

Staff Report

Report To: Community Services Committee
Report From: Andy O'Leary, Facilities Booking Coordinator
Meeting Date: September 23, 2026
Report Code: CS-26-092
Subject: Ice Allocation Policy (CS-17) Approach to Review and Update Policy

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-092 respecting the Ice Allocation Policy (CS-17) Review and Update, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to:

1. Draft an updated Ice Allocation Policy following stakeholder consultation, operational review, and analysis of current utilization, registration and allocation data, as outlined in the report; and
2. Maintain the current policy framework during the review period unless urgent operational amendments are required.

Highlights:

- The landscape of minor hockey has changed in recent years, and the demand has increased significantly. The current policy was revised in 2016 and an update is well timed.
- User groups, scheduling priorities and recreation agreements have changed since the last review.
- The majority of the updates are administrative changes, including a request to update the allocation timelines will be suggested.

Vision 2050 - Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: The recommendation contributes to core service delivery or a corporate initiative that enables service delivery for one or more strategic priorities.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Report CS-16-004](#) – Annual Ice Allocation Policy Review – Input from Public Meeting

[Ice Allocation Policy](#) (CS17)

[Non-Resident Fee Policy](#) (CS19)

[Minor Sport Subsidy Policy](#) (CS79)

[Fees and Charges By-law](#) No. 2026-067

Background:

In 2009, the Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee established the City's first Ice Allocation Policy. The goal of this was to develop a policy that would allow for fair and equal access to ice time with a high measure of financial accountability.

In 2016, Staff undertook a review of the policy to reflect the 2015 City Strategic Plan, new City structure and staff re-organization; new committee structure and name as well as some additional administrative updates.

Policy Purpose:

The current Ice Allocation Policy (CS-17) is intended to:

- Define and communicate how ice is managed, allocated, and distributed;
- Guide the ice allocation process;
- Promote participation in ice sports;
- Support fair and equitable allocation;
- Maximize use of City facilities;
- Support fiscally responsible ice facility operations; and
- Address tournaments, special events, seasonal rentals, administration, accessibility, and active living.

Summary of Current Policy

Responsibility for Ice Allocation:

The Community Services Department is responsible for managing the annual allocation and distribution of ice based on population, registration, utilization and participation.

Scheduling Priorities:

The policy currently allocates ice using this priority order:

1. Owen Sound Attack Junior A Hockey Team, in accordance with City agreement.
2. Junior B, in accordance with City agreement.
3. City of Owen Sound recreation programs.
4. Minor Sports groups.
5. Seasonal Organizations.
6. Boards of Education.
7. Commercial and occasional users.

Recognized Minor Sport Groups:

The current policy identifies the following minor sport groups:

- Owen Sound Minor Hockey Group
- Owen Sound Girls Hockey
- Owen Sound Skating Club
- Owen Sound Ringette

Residency and Recreation Agreements:

The policy recognizes that Owen Sound taxpayers and recreation agreement partners contribute to the capital and operating costs of recreation ice facilities. As a result, residents and applicable recreation agreement partners receive priority for subsidized youth ice use. Non-resident participants of these partners are required to purchase a non-resident card to contribute towards the difference in these capital and operating costs as a City taxpayer.

Entitlement and Distribution:

Minor sport allocation is informed by registration data, participation patterns, and ice allocation standards drawn from sport organizations such as Ontario

Minor Hockey Association, Ontario Women's Hockey Association and Skate Canada.

The policy describes the standards as the ideal allocation goal, while recognizing that available ice may limit the ability to fully meet that ideal number of allocated weekly ice.

Prime and Non-Prime Ice:

The policy requires minor sport groups to receive an equitable distribution of prime and non-prime ice. Minor sport groups must maintain use of 10% of their overall time allocation as non-prime ice, with a minimum of one hour per week, throughout the winter season for a minimum of seventeen consecutive weeks.

