



GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL
RECREATION
— COMMITTEE —



Black Ice Annual Report 2023-2024

Grande Prairie Regional Recreation Committee
July 2024

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“ Coming together is a beginning,
staying together is progress and
working together is a success. ”

- HENRY FORD

Collaboration by the Grande Prairie Regional Recreation Committee Administrative Working Group

Helen Garland - Grande Prairie Regional Recreation Committee

Karna Germsheid - Grande Prairie Regional Sport Connection

Katie Biberdorf - City of Grande Prairie

Sarah Paterson - City of Grande Prairie

Christine Rawlins - County of Grande Prairie

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Kevin Gramm - M.D. of Greenview

Tanya Harvey - Town of Beaverlodge

Melody Sample - Town of Sexsmith

Christina Ketchum - Town of Wembley

Charmaine Baker - Town of Wembley



The Grande Prairie Regional Recreation Committee recognizes the social return generated from investment in publicly available ice arenas. In 2019 the GPRRC decided to review the allocation of ice time in regional arenas to ensure that these facilities were being utilized to their full potential, therefore maximizing available ice time, and in turn creating a greater social return. The Ice Allocation Framework was developed in 2020 and brought to each partner Municipality of the GPRRC for decision and implementation in 2021. The framework is a multi-step approach, and each Municipality has the autonomy to implement the framework in stages as approved by individual municipalities. Please see Attachment A – to find the Ice Allocation Framework document in its entirety.

The Ice Allocation Framework was guided by the following vision for recreation as outlined in the 2016 Grande Prairie Regional Master Plan:

“The local municipalities believe that public recreation services enable the development of communities in which everyone is engaged in meaningful and accessible recreation experiences that foster individual wellbeing, community wellbeing, and the wellbeing of our natural and built environments.”

BLACK ICE TRACKING

GPRRC-12-10-2020-05 (made by Reeve Marshall) to direct AWG to come back to a future meeting a proposal on how the Region can better track Black Ice, specifically ice that is allocated, paid for, and not being used on an ongoing basis.

The Administrative Working Group responded to this motion by working with regional ice managers to track Black Ice. Black Ice reports are submitted monthly by ice managers and tallied by the GPRRC Coordinator.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the 2022/23 season was the first one where ice use returned to normal usage and booking.

As such, after reviewing the Black Ice Annual Report 2023, the GPRRC made a motion to continue tracking for the 2023/24 season.

MOTION-GPRRC-09-20-2023-01 (made by Reeve Marshall) that the GPRRC accept the Black Ice Annual Report 2022/2023 for information and continue tracking for the 2023/2024 season.

For this past season, September 2023–March 2024, a total of 112.5 hours of Black Ice have been reported for all user groups. This amount is a decrease from the 2022–2023 season of 199 hours from Sept 2022–Mar 2023. It is anticipated that this is due in part to increased awareness by the user groups, and better preparation in scheduling with the City of Grande Prairie Ice Allocation meeting being moved to May.

Improvements in tracking this season include staff training and reporting tools such as an updated Black Ice Tracking Sheet for use by arena staff. September 2023 had 42% of the Black Ice for the season which is a considerable reduction compared to 54% of the annual total in September 2022.

Throughout the 2023/2024 season, the Administrative Working Group has maintained communication with the user group reporting the most Black Ice to discuss Black Ice reduction strategies. September is traditionally the month with the most Black Ice as a result of a more unpredictable schedule due to the variable nature of the tryouts that are occurring for some user groups. Black Ice in September 2024 (47 hours) is 56% lower than in September 2023 (107.5 hours).

