



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Extending the 2015-2016 Outdoor Artificial Ice Rink Season

Date:	June 3, 2015
To:	Parks and Environment Committee
From:	General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:\2015\Cluster A\PFR\PE04-062215-AFS#21136

SUMMARY

This report responds to City Council's direction that the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) report to the Parks and Environment Committee on the viability of extending the 2015-2016 outdoor artificial ice rink season; participation statistics for the current 2014-2015 outdoor artificial ice rink season; and all viable options and associated costs related to extending the 2015-2016 outdoor artificial ice rink season.

This report also responds the Parks and Environment Committee's direction that PFR include cold weather contingency funds in its 2016 operating budget to extend the outdoor artificial ice rink season, when weather permits, and to evaluate the feasibility of sustainable, multi-year opportunities for sponsorship of the outdoor artificial ice skating season.

The recommendations contained herein include: the addition of 19 rinks for an extended 16 week season, weather permitting; announce and operationalize the new service standard in 2015; the inclusion of a request for an additional \$0.278 million as part of the 2016 Operating Budget submission; as well as a request for the establishment of a PFR Outdoor Ice Contingency Reserve Fund with an additional \$0.278 million contribution. The report further details the five criteria used for selecting the most optimal rink locations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council authorize Parks, Forestry and Recreation to extend the 2015/16 and subsequent outdoor artificial ice rink seasons for an additional 19 rinks to 16 weeks, inclusive of March Break, for a total of 36 extended rinks, contingent on weather conditions;
2. City Council direct the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to announce and operationalize the new service standard in 2015 and include an additional \$0.278 million to support this increased service level (two weeks) in its 2016 Operating Budget submission for consideration by City Council; and
3. City Council direct the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to include an additional \$0.278 million request in the program's 2016 Operating Budget submission to be used to establish an Outdoor Ice Contingency Reserve Fund for the purpose of supporting an additional two week extension of the outdoor artificial ice rink season, contingent on weather conditions.

Financial Impact

Establishing a 16 week season at 36 of PFR's 52 outdoor artificial ice rink locations requires a four week season extension at 19 additional locations. The four week extension for an additional 19 rinks carries an annual financial impact of \$0.556 million for outdoor rink staffing and utilities. If weather does not permit the full four week extension at all 19 rinks, then the cost of the extension is reduced.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation will include \$0.278 million as a new request to establish a higher level of base budget funding, and an additional \$0.278 million request to contribute to an Outdoor Ice Contingency Reserve Fund, as part of its 2016 Operating Budget submission. The request to create the reserve fund will also be included in the 2016 Operating Budget submission.

Although the commitments required to support this service expansion must be made in 2015 and early 2016, prior to Council's planned 2016 Budget approval date, the program intends to proceed to make them. Should these requests not be approved, the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation will have to accommodate the resulting financial impacts within the program's available resources for the 2015/2016 season only.

The first two weeks of the extension, where temperatures are more likely to be lower and all extended rinks stay open, will be funded by the request to establish a higher base budget. The second two weeks, where some rinks may close due to higher temperatures, is intended to be funded by the new reserve fund. The following is the breakdown of the costs for the four week extension (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Financial Impact Summary

Financial Impact Summary – Four Week Extension for 19 Outdoor Rinks (\$000's)					
Category	2016 Budget Request (2 weeks)		Reserve Funding (2 weeks)		2016 Budget Impact
Salaries & Benefits	\$	198.0	\$	198.0	\$ 396.1
Utilities	\$	80.0	\$	80.0	\$ 160.1
Gross Expenditures	\$	278.1	\$	278.1	\$ 556.2

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

Since 2008, City Council and Committees have approved an extended 16 week ice rink season for a total of 15 outdoor artificial ice rinks in Toronto, to which two additional rinks were added due facility upgrades. These decisions can be found in the following:

"Re-Opening of 41 Artificial Outdoor Ice Rinks" (Item MM17.21)

Decision, March 3, 4 and 5, 2008:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2008.MM17.21>

"Outdoor Artificial Ice Rink Season" (Item CD20.9)

Decision, December 1, 2 and 3, 2008:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2008.CD20.9>

"Early Opening of Outdoor Artificial Ice Rinks – Supplementary Report" (Item CD22.6)

Decision, February 23, 24 and 25, 2009:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2009.CD22.6>

"Request Regarding Ice Rink at Mel Lastman Square" (Item NY22.41)

Decision, March 21, 2013:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.NY22.41>

"Extending the Ice Skating Season at Dieppe Park Artificial Ice Rink" (Item MM48.2)

Decision, February 19 and 20, 2014:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.MM48.2>

Due to continued public interest in skating at outdoor rinks through March Break, City Council, at its meeting of March 10, 2015 through item EX3.4, "2015 Capital and Operating Budgets", requested that the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation report to the Parks and Environment Committee on the viability of extending the 2015-

2016 outdoor artificial ice rink season, including participation statistics for the current 2014-2015 outdoor artificial ice rink season, and all viable options and associated costs related to extending the 2015-2016 outdoor artificial ice rink season.

