

HE MUNICIPALITY OF LAMBTON SHORES

Report DCS 06-2025

Council Meeting Date: February 25, 2025

TO: Mayor Cook and Members of Council
FROM: Ashley Farr, Director of Community Services
RE: Extended Ice Season Request
RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report DCS 06-2025 regarding the “Extended Ice Season Request” be received; and

THAT the request received from Lambton Shores Minor Hockey Association, Forest Ringette Association and Forest Skating Club to extend the ice season at the Shores Recreation Centre for a period of six weeks to May 11 be approved pending a commitment of 40 hours of ice rented per week.

SUMMARY

This report presents a request received from Lambton Shores Minor Hockey Association, Forest Ringette Association and the Forest Skating Club to extend the ice season at the Shores Recreation Centre to May 11, 2025.

BACKGROUND

The Municipality has received a letter from Lambton Shores Minor Hockey Association (LSMHA), Forest Ringette Association (FRA) and the Forest Skating Club (FSC) requesting an extension to the 2024/2025 ice season. Traditionally, the ice season at the Shores Recreation Centre has operated from the last week of August to the end of March with few exceptions. The request was first initiated by LSMHA to have ice available in one facility until May 11 to accommodate spring tryouts for the Association. The FRA and FSC both submitted letters after LSMHA in support of spring ice to work on player development and prepare for additional upcoming tournaments.

LSMHA is requesting spring ice due to changes in the tryout process that was initiated by Ontario Hockey Federation (OHF) and Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) in December 2024. The most significant change impacting the 2025/2026 season includes:

- OHF Minor Hockey Players in the U10 age group and above will have the opportunity to participate with the Association of their choice regardless of

category (e.g., removal of traditional boundaries to allow players to move to different Associations).

- The OHF notes that the Minor Hockey Associations can limit enrollment to players for a geographic area but cannot limit the choice of players internal their traditional boundaries from leaving their home association.

The window for LSMHA tryouts has been established by OHF as May 3 – May 11, 2025. LSMHA has included reasoning in the attached letter for their preference to host spring tryouts, and the potential impact that the change from OHF could have on their Association.

Staff are supportive of the request received from the minor associations and appreciate the challenge that LSMHA is facing as a result of the changes from OHF and OMHA. With that said, there are considerations that should be noted as there could be budgetary implications with accommodating this request.

1) Mechanical

Not all ice plants can accommodate extended ice seasons. If the plant is not equipped with in-floor heating, an insufficient thaw cycle could cause damage to the floor over time. The Shores Recreation Centre is equipped appropriately to accommodate an extended ice season and would have a low risk of damage to the floor. The Legacy Centre could not accommodate an extended ice season.

2) Staffing/Operations

In a normal year when ice is removed at the end of March, Community Services staff shift to spring operations. Tasks generally include facility maintenance that cannot be completed while the arenas are in full operation (e.g., board repairs, painting), spring preparations on sports fields (e.g., fertilizer, rolling), park maintenance (e.g., installation of shade sails, general clean up from winter), and garden preparations. This is in addition to ongoing maintenance requirements at other municipal facilities that are required year-round.

If the ice season is extended to May 11, staff would be required in the arena until May 14 to allow for the decommission of the plant and cleaning the floor. Staff anticipate that ice rentals would be available evenings only during the week, and daytime only during Saturdays and Sundays during the six-week period. This would require two staff weekly for the arena operation. The 2025 budget included one new operator that will be a shared resource between Public Works in the winter and Community Services during the summer. With this additional resource to assist the parks and grass operations, staff can accommodate the spring ice request with the existing staff complement, however it is expected that there will be a requirement to keep seasonal part-time staff during this period. The expected costs for seasonal part-time staff for an additional six weeks is approximately \$6,900.00. Additional financial considerations will be overtime

requirements to conduct ice plant checks over the Easter long weekend. This expense has not been budgeted for in the 2025 operating budget.

To minimize the impact to budget and operations, staff would suggest that the Shores Recreation Centre ice is not made available until September 2, 2025, rather than August 25, 2025. This delay of one week could help to reduce budget impacts associated with spring ice and is more manageable for staff that are still working in parks at this time of year. A later start date is also beneficial for the ice plant as there is less time required to operate during the summer temperatures when ice is difficult to maintain. In the past, the primary uses for the August ice (Monday to Friday) have included hockey camps (privately operated), private rentals, ringette camp offered by the FRA and LSMHA pre-season skates. It is expected that with spring ice, the FRA could run its camp during the spring ice, and LSMHA pre-season skates will not be required due to spring tryouts. There are no rentals on weekends in August or during the labour day weekend. Staff can work with the minor associations to ensure that a later start date will not have a significant impact to their operations.

Accommodating spring ice for an additional six weeks will have an impact on adult ball hockey leagues start dates. There are no other events that will be impacted in the arena because of this request.

3) Cost of Utilities

The most significant utility costs from operating the ice plant are hydro and water. The chart below provides a comparison of the cost of utilities when the ice plant is not operational (June to partially August) versus when the plant is fully operational (September to November).

	Hydro	Water (monthly average)
June	\$ 3,885	\$1,475
July	\$ 3,750	\$1,475
August	\$ 4,750	\$1,475
September	\$ 11,170	\$3,600
October	\$ 18,234	\$3,600
November	\$ 18,135	\$3,600
Avg Cost Per Week without ice	\$ 1,035.00	\$ 368.75
Avg Cost Per Week with ice	\$ 4,560.00	\$ 900.00
Six week period without ice:	\$ 6,210.00	\$ 2,212.50
Six week period with ice:	\$ 27,360.00	\$ 5,400.00

The difference in utility expenses for an additional six weeks of ice is estimated to be approximately \$24,400 and has not been considered in the 2025 budget.

4) Minimum Ice Rental Requirements

- 5) Historically, the Municipality accommodated early ice in August as long as there was a guarantee of a minimum of 40 hours of prime-time ice rented per week. Staff recommend that this standard be maintained when considering an extension to the ice season into the spring. Based on the letters received from the various minor organizations, staff believe that this minimum is achievable.

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER

Council may choose not to approve an extended ice season.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Staff recommends approval of the request to extend the ice season for a period of six weeks on the basis of a minimum forty-hour rental commitment per week over the six-week period.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Staff estimate approximately \$30,000.00 revenue for an additional six weeks of ice, based on an average of 40 hours rented per week at the subsidized minor rate. This revenue considers blackout dates (no rentals) that would occur when the facility is closed during the Easter holiday. Expenses for the same period are estimated to be \$31,300 and do not consider overtime, or additional materials, contracted services (e.g., repairs) and supplies (e.g., cleaning, paper products, etc.) that will be needed during this time frame.

CONSULTATION

Steve McAuley, CAO

Trevor Sanderson, Manager of Parks and Facilities

Attached:

- 1) Letter from Lambton Shores Minor Hockey Association
- 2) Letter from Forest Ringette Association
- 3) Letter from Forest Skating Club