

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 8, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Perspectives and Initiatives Regarding Community Access to Schools

ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Executive Director

RESOURCE
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INFORMATION

This report provides a response to a trustee request for information which follows in bold type. The report also includes background information on the process that is used for community groups to book space in schools, and outlines some of the issues regarding community use of schools.

TRUSTEE REQUEST #115, OCTOBER 8, 2005 (TRUSTEE GIBEAULT) PROVIDE A REPORT OUTLINING ELEMENTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE PERCEPTION OF RESTRICTED ACCESS TO SCHOOL BUILDINGS AS WELL AS POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION THE BOARD COULD CONSIDER TO RESPOND TO THESE CONCERNS.

Under the Joint Use Agreement, Edmonton Public Schools makes space available to recreation and culture groups in the community for after hours use. The City of Edmonton, through sponsoring all groups into the space, ensures a group’s eligibility to use the space and manages the group’s access to the space.

The opportunity for groups to use school space is provided at no charge or for a nominal fee. Youth and minors under the age of 18 are given free access schools, and adult groups pay a nominal fee of \$10 or \$15 per hour for a group of ten or more people, depending on the size of the gym. Groups that are not eligible to access schools under City sponsorship must rent the space.

Understanding the Booking Process

The process for community groups to book space in schools includes many steps and involves many players. These steps are outlined in more detail in Appendix I. The main steps and responsibilities are:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1: Schools determine the hours that will be available for community use | April, May |
| 2. Community Services calculates total community demand and group’s entitlements | May, June |
| 3: Casual Users and Small Recreation Groups can re-book their historical bookings | June |
| 4: Major City-Wide Sports Groups can re-book 75 per cent of the time they are entitled to | June, July |
| 5: City holds meetings to book remaining 25 per cent for Major Sports Groups | July |
| 6: All Users can book the remaining available time as required | September to June |

Issues Relating to Community Use of Schools

Edmonton Minor Soccer Association (EMSA) has recently expressed concern regarding their experience of booking space in certain zones, and their recent experiences of reduced access to schools for the team practices.

Participation in indoor soccer is growing, and the number of gyms that can support this activity is not.

While demand for indoor soccer gym availability is growing, the overall demand for after-hours use of gyms in both school districts has declined from about 62,000 hours in 2001-02 to about 55,000 hours in 2003-04 (Appendix II).

Community groups are looking for ways to expand or enhance their access to schools for after hour use.

Groups do not want to travel great distances from their local communities to access schools for after hours use. Related to this issue, schools are not evenly distributed throughout the city. In some sectors, where the population and participation in sports is growing fastest, there are the fewest schools.

Apart from the nominal fee for adult users, the district does not receive grants or other funds to pay for costs associated with after-hours community use. As plant operating funds are now more closely tied to student enrolment, the funding of this non-educational activity is ever more constrained. For the past school year, the district provided an allocation of \$284,360 from the operating fund to participating schools to offset a small portion of the costs incurred at the school level in providing for after-hours community use.

Elements that Contribute to a Perception of Restricted Access (Trustee Request)

A change in school availability is perceived as a loss or decline of school availability. Whereas the district as a whole may provide a stable number of gyms each year and a stable number of available hours overall (Appendix III), the specific groups experiencing a change will interpret this change as a decline of availability.

Changes in school venues impact most acutely on the minor soccer community as this group has access to only a sub-set of gyms that can accommodate this type of activity. Changes in the availability of soccer-approved gyms are therefore more disruptive to this group than a loss of a gym that serves all users. This raises concerns for individuals responsible for booking space in gyms for soccer conditioning.

The introduction of the *Standards of Play* has significantly impacted the amount of access certain sport groups are entitled to receive for after hours use. This initiative was set up by the City to ensure fair and equitable access for all users. The Standards reduced access for some groups in order for other groups to gain a fair share of access. Those groups or teams that were scaled back may not have clearly understood that their loss was the result of implementing the Standards of Play, and not through a perceived reduction of availability of gyms.

The City brokers gym space to the sport associations through a booking process established by the School and Recreational Facilities Committee of the Joint Use Agreement. The responsibility to distribute the specific gym bookings is delegated to the sport associations themselves. When a

desired gym slot is not assigned to a particular member or team, a lack of understanding of the complex process may contribute to a perception that the district has restricted access to that gym.

The hours provided by the school boards for community use are spread evenly throughout the year, on operational school days from approximately September 22 to June 10. The most desired times, however for community use are on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays of each week. Also, the 'playing seasons' of the major sports generally start in October or November and run through mid-January to March. This creates pressure points at particular times in the week and in particular months of the year, and reinforces the perception of a shortage of supply. From the users' perspective, many of the hours the district makes available are not relevant or useful for them.

Possible Courses the Board Could Consider to Respond to these Concerns (Trustee Request)

1. The Board has recently implemented a *Consultation on Community Use of Facilities*. The Goals of this consultation are:
 - to understand the community's expectations regarding access to schools,
 - to increase understanding of the challenges facing the board in making space available for after-hours use,
 - to generate key messages and ideas to bring forward into the current review of the Joint Use Agreement.
2. The Board could continue advocacy at the provincial level for specific funding to support costs associated with community use of schools. Presently, Plant Operation and Maintenance Funding is tied solely to the minimum amount of space required by each student to learn. It does not address costs associated with non-instructional needs such as after hours community use. Additionally, the board could provide follow-up support for a recent Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) resolution calling for the province to establish new funding to school boards for the purpose of accommodating after-hours community use of schools (Appendix IV).
3. The Board could request that the City consider a financial role in supporting the costs of community use commensurate with its mandate to provide for the recreational needs of the community. The Board could also support the City's provision of appropriate venues for indoor soccer conditioning as these kinds of projects materialize.

In addition to consultation the administration is also moving forward in the following areas:

1. The Joint Use Agreement Review team is exploring ways to expand availability in school gyms.
2. Planning staff are working with the users, the City and principals to establish a closer alignment of the availability of hours and locations of gyms, with the hours and locations that are needed or desired by the user groups.
3. District staff will work within the Joint Use Agreement Sub-Committees to ensure that all user groups fully understand the complex booking process and the responsibilities within it.
4. Planning staff will work with principals to find creative ways to manage the custodial requirements for keeping space open without impacting infrastructure dollars.

DME:cp

APPENDIX I The Community Booking Process

APPENDIX II Gym Booking Activity: from Joint Use Agreement Annual Report 2004

APPENDIX III Community Hours Available and Community Hours Booked 2002 – 2005

APPENDIX IV AUMA Resolution to Encourage Greater After-Hours Community Use

The Community Booking Process

Step 1: **Schools** determine the hours that will be available for community use April, May

What happens?

- District principals review the calendar for the upcoming school year.
- District principals determine when the school will need the gym and classrooms for after-hours school events.
- District principals determine when the school will be available for after hours community use based largely on school needs and the ability to staff appropriately.
- District principals determine the kinds of activities that are permissible in their schools based on district administrative regulations (JG.AR) and the physical constraints of the gym. Principals also specify what school sports equipment and fixtures are available for community groups to use.
- Information is compiled by the district and sent to the City's Community Services Department.
- Similar information is compiled by Edmonton Catholic Schools and sent to the City's Community Services Department.

Step 2: **Community Services** calculates total community demand and entitlements May, June

What happens?

- Community Services requests applications from all users for after-hours community use of schools for the coming school year, and determines the total demand.
- The major sports groups identify to Community Services how many hours will be needed based on expected participation levels and number of teams organized.
- The major sports groups in Edmonton are:
 - Edmonton Basketball Association
 - Edmonton Volleyball Association
 - Edmonton Youth Basketball
 - Edmonton Badminton Association
 - Friends of George (FOG) Volleyball
 - Northern Alberta Volleyball Association
 - Alberta Team Handball Federation
 - Mill Woods Recreational Volleyball
 - Edmonton Minor Soccer Association (EMSA)
 - Edmonton Inter-youth Soccer Association (EISA)
- Community Services applies the *Standards of Play* to determine the amount of time each major sport group is eligible to receive. This is the major sports group's "entitlement".

Step 3: **Casual Users and Small Recreation Groups** can re-book their historical bookings June

What happens?