Decision (Item EX3.4, Recommendation #189):

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.EX3.4>

At its meeting of March 31, April 1 and 2, 2015, City Council, through item PE2.5, "Extending Outdoor Skating Season in the City of Toronto," directed the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to include cold weather contingency funds in the 2016 Operating Budget to extend the outdoor skating season when weather permits, and report back on the status of this direction, including an evaluation of the feasibility of sustainable, multi-year opportunities for sponsorship of the artificial outdoor ice skating season.

Decision (Item PE2.5):

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.PE2.5>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The City of Toronto provides a variety of recreational skating and shinny hockey opportunities throughout the winter. The City owns and operates 40 indoor arenas, with 48 ice pads, as well as 52 outdoor artificial ice rinks (see Appendix A), with 35 hockey pads, 30 leisure pads and four skating trails. The City also owns nine arenas, with 15 ice pads, that are operated by Boards of Management.

In reviewing the largest five municipalities in Ontario and Canada by population, excluding Vancouver due to warmer temperatures, it is clear that the City of Toronto offers the highest service level per capita in outdoor artificial ice rinks, with one artificial rink per 53,846 people, followed by Edmonton, with one rink per 125,428 people.

In addition to the rinks operated by the City, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division works with local community members who build and maintain natural ice rinks on parkland for community use. Through this program, PFR provides training, equipment and access to water for community groups. In 2015, there were 46 natural ice rinks in operation, augmenting outdoor skating opportunities.

Prior to 2008, artificial ice rinks were historically open for a duration of 12 weeks, with the exception of five, which operated for 16 weeks. The start and end dates of the outdoor artificial ice rink season were originally established based on historical weather patterns and typically warmer temperatures in March. Since early 2008, various directions have been given by City Council to extend the outdoor artificial ice rink season by opening all or select rinks earlier, or by extending their operation later, through the end of March Break. In the past two years, select rinks were extended by sponsorships.

COMMENTS

Option for Extending the Outdoor Artificial Ice Rink Season

Parks Forestry and Recreation's current Council-approved service standard for the outdoor artificial ice rink season is 12 weeks for 35 locations and 16 weeks for 17 locations. In the past two years, extension of some additional artificial ice rinks was funded with third party sponsorships, which is not a sustainable approach.

Extension through sponsorships does not allow the Division to provide the full range of programming, permitting and security services in extended rinks and creates staffing pressures during the extended time period. Parks operations spring clean-up begins in mid-March, which overlaps with extended ice rink operations into March. Extending the outdoor artificial ice rink season also creates some scheduling challenges for seasonal staff training normally conducted during this period in March.

In order for PFR to maintain its service standards in maintenance, programming, permitting and security, the Division needs to have approval and funding confirmation for the extended 16 week season for 19 additional rinks in the year preceding the extension.

Figure 2 outlines the current and recommended service level based on the five criteria detailed in this report.

Figure 2: Current and Recommended Service Levels

	Current Service Level	Recommended Service Level
12 Week Season	35	16
16 Week Season	17	36
Total	52	52

Of the 16 rinks that will continue on a 12 week season, seven rinks have lower refrigeration plant capacity, four have established permit use and must be converted to dry pads in early April, and the remaining five have low user participation.

The recommended increase will cost \$0.556 million and will be funded by a combination of increasing the base budget to fund the first two weeks of the extended season, when temperatures are colder, and a new PFR Outdoor Ice Contingency Reserve Fund to fund the second two weeks, which will cover those rinks that can remain open in warmer weather.

Having approved funding will allow the Division to schedule staff to maintain, program and supervise rinks and perform park spring season clean-up and preparation. A planned 16 week season would also provide increased recreational programming such as shinny and leisure skating at the 36 locations.