Table 1. Regional Black Ice by Month

MONTH	MONTH TOTAL 2023/2024	MONTH TOTAL 2022/2023
September	47	107.5
October	21.75	117.25
November	8.75	9.75
December	18.5	5
January	7	10
February	8.5	23.5
March	1	26
Total	112.5	199



Table 2. Black Ice by Regional Facility

ARENA	2023/2024 SEASON TOTAL HOURS	2022/2023 SEASON TOTAL HOURS
Design Works Centre	12	98.5
Dave Barr Arena	71.5	60.25
Bonnett’s Energy Centre	4	0.75
Crosslink County Sportsplex	2	35
Beaverlodge	5.5	4.5
Source Energy Centre	17.5	N/R
Total	112.5	199

*N/R Indicates that no Black Ice report was submitted by the arena

Table 3. Black ice by Day of the Week 2023/2024 Season

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Black Ice	32.25	26.75	6.5	11	5.75	3	20



The GPRRC Ice Allocation Framework definition of Prime Time Ice which is Monday-Friday 4pm-11pm as well as Saturday and Sunday 8am-11pm was used for Black Ice recording by facilities, regardless of whether their individual facility used the same definition for their bookings. An updated tracking sheet was provided to facilities (see Attachment B).

A request was made by committee to differentiate in data collection, whether a facility had reported zero hours of Black Ice, or had simply not reported any Black Ice. As such, in data collection, the term N/R indicates that there was nothing reported from that facility, whereas 0 indicates that the facility reported that no Black Ice had occurred.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Variations within regional arenas reporting Black Ice differently continues to be a challenge. Some arenas are municipally owned and operated while others are operated by Agricultural Societies and rarely report Black Ice. Without consistent definitions and recording practices for Black Ice, the conclusions drawn regarding the data collected are to be made with caution.

The AWG continues to discuss with municipalities, arena managers and arena employees who are recording the data. The clarification of a universal definition of prime-time ice and therefore "Black Ice", as well as the timeframe for recording (tryout/playoff season and/or regular season) is important to ensure that all data being collected is standardized and can be used to draw conclusions. To standardize data collection, in 2023/24 season, all Black Ice was to be recorded, regardless of whether it was during tryouts, playoffs or regular season.

In 2023/24 Season, after discussion with the largest user group, the term "Grey Ice" was introduced. Grey Ice is any Black Ice that is 45 mins or less, and therefore is considered unsellable ice. This allows the differentiation between sellable and unsellable Black Ice. In 2023/24 Season there were 10 instances of Grey Ice which amounted to 7.25 hours.

A request was also made in 2023 by the user group, for the City of Grande Prairie to hold its Ice Allocation meeting no later than end of May, to better allocate reserved ice time within their schedule. In response to this request, the City has held their Ice Allocation meeting in May since 2023. The 2023/24 Season is the first to be affected by the adjustment of the allocation meeting date.

The AWG held two Ice Managers meetings in the 2023/24 Season, in October 2023 and March 2024. The Regional Arena User Behaviour Guidelines update was reviewed at the March 2024 meeting, and Ice Managers requested the addition of the banning of air horns, as it has been an increasing issue at some of the facilities.



The AWG will continue to collaborate with the regional facilities by hosting an ice manager meeting prior to the start of the season in September 2024. This will provide an opportunity to support ice managers in educating ice user groups with regards to Black Ice tracking, and it will also provide tips for ice managers to promote awareness of Black Ice and training about how to report it.

IMPACT TO ARENAS

The impact of Black Ice is predominantly one of reduced social return. Financially, the ice is still being paid for by the user groups but there is under utilization of a highly sought after and limited recreational resource. With sufficient notice unused ice time could be reallocated with high social return as a public skate, stick and puck or similar public program.

NEXT STEPS

The AWG identified the following next steps that should be taken to improve ice management in the region.

- 1. Continue with a forum for regional arena operators to share ideas on best practices and how to support all user groups and participation in general through annual ice manager meetings that will be conducted at the start and end of the season.**
- 2. Implementation of the Facility Allocation Policy Template developed by RC Strategies in 2024/25 Season.**
- 3. A sub-committee of the AWG will reach out to the rural arena operators to discuss ice availability and encourage participation in tracking and attendance of ice managers meeting.**
- 4. Review the tracking form and tracking practices, ensuring that they work for municipal partners to promote consistency across the region.**

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