

# Report to Council



**Date:** October 26, 2020  
**To:** Council  
**From:** City Manager  
**Subject:** Stuart Park Ice Rink – 2020/21 season  
**Department:** Sport & Event Services

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## **Recommendation:**

THAT Council receives the report from the Sport & Event Services Department, dated October 26, 2020, providing information related to the opening of the Stuart Park ice rink for the 2020/21 winter season;

AND THAT Council direct staff to operate the Stuart Park ice rink for the 2020/21 season with an adapted operating model to align with provincial COVID safety guidelines as outlined in the report from the Sport & Event Services Department, dated October 26, 2020.

## **Purpose:**

To seek Council's approval to open and operate the Stuart Park ice rink for the 2020/21 season with an adapted operating model to align with provincial COVID safety guidelines.

## **Background:**

The Stuart Park ice rink began operations in 2011 and since has become one of Kelowna's community gems in the winter season, showcasing our vibrant waterfront area and bringing over 25,000 people downtown annually to skate. From the start of December to the end of February, the rink is open daily from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. for free public skating. It's a popular destination for locals and visitors alike and provides a unique focal point in downtown Kelowna.

In a typical year, City staff begin rink preparations in November and commence general operating services in December, which includes: regular ice cleans/floods, snow clearing (as needed), fire pit maintenance, school courtesy bookings and overnight security. Additional on-site services during ice operating hours can also include skate rentals and food vendors.

## Discussion:

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of safety measures have been adopted at various recreation facilities throughout the City in alignment with Provincial reopening guidelines to ensure safety and minimize risk of transmission, including:

- Heightened cleaning and disinfection
- Modifications of facilities to accommodate physical distancing
- Ensuring physical distancing is maintained where possible through program modifications and queueing strategies
- Directing anyone experiencing symptoms to stay home
- Promoting high levels of handwashing and personal hygiene as a key preventative measure
- Providing public education on maintaining physical distance
- Ensuring clear return to activity guidelines are in place

Based on preliminary discussions with Interior Health, status quo operations at Stuart Park ice rink are not recommended due to the nature of the site. Despite being an outdoor venue, there are additional challenges to consider, particularly related to gatherings and crowding during peak skate times and ensuring adequate space for physical distancing. With that in mind, the following operational levels have been considered for opening the Stuart Park ice rink for the 2020/21 season:

- **Level 1: Open for Casual Use**  
Patrons will be able to access the site on a casual-use basis with no ancillary services (skate rental, fire pit, food vendor) provided. Signage will be displayed clearly outlining COVID-19 guidelines and safety protocols to follow. Additionally, contracted support staff (Facility Ambassadors/Security) will be on site during prime hours (M-F 5 p.m.- 9 p.m.; Sat/Sun 11 a.m. – 9 p.m.) to educate the public on site safety guidelines and monitor gathering sizes and physical distancing protocols.
- **Level 2: Open for Restricted Use**  
The site will be enclosed with temporary fencing. An online registration system will be used to manage participant numbers during prime hours and all patrons will be required to pre-book their skate sessions (1 hour), with a maximum of 50 participants per session. City staff will be on site during prime hours to manage registration lists, control entry/exit points and oversee operations. Limited services may be offered during supervised times in accordance with physical distancing/gathering protocols.  
  
The site will remain open for drop-in casual use during non-prime hours (M-F 6 a.m.- 5 p.m.; Sat/Sun 6 a.m.- 11 a.m.) and spot-checks will take place to minimize gathering sizes.
- **Level 3: Closed**  
The rink will not be open.

Each level has a number of assumptions and projected costs associated with it:

For level 1, it is assumed that the removal of the ancillary services (skate rentals, food vendors, fire pit), combined with public comfort levels related to gathering and the ability to view the rink in advance using the Stuart Park live cam, will limit participant numbers through self-regulation. The communication plan and facility ambassadors will support the adherence of guidelines and safety protocols. Level 1 expenses include: signage and contract staff.

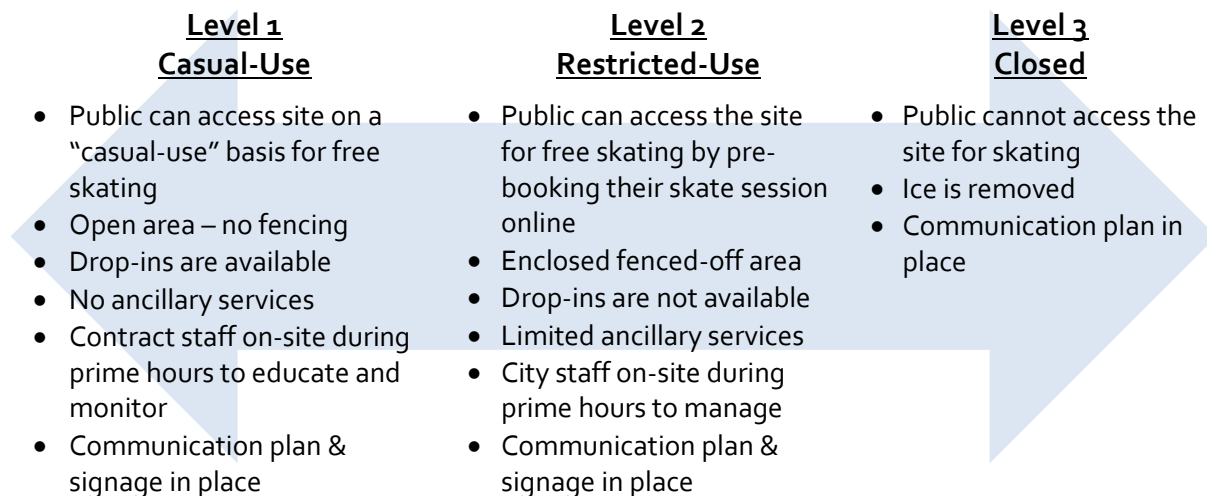
In the more restricted level 2 model, it is assumed that due to the pre-booking system with a maximum 50 capacity, drop-in availability on-site will be limited. Signage would be in place and City staff would manage the site to ensure safety measures were followed. Level 2 expenses include: signage, fencing, online registration system, additional ice cleans and City staff.

For level 3, it is assumed that the risks associated with opening the site, in particular the gathering of people and physical distancing, are too significant to manage. Level 3 expenses would be minimal and include communication and signage.

### Proposed Operating Model

Based on the three levels presented, a fluid phased-approach is proposed that would involve advancing progressively (forward or back) through the levels as required (see below).

## Stuart Park Ice Rink 2020/21 Operations – Phased Approach



To start, the Stuart Park ice rink would be opened on a casual-use basis (level 1). This operating model would be maintained dependent on level of adherence to the safety protocols and site guidelines. If crowd sizes and physical distancing guidelines were not being followed and ensuring public safety was proving to be a challenge, rink operations would be adjusted to a more restricted-use model (level 2). If safe operations within the restricted-use model continued to be challenging, the next option would be to close the facility (level 3). Conversely, if patrons were adhering to safety protocols and site

guidelines, the operating model could potentially be shifted back to support a more “casual-use” model (level 1).

**Conclusion:**

The Stuart Park ice rink provides a unique opportunity for citizens to recreate outdoors in the heart of the city. Through the years, it has become an important community gathering space and an extremely well-used winter site. Opening and managing the ice rink during COVID-19 is a challenging task with associated risks compounded by the fact that the pandemic is unpredictable. As such, City staff believe a fluid operational approach which can respond to the latest provincial guidelines and allow for flexibility is crucial to effectively and safely manage the operation of the Stuart Park ice rink site for the 2020/21 season.

**Internal Circulation:**

Active Living & Culture  
Property Management  
Financial Services  
Risk Management  
Parks Services  
Communications

**Considerations applicable to this report:**

***Financial/Budgetary Considerations:*** Funding is needed to support the proposed operating model of the Stuart Park ice rink for the 2020/21 winter season. The amount of funding required will be based on the primary operating option that is used to a maximum of \$50,000 which would be drawn as needed from the COVID-19 response budget.

**Considerations not applicable to this report:**

***Legal/Statutory Authority:***

***Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:***

***Existing Policy:***

***Financial/Budgetary Considerations:***

***External Agency/Public Comments:***

***Communications Comments:***

**Submitted by:** Doug Nicholas, Sport & Event Services Manager, Active Living & Culture

**Approved for inclusion:** Jim Gabriel, Divisional Director, Active Living & Culture

**Attachments:** Powerpoint Presentation – Stuart Park Ice Rink 2020/21 season