Sponsorships remain a funding option for extension of the rink season. In past years, sponsorships were received from Canadian Tire and Scotiabank in 2014, and Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (MLSE) and Tim Hortons in 2015. Once funding is approved, the Division will not actively seek sponsorships, but will consider any proposals before drawing funds from reserves.

Rink Extension Criteria

In reviewing the outdoor artificial ice rink season, PFR considered the following criteria in recommending the additional 19 rink locations for a 16 week season. Staff also validated the 17 rinks which were already operating for 16 weeks, to ensure they would meet these criteria:

1. Weather Considerations
2. Environmental and Mechanical Considerations
3. User Participation Levels
4. Equitable Geographic Distribution
5. Permit Considerations

1. Weather Considerations

The start and end dates of the outdoor artificial ice rink season are based on the time frame when staff are able to successfully make ice, and when the sun is at its lowest azimuth and weakest (least warm). To make ice, staff require three consecutive days of five degrees Celsius or cooler daytime temperatures, with zero degree or cooler temperatures at night. When warmer weather makes ice soft and unsafe, despite efforts to keep the pad chilled, rinks are closed for periods of time until frozen again, or they are sporadically closed due to local ice conditions. Recent winters have been much colder than in prior years, which may allow the season to be extended.

Even with these cold temperatures, during the last four weeks of the extended outdoor artificial ice rink season in 2015, there was a 41% closure rate for those rinks scheduled to be open until March 20th. For rinks that did remain open, melting ice created less than optimal skating conditions, requiring some areas to be coned off or rinks closed for periods of time. Rinks less likely to be impacted by warming trends were selected for a 16 week season.

2. Environmental and Mechanical Considerations

Warm weather strains the capacity of ice rink refrigeration plants. Newer or refurbished rinks can absorb some of this extra work pressure, but older and aging refrigeration plants have lower capacity, which results in plant failure and costly repairs.

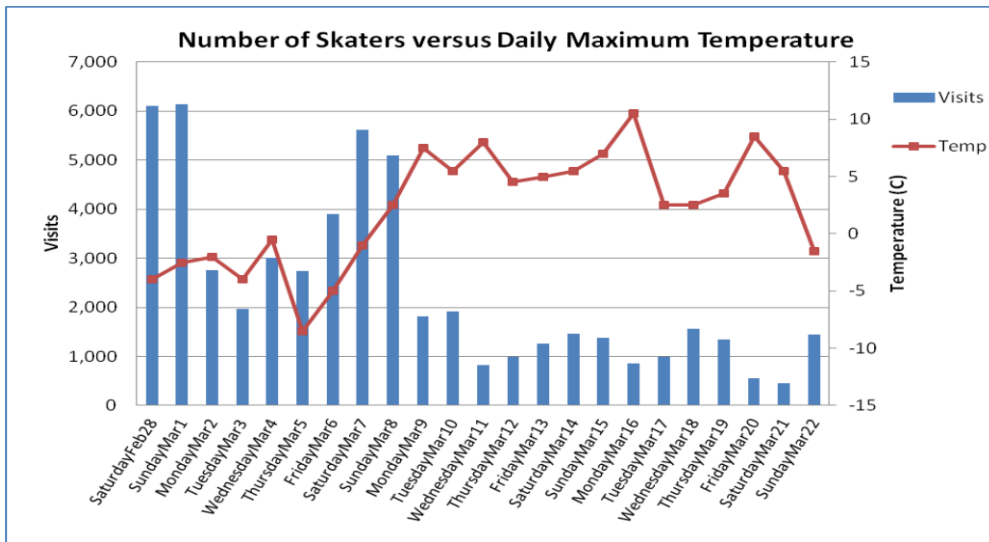
With warmer temperatures, greater energy is required to cool ice rinks, increasing greenhouse gas production. Parks, Forestry and Recreation can demonstrate support for

the City's *Climate Change Action Plan* and avoid costly repairs by ensuring that only select rinks qualify for an extended season.

3. User Participation Levels

Participation statistics for the full 2014/2015 outdoor artificial ice rink season are not available, however attendance was recorded from February 28 to March 22, 2015 for the 29 rinks that had a 16 week season. The total recorded attendance for this period was 73,840 skaters and 8,359 spectators. Generally, attendance was highest at the beginning of March and declined as time progressed, ice conditions deteriorated and the weather warmed (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Temperatures and Participation Levels for February 28 – March 22, 2015



Although limited to this calendar year, this participation data demonstrates that as the weather warms, fewer people skate at outdoor ice rinks. Figure 4 below further highlights that the busiest days during the extended season took place during the first week of March. As such, rink participation levels are important to consider in determining the rinks selected for an extended season.

Figure 4: Busiest and Slowest Ice Rink Days for February 28 – March 22, 2015

Busiest Dates	# of Skaters	Slowest Dates	# of Skaters
Saturday February 28	7721	Friday March 20	1147
Saturday March 7	7415	Wednesday March 11	1368
Sunday March 1	6915	Saturday March 21	1443
Sunday March 8	6508	Monday March 16	1462

It is anticipated that with planned communications and programming, use and participation will increase with increased ice availability.

4. Equitable Geographic Distribution

It is important to consider the geographic distribution of outdoor artificial ice rinks in order to ensure equitable distribution and access by the public to rinks open for a 16 week season. Consequently, in some instances, rinks that did not meet some of the other criteria were selected for a 16 week season in order to ensure good geographical distribution of the open rinks.

5. Permit Considerations

Some ice rink locations have established permit uses for activities like ball hockey at the start of April. Conversion from ice pad to dry pad can require two weeks of preparatory work. Extension of the outdoor artificial ice rink season at these locations creates pressure to ensure that dry pads are available on time and without delay. As such, some rinks with early established dry pad permits will not be considered for a 16 week season.

Conclusion

Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends a new ice season service standard for artificial outdoor ice rinks that would provide a 16 week season for 36 of its 52 rinks and a 12 week season for the remaining 16 rinks. By funding the additional 19 rinks through a base funding increase and a contingency reserve fund, the public will have greater planned access to skating programs, leisure skate and permitted uses, which optimizes a much valued asset in a city that enjoys its winter sports.

By taking a planned and balanced approach to this service level enhancement, Parks, Forestry and Recreation is able to manage the operational impacts, including seasonal staffing and spring start-up operational needs, so as to not impact the other important uses and users of these facilities and parks. To that end, PFR is recommending that \$0.278 million be funded through the 2016 Operating Budget for the first two weeks of the extended season, and an Outdoor Ice Contingency Reserve Fund of \$0.278 million be established to fund the last two weeks of the extended season, with the ability to announce and operationalize the extended season beginning in 2015.

The additional 19 rinks recommended to operate for 16 weeks were selected because they meet the operational requirements for a longer ice season, were generally well used by the public, are consistent with equitable geographical distribution or are not required immediately in April for dry pad use (e.g. ball hockey programming).

All rinks will be evaluated on this basis annually, with adjustments to the list of rinks made as required. This represents a significant increase in the number of rinks open for 16 weeks, from 17 currently funded to a total of 36 rinks, and new or refurbished rinks with good ice making capacity will be added, where feasible, in the future.

CONTACTS

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SIGNATURE

Janie Romoff
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Outdoor Artificial Ice Rink Program

APPENDIX A: Outdoor Artificial Ice Rink Program

OUTDOOR RINK PROGRAM - 2015-2016			
Proposed Extended Dates - Pending Budget Approval			
LOCATION	Historically Pre-Approved Extension	Additional Rinks Recommended for Extension in 2015/2016	Regular Opening & Closing
Albert Campbell	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Broadlands	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Cedarvale Park	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Col. Sam Smith	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Dieppe Park	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Dufferin Grove	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Glen Long	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Greenwood	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Hodgson	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Irving W, Chapley	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Kew Gardens	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Mel Lastman Square	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Nathan Phillips Square (City Hall)	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Regent Park South	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Rennie Park	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Sunnydale	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
West Mall	Nov. 28 - Mar. 20		
Christie Pits		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Giovanni Caboto		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Harry Gairey		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
High Park		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Ledbury		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Otter Creek		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Ramsden Park		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Sir Adam Beck		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Trinity		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Westway		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Martingrove		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Monarch Park		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
North Toronto Memorial CC		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Pleasantview		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Rosedale		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Royalcrest		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Sherbourne Common		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Valleyfield		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Wallace Emerson		Nov. 28 - Mar. 20	
Buttonwood			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Campbell			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Humber Valley			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Jimmie Simpson			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Joseph Bannon Park			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Lambton-Kingsway			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Prince of Wales			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Regent Park North			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Rivercrest			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Riverdale Park East			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Ryerson(Devonian)			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Summerlea			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Wedgewood			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Westgrove			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Withrow Park			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28
Queensway			Dec. 5 - Feb. 28