



**Tavistock & District
Skating Club**

February 2, 2025

To: His Worship the Mayor & Members of East Zorra-Tavistock Council

The Tavistock & District Skating club would like to express our concerns with the recommendation from the Community & Recreation Services Manager to no longer provide August (summer) ice at the Tavistock & District Recreation Centre. In addition, we plan for our programs to run until mid-May but have been informed recently, not formally, that there are plans to remove the ice in April this year.

The skating club is a major ice user for the facility, both in August and throughout the season. If August ice is not available, this will significantly impact our skating programs, in particular, our synchro program. We have grown our club and synchro programs over the last several years due to the success of our teams at provincial and national competitions. Our teams rely on the availability of ice in August to begin training for the upcoming season. If this ice is not available, it will greatly impact our ability to train our skaters and teams to be prepared for the competition season.

For context, we'd like to share more about history of the Tavistock & District Skating club:

- Our August ice is needed for our synchro programming, which has been critical to the rejuvenation and growth of the skating club during the past decade. Prior to synchro programming, the club was in danger of folding.
- We have been relying on this ice for the last number of years. We feel that council should be aware of the impacts to our programming, which was outlined in an email to the Community Recreation Services Manager on January 15 (see attached), which were not included in the report to council.
 - Our Tuesday & Thursday evening ice in August, as well as our 4-day synchro camp (9-4 pm) is more ice than any other time of the season and critical for development of our teams and continuation of the synchro program.
- This synchro programming has led to increased membership and greater uptake in skating, as well as increased ice usage during the regular season. In 2020, we added 2.5 hours of ice and have requested additional ice every year since then. This in turn has attracted more skaters to our club, including at the learn-to-skate levels, resulting in more participants and ability to offer lower skating lesson rates to residents of EZT
- The Tavistock & District Skating Club has been represented by our Team Unity synchro team at the national level since 2020. We have continued to grow & develop, with plans to send an additional team to compete at the national level next season. Without August ice, we may be forced to change our development plans – this puts our programming and overall membership of our club at risk.
- The skating club, and our Team Unity synchro programs, have forged positive relationships with other user groups, businesses, and organizations in the township, including:
 - Participation in the fall fair & Santa Claus parades
 - Skating performances at Braves' & Royals' games
 - Hosting our annual synchro gala, pop concert and bi-annual carnival to showcase our skaters
 - Sponsorship opportunity – working in the booth with Men's Club volunteers
 - We are fortunate to receive sponsorship from several community organizations & business

- We order pizza and catering from local restaurants in town – for example, we order lunch for skaters from local pizzerias and restaurants during our 4-day (9 am – 4 pm) synchro camp in August.

Further, we would like to point out some the issues with report CRSM-2025-02 to council:

- The argument that other neighbouring municipalities do not have ice in during the summer is an argument that we should maintain our ice – there is actually revenue in doing so, according to the report, the township made \$14K in 2022.
 - We have already reached out to Stratford and Woodstock regarding ice availability in August with very few options available for our teams.
 - Loss of revenue (which has decreased during the past 3 years due to fewer ice rentals (37% decrease in ice rentals) – we would like to point out that this decrease is not the fault of user groups (the skating club has maintained the same usage), but incentives to other groups have been suspended, result in a loss of revenue from gap ice. We see this as opportunity to once again encourage other user groups to make use of township ice.
- The report fails to include information about September ice. While the fall fair is stated to be at the beginning of September, it is only early for 2025 with Labour Day falling on September 1st. Looking at the 2026 calendar, the ice would only be in as early as September 16 – which is significant difference for all user groups who require ice for their programming.
 - The report includes the expense incurred to repurpose the arena for use as an indoor facility. We'd like to express our concern that the current arrangement supports both user groups with compromises from each, while the proposal in the current report favours one user group at the expense of another's.
- The report fails to include the cost to upgrade the facility with a better dehumidification system. As the report indicates, weather patterns are changing. Much of the climatic conditions experienced in August is starting to show up in September and April – to protect the life of the building, these issues should be addressed for all months of operation.
- We've consulted Nicholas Hendry, a local engineer who has experience in maintaining compressors. His response is as follows:

The report indicates that revenue - expenditures is a positive number until wear and tear on the capital equipment is considered. This means that not operating the equipment would generate less operating cash so long as additional wear and tear is less than equipment costs. This is estimated by the author of the report to be approximately \$7500 per year. Over the 25 year life cycle of the compressors this would be \$185,000 assuming that these funds are not invested in an interest bearing account, or approximately the value that the author estimates of 1.5 new compressors (\$110,000 per compressor). The author has either left out sufficient details for a reader to make an informed decision OR appears to be attempting to mislead the reader by breaking down the compressor to operating hours when it suits the authors purposes. The author indicates the compressors are overhauled on a 5 year basis, presumably in the off season as the compressor would be required at all times when the ice surface is present. Therefore, an additional 675 hours per compressor actually has no material change on maintenance or lifecycle of the compressors. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that additional operating hours generated during the August ice would not actually reduce the maintenance cost on these compressors. This is reinforced by the expected useful life of 25 years of the compressor presented in the report as the author does not predict that they would be able to achieve 30 years of useful life out of the compressors if August ice is removed. They have provided an arbitrary set of calculations that are not supported by any supporting maintenance information with regards to the compressors. Without a detailed maintenance schedule for the compressors based on operating hours, an alternative interpretation of the maintenance schedule is that if you do not have August ice you are actually over-maintaining your equipment so that you

complete your maintenance in the off season and you are not operating the equipment to its full potential. You are therefore simply increasing the maintenance cost per operating hour and giving up a potential revenue stream that can help support the maintenance requirement, and discarding the equipment after 25 years without having used the entire usefulness of the equipment. As this is industrial machinery, it should be able to be re-built and maintained for a period that should be close to the useful life of the facility as a whole, or until obsolescence which is the most likely replacement case¹. The insinuation that if a compressor has a malfunction, or needs to be repaired the township will be on the hook for a \$1.1 million refrigeration plant replacement due to extending the skating season a couple weeks is an exaggeration.

Further, It is also misleading that visitor numbers would have a material impact on the ventilation requirements of the facility. There are implications that the entering and exiting of the building has a material and substantial impact on operations of the ventilation systems. This is also misleading the reader as the vast majority, if not all patrons to the facility enter and exit through the main entrance which is equipped with a vestibule that limits the effect of this impact.

Reference:

1. *Comparative Study of Refrigeration Systems for Ice Rinks. Natural Resources Canada. July 2013. https://natural-resources.canada.ca/sites/nrcan/files/energy/pdf/comparative-study-arenas_EN.pdf*

Recommendations

Rather than render a township facility to be inoperative during August, we implore council to promote usage. Offering gap ice and providing incentives for community members and groups to be active and make use of the township's asset has an very high return on investment – It incurs very little incremental cost and essentially provides enough additional revenue to replace a compressor after 25 years. Further, the staff report indicates that the main reason for not putting ice in is the wear & tear on the compressors; however, based on the report, maintenance is completed on the compressor on an annual basis and 5 year overhaul, regardless of run hours.

It's our understanding that township is looking at expanding facilities and making more facilities for multipurpose. We implore council to consider the impact this proposal could cause to a local user group, and create a long term plan that incorporates the use of this multi-purpose facility for indoor activities, rather than use reasoning to turn the arena's ice pad into a short-term indoor facility at the expense of other user groups.

If major changes are to be made to ice availability, we request at least 1 year's notice in order for us to plan accordingly. Similarly, when the ice is to be removed, which we have been informed may take place in April this year, while, as in previous years, we plan our season until mid-May when the ice has typically been removed.

If we are forced to book ice elsewhere, the club will pay an increased cost for ice rentals with other centres. If the fee has to be increased in Tavistock, we would rather allocate these funds locally than with other centres, as well as continue to keep our business and foster partnerships in the township. Further, we would like to continue making use of a township facility, rather than see it sit empty for an additional 6+ weeks of the year.

On behalf of the Tavistock & District Skating Club,

Lori Hartman – Arena & Ice
Teresa Weicker & Alicia Rujescu – Co-Chairs

Attachment:

The below email was sent to by Lori Hartman to Mr. Will Jacques following a phone conversation January 14 to express our concerns on behalf of the Tavistock & District Skating club and its member.

*Email to Will Jaques – JANUARY 15
Community & Recreation Services Manager*

I have been thinking about our discussion and ... panicking a little. I just wanted to reinforce a few things with you.

- *In past years, we have always planned our season from August - mid-May. With that in mind, we are planning to run try-outs for all our synchro teams (6 teams) in March/April (the last competition, Provincials, is scheduled Mar.23). We then plan to run skills sessions for these teams until mid-May. Our synchro program is a huge part of our skating club. Synchronized skating is a growing sport and Tavistock is the only club in the area offering this program.*
- *We are also hoping to extend the skating season for our singles skaters to mid-May. The Skating club is continuing to grow and by offering an extended season to our skaters, this will keep them interested in the sport and our club.*
- *Our synchro season also starts in August. If we do not start in August, all teams will struggle to be ready for competition season. We also host a synchro camp (4 full-days) in August that is mandatory for skaters to attend in order to get our programs underway. Parents are already requesting confirmation of when this will be held... as I'm sure you can imagine they are trying to ensure summer camps, holidays, etc. do not conflict with the dates of synchro camp.*

I appreciate the costs of running summer ice and the impacts on the equipment... however, if this ice is not available it will significantly impact the skating club.

Please let us know as soon as possible as we will need to look at other options immediately if there are any changes to scheduling.

If you would like to discuss further please let me know.