

Report to Council

Report Title:	Green and Inclusive Community Building (GIBC) Grant-Update for New Arena		
Prepared By:	Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services		
Department:	Recreation		
Date:	March 10, 2026		
Report Number:	REC2026-06	File Number:	C11REC, R05, C08
Attachments:	2014 PRISM Report, Council Report CAO 2023-11		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number REC2026-06 - Green and Inclusive Community Building (GIBC) Grant Application Update for New Arena, prepared by Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services, and authorize staff to initiate a Request for Proposal and procurement process to retain a qualified project consultant to advance detailed planning for a new arena in Walkerton, including: needs validation, a feasibility study, development of conceptual design options, preparation of Class “D” cost estimates, and a phased implementation strategy,

And further that the strategy include a comprehensive community consultation and fundraising plan to position the Municipality for competitive grant opportunities in support of this key community infrastructure project.

Report:

Background:

In January of 2025, staff submitted an application to the Government of Canada’s Green and Inclusive Community Buildings (GICB) program to support construction of a new arena, based on the I.B. Storey Feasibility Study (2023) for a Net Zero Carbon Ready single-pad facility with an elevated walking track and an option to add a second pad in a future phase. In February 2026, staff received formal notification from Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada that Brockton’s project was not selected for funding due to significant national demand and that the GICB program has no remaining funds and no future intakes are planned; however, the letter also notes the federal government’s intention to establish the new Build Communities Strong Fund and indicates that GICB applications may be considered under that future program (with an emphasis on “shovel-ready” projects), with federal officials to contact the Municipality should our application be advanced for further consideration.

Based on this outcome, the following section outlines staff's recommended next steps to keep the project positioned for alternate funding opportunities and Council decision-making.

Analysis:

Brockton has authorized multiple studies, assessments, and staff reports over the past two decades that consistently point toward new construction as the preferred long-term solution, rather than attempting major renovation or expansion of the existing Walkerton Community Centre arena facility. Council is encouraged to review the attached PRISM Walkerton Community Centre Assessment 2014 and Report CA02023-11- Future Municipal Complex Site. The 2011 and 2023 Recreation Master Plan's both recommended "the Municipality construct a twin pad arena in conjunction with playing fields, and a multi-use centre", in a phased in multi-year approach.

While the Walkerton Community Centre has served the community for many years, it was originally constructed in 1971 and does not align with modern expectations for:

- accessibility, safety, and building code requirements,
- energy performance and long-term operating efficiency, and
- the scale and type of space required for current and projected recreation use.

In addition to the facility's age and limitations, the Municipality continues to experience significant pressure for on ice capacity and associated community space. This has been reinforced by recent correspondence from Walkerton Minor Hockey, which highlights that local demand is exceeding available ice time and is approaching a point where program waiting lists and/or turning children away may occur if capacity cannot be expanded. The letter also underscores the reliance on temporary/alternative ice arrangements and the additional costs, and volunteer demands associated with those stop-gap measures.

Although the unsuccessful GICB application is disappointing, it underscores the importance of advancing this project to a more mature stage of readiness. If the Municipality of Brockton is to remain competitive in future intakes and alternative funding streams, we must proactively complete the foundational planning work that funding bodies increasingly expect.

At the 2025 Ontario Recreation Facilities Association (ORFA) Conference attended by staff, a consistent message from presenters and sector leaders was the growing scarcity of grant programs available to address the widespread challenge of aging recreation infrastructure. Successful applicants were not simply "shovel ready", they had progressed well beyond preliminary discussions. Successful grant projects were supported by completed conceptual designs, Class D cost estimates, defined scopes of work, and active fundraising strategies, with several already entering or underway in the construction phase.

As a first and strategic step, it is recommended that Council authorize initiation of a Request for Proposal process to retain a qualified project consultant to lead the next phase of planning. Engaging a consultant with expertise in Recreation infrastructure will allow the Municipality to establish a clearly defined scope, undertake needs validation, conduct a feasibility study, develop conceptual design options, prepare a Class D cost estimate, and outline a phased implementation strategy. A consultant-led approach will also strengthen governance, ensure industry best practices are applied, support community consultation and input and provide the technical documentation required to support competitive grant submissions.

Retaining a project consultant at this stage demonstrates proactive leadership, positions Brockton to move effectively and efficiently forward and places us in a strategic position as funding opportunities arise. Further, we can substantially advance the project in the community with a credible, well-supported, and investment-ready application.

Staff remain committed to advancing this project in a strategic and fiscally responsible manner and will continue to approach the next phases with an open and collaborative mindset. This includes actively exploring innovative partnership models, alternative service delivery approaches, and potential private or community investment opportunities that may arise.

Strategic Action Plan Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Strategic Action Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Heritage, Culture, and Community Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Quality of Life Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Development Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Municipal Governance N/A

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

With the successful application to the Housing Accelerator Fund to support community growth projects, HAF funding can be allocated towards a third-party consultants work to advance this essential Recreational Facility in the growing community of Brockton. Further, in 2019, Council established the Recreation Facility Reserve Fund to support the future construction of a new arena. The current balance of the reserve is \$1,743,504.00, these funds are available to support preliminary project costs, including the retention of a project consultant.

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer