CITY OF HAMILTON

EMERGENCY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Recreation Division

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Date: August 17, 2007

Prepared by: Coralee Secore, Ext. 4689

SUBJECT: Artificial Outdoor Ice Rinks (ECS07049) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That Report ECS07049 – Artificial Outdoor Rinks, be received.

(b) That staff be directed to bring forward a report, outlining the costs associated with the analysis of the City’s outdoor recreational facilities, to the 2008 budget process for consideration.

(c) That Item respecting Artificial Outdoor Ice Rinks be identified as completed and removed from the Emergency and Community Services Committee’s Outstanding Business List.

Joe-Anne Priel
General Manager,
Community Services Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Report ECS07049 highlights the experiences with outdoor artificial ice rinks in the City of Toronto and various other municipalities. Based on these findings, staff is recommending continuing to research the use and role of artificial ice rinks as part of the City’s supply of recreational outdoor ice facilities and to outline directions for the provision for future consideration.
BACKGROUND:

At its meeting of January 24, 2007, Council directed staff to investigate the experiences with artificial ice rinks in the City of Toronto and other municipalities, and report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee respecting the viability of establishing outdoor artificial ice rinks (AIRs) in the City of Hamilton.

**Toronto’s Experience with Artificial Outdoor Ice Rinks**

The following examines the current provisions of outdoor rinks in Toronto on a city wide basis.

Toronto provides two major types of outdoor rinks, AIRs and outdoor natural ice rinks (NIRs).

There were 161 outdoor ice rinks, during the 2006-07 season; 64 AIRs (representing 40% of all outdoor ice rinks) at 50 locations across the city. A number of these locations provide two pads. There were 97 NIRs (representing 60% of all outdoor ice rinks). The number of NIRs varies from year to year.

The City of Toronto has been providing AIR facilities for more than 50 years. The majority (49% or 84%) were built between 1950 and 1980. No new AIR facilities have been built in the city for more than twenty years due in part to the cost to construct new AIR facilities. The 2008 Capital Budget Program has an outdoor artificial ice (AIR) project scheduled for North Toronto. Total cost of the project is $2.1 million, which includes rink and user support amenities.

Toronto’s AIRs tend to serve community requirements and NIRs respond to unmet demand for outdoor skating opportunities in neighbourhoods, which do not have an AIR or convenient access to an indoor facility.

The most common provision of user support is changerooms and washrooms. Several AIRs are located next to indoor arenas or recreation centres where support services are available in the adjacent facilities. Most of the AIR facilities are supervised during operating hours by municipal staff. The responsibility for ice-making varies between staff and contracted services.

The AIR facilities season is typically provided between December and March, although the actual number of weeks varies significantly. The operating season varies largely due to weather conditions, equipment capabilities and the City of Toronto’s operational practices. Most (55) operate 12 weeks. The other nine vary from eight weeks to 18 weeks. The opening times range from 7:00 a.m. to noon, and closing times range between 9:00 p.m. to midnight. Almost all outdoor AIRs operate seven days per week.

Between the months of April and November when ice is not provided, approximately half (33) are used as tennis courts, 18 are used as multi-purpose boarded facilities for activities including: In-line skating, ball hockey, lacrosse and the odd soccer
The City of Toronto’s Parks Forestry and Recreation Department reported that, “the existing artificial outdoor ice facilities and the support amenities, due to age are in need of significant repair and with that, as seasonal facilities they are often identified as a concern with respect to the cost of the operation and maintenance in light of the relatively short period of time in which the facilities provide ice”. It was reported that one facility in need of significant repair was closed this past winter and was replaced with a NIR operated by volunteers.

Toronto’s most successful AIR facilities in terms of length of season and ongoing maintenance is at the facilities that have dedicated staff resources responsible for the operation and maintenance, specifically City Hall (Nathan Phillips Square) and the Harbour-front (Queens Quay). They have deemed these AIR facilities as major recreational and tourist attractions with a priority focus on the operations and maintenance.

The annual operating costs associated with each AIR facility range between $40,000 and $110,000, based on the level of maintenance and the length of the season. These expenses include full and part-time staffing costs and utility costs to operate the refrigeration plant. It should be noted that climatic changes, season opening and closing and major operating investments, due to the aging infrastructure, all impact the annual operating expenditures.

An AIR that is the approximate size of a traditional indoor ice surface (85’ x 200’) can cost approximately $800,000. An irregular shaped ice rink, skating path or a double pad is in excess of one million dollars to construct. This does not include changeroom/washroom or concession facilities to offer support services to the AIR facility.

Outdoor Artificial Ice Rink Provisions in Other Communities

The following is a summary of the provisions and operations of AIRs in other communities:

- **Brampton** – there are two lit outdoor AIR facilities. The Municipality operates the facilities. One is rectangular and the other is a skating path. The AIR facilities are used only for pleasure skating and are serviced as city wide attractions operating from December to March. The annual operating cost for the skating path is $100,000 to $110,000 per year, based on a 16-week season.

- **Mississauga** - there are four lit outdoor AIR facilities. The Municipality has a provision standard for AIR facilities; one is to be provided in each of the four quadrants in the city. The AIR facilities are operated by the Municipality and are used only for pleasure skating. Operating season is November to March. The annual operating costs specific to the rink were unavailable. Each AIR’s
operation was tied into a major facility. They have not been requested to isolate the AIR costs only.

