

May 27, 2009

City of Ottawa
City Wide Allocations
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Sent via email: sports@ottawa.ca

To whom it may concern:

The Rideau Skating Club appreciates the opportunity to comment on the City's review of the Facility Allocation Policy. We provide the following remarks to ensure that the interests of the figure skating community are recognized, as well as to add some context for our specific concerns.

The Rideau Skating Club is sanctioned by Skate Canada, and is based in Manotick, Ontario. As an organization entirely run by volunteers, we have taken great pains to try and offer the best programs for our skaters. We seek to serve our community by providing a variety of programs and by developing skaters of all abilities, from our Parent and Tot learn to skate program to the recreational skater to the competitive figure skater.

Given our location in one of the fastest growing areas of the City, there have been greater needs and demands placed on the Club. We have substantially increased the size of our learn-to-skate programs ("Canskate") over the last five years, and yet we still had to turn away young skaters for the last two years because of lack of space. We are also trying to foster our competitive figure skaters as well, which requires access to training facilities on a regular basis.

While the Canskate program has seen the most dramatic growth, all programs have increased in participation, with the Club doubling its membership over the past five years. While we recognize that there may be other organizations receiving less of their ideal allocation than our own (from our calculations, we are currently at approximately 74% of our ideal allotment), the fact remains that we are in need of additional ice time to fully support our programs.

Unlike many team-oriented sports, figure skating is generally an individual sport, and therefore has unique qualities. For the best utilization of ice, safety issues etc., we manage the number and level of skaters on each session and carefully regulate adjustments throughout the season. Professional figure skating coaches work with skaters both in group environments and individually. They coach skaters across all levels, from Canskate to competitive programs, and must be on the ice through the various levels and disciplines as required by

Skate Canada and for insurance purposes. Blocks of time are essential to a figure skating organization as it is difficult to attract professional coaches for one-hour intervals of work. Also, the sport of skating requires practice on various disciplines by an individual skater, again necessitating blocks of time to work on each discipline in a session.

Having outlined the context in which we function, we would like to briefly comment on certain options being put forth. From our perspective, these options require careful review and consideration prior to any implementation:

'Previous use' not a key factor in allocation of ice time:

- While the rationale is commendable, the working reality for many not-for-profit organizations is that there is a need to have some security in the schedule that they have, given the pressures already placed on volunteers who manage many of these clubs, ours included. An overly onerous process may result in the inability of volunteer-run clubs to provide the services. Note: If the re-allocation is to take place on a five year cycle as per option #4, this could assist in reducing the onus on the clubs and its volunteers, however, consideration still needs to be given to having a simple and streamlined process with the non-profit organization in mind.
- As indicated above, figure skating requires blocks of time, both from a training perspective as well practicably from a coaching perspective. This is an essential component to our current schedule, and currently recognized as part of the 'previous use' factor. If 'previous use' is not to be recognized, consideration must be given to the specific needs of the sport.

Minor Ice Distribution – weekend to weekday ratios

- The Rideau Skating Club currently maintains a fairly equal ratio of time between weekend and weekday hours, and this has proved a successful balance in catering to the needs of our users. It should be recognized that access to weekend hours is essential in order to be able to provide access to the programs to the greatest number of participants.

Length of Season – maximize facility usage:

- The Rideau Skating Club has recently extended its season to April 30th. However, we are required to move arenas and create an adjusted schedule for the month of April. The club strongly supports a recommendation which would allow it to have a continuous schedule from September to April of each season, as per the recommendation. We would also be eager to discuss the possibility of extending the season into June while maintaining our ice schedule, if such ice time was available.

While the recommendations within the policy will address the immediate allocation of ice time, it does not address the plain fact that certain areas of the City, such as ours in Manotick and the surrounding area, do not have the

required infrastructure to support the population growth or the demands for ice time. No readjustment of the policy will be able to address this fundamental gap. As a result, the organizations in these areas are unable to properly service their community.

Given the growth planned in the coming years, we strongly urge the City to act swiftly to address the gaps in infrastructure; additional ice hours in the Manotick and surrounding area are essential in order to meet the needs of its users. We also encourage the City to look at alternative methods by which non-prime time ice could be better utilized, such as working with the school boards.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the policy. We remain available to the City for any further discussions on ice allocation and how to improve the programs and services in our area.

Sincerely,

Angela Justason
On behalf of the
Rideau Skating Club