



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☒	Recommendation ☐	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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To: West Hant Municipal Council

Submitted by: _____
Kathy Kehoe, Director Community Development

Date: May 14, 2026

Subject: Information Report – Rural Playground Request

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Municipal Government Act, Section 65, Powers to expend funds for municipal purpose.

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

n/a

BACKGROUND

Property ☒	Public Opinion ☐	Environment ☒	Social ☒	Economic ☒	Councillor Activity ☐
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At the January 27, 2026, Council meeting the motion was passed:

THAT COUNCIL DIRECT STAFF TO UNDERTAKE A REVIEW OF POTENTIAL PLAYGROUND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE VAUGHAN AREA AND REPORT BACK TO COUNCIL WITH AN ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL LOCATIONS WITHIN VAUGHAN FOR THE INSTALLATION OF PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT, AN OVERVIEW OF OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTNER WITH EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS, INCLUDING A COMMUNITY HALLS OR ADJACENT MUNICIPALLY OWNED OR COMMUNITY-MANAGED LANDS AND PRELIMINARY OPTIONS AND HIGH-LEVEL COST CONSIDERATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE INSTALLATION OF NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT, POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES AND POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRANTS THROUGH RECREATION NOVA SCOTIA AND ACCESSIBILITY NOVA SCOTIA BY MAY 2026 TO COINCIDE WITH THE UPCOMING NEEDS ASSESSMENT.

That Council direct staff to undertake a review of potential playground opportunities in the Vaughan Area and report back to council with:

1. *An assessment of potential locations within Vaughan for the installation of playground equipment.*
2. *An overview of opportunities to partner with existing community assets including community halls or adjacent municipally owned or community-managed lands.*
3. *Preliminary options and high-level cost considerations associated with the installation of new playground equipment, potential funding sources and potential opportunities for grants through Recreation Nova Scotia and Accessibility Nova Scotia.*

In the fall of 2025 Council approved the Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Parks & Recreation Facilities contract. The intent of the assessment, when complete will create a long-term vision for parks and recreation facilities that are needed in WHRM and will support decision making and capital improvement planning for the next eight years. The assessment is intended to address current conditions, identify gaps and provide actionable strategies for future planning, investment and sustainability. Staff anticipate this document will be complete by early summer and anticipate it will prioritize focus on renewal and enhancement of existing municipal assets.

DISCUSSION

In advance of the Parks & Recreation Needs Assessment being completed staff are providing the following information report.

There were thirty-five children enrolled in the Windsor Forks Elementary School this year from the Vaughan area.

The Accessibility Act (Bill 59) established accessibility as a human right aiming to make Nova Scotia fully accessible by 2030 and the province's strategy, Access by Design 2030 outlines a roadmap to achieving this vision.

The Built Environment Accessibility Standard targets indoor, outdoor, and recreational spaces, such as parks and playgrounds and as of April 1, 2026, all new or redeveloped infrastructure including playgrounds, must meet technical accessibility requirements.

The WHRM Equity, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility Strategy Plan Strategic Action #4 - *make municipal buildings and public spaces more accessible to people of all ages and abilities.*

4.1 Create a process to review and maintain the conditions of existing municipal infrastructure and public spaces that already meet accessible design standards. This includes getting a Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFA) Gold rating.

4.2 Evaluate and prioritize retrofits to existing municipal buildings and facilities to meet the accessibility requirements in the latest version of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations.

4.3 Commit a portion of the annual budget to go toward the installations and maintenance required for improving the accessibility of public buildings and public spaces in alignment with RHFA.

4.5 Evaluate and prioritize capital projects that have potential to improve accessibility and equity. This can include establish a standardized process in project planning stage, and accessibility impacts as a part of staff reports to Council.

The playground design process may include consideration of higher-level accessibility features consistent with the Rick Hansen Gold Standard.

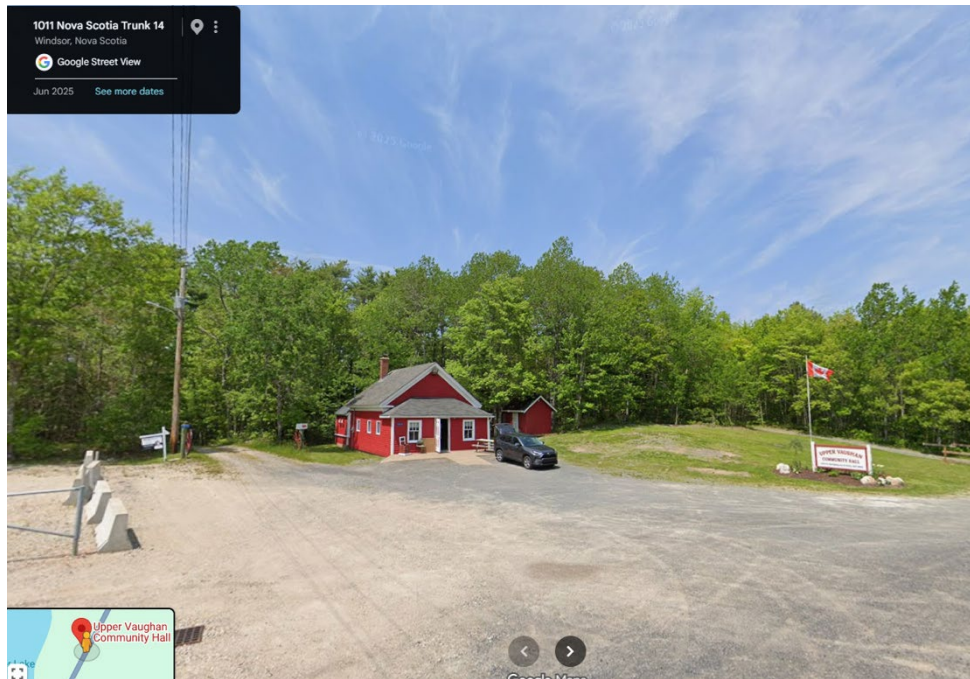
Existing Playgrounds

WHRM currently owns six playgrounds that are located in the communities of Falmouth (2), Windsor (2), Avondale (1) and Ardoise (1). The typical lifespan of a traditional playground is approximately 25 years.

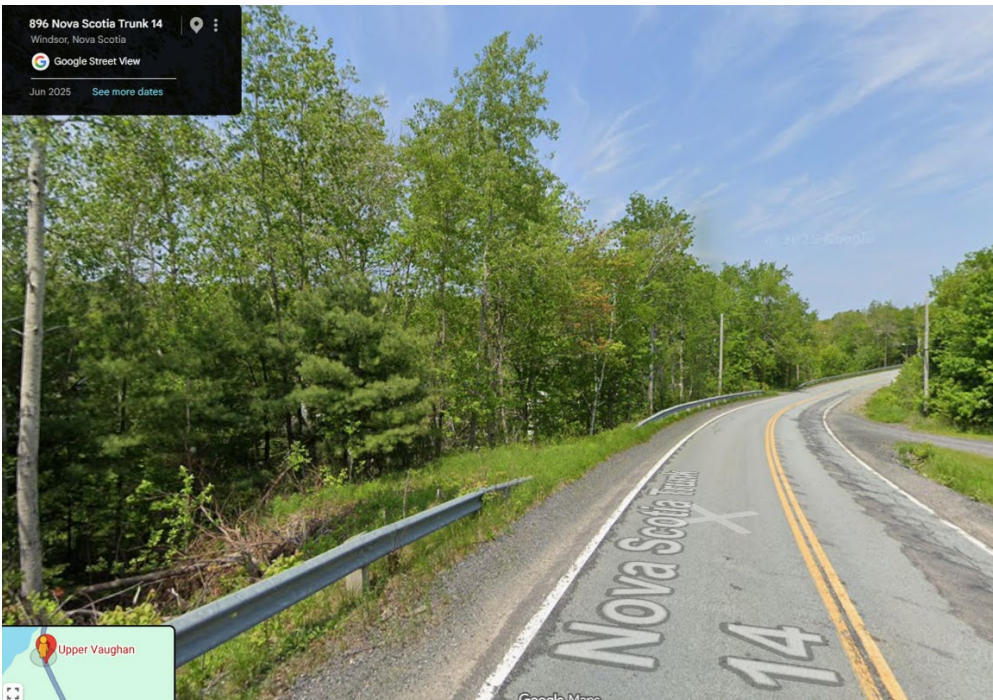
- Falmouth - Eldridge Road Recreation Site – installed 2014
- Falmouth - Falmouth Mini Park – installed 2014
- Windsor - Elmcroft – new replacement equipment to be installed Summer 2026
- Windsor - Burgess Crescent
- Avondale - Newport Landing Waterfront Park – new replacement equipment to be installed spring 2026
- Ardoise - Initial playground components installed 2025 by a community organization

Potential Site Locations Initially Identified by Staff

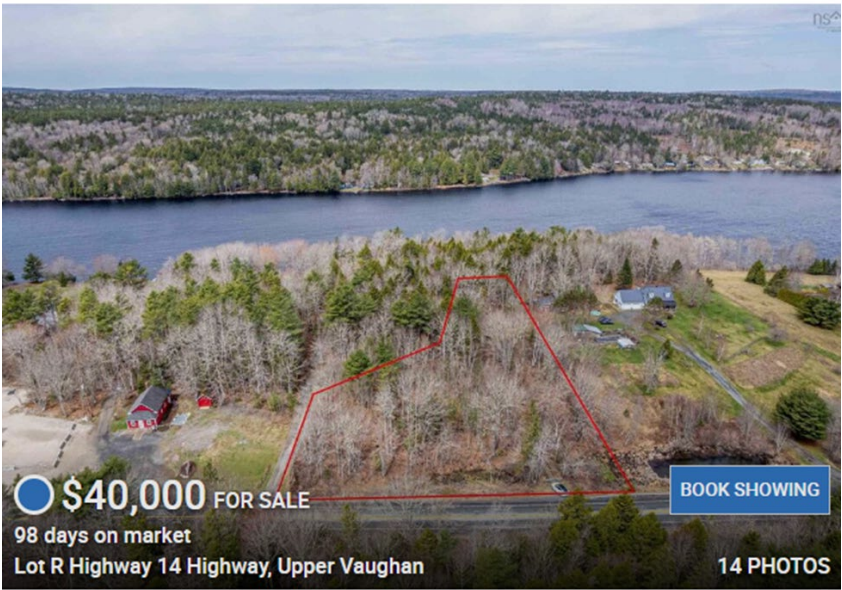
Upper Vaughan Community Hall property (PID 45041894)



Upper Vaughan Community Hall Trustees vacant lands (PID 45192903)

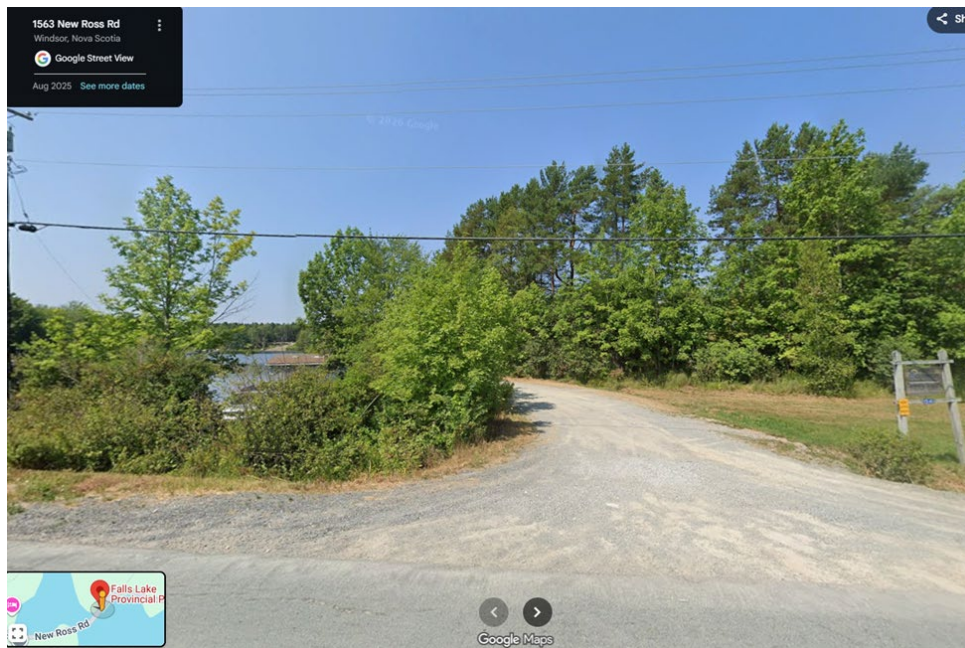


Private Lands Adjacent the Upper Vaughan Community Hall (currently listed for sale) (PID 45389434)



PID 45389434	2026 ASSESSMENT & TAX \$35,000 /	LISTING HISTORY 3 events over 2 months
TYPE Land & Acreage	PCDS No	HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT 133% Increase (2022-2026)
WATERFRONT No	LOT SIZE 54,836 sqft (1.3 acres)	LAND REGISTRY RECORDS 11 (1922 - 2024)

Falls Lake Provincial Park (PID 45040649)



If it is the direction from Council to proceed with a playground in the Vaughan area staff have, at a high level reviewed each of these sites with respect to driveway access, parking, washroom availability, location, overall readiness and safety etc. With direction from Council to proceed with a playground in the Vaughan area, staff would recommend WHRM explore a potential partnership with the province to enhance existing community opportunities at the Falls Lake Provincial Park. While the provincial park operates six months of the year, it remains accessible for passive use (walking, AT etc.) year-round. A collaborative approach could help optimize use of this existing destination beyond the peak season and support broader recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

The benefits of this location include – currently a destination location that includes parking, washrooms, picnic tables, ample shade areas etc. It would reduce the need for overall site development elsewhere. A play structure in this location would complement existing amenities and create a more family friendly destination that would appeal to a broad range of users.

The province has entered into similar partnership agreements with municipal units and is open to exploring this partnership further should it be the direction of Council.



TYPES OF PLAYGROUNDS

Natural play spaces are alternative playgrounds that use natural elements to inspire active and creative outdoor play and connect people, young and old, to nature. They can include natural elements such as wood, landforms, plants, and boulders. These elements teach children, on their own, how to play and use different pieces to discover and create. This type of play has as few synthetic elements as possible.

A traditional playground is an outdoor play area usually equipped with standardized play equipment such as swings, slides, monkey bars, and other play elements.

If it is the direction of Council to install a playground in the Vaughan area, staff would recommend consideration to be given to the installation of a natural playground.

Potential Capital/Operating Costs

For this report staff have used a natural playground and the figures noted in this report are estimations only and municipal procurement practices would be required to properly determine costings.

Staff have confirmed that should council wish to proceed with the Falls Lake Provincial Park additional costs may include environmental assessment, community engagement, archeological assessment etc. as required by the Provincial Government.

Potential Capital Costs (site dependent)	
Land purchase (if required)	\$45,000
Legal (if required)	\$7,500
Surveying (if required)	\$4,000
Environmental Assessment (if required)	\$10,000
Archeological Assessment (if required)	\$20,000
Site Preparation	\$45,000
Playground Design & Install	\$125,000
Playground Border	\$35,000
Playground Surfacing (engineered wood vs rubberized matting or turf)	\$20,000 - \$75,000
Garbage Bin (if required)	\$2,500
Shade/seating (if required)	\$30,000
Landscaping & Pathways (if required)	\$20,000
Signage & Safety	\$2,500
Washrooms (if required)	\$25,000
Subtotal(s)	Low of \$391,500 High of \$446,500
Potential Annual Operational Costs (approximate)	
Staffing	\$1,500
Outdoor privy (if required)	\$4,500
Routine Maintenance (including vehicle costs/fuel, regular waste collection and site mowing if required)	\$2,500
	\$8,500

Vendors

Vendors that sell and install commercial playgrounds include but are not limited to: PlayPower Canada Inc, Cobequid Consulting, Dirt Road, Fundy Fence, Terra, Tessier and ABC.

Funding Opportunities

1. The Province of Nova Scotia, Communities Culture, Tourism & Heritage (CCTH) – Recreation Facility Development Grant Program – projects approved for funding are eligible to receive up to 66% of estimated total project cost stated in the application. The total provincial government contribution cannot be more than 75% of the total project cost. Deadline to apply was February 14, 2026.
2. The Province of Nova Scotia, Communities Culture, Tourism & Heritage (CCTH) – Community Access Ability Program – the province covers up to 66% of total eligible project costs. Deadline to apply was February 14, 2026.

3. WestFor Management Inc. – Community Grants Fund – This program supports projects that make a lasting impact in the communities where they operate. Each year a portion of the value of the wood harvested in each county is reinvested back into those communities. Funding is available for projects focused on child and youth programs and outdoor recreation that will leave a lasting benefit for local residents. Deadline to apply was April 7, 2026.

NEXT STEPS

To be determined by Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2026/27 Capital Budget includes \$200,000 from the Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF) to support a playground in a rural community.

The CCBF balance is projected to be about \$1,298,482.56 as of March 31, 2027. After the five-year capital plan, the fund is expected to have a remaining balance of \$3,430.56.

Given the low projected ending balance, future funding decisions will need to be made carefully to ensure affordability and maintain financial flexibility.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Council can choose to wait for the completion of the Needs Assessment for Parks and Recreation Facilities before making a final decision regarding a new playground for the Vaughan area.

ATTACHMENTS

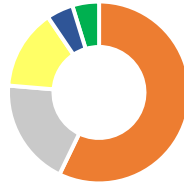
None

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

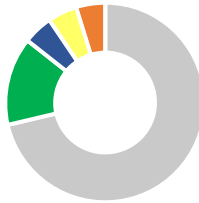
**Goal: Balanced
Decision Making**



Unbalanced



Heavily Weighted



Report Prepared by: _____
Kathy Kehoe, Director, Community Development

Report Reviewed by: _____
Kevin Bennett, Manager, Parks & Recreation Facilities

Report Reviewed by: _____
Carlee Rochon, Director, Financial Services

Report Approved by:  _____
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer