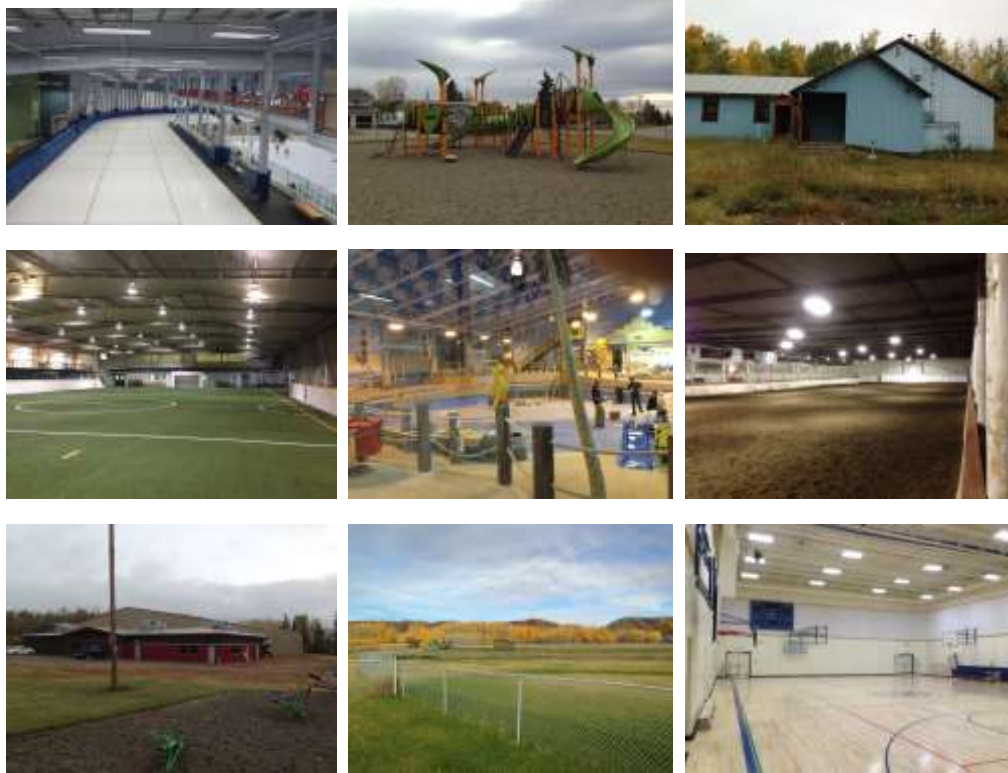


# Peace River Regional District, City of Fort St. John, and District of Taylor



## North Peace Sub-Regional – Recreation Facility Inventory and Assessment

**FINAL REPORT**

February 2015



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## Executive Summary

The Peace River Regional District, City of Fort St. John (FSJ) and the District of Taylor deliver coordinated recreation services to the residents of the North Peace region. Before subsequent recreation master plans are updated and plans made to commit new capital or operating funds, it is prudent to get a comprehensive picture of the current status of facilities and assets.

The intent of this report and the facility audits appendix is to thoroughly document the condition and projected remaining service life of assets in order to forecast at what point in time capital interventions will become necessary. Assets have been given numerical scores or grades between 1 (lowest) and 10 (highest) as well as an estimate of remaining service life (between 5 and 35 years), as shown in the summary table on the following page. Assessments were based on visual observations only (not detailed technical assessments by engineering specialists, though buildings with obvious concerns were identified for further investigation).

In addition, this report examines demand factors including population and participation rates, facility utilization, facility size and construction type and cost recovery. This information will aid in identifying whether the current inventory of facilities are adequate to meet the demand for recreation services, or if gaps exist. It is important to note however that City of Fort St. John has committed to making recreation accessible to all citizens by remaining affordable, impacting cost recovery for a higher social good and consequently impacting other facilities in the region and their rates and revenues.

The report concludes with a series of options and strategies to consider for the development or redevelopment of facilities including order-of-magnitude capital cost estimates. The purpose of these options or ideas are to stimulate thinking, further due diligence and debate – none of these options been vetted through a public consultation process.

