

July 13, 2023

To Mayor and Council, City of Vernon

The Greater Vernon Chamber recently conducted a survey of members and non-members about their experiences renting City of Vernon facilities. As a result, a letter with recommendations was submitted to City of Vernon Council July 5, 2023. The letter will be on the council agenda for July 17, 2023.

Since July 5, the Chamber has compiled information comparing Vernon facility rentals to other communities. Along with this narrative, this backgrounder also contains comments received from Chamber members and non-members during the survey. We ask that you consider this information as part of your deliberations.

FUNTASTIC

Funtastic is the largest slo-pitch tournament in Western Canada and both the tournament and the music festival pump more than \$4 million into the local economy, including hotels, restaurants and retail shops. But even with that economic investment and significant support of local charities, Funtastic faces the highest rental fees in B.C. when it comes to ball fields.

- \$141.29 - \$169.55 for makeshift fields in the soccer pitch for a field for the day.
- Fenced diamonds without lights are \$226.
- Diamonds fenced with lights are \$260.56 taxes in.
- Funtastic also pays \$34.49 a game for lights, and an honorarium of \$1,500 for field maintenance during the weekend.

The situation is far different when sports fields are rented in other B.C. communities:

- The City of Kamloops rentals for an adult tournament are \$178.66 per game. This fee includes the city liming the fields and dragging the infield after each game.
- The City of Kelowna charges an hourly rate of \$18.50 an hour per field for an adult tournament, including liming and dragging done by their parks department.
- The City of Vancouver charges \$16.90 per hour with the maintenance covered.
- The City of Surrey charges \$15.66 per hour with the maintenance covered.
- The City of Abbotsford charges \$45 per game with no maintenance.

VERNON FARMERS MARKET

The Vernon Farmers Market was founded in 1979 and it regularly has more than 100 vendors providing local food products and crafts. It plays a significant role in the local economy and provides food security to residents. The future of the VFM is in question because of the City of Vernon's fee structure for the Kal Tire Place North parking lot.

- VFM's rental fees jumped from about \$4,000 in 2022 to \$11,700 this year.
- About 10 vendors have been lost in 2023 because the higher facility fee has been passed on to vendors.
- VFM has been told the facility rental rate will triple over the next decade.

The situation is far different for farmers markets in other B.C. communities:

- The Kamloops Farmers Market has free access to a street in downtown Kamloops and pays \$600 for an adjacent park for 28 Saturdays a year. It has a \$300 business license, but the City of Kamloops provides access to electricity and free placement of a storage container. On Wednesdays, the Kamloops Market, has access to the 400 block of Victoria Street for free but must provide its own signs and barricades.
- The Armstrong Market uses land administered by the Armstrong Spallumcheen Parks and Recreation Commission and it pays about \$2,380 a year. For that, they get access to washrooms, use of five picnic tables, garbage cans picked up and delivered every week, access to potable water, electricity, and the year-round use of a dry storage area. The commission even helped the Armstrong Market plant five trees it fundraised for on the grounds.
- The Enderby Farmers Market has free access to a portion of Cliff Avenue Fridays from April to October (it put up barricades). In the winter, it pays \$600 for the Splatsin Community Centre.

SURVEY COMMENTS

The Greater Vernon Chamber surveyed members and non-members about their experiences renting City of Vernon facilities. Here is a cross-section of the comments received:

"I have submitted rental requests and have not been able to rent any facility due to lack of communication and/or interest. No available dates and no pricing. No interest."

"Cost is high, especially parking lot outdoor venues. Reply time is slow. Transparency is low (what are other groups paying/getting?). No weekend support (staff) available for events."

"The city needs to look at each event and the economic benefit and/or the economic loss to the city if these events weren't going to happen. Having one price for event rental doesn't make sense."

“Lower the cost. Understand the greater good that comes from the rental of the facility. Don't try to pass off all of the city's expenses to the renter. There are overhead costs the city has to pay whether or not the facility is rented.”

“We believe that if the City had more enticing rates, more user groups would be willing to rent facilities in Vernon. The costs are unattainable for many user groups and increasing costs are only going to drive more groups away.”

“Fees go up every year, although the service isn't better. Just now, I received the facility agreement (for an event). Actually, I think it was right on the first try. Usually, you have to send it back 3 times before it's right.”

“The building (Lakers Clubhouse) was very dirty. Walls & floors were very dirty, windows were really bad too. The whole place needed a really good scrubbing. Plus, the tables were filthy. We tried to wash them with the cleaning supplies in storeroom but didn't help.”

“Delays in approval process Poor communication and conflicting information No authority to respond to questions given to front line staff Bylaw and RCMP very helpful.”

“Clearer Rental Agreements. What is the \$500 damage deposit for? Nobody checks anything before or after.”

“The cost of the rentals is too high, especially for the service we receive in return. As well, there should be consideration for events that happen in the off season.”

“We are a community based non-profit registered society. We provide programs and lessons for children as young as 5 and for adults up into their 80s. All are run by volunteers. However, we are charged the same fees as a private company.”

For more information, please contact:
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