



Fort Frances Girls Women's Hockey Association



September 24, 2020

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please accept this letter as a follow up to the Community Services Executive Committee (CSEC) meeting this past Monday, September 21, where the ice-in plan for the Memorial Sports Centre (MSC) was debated at length.

Fort Frances Girls and Women's Hockey Association (FFGWHA) acknowledges the difficult position that the Covid-19 Pandemic has put the Town of Fort Frances in, trying to balance the health and safety of its citizens with the wants and needs of the community, with respect to services offered.

The town is faced with several challenges. Three of the key challenges with respect to the Memorial Sports Centre are: (1) a loss of revenue; (2) an increase in facility expenses (predominantly related to health & safety and cleaning) due to new regulations put forward by the Government of Ontario and the Northwestern Health Unit; and (3) equal treatment of the various user groups using the MSC.

1. Lost Revenue

With respect to loss of revenue, there are two main sources of loss: (1) user groups not able to run their programs due to Covid-19 and (2) user groups not being allowed to host games and tournaments this winter. This loss of revenue streams ultimately results in unused ice being available this winter. However, the current ice-in plan requires user groups to rent ice in 1.5 hour time blocks for 50 minutes of ice time. So, effectively, the user groups that do want to rent the same number of 50 minute ice blocks as we had last winter are being asked to rent the unused blocks, thereby making up for the loss of revenue. We believe that this cost is being unfairly burdened upon the user groups that do wish to rent ice at the MSC. To be clear, if MSC reverted back to 1 hour time slots, there would be approximately 20 hours of unused ice per week from user groups not running programs this winter. This lost revenue disappears when you spread the remaining user groups over 1.5 hour time slots and results in an increase in revenue for the town and an undue hardship on the remaining 2020 user groups.

2. Increased Facility Expenses

With respect to an increase in facility expenses, FFGWHA is not opposed to an increase in fees or a surcharge of some sort related to the increase in facility expenses due to Covid-19. We acknowledge that the town is incurring costs, such as increased, unbudgeted staff and these costs should be incurred by all users of the MSC.

3. Equal Treatment of User Groups

Finally, with respect to the equal treatment of user groups, below is a summary of each user group (compiled based on information received from them), the cost impact that they are feeling and the service impact that they are feeling.

User Group - Ice Users

Cost Impact - 50% ice cost increase. 50 minutes of ice allocated using 1.5 hour timeblocks.

Service Impact - reduction in available weeknight ice from 10 slots to 6 slots (from 5pm to 10pm) and reduction in available weekend ice from 28 slots to 18 slots.

User Group - Fitness Memberships (Gym, Pool, Squash Courts, etc.)

Cost Impact - No cost increase for 2020

Service Impact - must book appointments to use the facility; reduced availability of facility. No longer able to just show up and use the gym for whatever time period you wish for.

User Group - Cyclone Swim Club

Cost Impact - 25% cost increase in pool costs. Pay for 1/2 hour of pool time per 2 hour block.

The swim club has also been granted permission to have their coaches clean and are burdened with paying their coaches, as opposed to the Town, for cleaning. Ice users asked and were advised that user groups would not be able to undertake cleaning at the MSC due to liability and ensuring the cleaning is completed, as required, per Ontario's regulations.

Service Impact - Swim club is able to maintain their historical pool usage.

User Group - Rainy Lake Gymnastics Academy

Cost Impact - \$50-\$75 cleaning fee per session. Based on 17.5 hours per week and 6 sessions per week, this equals a cost increase of 37% - 56%. Specialized cleaning agents are required for the gymnastics equipment. Cleaning fee not yet firm.

Service Impact - Unknown

User Group - Walking Track Users

Cost Impact - None (there is no fee to use the walking track at 52 Canadian Arena)

Service Impact - Loss of ability to walk indoors in a controlled environment.

User Group - Air Cadets

Cost Impact - Unknown / No Response

Service Impact - Unknown / No Response

We are assuming that the air cadets would be subject to a similar cleaning fee as the Rainy Lake Gymnastics Academy as they rent the same space.

There appears to be a fair bit of variation with respect to the cost and service impacts that each user group is being subjected to and we feel that this should be re-evaluated to ensure all users are being treated equally.

At the CSEC meeting on Monday, the Fort Frances Minor Hockey Association suggested that the Town might want to consider only putting in one ice-surface for the start of the season. FFGWHA is not opposed to this and there might be some merits to it: (1) It will allow the town to cautiously move forward with the further re-opening of the MSC and (2) traffic patterns may be adjusted to allow for multiple intake and departure areas that will allow the Town to revert to 1 hour time slots for 50 minutes of on-ice time. Let's find a way to minimize the impact on the asset (the ice surface) and use MSC's large supporting building infrastructure to our advantage.

For example, for skaters on at 5pm, they could enter the 52 arena at the 52 arena doors and depart the same. For skaters at 6pm, they could enter the 52 arena through the IFK doors and get to the ice by the muskie locker rooms. Or they could enter 52 at the 52 doors and depart through the IFK doors. Either of these options would allow the intake area to be cleaned while the skaters are on the ice and the ice area can be cleaned while the zamboni is on and the next group can be waiting to go on when the Zamboni is complete. By utilizing only 1 ice surface, almost the same amount of ice is available as using 2 ice surfaces.

In closing, we want to thank everyone for the considerable efforts that are being put forth to help the community have a safe winter. We know that there will be many challenges this winter and that the situation faced by the MSC can change on a moment's notice as a result of a Government of Ontario announcement.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Town and build upon a 25 year relationship and history with the Town of Fort Frances.

With Kind Regards on Behalf of Fort Frances Girls and Women's Hockey Association,

Craig Miller	Aimee Matheson
President	Ice Scheduler

Attachment:

Remarks made to CSEC meeting on September 21, 2020

Remarks to CSEC on September 21, 2020.

Good morning Chairman Hallikas and good morning to the members of the Community Services Executive Committee and good morning to everyone else who is on this call:

Thank you for your continued work towards opening the ice surfaces for the community. Having the ice in will provide our youth with a significant morale boost as they are longing for activities that were once taken for granted.

As recent as this weekend with Premier Ford's announcement with respect to unmonitored gatherings, we received a clear message that the pandemic is far from over and we, as citizens, must remain vigilant to help stop the spread of Covid-19.

Fort Frances Girls and Women's Hockey is here to support the town and we will continue to offer our support to the Community Services Division to help with a safe transition to start using the arena facilities.

With that said, in light of Premier Ford's announcement this weekend and recognizing the City of Kenora's decision to not have spectators in their arena to start the season, we support Mr. Bisson's recommendation for a staged start to the season and to start the season without spectators and to revisit that decision following the completion of the first two weeks of the hockey season. FFGWHA would like to offer our support and services to the community services division and work collaboratively with community services to work towards a solution to allow spectators into the arena facilities within the Ontario guidelines and to determine a process that minimize cleaning requirements (without sacrificing safety) on a daily basis.

The ice-in plan has other key points the allocation of ice time blocks, the cost of those time blocks and the impact of these blocks and their costs to the Town.

We have spent time this past weekend working to understand these costs and the impact to not only the town, but to Fort Frances Girls Hockey, based on our understanding of the user groups and our knowledge of scheduling.

The Memorial Sports Centre is faced with both a loss of revenue and increased expenses due to Covid. FFGWHA feels like the facility is trying to regain the revenue from the user groups that are not participating this year by charging the participating users for the ice not being used.

If the time slots were 1 hour, the same as in a typical year and only FFGWHA, FFMHA and BSC were booking ice, there would likely be over \$100,000 in lost revenue this year due the arenas not being used to their full potential. By spreading the time slots out for cleaning, the user groups will take up the spots typically reserved for tournaments and night time hockey games. This is roughly \$50,000 in revenue that would normally be lost if the user groups that are prepared to move forward this winter do not participate.

We fully acknowledge that the town is in a difficult position and that there is overhead to operate a facility such as the MSC and, when it cannot be used to its full potential, there is lost revenue. Please do not offload these costs to the user groups that are trying to offer a service to the kids in the community.

Thank you.