



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Outdoor Ice Rink Program Standards and Improvements

<b>Date:</b>	October 4, 2016
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation Committee
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:\2016\Cluster A\PFR\CD15-102016-AFS#23417

#### SUMMARY

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This report responds to a request from the April 13, 2016 Community Development and Recreation Committee for Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) staff to provide information on the 2015-2016 outdoor artificial ice rink season, a summary of operating standards and planned business process improvements for the 2016-2017 outdoor artificial ice rink season.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation operates 52 outdoor artificial ice rinks offering programs, leisure skate and permit opportunities. In 2016, over 480,000 residents visited outdoor artificial ice rinks for leisure and instructional skate.

Programs and services are continually reviewed by staff to improve upon service delivery and customer experience. As a result of this continuous improvement effort, changes to customer service, communication and promotion, facility maintenance and quality assurance processes have been implemented for the 2016-2017 season, improving user experience within current service levels and the Council-approved budgets.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. the Community Development and Recreation Committee receives this report for information

## **Financial Impact**

There are no financial impacts resulting from the adoption of this report. The report outlines a number of business process improvements that have been implemented by PFR to deliver Council approved service levels within the 2016 Council-approved Operating and Capital Budgets.

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

## **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting of April 13, 2016, the Community Development and Recreation Committee requested the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report on:

- a) the 2015-2016 rink season including current management models between parks and recreation; levels of expertise required by staff; protocols and standards related to ice quality, maintenance and safety; and rates of usage;
- b) recommendations for any improvements in departmental customer service for all artificial ice rinks for the 2016-2017 season; and
- c) an analysis of the potential of establishing rink classifications including a possible destination rink designation.

To view the decision document follow the hyperlink:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD11.11>

## **COMMENTS**

### **Current operations**

The City of Toronto offers outdoor skating opportunities at City-operated artificial ice rinks and community-run natural ice rinks. PFR operates 52 outdoor artificial ice rinks offering programs, leisure skate and permit opportunities. In 2016, over 480,000 residents visited outdoor artificial ice rinks for leisure and instructional skate. Additionally, PFR works with community groups to provide approximately 30 to 40 natural ice rinks annually. The information in this report only applies to the outdoor artificial ice rink operation.

Staffing models vary across the City and include staff from both the Parks and Community Recreation sections. To support this cross-section effort, an inter-section team, co-led by one Manager each from Parks and Community Recreation, provides leadership and direction to the program with the goal of increasing collaboration and

consistency. Operating standards exist in the areas of ice quality, maintenance, staffing and programming and are developed, reviewed and adapted by the inter-section team. Service levels outlined below are subject to the configuration and utilization of each ice surface.

Ice Quality

The current ice maintenance standards include maintenance for scraping, flooding and edging depending on a rink being serviced by dedicated staff (staff remain on site for entire shift) or a roving crew (staff service multiple locations per shift). These service levels may be impacted by weather considerations and time of the year, and only reflect the minimum requirement. On normal days without extreme weather, these standards are often exceeded.

<b>Maintenance Type</b>	<b>Rink Serviced by Dedicated Staff</b>	<b>Rink Serviced by Roving Crew</b>
Scraping	Four times daily	Twice daily
Flooding	Four times daily	Twice daily
Edging	Weekly	Weekly

Programming

Community Recreation delivers the outdoor ice program which includes: instructional skating and hockey, age-based drop-in opportunities, open public skate and community use through permits. Locations with unique amenities such as skating trails and fire pits also provide special events and community programming. Annually, Community Recreation Programmers responsible for the programming schedule review the previous year's program, utilization, demographics and customer feedback, and determine if change to the schedule is warranted.

Staffing levels (ice attendants, instructors, and maintenance staff) are determined to ensure safety, facility maintenance needs, participant supervision and appropriate instructor-to-participant ratios based on divisional operating guidelines and best practices. Additional drivers of staff-to-participant ratios include programming schedule and other facility needs such as customer service and maintenance requirements.

**Rink classifications**

Outdoor artificial ice rinks each have different amenities which can be a driver of usage patterns. Some examples of amenities include skating trails, an ice canopy, kitchen amenities, fire pits, rink boards and on-site maintenance staff. Experience demonstrates that sites with additional and unique features draw users from a broader catchment area.

