



City Council Report

REPORT NUMBER 312-2025-Community Services-Recreation & Culture

DATE

PREPARED

September 25, 2025

FILE

**CITY COUNCIL
MEETING DATE**

October 7, 2025

SUBJECT

Consolidation of Locations for Weekday Ice

RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUCIL

WITH RESPECT to Report 312-2025-Community Services-Recreation & Culture, we recommend the following service level change for regular weekday ice bookings at the following arenas:

- Grandview Arena be closed for weekday ice bookings on Mondays
- Neebing Arena be closed for all weekday ice bookings, with some exceptions as noted in this report;

AND THAT these changes be effective October 12, 2025.

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the 2024 Operating Budget, access to weekday ice at City-run arenas was consolidated, resulting in net cost savings and the reduction of one Leadhand position. This change was implemented to 'right size' the City's offering of weekday ice to meet user demand and to achieve cost efficiencies. Effective the 2024/2025 winter ice season, weekday ice bookings were accommodated at either the Current River or Grandview Arena but not both facilities.

To support this change, 1 Leadhand was assigned accountability for two arenas (Current River and Grandview Arena). Changes had to also be made to Facility Operator shift schedules.

Implementation of this change has resulted in minimal concern from users and clients. School groups impacted by the Grandview closure were accommodated on another day. Alternating the availability of weekday ice between sites presents facility booking and

maintenance inefficiencies. In addition, there are considerations for work/life balance of affected employees.

Given the limited demand for weekday ice at the Neebing Arena, Administration is recommending the closure of Neebing Arena for regular, weekday ice bookings and the closure of Grandview Arena during the day on Mondays to accommodate maintenance. Exceptions to these closures would include accommodation of tournaments, users displaced temporarily from their regular location due to a maintenance issue, and/or should demand for access to weekday ice increase.

DISCUSSION

Up until the 2024/2025 winter ice season, the regular staffing structure at each of the City's satellite indoor arenas consisted of: 1 full-time Leadhand; 2 full-time Facility Operators. During the peak winter months, indoor arena staff are scheduled from 8 am to 12 am on a daily basis.

Through the 2024 Operating Budget, access to weekday ice at City arenas was consolidated, resulting in net cost savings and the reduction of one Leadhand position. This change was implemented to 'right size' the City's offering of weekday ice to meet user demand. To support this change, 1 Leadhand was assigned accountability for two arenas (Current River and Grandview Arena) effective the start of the 2024/2025 winter ice schedule. Also, in order to accommodate this change, one Facility Operator shift schedule at each of the affected sites (Grandview and Current River) had to be converted to consecutive night shifts to meet operational needs.

The above arrangement resulted in facility booking and maintenance inefficiencies as the Leadhand had to alternate between indoor arenas based on ice rental demands and there was additional work to establish available facility booking times. Staff also expressed dissatisfaction with their schedule and the negative impact it was having on their work/life balance due to the high number of night shifts.

In response to staff concerns and effective summer 2025, revisions to the Leadhand structure and shift schedules were implemented. The updated Leadhand structure involves combining Grandview and Neebing Arenas under one Leadhand. These two arenas typically have lower user demand. The Leadhand's schedule is as follows:

- Monday to Wednesday: day shifts at Grandview
- Thursday and Friday: alternating weekly night shifts at Grandview and Neebing.

This new structure/schedule provides Facility Operators previously on a consecutive night shift with access to occasional day shifts on a two-week cycle, improving overall work life balance for the winter ice season.

To improve weekday operations and achieve both facility booking and maintenance efficiencies, Administration is recommending the following:

- Closure of Neebing Arena for regular weekday ice bookings (8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.).
- Closure of Grandview Arena to the public during the weekday on Mondays to accommodate maintenance.

Exceptions to these closures would include accommodation of tournaments, users displaced temporarily from their regular location due to a maintenance issue, and/or should demand for access to weekday ice increase. In instances, where there is a 4 pm weekday ice booking at Neebing Arena, the scheduled Facility Operator would report to the arena for 3:30 pm.

During the 2024-2025 winter ice season, the following hours were booked during the above timeframes:

- Neebing Arena – Weekdays – 541.75 hours
- Grandview Arena – Weekday Mondays – 8 hours

The majority of these bookings were by school groups through our reciprocal agreement. There is capacity to accommodate this usage at other arena sites.

Another impact of the proposed change affecting Grandview Arena is that Grandview Arena is now the emergency evacuation site for a nearby school. Staff will explore with the school an alternative designated emergency evacuation centre on Mondays, such as the nearby 55 Plus Centre. If the 55 Plus Centre is not an alternative, staff will still be working at Grandview Arena performing maintenance activities and may be able to suspend maintenance activities to accommodate an emergency evacuation of the school. The Neebing Arena is not a designated emergency evacuation centre for any school.

CONSULTATION

Based on an initial inquiry to the Activities Coordinator representing the affected School Boards, the Grandview Monday closure is not expected to be an issue. It is anticipated that schools in closer proximity to Neebing Arena may be concerned with the location change, however all schools currently access Neebing Arena via bus and would be bussed to an alternative arena to accommodate programming.

At the Quality of Life Standing Committee on September 23, 2025, Report 292-2025 - Consolidation of Locations for Weekday Ice (Community Services-Recreation & Culture) was presented for endorsement. Feedback received from the Standing Committee Quality of Life focused on the rationale for the service level change and the importance of accommodating requests from staff to consider work life balance, our capacity to accommodate requests for access to weekday ice at the remaining open indoor arenas, and the rationale for selecting Monday as the day of closure at Grandview Arena.

Administration responded that the Activities Coordinator representing the affected School Boards did not anticipate concerns with the proposed changes and there is currently sufficient supply of weekday ice to accommodate demand. Being responsive to employee

concerns about their work schedule is important for staff retention. Administration is recommending the change in locations and schedule for weekday ice given that Grandview and Neebing Arenas have the least demand for weekday ice, with Monday being the day of least demand at Grandview Arena, and the opportunity to achieve improved work life balance for employees without compromising our ability to meet community needs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

There are no revenue implications with the proposed changes as the impacted weekday ice bookings are by schools who access the arena through a reciprocal agreement between the City of Thunder Bay and the School Boards.

There is a cost in the instance of weekday 4:00 p.m. ice bookings at the Neebing Arena. On these days, a Facility Operator must attend the Neebing Arena at 3:30 pm to allow access to clients for the 4:00 p.m. ice rental. However, this cost impact existed under the prior arrangement when Grandview and/or Current River Arena were closed on a specific day. Therefore, there is no net new significant impact with the proposed changes.

BACKGROUND

Through the 2024 Operating Budget, a reduction of 1 FTE to the Arenas/Stadia budget was repurposed to a Utility Trades Person resulting in net cost savings of \$6,000. (Report 1 – 2024 – 2024 Capital and Operating Budget as Amended – February 12/24).

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

N/A

REPORT PREPARED BY

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REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Brad Loroff, Acting Commissioner, – Community Services

Date (MM/DD/YEAR)