
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CDP-23-2024 Live Streaming of Junior and Senior Games in Arenas
For Consideration by Council in Committee on November 19, 2024



OBJECTIVE:

To receive Council's approval, as a pilot project, to support live streaming of Haldimand County's junior and senior hockey games/special events at County arenas, including entering into agreements mandated by the junior and senior leagues/associations with third party service providers as requested.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CDP-23-2024 Live Streaming of Junior and Seniors Games in Arenas be received;
2. AND THAT live streaming of junior and senior games/special events at Haldimand County arenas, as mandated by the related leagues/associations, including local clubs/teams entering into agreements with third-party providers, be supported;
3. AND THAT a future staff report be prepared, for Council consideration for the 2025-2026 ice season, associated with expanding live streaming opportunities to minor sports associations and other ice users.

Prepared by: Katrina Schmitz, Manager, Community Development & Partnerships

Reviewed and respectfully submitted: Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager, Community & Development Services

Approved: Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Since the 2023-2024 season, the junior and senior hockey leagues have required their member teams to offer live streaming of their games and other special events. In Haldimand County this impacts the following teams: the Dunnville Mudcats and Hagersville Hawks—which are members of the Provincial Junior Hockey League (PHJL); the Caledonia Corvairs of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League (GOJHL); and, the Dunnville Aeros of the Ontario Super Hockey League (OSHL). The purpose of this service is to extend the viewership of games beyond the local market, to market/promote local teams and to use videos for training and coaching purposes.

The current request is intended to serve as a pilot project for the 2024-2025 season, allowing the junior and senior teams to comply with the mandates of their leagues and allow County staff to determine the pros and cons of expanding this service to other arena ice users, including minor and recreational hockey, ringette and figure skating, given these groups have expressed interest in having access to live streaming services.

BACKGROUND:

For the 2023-2024 hockey season, the Provincial Junior Hockey League (PJHL) entered into a service agreement with third-party provider, Pixellot, to install live streaming hardware in the arenas where its clubs/teams played, including in Hagersville Arena for the Hawks.

The Caledonia Corvairs—as part of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey Leagues (GOJHL)—were mandated to work with the GOJHL’s exclusive live streaming provider, FloHockey, while the Dunnville Aeros—as part of the Ontario Super Hockey League (OSHL)—were required to work with that league’s live streaming provider, Sporfie. Both the Corvairs and Aeros used mobile cameras to live stream their games (setting up before each game/event and removing the equipment afterwards).

Since then, NBC SportsEngine has partnered with the PJHL’s live streaming provider, Pixellot, to expand its services, and NBC SportsEngine is now the PJHL’s exclusive live streaming service partner. This impacts the Hagersville Hawks—which already has live streaming hardware in the Hagersville Arena—and the Dunnville Mudcats, which are interested in installing a permanent camera in the Dunnville Memorial Arena.

The intention of this report is four-fold:

- To inform the general public that cameras are being used at junior and senior hockey games for live streaming of games/events;
- To approve the ability of the junior and senior teams—as mandated by their leagues, and any agreements their leagues have entered into—to use Haldimand County facilities for live streaming of their games/special events. This includes the option of installing fixed hardware in the arena or using mobile camera equipment;
- To outline the roles and responsibilities of the partners providing the live streaming service in County arenas (the provincial leagues, the clubs/teams, the third-party providers and Haldimand County);
- To begin to determine how Haldimand County may be able to expand live streaming opportunities—fairly and consistently—for other ice users including minor and recreational hockey teams, ringette and figure skating, given the potential increased role of staff in administering this activity due to the age of the user groups, the increased volume of live streaming in arenas, etc.

ANALYSIS:

Prior to the 2024-2025 hockey season, staff were approached by NBC SportsEngine to discuss its new agreement with the Provincial Junior Hockey League (PJHL) to provide live streaming for its clubs/teams, including the Dunnville Mudcats and Hagersville Hawks. The agreement with the PJHL includes the installation of a fixed camera in each home arena and associated operations and maintenance, of which NBC SportsEngine wanted to make Haldimand County aware, as the owner of the arenas.

Among the features of NBC’s “SportsEngine Play” are:

- Each club/team will have an assigned administrator to access/manage the local live stream;
- The system is schedule-based, so the camera turns on at the scheduled start time of the game and turns off at the scheduled completion. Cameras are not motion-activated or capturing any information between scheduled games;
- Streaming is only on during a scheduled event or game, and the schedule is provided by the PJHL to NBC SportsEngine each Monday for the upcoming week;

- If an update needs to be made during the week, the club/team can do so; if there are any software issues, SportsEngine has different support teams available to assist;
- Each facility has its own landing page listing all home clubs, leagues and hosted tournaments, enhancing promotional opportunities for local clubs/teams and user experience;
- Clubs/teams will have their own channel, listing their games and making it easier for users to view their games; and,
- Replays are available within minutes after the game, which is ideal for training and coaching purposes.

Although NBC SportsEngine is currently the live streaming provider—in Haldimand County—for only the PJHL, it would like to investigate live streaming of other ice activities in County arenas. At this time, FloHockey and Sporfie have not approached the County to install hardware/equipment in the Caledonia and Dunnville arenas, and Haldimand County staff have had no involvement in the live streaming of the Corvairs and Aeros games.

Equipment to be Installed:

Each ice pad in Hagersville and Dunnville will have one camera, which follows the play/activity. All hardware will be provided and installed by NBC SportsEngine, which is also responsible for all maintenance, repairs and replacement of equipment. Clubs/teams are responsible for providing a dedicated secondary internet connection, the costs of which are borne by the clubs/teams. The PJHL—through its licensing agreement with NBC SportsEngine—is responsible for insuring all the equipment.

Working with the County’s insurance provider and Information & Privacy Coordinator, staff will develop the text for any signage associated with the service to ensure members of the public are aware of the purpose of the camera (for live streaming only, not security).

Operating Considerations:

Ongoing operations of the live streaming service are the responsibility of NBC SportsEngine for all aspects of the hardware and the PJHL and club/team to ensure the schedule of games/events to be live streamed is up-to-date each week. The club/team is also responsible for ensuring the data and any videos are not downloaded and/or shared for any purpose other than those identified in this report.

Haldimand County staff are not responsible for or involved in any aspect of the live streaming service.

Risk Considerations:

Control and ownership of the footage belongs to the PJHL and its clubs/teams. They have the ability to edit or remove footage at any time, and the use of highlight clips are only permitted to be shared at the discretion of the PJHL and the clubs/teams. Typically, the sharing of footage would only be for social media promotion or through news outlets.

At this time, the footage remains on SportsEngine Play in perpetuity, which is hosted on Amazon Web Services (a hosting service used by most corporations and news outlets globally). If SportsEngine Play was interested in using any footage, it would be with the collaboration with the PJHL and its clubs/teams.

Staff will ensure the same approach to data collection and management is taken with FloHockey for the Caledonia Corvairs and Sporfie, for the Dunnville Aeros.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

There is no cost to the County or the clubs/teams for the installation of the equipment in each facility. NBC SportsEngine is responsible for the ongoing maintenance, repairs and replacement of any hardware/equipment associated with the live streaming service. The clubs/teams are responsible for

ongoing use of the equipment and the provision of a dedicated secondary internet connection. The PJHL is responsible for insuring all equipment installed in the arena. The intention is that there is no Haldimand County staff time associated with the provision of this service.

The service is subscription-based—through NBC SportsEngine—and there are no contracts so users can cancel their subscription at any time.

Haldimand County's Information & Privacy Coordinator will develop—for the clubs/teams to review and sign off on—operating guidelines associated with use of the software, including the blocking of game and event videos from being downloaded.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

This request and associated agreement have been reviewed and are supported by staff from the following Divisions: Clerks; Community Development & Partnerships; Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations; Innovation & Technology Services; and, Legal & Support Services, as well as the County's Information & Privacy Coordinator.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

REFERENCES:

1. Policy 2006-04 – Guidelines for Requesting, Assessing and Implementing Technology (available upon request).

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Policy 2007-01 – Facility Booking and Ice Allocation Policy