50, the league may divide into smaller groups of no more than 50. Players are not yet permitted to play against players outside of their league or group.
- Spectators at all sporting events, including professional sports, will be subject to gathering limits and physical distancing measures, with assigned seating where possible.

Recreational Courses and Instruction

- Examples of recreational courses and instruction include music lessons, language classes, tutoring and art classes.
- All instructional classes are subject to gathering limits.
- Physical distancing must be in place for participants, other than when necessary for instruction. Face coverings are recommended in those situations.
- Equipment must be cleaned and disinfected frequently.
- Plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier and physical distancing are required for any instruction that involves singing or playing wind or brass instruments.

When the Stage 3 plan was circulated on July 13, 2020, it stated that all indoor recreation facilities, no matter if they were multi-use complexes could only have a total of 50 people indoors no matter how many different amenities were part of that complex. On Friday August 14th the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, amended the indoor recreational facility capacity limit to a per room basis to help more facilities reopen their doors, and promote the return to a healthy and active lifestyle for all Ontarians. Beginning August 15, 2020 at 12:01 a.m., these facilities may have up to 50 patrons for each indoor sport or fitness room, while ensuring physical distancing of at least two metres. The revised capacity limits are on a per room basis and they will apply to gymnasiums, health clubs, community centres, multi-purpose facilities, arenas, exercise studios, yoga and dance studios and other fitness facilities that are able to follow the new guidance. The change was enabled by amendments to the Stage 3 regulation and a new plan and guidance document to apply a per room limit for sport and recreational fitness activities at facilities with the necessary space or layout.

While circumstances have been unusual, with many factors outside of Essex's control, staff have approached the opportunity to reopen by applying the following guiding principles to our decision making:

- Safety of staff and public is paramount;

- Continuation in the delivery of public services;
- Responding to the needs of the community as the pandemic evolves;
- Fiscal responsibility and appropriate use of taxpayers funding.

To open Town indoor recreation facilities in a safe manner for the public and staff, Administration has reviewed best practices and consulted with Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO), Ontario Recreation Facilities Association (ORFA), and reviewed best practices from provincial associations and sport governing bodies. In addition to the Provincial Directives, staff have also reviewed the Ontario Recreation Facilities Association (ORFA) Guidelines regarding safe operation of facilities including capacity limitations, sanitation recommendations and other operational considerations to ensure all requirements are met. Below are a few of the steps that will be implemented for Town of Essex indoor facilities that are able to open in stage 3:

- Any public member that enters the facilities must wear a mask at all times, except when participating in certain activities such as ice rentals, fitness programs, etc;
- Designated entry and exit points into the facilities will be established where possible;
- Town staff will monitor the number of patrons in each “room/rink” at the facilities to ensure remain under the 50 person limit;
- It is strongly recommended that only the participants for the activity enter the facility, however if a child is 18 years or younger only 1 parent/guardian will be permitted into the facility and they must remain in the designated viewing areas;
- Water fountains will not be available so it is recommended each participant bring their own water bottle and have it clearly labelled. The water fill stations in each facility will be available to fill water bottles;
- Dressing rooms will have limited use with social distancing of at least 2 metres to be maintained;
- After each rental or program Town staff will disinfect the high touch areas;

- All organizations renting space must track who from their organization are in the facility during their scheduled rental time.

There have been challenges when planning to reopen facilities due to lack of clarity in some of the regulations, different interpretation of the regulations across the sector, the speed at which the Province changes direction and managing public expectations.

Municipalities across the Province are taking various approaches under Stage 3 regarding reopening facilities: some are staying closed while others are operating for limited hours or reopening with regular hours.

Administration is recommending all Town indoor recreation facilities be open to the public as of Tuesday September 8th with the exception of the Essex Centre Sports Complex 2 ice pads.

This would mean the Harrow Arena, Colchester Community Centre, McGregor Community Centre and the Maedel Community Centre, and the Essex Centre Sports Complex Shaheen Room would be available for rentals or programming based on policies and procedures put in place.

The two ice pads at the Essex Centre Sports Complex would remain closed at this time due to the facility structural repairs that need to occur. It is anticipated this work may take up to 2 months and once complete the two ice pads at the Essex Centre Sports Complex will reopen based on the provincial guidelines in place at that time.

Due to the reduction in ice pads available for September and potentially October, Administration is recommending the Town continue to follow its ice allocation policy in scheduling ice at the Harrow Arena during the closure of the two Essex Centre Sport Complex ice pads.

The Town's ice allocation policy list order of group priorities as follows:

- Town of Essex recreational ice programs;
- Youth organizations;

- Tournaments and special events;
- Seasonal clients;
- Boards of education – high school hockey and school ice;
- Occasional and commercial users; and
- Occasional and commercial user's tournaments and special events.

Based on the Town's ice allocation policy ice preference will go to all youth organizations that previously used Town of Essex facilities first, and then adult groups. All youth organizations who utilized Town of Essex ice pads during the 2019/20 season have been updated and sent a revised ice request form for the Harrow Arena for the month of September. Administration is recommending ice at the Harrow Arena be scheduled a month at a time so it can monitor when repairs at the Essex Centre Sport Complex will be complete and then be able to schedule ice at that facility as well.

Financial Impact

Based on the previous opening of other Town facilities, Administration is aware that there will be additional costs for signage and cleaning products at each facility. These costs are unknown at this time but staff continue to track all costs through a separate COVID cost centre that was set up in April.

In addition, with the Stage 3 limitations on the level of activities that can occur within indoor recreation facilities staff do realize that all ice rental groups (youth and adult) may not require the same amount of ice as their registration numbers have dropped or their participants are not comfortable participating with the current provincial guidelines. Administration will constantly monitor usage and schedule ice and rentals in blocks to avoid gaps and additional staffing.

Consultations

John Olsen, Manager of Parks and Facilities

Cynthia Cakebread, Manager of Recreation and Culture

Link to Strategic Priorities

- ☐ Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure which meets current and future needs of the municipality and its citizens.
- ☒ Create a safe, friendly and inclusive community which encourages healthy, active living for people of all ages and abilities.
- ☐ Provide a fiscal stewardship and value for tax dollars to ensure long-term financial health to the municipality.
- ☐ Manage responsible and viable growth while preserving and enhancing the unique rural and small town character of the community.
- ☒ Improve the experiences of individuals, as both citizens and customers, in their interactions with the Town of Essex.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	CS-2020-Reopening of Town of Essex Indoor Recreation Facilities - Community Services-2020-04.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Aug 19, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below: