

In the new Joint Use Agreement (JUA), a cost model was introduced in response to community groups concerns about insufficient available gym time.

The original agreement expected a certain level of available gym time being provided in return for school use of City facilities such as pools and arenas.

The operating costs for schools, i.e. caretaking and utilities, have been going up and school principals and school boards seem to have been tightening up on the hours available for community use.

Adult groups have been paying a fee and youth groups have been provided space at no charge with the exception of usage in large high school gyms. The new agreement provides a guaranteed base level of hours (that the Boards will provide) and opportunities for an additional number of hours. The City centralized bookings before the 2006-2007 school year, and is currently the booking agent for all school board gymnasias.

The potential affect on any change in the fees charged for increased access will be negotiated in a series of meetings with affected user groups. The first such meeting took place on Monday, January 28 and to date, 70+ groups registered to attend and be part of the discussion that will result in an adjusted fee schedule. It is too early to say if there will be any significant increase in fees for youth and non-profit groups. This consultation is still taking place.

The City's Community Services Department has heard the call for more available gym space and has negotiated a solution that will provide more hours. Using available gyms more is the only short term solution. Until the City's ambitious recreation centre building program produces more gyms and the provinces school building program starts to produce more schools, this new JUA agreement can be an effective way to give community groups more access to much needed gym time.