- Community Services advises the minor sports teams and casual users that they may re-book their past year's booking for the coming year. Examples of casual users are Boy Scouts, community league programs such as dance classes, Tae Kwan Do, etc. These are "historical bookings" which can be rolled forward for the coming year.

- The City forwards all applications from Casual Users who indicated their desire to keep their historical booking to the district. These are booked into the schools for the coming school year.

Step 4: **Major City-Wide Sports Groups** Re-Book 75 per cent of the time they are entitled to
June, July

What happens?

- Community Services advises the Major Sport Groups that they may re-book or protect 75 per cent of their past year's bookings. These historical bookings are rolled forward for the coming year and booked into the schools.

Step 5: **Community Services** holds a meeting to book remaining 25 per cent for Major Sports Groups
July

What happens?

- A meeting is held among the major sports groups to book the remaining 25 per cent of their entitlement for the coming year, as determined by the Standards of Play.
- This process allows the major groups to retool or refine their booking locations and times by "exchanging" with other major sports groups those booking times or locations that did not work well for them.
- A three per cent additional entitlement is given to each group to allow flexibility for cancellations.
- Each of the major sports groups take turns going around the table to select times and specific school locations to meet the remaining 25 per cent of entitlement, and to better serve their sport's needs.
- Each major sports group's remaining 25 per cent of time is booked into the system.
- Each major sport group takes from the meeting all of its demand or entitlement, which consists of the remaining 25 per cent of entitlement hours booked at that meeting, together with its 75 per cent of its protected, historical hours that are already re-booked.
- Each major sport group then distributes or assigns all of the hours and school locations to its members or participant teams.

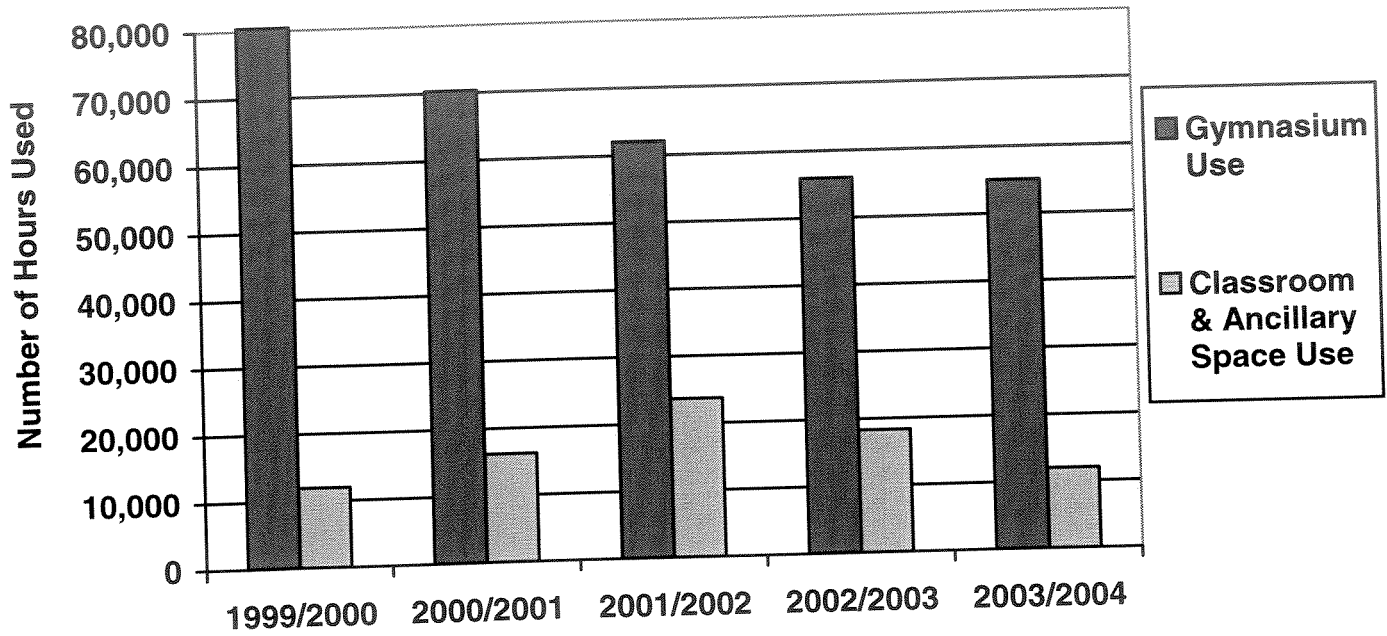
Step 6: **All Users** book any remaining available time
September to June

What happens?

