



Outdoor Ice Oval Society of Prince George

Report on 2023/2024 Operating Year

By Kathy Lewis, President

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The Outdoor Ice Oval opened for the 2023/2024 season on January 20, 2024, our latest opening yet. The Oval closed and reopened twice during the season due to warm temperatures affecting ice conditions. The oval was open for only 27 days during the period between Jan. 20, 2024 and March 9, 2024. Despite the extreme weather challenges, we had 3818 skater visits, for 141 skaters per day. Once again, the weather was extremely challenging this season due to warm temperatures. Heroic efforts of the volunteers, including new volunteers who answered a call for help, resulted in the oval being available for the 2024 Prince George Iceman.

We worked during the pre-season to purchase and equip a new (to us) water truck! Many thanks to the Northern Development Initiative Trust for a grant, as well our thanks to Interior Offroad, Central Interior Piping and Fort George Alignment for in-kind contributions. The truck is much more user-friendly than our previous truck.

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, 2 equipment maintainers, and 6 executive members. Table 1 shows the number of volunteer hours by activity. Total volunteer hours approximately 1129.

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

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.

As usual we received tremendous support from City of Prince George and its staff, including parking lot and hydrant maintenance, and leveling of the oval in the off-season. An operating plan was jointly 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 season passes to families (\$60 per family) and individuals (\$25 per person).

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

Attendance

The on-site counter registered 3818 skaters during the season.

The PGBSSC had one night per week restricted access for speed skating practice but due to closures this was infrequently available. 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 2023/2024 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

Facility Improvements During Off Season

- Purchase and outfitting of the new water truck.
- New (to us) diesel storage tank acquired from the Caledonia Nordic Ski Club (thank you!), moved to the oval and cleaned.
- Weed wacking and grading of the high spots on the track

Website and Social Media

We continued to work on improving e-commerce for season pass and skate rental purchases.

Instagram 1052 followers - more businesses and media requests come through this route
Facebook – 1153 followers.

Plans for next season

1. Refresh our policies and manuals
2. Work with the City to get the refrigeration project back on the unfunded capital projects list and continue to advocate for refrigeration.
3. Continue to improve training opportunities for new volunteers