Outdoor Ice Oval Society of Prince George

Report on 2025/2026 Operating Year
By Kathy Lewis, President
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The Outdoor Ice Oval opened for the 2025/2026 season on December 23, 2025 and closed on March 1, 2027. There were four in-season closures due to warm temperatures affecting ice conditions. The oval was open for 32 days during the period between December 23 and March 1.

Operation
The operation of the Oval was based on the same model as previous years, and was entirely volunteer-driven, with an honour-based user-pay system. Volunteer person-hours are shown in Table 1. We had approximately 20 regular volunteer ice-makers, 3 equipment maintainer3, and 7 executive members. Table 1 shows the number of volunteer hours by activity. Total volunteer hours approximately 802.

A new signup system for ice making volunteers was developed using "Signup.com" which seemed to work quite well and reduced the number of emails being sent to volunteers and the workload for the volunteer coordinator.

Table 1. Volunteer hours

Year	Equipment mntnce[1]	Making ice[2]	Maintaining skating[3]	Administration[4]	Skate Rental[5]	Facility Improvements[6]
16/17	25	180	450	140	50	500
17/18	25	162	688	280	157	500
18/19	36	250	650	220	194	400
19/20	16	167.5	798	250	198	228
20/21	64.5	226.5	566.5	200	0	144
21/22	54	195	570	230	0	>500
22/23	42	254.5	941.5	200	75	150
23/24	52.5	287	609.5	150	10	20
24/25	20.5	304.5	310.5	150	15	104
25/26	69.5	252	467.5	150	25	13

1. Moving equipment, regular maintenance, putting equipment away for the season
2. Initial flooding and some conditioning to get the ice to skating condition
3. Snow removal, in-season flooding, and conditioning, snow removal around buildings, cleaning during season
4. Preparation of agreements with the City, collection of fees, banking and book-keeping, website updates, responding to emails and requests by user groups, support for special events, issuing memberships
5. Fitting skates, completing paper work, skate maintenance
6. Work done over the season and the summer on building improvements and completion, and other improvements to the facility.

An operating plan was developed and agreed upon by the OIO Society and the City. The oval was open from approximately 10am to 8:30pm, 7 days a week and was unmonitored. User fees were $2.00 per person or $5.00 per family and collection of the fee was on the honour system that utilized the on-site,

secure, drop-box, cleared daily. We also sold memberships (includes a season pass) to families ($60 per family) and individuals ($25 per person). For the 25/26 operating season we added options to pay for memberships online, and a QR code on site for paying drop-in fees.

The Canfor House was available this season for use by skaters as a change and warmup facility, and a washroom in the equipment building was also available.

Outdoor Ice Oval equipment and ownership are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Outdoor Ice Oval equipment

Equipment	Purpose	Ownership
2015, Ford F550 water truck	Ice making	OIO Society
1994, Bobcat – blade, bucket, snow thrower	Snow clearing	OIO society
1998, Bobcat – brush	Brooming	OIO society
Zamboni	Conditioning	OIO Society
Snowblower	Clearing snow from walkways	OIO Society

The maintenance volunteers put considerable work into maintenance and repair of the bobcats, and as a result, our initial plans to try to replace one or both machines have been put on hold.

Attendance

The on-site counter was not working for a significant part of the season, therefore reliable data on number of skaters was not available.

The PGBSSC had one night per week restricted access for speed skating. Attendance at these sessions was approximately 10 PGBSSC skaters, plus up to 30 long blade skaters who accessed the ice after the club practice. Saturday and Sunday mornings were reserved for long blade skaters as well.

Table 3 shows the attendance for the 2024/2025 season compared to past years.

Table 3. Attendance numbers by year

Year	Number of skate visitors	Days open	Skaters/day
2009-2010	6300	70	90
2010-2011	7471	97	77
2011-2012	8290	74	112
2012-2013	8320	66	126
2013-2014	5688	66 (16 days below – 20 C)	86
2014-2015	Not kept due to CWG		
2015-2016	8338	55	153
2016-2017	10168	73	139
2017-2018	15,802	99	160

2018-2019	12,525	73 (13 days below –20)	172
2019-2020	14,525	82	177
2020-2021	14,855	54	275
2021-2022	10,980	51 (8 days below -20)	215
2022-2023	7323	46	159
2023-2024	3818	27	141
2024-2025	7912	39	202
2025-2026	Not available		

Facility Improvements During Off Season

- Straightened booms on water truck and modified the water spreading rags.
- Mowing of the oval
- Flattening of the surface in front of Canfor House to remove high spot.
- Revised the equipment check procedure for use prior to operating equipment.
- Had the water truck weighed at the weigh scale to determine if annual inspections were necessary (they aren't).

Refrigeration

We worked with Polar Engineering on development of a report that provides cost estimates for capital and operating costs of refrigeration. The draft report identified a problem with the inadequacy of existing electrical service to the exhibition park area to supply power requirements for refrigeration. Polar Engineering subcontracted NRS Engineering to study and recommend options for additional electrical service. Both reports were funded from the "Chill the Oval" funds raised to date. We have received both reports.

As the City staff were directed to facilitate the development of the report we will be presenting the reports to City Council. As a new council was recently elected, we were advised to wait a few months before making a council presentation. Our plan is to request an opportunity to present to council in March of 2027.

Website and Social Media

Updates were made to the website for clarity, and we continued to work on improving e-commerce for membership and skate rental purchase.

Instagram 1167 followers - more businesses and media requests come through this route
Facebook – 1700 followers.

Plans for next season

1. Continue to improve training opportunities for new volunteers.
2. Present the refrigeration reports to City Council and continue to advocate for refrigeration.

3. Receive a new (to us) Zamboni from the City. The City is replacing one of the Zambonis used at the CN Centre (the black and red one) which they will transfer to us. Modifications to the machine have been requested and these include enabling it to run entirely on propane, and combining the cold water wash tank with the hot water tank.