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Rocky Lake Dome rink opens

'We haven't even advertised ice time for the facility and we're getting calls'

BY YVETTE D'ENTREMONT
THE WEEKLY NEWS

BEDFORD – Bedford recreation enthusiasts now have a new regulation ice surface to play on, taking a small bite out of an ice crunch that has plagued the community for decades.

On Oct. 30, the Rocky Lake Dome rink officially opened its doors to the public. The permanent dome rink structure will primarily be used by the Bedford Minor Hockey Association, but other local groups (including gentlemen's hockey leagues) have also booked ice time at the Rocky Lake site.

"We haven't even advertised ice time for the facility and we're getting calls from Dartmouth Minor Hockey, Dartmouth Ringette, calls from Sackville, and many others asking for ice time," said Barry Mason, president of the Rocky Lake Development Association.

"That's telling me there's an awful lot of pent-up demand there."

The total cost of the facility was about \$3 million, and the rink was in full operation by Nov. 2. Board members with the association were the first to skate on the ice surface.

In addition to the regulation 18,000 square-foot ice surface, the facility includes four dressing rooms with in-floor heating systems. The



Mark Smith applies some finishing touches to key areas of the ice at the new Rocky Lake Dome rink on Oct. 30.

dome itself is 230 ft. by 110 ft. in size, and the rink sits on a portion of the 50-acre Rocky Lake Common lands.

Those lands will be the site of the Rocky Lake Development Association's second phase of development,

which is slated to include soccer fields, basketball courts and a field house.

Organizers behind the rink's grand opening last week jumped right into creating awareness about their next phase. They invited representatives from the local soccer and basketball communities to address the crowd and highlight the desperate need for indoor and outdoor facilities to keep up with the growing demand.

Nova Scotia Soccer League president Michael Spencer said the two artificial playing surfaces proposed for the Rocky Lake site will support not only local soccer, but football, rugby, lacrosse, field hockey and maybe even ultimate frisbee.

"These facilities are just as needed as the ice rink," noted association board member and former MLA Len Goucher.

In order to complete that second phase, the association will soon be launching an extensive fundraising campaign. The estimated cost of the second phase of the Rocky Lake recreation complex is about \$35 million, said fundraising chairman John Patterson. They'll be asking all three levels of government to cost share about \$30 million, with the community chipping in the remaining \$5 million.

"I'm confident we can raise \$5 million in the community," Patterson said last week.
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