### Key Observations

By activity grouping and gleaned through facility tours, interviews and subsequent analysis of participation and utilization, are the following key observations:

- Minor hockey constitutes less than 33% of prime-time demand for arenas outside of Fort St. John. The demand for minor hockey in FSJ absorbs over 90% of prime-time in two of the three arenas. If minor hockey grows as anticipated, adults now using prime-time will have gradually shift to off-prime or to more favourable time slots in rural arenas. FSJ minor hockey can also seek some additional prime-time slots in Taylor and at the rural arenas. The combined 650 youth in minor hockey in the North Peace region (equal to 12% of the 5,500 SD60 enrolment) is a higher participation rate per capita than the national average. However, demand and operational sustainability will likely not reach a tipping-point to support the addition of another ice sheet (a seventh in the region) for at least the next 15-20 years.
- The North Peace Leisure Centre aquatic facility has had numerous problems and will not likely reach its projected service life potential. This would accelerate the timetable for replacement - to just over 10 years from now. The current pool also has functional deficiencies such as narrow lanes in the lane tank and too short a run in the wave pool to optimally generate waves. A replacement pool should be built to 8-lanes, increasing pool time inventory by 33% but only increasing overall building size and operating costs by about 10%.
- Outdoor and indoor soccer have experienced the most significant growth of any sports in the past decade. As population increases and the soccer participation rates approaches national averages, additional growth could be exponential. According to Soccer Canada, current participation per

population for minor soccer should be in the range of 1,900 but in FSJ, is currently capped at 800. Outdoor soccer currently uses two fields at Surerus Park and a number of unreliable school fields. Conversely, the study area has 20 ball diamonds for a sport that has declined nationally by 70% in the last decade. Indoor soccer with 480 registrants uses all of prime time in Kids Arena and 100% of time in three school gyms. Adults use off-prime time in Kids Arena. At least a doubling of outdoor and indoor facilities is needed.

- School District 60 has applied to the Ministry of Education to add two new FSJ elementary schools and one new FSJ middle school as well as to replace two existing FSJ schools (Central and Charlie Lake). The opportunity exists for the PRRD and/or City of Fort St. John to partner with SD60 and 'top-up' capital to enlarge the three new elementary gyms to full-size, thereby doubling the inventory of the versatile full-size gyms in the region. This would accommodate a number of sports most notably indoor soccer, but also creating access for marginal activities unable to book gym time now.
- Gymnastics appealing to predominantly female youth and FSJ curling appealing to older adults, are two very popular and viable sports in Fort St. John - both with buildings that eventually will need replacing. Gymnastics with current 850 registrations occupies a space 50% the size of modern functional and safe gymnastics gyms. FSJ curling with 8-sheets officially has 310 memberships though 440 are registered in their database. Conversely, Taylor Curling with 4-sheets only has 24 youth memberships, approximately 80-90 adult memberships and its long-term viability is questionable. In terms of per capita participation, both sports are slight above national averages.
- For fitness training, the North Peace region should have at least two additional multi-purpose sprung-floor dance studios for fitness programming. While some of this activity can be accommodated in school gymnasiums, the peak demand time slots for fitness are not typically available due to conflicts with school use. These rooms could also serve as meeting and childcare spaces if built as part of a replacement building such as indoor soccer or a pool.
- Community halls are in part a legacy from the agricultural past, when mobility and transportation were limited. Many rural areas are slowly becoming bedroom communities for the urban centers and families opt for urban recreation and entertainment. That noted, the halls remain the key identifiers and landmarks of the small rural settlements. About half of the halls are larger, reasonably well maintained and more economically self-sustaining. But all of the halls depend on volunteer labour, which is in systemic decline everywhere. When many of the smaller, lesser used halls reach the end of building service life in 10-15 years, critical evaluation will be required before committing \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 in current cost for replacement buildings.
- The North Peace region, FSJ and Taylor have a wealth of parks and outdoor amenities. The urban centers have numerous playgrounds, all upgraded to current safety standards - but none are handicapped accessible (though Taylor Arena has an indoor play structure that is accessible). Heritage Park in FSJ is handicapped accessible park but is designed for seniors use, not children. Sport parks are abundant but possibly require reconfiguration for growing sports, and passive parks and trail systems are vibrant and constantly improved. Note that school playgrounds were not assessed as part of this study.
- The Big Bam Ski Hill and the equestrian gymkhanas each have problems. Each operated by not-for-profit society, these facilities are experiencing declining participation and volunteerism needed to manage and operate the facilities. Further, Big Bam lost a generation of skiers when the lower slope collapsed over a decade ago and the facility has been slow to rebuild itself. The equestrian community is a small committed community, but interest in attending events has fallen sharply and calls into question the viability of some venues.