Prime and non-prime periods are currently defined as:

Season	Prime Time	Non-Prime Time
Fall/Winter, Spring	Monday-Friday 4:30pm to close; Saturday and Sunday open to close	Monday-Friday open to 4:30pm; Saturday and Sunday 6:00am-8:00am
Summer	Monday-Sunday open to close	Not applicable under current definition

These definitions are included in section 5.3 of the policy.

Allocation Timelines

The policy establishes request and allocation timelines for fall/winter, spring, and summer ice. For example, minor sport groups submit fall/winter requests by January 15, with allocation targeted for March 15.

Conflict Resolution

When allocation conflicts arise, staff first attempt to resolve them in a manner consistent with the policy. If a conflict remains unresolved, affected groups may be invited to a meeting chaired by the Community Services Committee, with written submissions used to help guide the final decision.

Cancellations, Last Minute Ice, and Administration

The current policy includes detailed provisions for cancellations, temporary closures, redistributions of ice, curfew ice, new organizations or emerging sports, after-hours openings, insurance, payments, and last-minute ice.

Insurance, Risk and Compliance

The current policy requires Comprehensive General Liability Insurance of not less than \$2 million and requires the City to be named as an additional insured.

Background data:

The following information is shared regarding use, residency, costs etc. as relevant background to inform the Ice Allocation Policy review.

Minor Sport Participation by Residency (Minor Hockey, Girls Hockey and Tri Centre)

	2024/25	%	2025/26	%
Owen Sound	423	57%	451	53%
Georgian Bluffs	177	24%	198	23.2%
Meaford	48	6.4%	54	6.3%
Chatsworth	23	3.1%	43	5%
South Bruce Peninsula	17	2.2%	52	6.1%
Other	52	7%	53	6.2%
Total	740	100%	851	100%

(Note: Numbers are reported by minor sport organizations)

The number of participants in winter ice sports has been increasing over the last 2 years, with the percentage from Owen Sound decreasing as a percent of overall participation, despite higher participant numbers from City children and youth.

In 2025/26, 47% of participants did not reside in Owen Sound. After City residents, the next largest group of participants is from Georgian Bluffs with 23%.

Registration Data from minor sport groups: Winter Sports Only

	2023/ 2024	%	2024/ 2025	%	2025/ 2026	%
Owen Sound Girls Hockey	82	27.6%	185	25%	216	25%
Owen Sound Skating Club	31	10.4%	60	8.1%	50	5.8%
OS Minor Hockey Group	184	61.9%	495	66.9%	380	44.6%
Tri-Centre *NEW*	N/A	0%	N/A	0%	205	24%
Total	297	100%	740	100%	851	100%

Overall participation in minor sports that utilize ice has increased over the last 3 years. A significant growth in Girls Hockey has been noted in recent years.

In 2025, a 2-year pilot was started under the umbrella of OSMH, the Tri Centre Attack. This pilot has increased participation, however, as noted above, the percentage of participants from Owen Sound has been reduced.

Ice Schedule

The current Ice Schedule can be found in Attachment 1 to this report. This schedule shows a weekly snapshot of ice rentals during the winter season. The schedule is significantly booked leaving very limited hours available for additional bookings.

The Manager of Arena Operations provides a list of required hours each week for ice maintenance on each ice pad and those maintenance hours are also included in the schedule. These blocks are mandatory in maintaining safe ice conditions and upholding the busy ice schedules at each facility.

The policy provides for an allocation of ice time based on the number, age group and level of teams/participants. Currently, based on the number of teams, there is not sufficient ice time for all teams within the minor sport groups to receive their maximum allocation. This deficit is shared equally among minor sport groups.

The recent change to daytime practice times for the Owen Sound Attack Hockey Club has opened up some evening ice at the Bayshore. In previous years, the Bayshore ice was blocked until 5:30pm Monday to Friday, and this year bookings start at 4:30pm. This has been a positive change for both the Attack Hockey Club and Minor Sport Organizations.

Permit and Cancellation Periods

Staff began tracking cancelled ice in 2020, to monitor how much ice was being booked and then cancelled under the Ice Allocation Policy. At the beginning of the tracking process, it was found that a very large number of hours were being wasted.

The cancellation policy was modified to require 30 days notice to cancel ice prior to meeting the 22 week seasonal commitment. This change has reduced the amount cancelled and also allowed a better opportunity for the City to re-book the cancelled hours.

The reduction in cancelled ice has also been improved by Owen Sound Minor Hockey and Girls Hockey sharing the same ice scheduler. Rather than cancelling ice, efforts are made to find a user for the ice time within the two organizations.

A few years into the tracking process, the minor sport organizations started seeing net positive rental hours added to their annual bookings. This has been a very positive outcome.

Revenue and Subsidy data: 3-year trend of revenue

The following table shows the revenue from ice bookings over the last 3 years and the anticipated revenue for 2026 based on bookings to year end.

	2023	2024	2025	2026 *based on current bookings*
Bayshore (ice only)	\$187,648.41	\$202,287.43	\$193,457.04	\$264,274.47
RC East	\$258,206.41	\$298,556.61	\$511,808.17	\$339,313.08
RC West	\$429,616.67	\$504,009.29	\$374,626.80	\$544,147.73
Total	\$875,471.08	\$1,004,853.33	\$1,079,892.01	\$1,147,735.28

The overall revenue from ice bookings has been increasing due to increased bookings and also incremental increases in rental rates under the Fees and Charges Bylaw.

Based on information shared as part of the 2026 budget, the 2 arenas have a net cost to the taxpayer after revenue as follows:

Bayshore

Revenue – \$474,400.00

Operating Cost - \$1,184,515.13

Net Tax Burden - \$710,115.13

Cost recovery ratio – 40%

JMRRC

Revenue - \$811,000.00

Operating Cost – 1,144,103.53

Net Tax Burden - \$333,103.53

Cost recovery ratio – 71%

Tournament and special event bookings

The arenas continue to see a steady schedule of tournaments and special events. This does have a mild negative impact on users with teams losing their ice on those dates and no additional ice available to reschedule.

A listing of annual tournaments and events can be found in attachment 3.

Last Minute Ice

Last Minute Ice was introduced to encourage use of ice times that are not otherwise booked, with restrictions to prevent regular users from cancelling and replacing existing permits with discounted last-minute ice.

Revenue from Last Minute Ice

	2023	2024	2025	2026
RC East	\$22,731.25	\$9,893.75	\$19,643.18	\$6,626.30
RC West	\$5,162.50	\$17,702.50	\$11,803.01	\$14,150.95
Total	\$27,893.75	\$27,596.25	\$31,446.19	\$20,777.25

Last Minute Ice reduces the hours of unused ice and allows users to book time without having to make a seasonal commitment. The largest amount of Last Minute Ice is booked during the winter hockey season.

Analysis and Options:

The amendments to the Ice Allocation policy fall under the following main areas:

1. Administrative – updates to titles, names, forms, dates or links
2. Clarification – updates to definitions and timelines
3. Operational improvements – updates to booking processes, timelines or administration
4. Policy - priority changes, non-prime rules, residency provisions, new user eligibility, or alignment with other policies

Initial Ice Allocation Policy Changes

The City's Ice Allocation Policy has served the City well and has defined and communicated how ice would be managed and allocated to a variety of users and promoted participation in minor sports and supported fiscally responsible operations.

The framework of the policy remains very relevant.

Based on experience in working within the policy framework and with user groups along with feedback from those groups over time, staff recommend the following general policy updates and changes:

Amendment Type	Amendments:
Ice Facility Operations	Update facility hours to reflect current ice schedule and demands.
Scheduling Priorities	Remove Jr. B and clarify updates to Owen Sound Attack Junior A Hockey Team and Boards of Education needs.
City Recreation Programs	Modify some City recreation program times to allow more prime ice for the increasing demands of Minor Sport Groups.
Seasonal Commitment	22-24 consecutive weeks to be completed between October 1 and April 30. Suggest updating the season as follows: Winter – October 1 to April 30 Spring/Summer – May 1 to September 30 Reducing from three to two allocation periods will help establish ice schedule and programs to open registration earlier.

	It will also provide more time to fill vacant ice and increase revenue.
Time Period Entitlements and Restrictions	Based on the current policy, and the number of teams each minor sport group has, the City doesn't currently have enough ice to offer. Wording will be updated to reflect this.
Deadlines for Ice time Requests and Timing of Allocation	<u>Fall/Winter (October-April)</u> Request – Mar-15; Allocated – June 15 for season starting in Sept/October. <u>Spring/Summer (May-September)</u> Request – Jan-15; Allocated – Mar-1
Signed Contract/Permit	Reduce the due date of a returned signed document from 4-weeks to 2-weeks. This will allow time for staff to fill any unused ice in a reasonable timeline.
Changes to Signed Contract/Permit	Restructure wording around 7.2 (b) when users can cancel ice time.
Permit Cancellation	Simplify – cancellation period for minor sport groups and occasional users.
Ice Flood Schedules & Dressing Rooms	Add wording around not entering the ice more than 15 mins prior to rental begins. Dressing rooms will be available 30-mins prior to rentals. Dressing room must be vacated 30-mins following ice time.

Insurance Requirements for All Facility Users	Update to reflect insurance providers suggestions. Wording updated in conditions of use.
Payment and Fees	Payment Schedule – credit card on file for payment processing the 1 st day of each month. Required by all groups except minor sport groups.
Appendix A	Update to reflect new allocation seasons. Holiday Closures – JMRRC will be open when possible. Two ice pads available to book versus one.
Appendix B	Remove Owen Sound Ringette Remove Owen Sound Skating Club
Appendix C	Follow Hockey Canada and OHF guidelines re: team weekly ice entitlements based on age/category.
Appendix D	Update with current tournaments
Appendix A	Remove Amendment and Cancellation
Appendix F	Currently shows groups as of 2009. Update to current listing of groups.
Insurance, Risk and Compliance	Confirm current insurance requirements. Review whether insurance limits remain aligned with City risk management standards. Confirm requirements for proof of insurance, additional insured status, and user responsibilities.

Administrative Appendices	Review all appendices for currency. Consider which appendices should remain Council-approved, policy and which should be administrative procedures. Update facility hours, recognized groups, allocation standards, tournaments, forms, seasonal organizations, and last-minute ice procedures as needed.
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Resource Alignment:

Financial Resources

The City's Ice Allocation and other policies support the fiscally responsible management of ice and equitable allocation. The rental of ice generates over \$1M in revenue each year, which assists in offsetting operational costs.

Human Resources

The booking of ice is the responsibility of the Facility Booking Coordinator.

Time and Scheduling

Following this report, staff will consult with ice users for information to update the policy. The intent is to bring a revised policy back to Committee for approval and implementation for the 2027/2028 winter season.

Technology and Infrastructure

Ice time is booked using the City's Xplor Recreation (PerfectMind) software.

Climate and Environmental Impacts:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Communication and Engagement:

Staff's recommended changes are based on experience in implementing the policy in the allocation of ice each year along with an understanding of the facility operation.

Following review by Committee, staff propose the following next steps relating to engagement with user groups and the public:

1. Create a project page using OurCity (Public Engagement platform)
2. On the project page, a draft redlined version of the Ice Allocation Policy would be linked with a copy of the presentation and background report and other policies.
3. The project page would include a survey that would support obtaining public feedback. The survey would be promoted using social media and via email with direct links to ice user groups.
4. Staff would plan to meet with minor sport groups directly to gather feedback on the draft policy.

The goal is to have the policy approved and implemented for the 2027/2028 winter ice allocation.

Report Developed in Consultation With:

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services
Ryan Gowan, Manager of Arena Operations

Attachments:

1. Attachment 1 - Ice Allocation Policy (CS37) - Current
2. Attachment 2 - Sample Fall/Winter Ice Allocation Schedule
3. Attachment 3 – Tournament/Event Listing

Reviewed by:

Ryan Gowan, Manager of Arena Operations
Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Andy O’Leary, Facilities Booking Coordinator at aoleary@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1255.