- **Oakville** - there is one outdoor AIR facility. The Provincial Government in Bronte Creek Provincial Park operates the facility. The facility can only be used for pleasure skating and is used most often during the evenings and on holidays. The AIR facility operates between December and February. Oakville has proposed exploring the idea of six community wide rinks by developing six basketball courts with refrigeration capabilities in order to assist in meeting community-level rinks.

- **Kitchener-Waterloo** – there is one AIR facility. The Municipality operates this facility. The AIR facility can be used only for pleasure skating. The AIR operates between November and March. No fee is required, but revenue is generated through the rental of lockers. Operating costs specific to this rink are unavailable as all costs are tied into the operation of the entire Civic Centre.

- **London** – there are two outdoor AIR facilities, which the Municipality operates. They can be used only for pleasure skating and operate between December and March. The annual operating costs, depending on the season, range from $40,000 to $60,000 per ice rink facility.

- **Burlington** – there is one outdoor AIR facility, which was recently constructed and opened this past season. It is an attraction on the waterfront. The annual operating cost, which includes the new Discovery Centre, is $105,000.

None of the municipalities contacted maintained attendance statistics, but there was a common theme that these facilities provide opportunities for participation in ice related activities different than those in indoor ice rinks, i.e. hockey, figure skating, etc. They are programmed informally and spontaneous and used for pleasure skating; therefore, serving a different purpose than indoor arenas.

Hamilton residents are expected to enjoy access to the city’s first outdoor artificial ice rink by November 2008. The Dundas Valley Sunshine Rotary Club is on track in their quest to fund and construct an AIR facility in the Dundas Driving Park. The plan is to officially open the new ice rink for the start of the 2008 winter season (end of November, beginning of December). Dundas Valley Sunshine Rotary has estimated the construction cost for the new AIR to be $800,000. The City is estimating the operating costs to be $50,000 for the rink and concession/washroom building.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

In terms of standards of the provision for outdoor ice rink facilities, there is no consistency in approach or in the recommended standards across municipalities. In discussions with the municipalities there was a common theme that AIRs are regarded as distinctive, unique recreational facilities, providing opportunities for participation in ice
related activities which are informal and spontaneous by their outdoor nature, different than ice related activities accommodated in the indoor ice rink facilities.

Standards are targets that are based upon a combination of market-driven factors (such as demand, trends, and demographics), benchmarks seen in other municipalities and the past and present circumstances. With respect to that staff is recommending continuing to research the use and role of AIRs as part of the City’s supply of recreational outdoor ice facilities, to outline directions for the provision and to explore partnership opportunities for future consideration.

Council approved the partnership with Dundas Valley Sunshine Rotary to construct an AIR in the Dundas Driving Park, based on this being Hamilton’s first and on their request to have it in the Dundas Driving Park.

Currently, the Recreation Division does not have a plan for these types of rinks. Further study is being requested to explore the need, standards and locations to identify areas of the City where specific outdoor ice rinks may be provided. Further exploration needs to be conducted to evaluate if AIRs would rectify the unmet need for recreational pleasure skating across the City and the associated capital and operating costs for future consideration.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

None

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

**Financial:**

The results of the investigation identified that the capital costs for an outdoor artificial ice rink that is the approximate size of a traditional indoor ice surface, can cost in the range of $800,000. An irregular shaped ice rink, skating path or a double pad is in excess of one million dollars to construct. These costs do not include changeroom/washroom or concession facilities. The capital costs for the above would vary depending on the square footage of the support facility and/or its proximity to other recreation facilities for joint use of the amenities.

The annual operating costs associated with AIR facilities range between $40,000 and $110,000 and are based on the level of maintenance and the length of the season. These expenses include full and part-time staffing costs and utility costs to operate the refrigeration plant. It should be noted that climatic changes, length of operating season and major operating investments (due to the aging infrastructure) all impact the annual operating expenditures.

Staff will be submitting a 2008 capital budget request in order to undertake a review and analysis of outdoor facility needs, which include artificial ice rinks.
Staffing:

There are no staffing implications associated with the recommendations of Report ECS07049.

Legal:

There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations of Report ECS07049.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

There are no policies being affected.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

In preparation of Report ECS07049, the following have been contacted:

City of Toronto, Parks Forestry and Recreation Department
James Dann, Parks and Recreation Manager responsible for Outdoor Ice Rinks,
Brian Rutherford, Supervisor, Maintenance Outdoor Ice Rinks,
Susan Korrick, Capital Projects Section,
Michelle Tatay, Recreation Program staff responsible for outdoor rinks.

Each staff member provided input into the Toronto’s experience with AIR facilities in regards to cost, operations and maintenance.

Town of Oakville, Community Services Department
Domenic Lunardo, Commissioner in regards to the Oakville experience with AIRs and their direction.

City of London, Community Services Department
Kent McVittie, Recreation Manager in regards to the City of London’s experience with AIRs.

LeisurePlan International Inc., John Stevenson, Consultant
Mr. Stevenson was commissioned by the City of Toronto to assist the Municipality in the development of its approach to the future provision of AIR facilities. He also identified the trends across municipalities.
CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Evaluate the implications of your recommendations by indicating and completing the sections below. Consider both short-term and long-term implications.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
AIRs are popular “active living” facilities and as such, are seen to encourage family leisure participation.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
AIRs provide a range of benefits that encourage outdoor participation during the winter months.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Investment in Hamilton is enhanced and supported

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☑ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☐ Yes ☑ No