Rinks including Nathan Philips Square, Mel Lastman Square, Greenwood Park, Colonel Sam Smith Park and Kew Gardens have become destinations for visitors and residents across the City and would be considered city-wide or more regional facilities. Programming and related staffing levels are planned at these rinks based on the utilization and amenities they provide, and staff continue to investigate new partnerships, program activations, promotions and other changes that could help to grow awareness of destination rinks and to expand their presence in the broader ice rink program.

A formal classification system that establishes a service standard for programming and supervision would require further study however, and would likely have financial implications in terms establishing and then meeting a committed and consistent service level.

## **Improvements for the 2016/2017 season**

### Public updates on rink status

During the 2015/2016 season, a computer application that provides real time updates of rink status was developed and piloted. With this new tool, staff are able to update rink status through their smartphones, which then populates rink status information directly to the PFR website and to 311. This allows for timely and accurate information for users, including changes in rink status due to weather or mechanical issues, program changes and open and closed information similar to the notification system used in our Aquatics programs. This tool will be fully implemented for the 2016/2017 season.

### Standardized rink status criteria

To improve communication in regards to program changes or rink closures and to ensure a consistent operation across the City, criteria have been developed to determine when ice is no longer safe for use. Previously, decisions regarding rink status and closure were made based on the experience and judgement of the staff on-site, resulting in inconsistent approaches across the City and from day-to-day.

Criteria for rink status change and closure are clear indicators used to determine rink status, which will then be reported through real time updates for users. During the 2016/2017 season, ice will be considered unsafe for use and will be closed when one or more of the following conditions exist and until the condition is remedied:

- Ice surface is covered in snow
- Ice has melted to expose concrete base other than at the edge
- Ice has melted to expose more than 12 inches of concrete base at the edges
- Soft ice conditions exist in multiple spots on the ice surface, which may include visible water pooling

### Consistent facility maintenance

Facility maintenance includes the removal of snow from exterior areas, cleaning of washrooms and change rooms and upkeep of interior and exterior areas. Although this function is performed by different staffing models across the City, the service standard and expectations remain the same.

For the 2016/2017 season, a new standard has been developed to deliver consistent facility maintenance, including an updated maintenance checklist, updated and amended annual training and orientation, and standards-based supervisory inspections.

### Improved signage and promotion

Staff have identified opportunities to improve visitor experience at our rinks through improved signage. Information regarding operating hours, amenities and programming will be better presented for the 2016/2017 season, as well as critical pre-season and end-of-season information regarding opening and closing dates. Signage is being developed with a consistent design style to improve onsite communication for users by providing information that is accurate, timely and visible.

During the 2016/2017 season, PFR will also increase the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to promote and provide information regarding outdoor artificial ice rinks. This feature information such as opening dates, rink status information and event information on the divisional Facebook and Twitter channels as well as the launch of a new dedicated Facebook channel for outdoor rinks.

### Continuous improvement

PFR is committed to continuously reviewing and improving our programs and services. During the 2016/2017 season, we will expand our program review process by soliciting direct feedback from the public on program delivery, community engagement and user experience at outdoor artificial ice rinks. Surveying residents, reviewing 311 call information and collecting other feedback received will provide key insights as staff review and make further improvements to the program.

## **CONCLUSION**

Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation is committed to continually improving its programs and services and has implemented a number of changes to customer service, communication and promotion, facility maintenance and quality assurance processes for the 2016-2017 season within current service levels and the Council-approved budgets.

Staff anticipate that these improvements will result in a more consistent, high-quality and enjoyable experience for residents using the City's outdoor rinks and will review the

outcome of these changes at the end of the season to identify additional improvements that can be implemented in future years.

## **CONTACT**

Howie Dayton, Director, Community Recreation, Tel.: 416-392-7252,  
Email: [hdayton@toronto.ca](mailto:hdayton@toronto.ca)

Richard Ubbens, Director, Parks, Tel.: 416-392-7911, Email: [rubbens@toronto.ca](mailto:rubbens@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Janie Romoff  
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation