

MacKay drops \$1.6 million for five rec projects

By PAT LEE
Staff Reporter

Ottawa has given the Halifax area \$1.6 million to be divided among five recreational projects, including a new indoor soccer pitch at the Mainland Common.

The Clayton Park soccer facility, expected to be open early next year, received \$1 million, the largest chunk of the federal funds that Central Nova MP Peter MacKay announced Sunday.

The announcement was made at the Dartmouth Sportsplex, which received \$320,000 to put toward a \$960,000 upgrade, including new air conditioning and heat-recovery systems, new arena boards and dressing room improvements.

The remainder of the federal funding will go toward upgrading six kilometres of pathways in Portland Hills in Dartmouth (\$200,000), building a new four-season multi-purpose room at the Big Cove YMCA Camp (\$32,000) and refurbishing the clubhouse at Banook Canoe Club (\$26,667).

The funding is through the Recreational Infrastructure Canada Program.

MacKay said the Halifax area has a core group of active residents and the upgrades and new facilities will be well-used.

"Halifax Regional Municipality is and has always been a strong supporter of sports and

active (living)," he said Sunday. "It has also produced many world-class athletes and I would say, in large part, this is why sporting announcements, projects and facilities are so very important to our region and our province.

"With 8,000 regional programs, 237 sport courts, 50 recreation centres and 15 walking trails, just to mention a few, there is truly something for everyone at every level in HRM."

MacKay said recreational facilities are particularly crucial to provide young people with healthy options.

"When we give our children the opportunity to become involved in organized sports or activities, whether they be dance, whether they be arts or sporting activities, it truly enhances their lives in ways we can only imagine if they were not there," he said.

Scott Lytle, vice-president of Soccer Nova Scotia, said the plan for a \$10-million indoor soccer facility, with a full-size pitch that is the first of its kind in the province, is essentially ready to go now that federal funding has come through.

"This is effectively the last piece of the puzzle. There's really no barriers at this point."

The facility will join the \$42-million Canada Games Centre being built on the same site.

Brad Smith, chairman of the sportsplex's board, said the



Defence Minister Peter MacKay announces \$1.6 million for five recreational projects in the Halifax area on Sunday at Dartmouth Sportsplex.

(INGRID BULMER / Staff)

money from Ottawa kick-starts a long-term plan to upgrade the 30-year facility, which includes a rink, pool and fitness facilities.

A series of meetings to garner public input will start soon, he said.

Michael LeDuc, the camp's director, said the Merigomish facility has for many years been open to groups most of the year, except winter.

"This final part of the puzzle will allow us to offer winter

programs," he said of the 120-year-old camp, operated by the YMCA of Greater Halifax-Dartmouth.

The Portland Hills trails will be upgraded to become an active transportation route that will eventually connect to the trail system along the Dartmouth waterfront.

Banook Canoe Club in Dartmouth will use its funding for new siding, windows and sills, painting and chimney repairs.

(plee@herald.ca)