

The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)

Hanwell in favour of recreation tax

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Residents of Hanwell local service district voted 239 to 85 Wednesday night to contribute to city recreation services and eliminate user fees of \$680 plus tax per person for their young families.

While older residents of the community on the border of Fredericton lamented the additional taxation, especially since the community has a local recreation tax to create its own sports areas, most saw communitywide support for recreation as beneficial.

"I believe it's all about the kids," said Brookdale subdivision resident John Smith.

The recreation tax, capped at three cents per \$100 of assessed property value or \$30 on a \$100,000 home, is less than what a family of four would pay for a night out at the movies, Smith said.

"The kids have to be first and foremost," Smith said.

His neighbour, Jeff Barry, agreed. He said getting kids into organized sports is a good way to keep them out of mischief.

In exchange for the \$104,463 the Hanwell local service district will pay annually for 20 years as a contribution toward the capital and operating costs of two new sports arenas and repairs to the Lady Beaverbrook Rink, the city is waiving its non-resident ice sport fee and all other non-resident charges on sports fields and recreation programs.

But that didn't cut any ice with resident Marc Plourde who said a tax is still a tax. Given the valuation on his home, he'll be paying closer to \$60 per year for 20 years for rinks he said he'll never use.

Plourde said he and his wife pay their gym fees at Kingswood Fitness Centre and they don't expect other taxpayers to subsidize their \$400 bill.

There was one wrinkle in the Hanwell local service district. Yoho Lake area residents aren't part of the Fredericton Youth Hockey Association boundaries for Fredericton. They play in Harvey.

Yoho resident Nellie Horncastle said it's not really fair to expect them to pay a user fee because their youngsters don't derive any benefit.

Yoho, like St. Marys local service district, should have been split off as a separate voting area in the same way St. Marys local service district was split, she said.

"Why didn't somebody make the decision to separate us so we would get fair treatment?"

Horncastle said she'll talk to her neighbours to see if there's enough interest to get a petition with 25 names and request that Local Government Department hold a separate vote for their area.

Meantime, in the third and final vote in Saint Mary's local service district, voters there decided 42 to 32 in favour of paying a community tax to support city rinks.

Even though some residents are in the Fredericton Youth Hockey Association geographical boundaries for play in city rinks, by paying the fee, they have the best of both worlds, said local service district chairman Neville Stewart.

They have the opportunity to go either to Stanley Arena or Fredericton.

"It was very, very close, but we expected it to be close. We had a pretty good turnout," Stewart said.

The local service district's annual tax share totals \$73,284.

Noonan, all three voting divisions of St. Marys local service district, New Maryland local service district, Estey's Bridge local service district and Hanwell have now all voted to support the city's taxation-sharing scheme.

Five communities, Kingsclear, Keswick Ridge, Douglas, Lincoln and Mougerville have yet to vote. The Village of New Maryland is still talking with the city.

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