- Following the re-booking of all casual users' historical bookings, and the booking of all major sports groups up to their entitlement, the remaining available time in schools is booked to any eligible user group as desired on a first come, first served basis.
- The City conducts this booking function on behalf of Edmonton Catholic Schools, and the City forwards all remaining applications requesting district space to the district and this booking is done internally.

*Edmonton Public Schools
November 8, 2005*

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES



	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
Gymnasium Hours	70,323	62,058	55,912	55,052
Classroom and Ancillary Space Hours	16,177	23,696	18,331	11,969

Source: JointUse Agreement Annual Report 2004

**Community Hours Available and Community Hours Booked 2002- 2005
Edmonton Public Schools**

Type	2002-03		2003-04		2004-05		2005-06	
	Available Hours	Booked Hours	Available Hours	Booked Hours	Available Hours	Booked Hours	Available Hours	Booked Hours (Est.)
AA	4,076.0	1,864.7	4,248.0	1,740.2	5,088.0	1,842.7	5,667.3	2,543.5
A	2,768.0	1,261.0	2,599.0	1,476.5	3,960.0	1,855.2	5,941.0	1,939.5
B	23,448.5	14,738.5	16,572.5	13,850.0	21,792.0	12,864.0	20,800.5	11,877.0
C	18,166.2	10,022.2	12,625.2	10,264.7	17,128.0	9,319.7	15,708.8	9,238.5
D	28,880.7	13,083.2	22,933.7	10,493.0	27,744.0	9,815.7	26,699.3	9,274.0
Subtot	77,339.5	40,969.7	58,978.5	37,824.5	75,712.0	35,697.5	74,816.8	34,872.5
Other	N/A	18,205.5	N/A	11,913.2	N/A	11,449.0	N/A	10,730.5
Total	77,339.5	59,175.2	58,978.5	49,737.7	75,712.0	47,146.5	74,816.8	45,603.0

Gym Type generally refers to size and associated amenities as follows:

- “AA” Gyms are greater than 500m² with full bleachers and locker/change room;
- “A” Gyms are greater than 500m² without associated amenities;
- “B” Gym is 400m² – 500m²;
- “C” Gyms are 350m² – 400m²; and
- “D” Gyms are less than 350m².

*Edmonton Public Schools
November 8, 2005*

AUMA RESOLUTION 2005.C.ii.1

TOWN OF BEAUMONT

**SPECIAL FUNDING TO ENCOURAGE GREATER AFTER-HOURS COMMUNITY
USE OF SCHOOL DIVISIONS' FACILITIES**

WHEREAS, many if not most communities in Alberta have agreements in place with their local School Divisions to provide for joint use of school and municipal recreational facilities; and

WHEREAS, budget constraints and increased costs are placing major impediments on all School Divisions in the Province to continue to accommodate evening and weekend use in their facilities for community groups; and

WHEREAS, given the adverse effect that results from the loss of community access to school facilities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AUMA request that the Government of Alberta give special funding consideration enabling School Divisions to mobilize resources needed to support and encourage greater after-hours community use within their facilities.

BACKGROUND

Many, if not most communities in Alberta have agreements in place with their local School Divisions to provide for joint use of school and municipal recreational facilities. In Beaumont's case, an agreement has been in place since 1997; and, although our own School Division remains committed to providing community groups with subsidized user rates in the schools, budget constraints and increased costs are placing major impediments on all school divisions in the Province to continue to accommodate evening and weekend use, which serves as prime time for community groups.

The School Divisions indicate that the level of funding that they receive does not provide for extra staff to open, monitor and close the schools while used by community groups after hours. Since municipalities staff their own facilities and make them available to the student population in the School Divisions, it was felt that perhaps the Provincial Government should be encouraged to provide an additional level of funding specifically targeted to improve community group access to school facilities.

Source: Convention Policy and Resolutions Handbook AUMA Calgary, AB
October 5-8, 2005