



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Options for Winter Public Access to Grenadier Pond

Date:	November 3, 2015
To:	Parks and Environment Committee
From:	General Manager Parks, Forestry and Recreation General Manager, Toronto Water
Wards:	Ward 13 Parkdale – High Park
Reference Number:	P:\2015\Cluster A\PFR\PE08-112315-AFS#21992

SUMMARY

The Parks and Environment Committee, at its meeting on September 18th, 2015, referred PE5.1 Skating on Grenadier Pond to the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation with the request to consult with the General Manager, Toronto Water and report to the Parks and Environment Committee meeting on a less expensive method of providing public access to the ice at Grenadier Pond which includes the following critical elements:

- a) ensuring the ice is of a safe thickness and density;
- b) creating new signage and flagging to communicate when the ice is safe for public use; and
- c) designating an area for both use and entrance onto the ice which does not impact the environmentally sensitive areas of the pond,

so that the program can be implemented in time for the 2015/2016 winter season.

This report outlines two options which would allow the public to have access to Grenadier Pond for winter activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Managers of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Toronto Water recommend that:

1. City Council receives this report for information.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact arising from the recommendation of this report.

The estimated costs for the options discussed in this report are as follows

Option 1 – Cleared Skating Area

The cost to clear snow, and measure ice thickness on a designated area on Grenadier Pond, would result in one-time capital costs of approximately \$105,816, and an estimated annual operating cost of \$111,000, assuming an 8 week operating period.

Option 2 – Ice Monitoring Program

The cost to offer an ice thickness monitoring program within a designated area on Grenadier Pond, will result in an estimated annual operating cost of \$50,000, assuming an 8 week operating period.

This expenditure cannot be accommodated within the 2015-2024 Approved Capital Plan or the 2015 Approved Operating Budget.

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

DECISION HISTORY

The Parks and Environment Committee, at its meeting on September 18th, 2015, referred PE5.1 Skating on Grenadier Pond to the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation with the request to consult with the General Manager, Toronto Water and report to the Parks and Environment Committee meeting on a less expensive method of providing public access to the ice at Grenadier Pond which includes the following critical elements:

- a. Ensuring the ice is of a safe thickness and density;
- b. Creating new signage and flagging to communicate when the ice is safe for public use; and
- c. Designating an area for both use and entrance onto the ice which does not impact the environmentally sensitive areas of the pond,

so that the program can be implemented in time for the 2015/2016 winter season.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.PE5.1>

This report presents two options to reduce costs contained in the September 18th, 2015 Parks and Environment Committee report PE5.1 Skating on Grenadier Pond. It should be noted that neither option contained in this report can be considered a skating program.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Parks and Environment Committee, at its meeting on September 18th, 2015, considered the report "Skating on Grenadier Pond" <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-83344.pdf>. This report provided information on the suitability of Grenadier Pond for safe skating, discussed the process of ice formation, monitoring and maintenance requirements, climate considerations, liability and risk management considerations, and a comparison of other similar programs offered by other municipalities, including the City of Ottawa's skating program on the Rideau Canal. It also proposed an ice skating program which could be run on the Pond that satisfied the City's Legal and Risk Management obligations.

As a result of the report above, the Parks and Environment Committee at its meeting of September 18th, 2015, asked that a report outlining a less expensive method of providing public access to the ice at Grenadier Pond be presented, including the above listed elements.

COMMENTS

Suitability of Grenadier Pond for Safe Skating

Grenadier Pond is a 14.2 hectare body of water and is considered to be a shallow pond, having an average depth of 2.9 metres, with a maximum of 6 to 9 metres located in the central basin. In addition to its ecological and social benefits, Grenadier Pond also serves an important storm water management function. Activities on storm water management ponds are currently prohibited in most municipalities, including the City of Toronto, due to flowing water, variability of water levels, and chemical composition, which complicates freezing of the water. These factors underscore the need for a rigorous ice monitoring program to ensure safety if access is to be permitted to the Pond.

Grenadier Pond has a long history as a natural skating rink, dating to the turn of the last century. Despite the City's current prohibition of skating on the pond, local residents occasionally use it for skating, skiing and other winter activities when they feel the ice is safe. This reports seeks to provide options to assess ice and communicate to the public when the ice in a designated area of the pond is thick enough for access.

Occupiers' Liability Act

The Occupiers' Liability Act requires the City to take steps to ensure that people entering its parks are kept reasonably safe. What is required will depend on the circumstances.

If a person is injured because the City did not fulfill its duties under the Occupiers' Liability Act, the injured person may sue the City for compensation for his or her injuries. This exposes the City to costly legal expenses and risk of an adverse court judgement.

The City Solicitor has prepared a separate confidential report outlining the legal risks associated with providing public access to the ice on Grenadier Pond.

Winter Access to Grenadier Pond

The Parks and Environment Committee directed staff to find reductions in cost to the skating program proposed at the September 18th Committee meeting. Subsequently, Parks staff met with Risk Management and Legal to discuss how to meet the City's obligations under the Occupier's Liability Act while providing for access to Grenadier Pond for winter activities, while also reducing the proposed costs.

Through this process staff has identified some cost reductions. With these reductions in place, however, a full skating program can no longer be achieved. Both options listed below provide for access to the Pond under certain circumstances. When the ice is of a certain thickness and quality, the public will be advised through signage that the ice may be accessed on a "Use at Your Own Risk" basis.

The two options are outlined below:

1. Cleared Surface

This option would provide testing of ice thickness and density by an ice engineer and surveyor, as well as monitoring and maintenance of ice, but does not provide staff for daily supervision or use of a Zamboni for ice clearing. While a Zamboni is the fastest and most efficient way to scrape ice and spread water to create a smooth ice surface, cost reductions have been achieved in this option by substituting submersible pumps with hose for flooding, and a snow blower for clearing the surface. Signage would be required to inform the public of the risk of skating on natural ice surfaces. Without a Zamboni, the ice surface will not be maintained to the City's Ice Rink standards, and the surface will likely have some rough patches.

Option 1 would result in one-time capital costs of approximately \$105,816, and an estimated annual operating cost of \$111,000, assuming an 8 week operating period.

2. Ice Monitoring Program

This is an ice monitoring program that would provide daily testing of ice thickness and density by an ice engineer and surveyor, within a designated area on Grenadier Pond, and necessary signage and a flagging system to inform the public of the risks associated with activities on frozen bodies of water. This program will, in essence, only ensure that it is communicated to the public when ice is thick enough to support weight. This option does not provide for clearing of snow, flooding or smoothing of the surface. Residents wishing to use the ice will have to clear the snow themselves, when it is designated to be safe.

Option 2 will result in an estimated annual operating cost of \$50,000, assuming an 8 week operating period.

Both options will require specialized signage in order to notify the public of the risks associated with activities on natural open water bodies. The proposed signage is found in

attachment 2. The signage system would also include a method of informing users of how thick the ice is within the designated assessed area, and whether or not it should be accessed by the public. This signage would be in addition to the signage advising caution when engaging in activities on the ice. All signage would apply only to the designated area, which would be delineated once the ice was safe for staff to access.

Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) and Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) – Grenadier Pond

Restricting the area of shoreline access is important to mitigate potential shoreline impacts for all potential options. Given the nature of Grenadier Pond, it is not feasible to fence off the entire Pond, therefore the designated access area on the ice would be delineated with ropes and stakes/pylons to ensure access is controlled in a way to prevent damage to the shoreline and habitat.

Feasibility of implementation for the 2015/16 Season

Because the City currently prohibits the use of natural water bodies for winter activities, there are no staff at the City who have the proper ice engineering designation and training to determine when the ice has reached appropriate thickness and quality. The City would have to engage the services of a contracted ice engineering company until such time as staff can be hired or trained to this role. Given the time restrictions, and purchasing process, it may not be feasible to have a contract in place by the 2015/16 winter season.

CONCLUSION

Both options presented in the report provide for:

- ensuring the ice is of a determined thickness, density and quality in a designated area of the pond prior to public access;
- new signage and flagging to communicate when the ice is open for public access;
- designating an area for both use and entrance onto the ice which does not impact the environmentally sensitive areas of the pond.

The options presented in this report cannot be considered skating programs. It should be noted that if either of these options is implemented, the difference between a skating program and ice monitoring program needs to be communicated to potential users so expectations will not exceed the service level provided.

Any changes to service levels would require that a business case be submitted as part of the 2016 operating and capital budget cycles. Even with funding, it may not be possible to secure the services of an ice engineer in time for the 2015/16 winter season.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Map – Designated/Former Public Skating Area at Grenadier Pond/Proposed Public access area
Attachment 2 – Proposed Wording for Signage

Attachment 1 - Map of Designated / Former Public Access Area at Grenadier Pond



Attachment 2 – Proposed Wording for Signage

Sign #1: to be placed every 23 meters (75 feet) along shoreline of designated area

Yellow Flag: Use at your own risk in designated area ONLY

Red Flag: Ice is unsafe, do not access

Unmaintained natural ice surface;
exercise caution when using

Sign #2 ("conditions of use"): to be placed at access to pond

Ice Safety

The ice thickness is measured in the marked area only, there is no access permitted to any other area of Grenadier Pond.

Yellow Flag: Use at your own risk in designated area ONLY

Red Flag: Ice is unsafe, do not access

This area is unsupervised, use at your own risk

- Never access the ice while alone
- Children should NEVER be on the ice unsupervised
- This ice is not maintained
- Use caution when skating
- The ice may have rough, uneven areas, soft surface areas or other areas not suitable for skating, skiing or other activities
- Do not congregate in one area
- Access not permitted after dark
- Ice fishing not permitted

Please report unsafe users by calling 311
In an emergency call 911