



Subject: Ice Allocation Procedure for Youth Groups

To: Council

From: Corporate Services Department

Report Number: 2023-71

Meeting Date: April 11, 2023

Recommendation:

That Corporate Services Department Report 2023-71 be received; and

That staff proceed with the proposed changes to ice allocation and ice cancellation protocols as outlined in pages 2 and 3 of Corporate Services Department Report 2023-71.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a recommended change to ice allocations and ice cancellation protocols.

Background:

Ice Allocation

Each season, ice time has been allocated by staff through a Council-approved Minor Sport Affiliation protocol. The protocol has ranked the prioritization of user groups as follows:

- Port Colborne children/youth (including AAA) hockey;
- Jr. B, high school hockey;
- Elementary schools;
- Adult leagues;
- Private rentals;
- Out of town youth;
- Out of town adults

The City has provided ice time blocks to the Port Colborne Minor Hockey Association (PCMH), which has managed and scheduled all local children/youth ice time for themselves and the following associations:

- Port Colborne Girls Hockey Association (Wave) teams; and
- Southern Tier Admirals (STA) teams.

The process has required schedulers from all three associations to communicate prior to each season and throughout the year to schedule their respective ice times through Port Colborne Minor Hockey.

City of Port Colborne executives have met with the associations in recent months to discuss this ice scheduling process. Staff recommend that Council approve a shift in protocol to support equitable access to ice that is directly managed and monitored by City Staff.

The Port Colborne Girls Hockey Association, also known as The Wave, marks its 10th anniversary this fall. The non-profit organization supports girls and women of all ages and abilities through its fundamental and house-league programs, which operate within the Ontario Women's Hockey Association and Hockey Canada.

Modernizing Port Colborne's protocol for ice allocation would result in The Wave and PCMH obtaining independent and exclusive rental permits with the City.

Ice Cancellation Protocol

The current cancellation protocol that users receive in their waiver when renting ice is 72 hours notice. If the ice is cancelled within that time frame, the customer is not charged. This is appropriate for many users - those renting one hour per week for example - but has far more impact for large block ice user groups as is the case in the tenants listed above. PCMH reserves blocks of ice with the City for the duration of the season, and subsequently sends in amended monthly schedule summaries that reflect actual and may also include additional cancellations. Again, to date, those cancellations (if received within the 72 hours) have not been charged to these groups.

Discussion:

Ice Allocation

The City of Port Colborne is the sole permit authority for all ice times. The City must be aware of and be able to control the intended use of all ice permitted within its facilities at all times. Associations may not sub-lease their ice times without prior approval and authority from the City.

Staff recommend two separate permits be issued moving forward. Specifically, one for the Wave association and one for PCMH and STA associations combined .

Moving forward, the associations will submit their required ice times based on the number of teams they have. These lists will be submitted August 15 (or sooner) each summer for the upcoming season, including the various age groups and preference of times accordingly. For example, younger teams to be scheduled early in the evening and older age groups scheduled later in the evening. It should be noted that the Wave and PCMH will be allocated times before they are allocated to STA. While allocated hours currently are not equal because there are more players in PCMH, staff will ensure that the times are allocated equitably.

Staff are cautiously optimistic all associations will receive ice time that satisfies their organizations' needs.

Staff recognize that ice time allocation may become more complicated should the associations grow significantly in membership and/or Port Colborne's population increases. Staff will continue to monitor and will come back to Council with recommended options should this situation emerge.

Ice Cancellation Protocol

Staff recommend amending the cancellation protocol regarding larger ice blocks. User groups and/or associations using five or more hours per week (on average) would adhere to the following when cancelling ice:

- Monthly calendars will be submitted to the City at least one week prior to the start of each month;
- The calendar will be reflective of the schedule and times being booked at the beginning of the season;
- The calendar will show cancellations of previously booked ice time, if any. Cancellations submitted this way will be removed from their permit along with any related charges;
- Any additional cancellations subsequent to the monthly calendar submission will be subject to a 50% penalty of the full rate; and
- In both examples of any cancellation, the City has the right to try to sell the cancelled ice time to another user or customer.

This protocol will be included in the signed waiver as part of any permit. Groups and customers booking fewer than 5 hours per week will continue to adhere to the original 72-hour time frame for cancellations.

This protocol change is recommended to encourage groups to use the ice that is booked and/or encourage unused ice to be repurposed to other user groups.

Financial Implications:

Ultimately, the goal of the program is to support efficient, equitable, and auditable scheduling by user groups to ensure unused ice can be marketed to other users. In this respect, there is the potential renewed marketing of unused ice that could realize additional revenue. Staff will report any changes in ice revenue in future financial reports through Financial Services.

Staff cannot quantify the financial implications at this time, however between the expected reduced number of last-minute cancellations combined with efforts to sell ice that is cancelled well in advance, staff would expect an increase in overall rental revenues. Staff note that a customer database can be utilized through mass email notifying all interested users of available ice to try to sell these cancelled ice times. Those customers that want to be included on the list can email recreation@portcolborne.ca. In preparation of the 2023/24 season, staff will also investigate other methods to notify users of open ice through the City's recreation software, including encouraging customers to book open times on-line. Open times will also be available to view on the City's website and video monitors throughout the VHWC.

Public Engagement:

Staff have spoken and met with PCMH, Wave, and STA. All groups are aware of the pending changes to permits next season, and the separation of boys and girls hockey programs. All groups are also willing to continue to work together in the best interests of Port Colborne children and youth.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Service and Simplicity - Quality and Innovative Delivery of Customer Services
 - Attracting Business Investment and Tourists to Port Colborne
 - City-Wide Investments in Infrastructure and Recreational/Cultural Spaces
 - Value: Financial Management to Achieve Financial Sustainability
 - People: Supporting and Investing in Human Capital
 - Governance: Communications, Engagement, and Decision-Making
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Conclusion:

If endorsed by Council, staff will proceed with the recommended changes to ice allocations and ice cancellation protocols identified in this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Theal
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Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.