## Summary of Asset Conditions

A total of 45 buildings and 36 parks were evaluated in the assessment process. The table below summarizes the findings. The left side of the table ranks assets in descending order of building condition (ranked 1-10, with 10 being the highest). The right side of the table sorts the asset intervention points by year in chronological order. Taylor Stock Car and Motocross tracks were not included in the study at this time. NFPS stands for not-for-profit society.

Sorted Overall by rating (Desending Order)				Sorted Overall by Intervention Year			
Building Assets	Owner	Rating	Remaining Life	Building Assets	Owner	Rating	Earliest Year Intervention
1 Pomeroy Centre	FSJ	8.5	35	1 Rose Prairie Curling Club	NFPS	2.5	2020
2 Clearview Elem. / Jr. Secondary School	SD60	8.5	30	2 Buick Creek Community Hall	PRRD	2.0	2020
3 North Peace Senior Secondary School	Sd60	8.5	30	3 Golata Community Hall	PRRD	2.0	2020
4 Taylor Community Hall	Taylor	8.0	25	4 New Elementary School FSJ Northwest	SD60	n/a	2020
5 Taylor Arena	Taylor	7.5	20	5 New Middle School FSJ North	SD60	n/a	2020
6 Lake Point Golf and Country Club	NFPS	7.5	20	6 North Peace Leisure Centre	PRRD	5.0	2025
7 Taylor Lone Wolf Golf Course	Taylor	7.5	20	7 Ecole Central Elementary School*	SD60	4.0	2025
8 Baldonnel Elementary School	SD60	7.0	25	8 Taylor Curling Club and Pool	Taylor	6.5	2025
9 Bert Ambrose Elementary School	SD60	7.0	25	9 Clearview Arena	PRRD	4.0	2025
10 Halfway Elementary School	SD60	7.0	20	10 Osborn Community Hall	PRRD	2.0	2025
11 Duncan Cran Elementary School	SD60	7.0	20	11 North Peace Light Horse Gymkhana	NFPS	2.5	2025
12 Buick Creek Arena	PRRD	6.5	25	12 New Elementary School FSJ Northeast	SD60	n/a	2025
13 Charlie Lake Community Hall	PRRD	6.5	20	13 Charlie Lake Elementary School*	SD60	5.5	2025
14 Montney Community Hall	PRRD	6.5	20	14 Taylor Elementary School	SD60	5.5	2025
15 Taylor Curling Club and Pool	Taylor	6.5	10	15 Buick Creek Elementary School	SD60	5.0	2025
16 Prespetou Elementary School	SD60	6.5	20	16 North Peace Gymnastics Centre	PRRD	4.5	2030
17 Alwin Holland Elementary School	SD60	6.5	20	17 North Peace Arena	FSJ	4.0	2030
18 Bert Bowes Junior Secondary School	SD60	6.5	20	18 Fort St. John Curling Club	NFPS	5.5	2030
19 C.M. Finch Elementary School	SD60	6.5	20	19 Kids Arena Fieldhouse	FSJ	6.0	2030
20 Dr. Kearney Junior Secondary School	SD60	6.5	20	20 Cecil Lake Community Hall	PRRD	5.0	2030
21 Upper Pine Elementary School	SD60	6.0	25	21 Upper Cache Community Hall	PRRD	4.0	2030
22 Wonowon Horsemen's Community Hall	PRRD	6.0	20	22 Big Bam Ski Club	NFPS	3.0	2030
23 Rotary Spray Park	FSJ	6.0	20	23 North Peace Fairgrounds	NFPS	4.5	2030
24 Kids Arena Fieldhouse	FSJ	6.0	15	24 Wonowon Horse Club Gymkhana	NFPS	3.5	2030
25 Fort St. John Curling Club	NFPS	5.5	15	25 Halfway Elementary School	SD60	7.0	2030
26 Charlie Lake Elementary School*	SD60	5.5	10	26 Robert Ogilvie Elementary School	SD60	5.0	2030
27 Taylor Elementary School	SD60	5.5	20	27 Wonowon Horsemen's Community Hall	PRRD	6.0	2035
28 North Peace Leisure Centre	PRRD	5.0	10	28 Halfway Community Hall	PRRD	4.0	2035
29 Cecil Lake Community Hall	PRRD	5.0	15	29 Charlie Lake Community Hall	PRRD	6.5	2035
30 Buick Creek Elementary School	SD60	5.0	20	30 Montney Community Hall	PRRD	6.5	2035
31 Robert Ogilvie Elementary School	SD60	5.0	15	31 Rotary Spray Park	FSJ	6.0	2035
32 North Peace Gymnastics Centre	PRRD	4.5	15	32 Taylor Arena	Taylor	7.5	2035
33 North Peace Fairgrounds	NFPS	4.5	15	33 Lake Point Golf and Country Club	NFPS	7.5	2035
34 Halfway Community Hall	PRRD	4.0	20	34 Taylor Lone Wolf Golf Course	Taylor	7.5	2035
35 Clearview Arena	PRRD	4.0	15	35 Prespetou Elementary School	SD60	6.5	2035
36 North Peace Arena	FSJ	4.0	15	36 Alwin Holland Elementary School	SD60	6.5	2035
37 Upper Cache Community Hall	PRRD	4.0	15	37 Bert Bowes Junior Secondary School	SD60	6.5	2035
38 Ecole Central Elementary School*	SD60	4.0	10	38 C.M. Finch Elementary School	SD60	6.5	2035
39 Wonowon Horse Club Gymkhana	NFPS	3.5	15	39 Dr. Kearney Junior Secondary School	SD60	6.5	2035
40 Big Bam Ski Club	NFPS	3.0	15	40 Upper Pine Elementary School	SD60	6.0	2035
41 North Peace Light Horse Gymkhana	NFPS	2.5	10	41 Duncan Cran Elementary School	SD60	7.0	2035
42 Prairie Rose Curling Club	NFPS	2.5	5	42 Taylor Community Hall	Taylor	8.0	2040
43 Osborn Community Hall	PRRD	2.0	10	43 Buick Creek Arena	PRRD	6.5	2040
44 Golata Community Hall	PRRD	2.0	5	44 Baldonnel Elementary School	SD60	7.0	2040
45 Buick Creek Community Hall	PRRD	2.0	5	45 Bert Ambrose Elementary School	SD60	7.0	2040
				46 Clearview Elem. / Jr. Secondary School	SD60	8.5	2045
				47 North Peace Senior Secondary School	Sd60	8.5	2045
				48 Pomeroy Centre	FSJ	8.5	2050

\* School identified by SD60 for replacement

Nb: Schools toned grey as interventions not part of this study, except noted

## **Short and Medium-Term Options for Addressing Demand Shortfalls and Buildings Approaching End-Life**

Strategies, options, ideas and opportunities suggested in this report are intended only for stimulating thought, discourse and deeper analysis. No action will occur before the City of Fort St. John in 2015 updates its recreation master plan followed by the Peace River Regional District and the District of Taylor also examining resource allocation priorities.

### ***Action 1 (Short-Term) – Indoor Soccer***

Initiate planning for the development of a new twin indoor soccer centre by the year 2020 or 2025 that could be phased. There is immediate need for one additional new indoor pitch to augment the Kids Arena Fieldhouse. A short-term strategy could be to convert Taylor Curling Rink to indoor turf or build one of two new pitches. Registrations currently capped at 480, pent-up demand could be as much as double that.

Estimated order-of-magnitude cost for each indoor pitch would be about \$5.0 million construction or \$10.0 million a twin (in current dollars). Soft costs, site development costs and escalation not included. Construction quality would be most economical pre-engineered metal. Converting Taylor Curling to turf would cost about \$250,000 to \$300,000 construction.

### ***Action 2 (Short-Term) - Gymnasiums***

Initiate conversation with School District 60 regarding partnering to enlarge new future gymnasiums. Partnering is more economical and the school as owner bears the operating costs. SD60 has applied to the Ministry of Education for funding for a new middle school and two elementary in FSJ plus replacing two existing schools (Central and Charlie Lake). PRRD and/or FSJ could 'top-up' funding to enlarge the three elementary gyms to full-size (6,500 SF instead of 4,100 SF) in return for community access. With the new middle school, this would double the number of full-size gyms in FSJ.

Estimated cost to PRRD / FSJ would be in the order of \$1.8 million construction (current dollars) for three projects (less than building one PRRD or City-owned gym). Construction quality to higher Ministry of Education institutional standards.

### ***Action 3 (Short-Term) – Outdoor Sport Fields***

Participation in soccer has increased dramatically and registrations capped due to lack of reliable quality fields. Conversely, the demand for ball diamonds is slowly declining. Options include to create up to four new regional sand-based grass fields with irrigation and drainage systems by the years 2020 (2 fields plus washroom building) and 2025 (2 more fields) either in an existing under-developed park or newly-acquired land, or to repurpose ball diamonds at, for example Surerus Park. The latter would result in reducing an over-supply in diamonds.

Estimated cost \$1.9 million construction (current dollars), including the replacement of washroom building at Surerus Park or new on new site.

### ***Action 4 (Medium-Term) –North Peace Leisure Centre Aquatics***

By 2020 PRRD and the City of Fort St. John should initiate planning for the development of a new replacement aquatic centre for opening in 2025. The new facility would include a FINA-standard 8-lane, 25-metre lane tank (almost twice the width of the current tank) and a leisure pool with waterslide and hot pool. The current NPLC pool is pre-maturely deteriorating and is unlikely to serve economically beyond 2030. The larger lane tank allows for 33% more usage and the wider lane widths allow for higher density of swimmers. Recreation industry planning benchmarks suggest one

pool facility per 40,000 population, the threshold for sufficiently large tax base and demand. The North Peace region will not be large enough to support two pools for at least the next three decades.

Estimated cost \$20 million construction (in current dollars). Quality of construction would be low-end institutional quality (comparable or better than existing).

***Action 5 (Medium-Term) – Clearview Arena, Fort St. John Curling Club and North Peace Gymnastics Club***

The three facilities will all be approaching the end of service life around 2030. Clearview Arena should be replaced with a new single-sheet arena. Fort St. John Curling will require a replacement 8-sheet curling venue and lounge (growth in demand accommodated by adding more draws rather than adding sheets). Taylor Curling Club membership is too low to sustain long-term viability and the facility risks closure at end of building life with remaining members shifting to FSJ.

The North Peace Gymnastics Club should have a gym floor area roughly double existing for safe and functionally efficient operation. Current volume necessitates more than one age group and too many concurrent users on the floor. Options for a replacement facility include a new stand-alone building, possibly a phased addition to an indoor soccer centre (synergies and operating cost efficiencies) or converting the still useful NPLC building shell into a gymnastics gym when a new pool is realized.

Estimated order-of-magnitude cost for each the arena, curling and gymnastics facilities would be in the range of \$5.5 million per building construction (in current dollars). Construction quality of each would be most economical pre-engineered metal. \$16.5 million total before soft costs and escalation.

***Action 6 (Medium-Term) - Community Halls, Taylor Arena***

Most community halls will be approaching end of building service-life at about the same time. The rationale for each building will need to be carefully examined as the cost of even a modest 2,000 to 4,000 SF Hall would be in the range of \$600,000 to \$1.2 million construction before soft costs, site costs and escalation. Taylor Community Hall, the largest hall would be \$2.1 million construction to replace. If replaced, new small halls in rural areas should be pre-manufactured portable buildings that could also be relocated if necessary. Community halls with low utilization and under watch include Buick Creek, Golata, Osborn and Upper Cache. If not replaced, demand from those settlements would be shifted to nearby remaining halls.

Estimated construction value \$6.7 million (current dollars) for Cecil Lake, Charlie Lake, Halfway, Montney, Taylor and Wonowon. Construction quality of each would be economical pre-engineered metal. Halls under watch would add another \$2.6 million to the total.

***Additional Modules That Could be Added to Any Phase***

Three other facility types that should be added or will need eventual replacement include:

- The Super Park indoor playground (about 7,500 SF) would cost less and have better potential for operational viability if co-located with other recreation facilities and could be added to a project for less than \$2 million construction, in current dollars.
- Multi-purpose dance/movement studios, minimally two 1,500 SF sprung-floor rooms with mirrors and storage, large enough for 30 persons usable for meetings, party rentals, exercise and children's programs. Estimated Cost about \$1.0 million construction, in current dollars.
- Spray parks: eventually Rotary Park will need to be replaced and likely follow NPLC to its new location. In addition, Taylor Curling Club may not be replaced at the end of building life and a decision would need to be made to relocate the temporary pool to Taylor Arena in summers, or to

replace the pool with a permanent outdoor waterpark. Each park would start at \$500,000 and would increase with complexity.

- Meeting rooms (capacity 8-12 persons) should be added to all new buildings. Cost \$100,000 each.