

# Artificial turf on Calgary's public soccer fields?

BY KIM GUTTORMSON, CALGARY HERALD JANUARY 30, 2009 10:02 AM

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart wants the city to move ahead on installing artificial turf on existing soccer fields and will recommend next week that council find the money to do so.

"It's a win-win," she said. "If we really move on this we can make a difference this year."

A report going to the community and protective services committee Wednesday outlines the cost of installing the artificial turf, as well as the longer life span those fields have.

City staff are recommending the report be received for information, but Colley-Urquhart will ask that funds be found to begin some conversions. She suggested money could come from the newly announced federation infrastructure funding.

Putting in a new artificial fields costs \$2.5 million, compared to \$1.5 million for a natural pitch. Converting an existing field to artificial would cost about \$2 million.

However, the number of hours an artificial turf field could be used is about 1,320 a year, compared to 550 hours for a natural field.

Daryl Leinweber, executive director of the Calgary Minor Hockey Association, said spending \$8 million to convert the four fields at the Calgary Soccer Centre would leapfrog it "from the bottom of the pile to the top, we'd be the best facility in Canada to host tournaments."

Leinweber said converting the fields would take about two months and could begin this spring if funding were in place.

He added the city will be removing some soccer pitches from rotation this summer so they can be rehabilitated.

"We're really short of quality fields within Calgary," Leinweber said.

Colley-Urquhart pointed out artificial fields also cost less to operate because they require less maintenance, including no herbicides or watering.

kguttormson@theherald.canwest.com

© Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald