



**BREWER SKATE PARK REPORT  
2006 - 2007 Annual General Meeting  
Pacers Speed Skating Club of Ottawa**

Monday, April 23rd, 2007  
7:00 - 9:00 PM  
Ottawa Citizen Conference Room  
101 Baxter Road  
Ottawa ON

Thanks to Alicia's recruitment efforts, the Pacers formed a "Brewer Committee" to oversee, guide and share the workload this year. The committee members include Rick Muise (Chair and Board rep), Alicia Weiss, Gerry Harrington, Pete Gauthier, Suzanne Dionne, Sheila McGinn, Tom Simper, Joanne Mitchell (Concordes) and Ted Huffman. The committee met several times over the fall, discussed options for implementation of past recommendations and suggestions and assigned duties and activities for the season.

After unseasonably mild weather and rain in late December and early January, base ice preparation began on Monday, January 15 and 2 days later the facility was opened, with good ice in the small rink and poor conditions on the other surfaces. The Park remained open every day until March 4<sup>th</sup>, 4 days past the City's 'official' end of season, for 47 days of skating.

Due to the late start and the subsequent cancellation of several speed skating events, we recorded only 14,255 person-hours of use at the park during the 2006 – 2007 season, down considerably from the 20,077 recorded last year. The average usage in person-hours per day over the past several years is as follows:

2006-2007 = 303  
2005-2006 = 415  
2004-2005 = 279  
2003-2004 = 325

Events on the Oval in 2006-2007 included a **Marathon on Feb ?? - ??**, a "Glebe Goes Global" Skate-A-Thon on February 10, a novice and intermediate "Mini-Meet" on Feb 10 and an OCMHA Skate-A-Thon on Feb 24. The Westboro Academy and Hopewell School again used the Oval at lunch time, for sports periods and for a 'Skate Challenge' field day while the Pacers and Concordes Youth and Masters groups made regular appearances in the evenings for training sessions.

The cost of our contract with Mountainview (now Mountainview Golf & Athletic Turf Specialists) for rental, fuel and maintenance of a tractor with snowblower and brush, a pick-up truck for the hot water assembly and a walking snowblower was the same as last year. The Pacers hired previous employees Greg Bennett and Stephen Hutchinson for rink attendance and ice maintenance. They shared a schedule of 9 'shifts' per week (6:00 pm – closing every night, plus 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm on weekends), while Greg also operated the snow removal equipment and performed flooding on an additional "as-

needed” basis.

The Ottawa South Minor Hockey Association once again scheduled practices on the small rink and provided a flood crew for Saturday nights. Once again this year, after base ice was in place we scheduled most ice maintenance for late at night or early mornings in order to avoid the main public use periods. Even the “Old Ottawa South Hockey Playing Dads”, who voluntarily flood the rinks after 10:00pm on Friday nights find that they often displace (onto the Oval) up to 25 hockey players.

Permit use this year consisted of the regular season-long permits by OCMHA (all hours at their discretion), the “Old Ottawa South Hockey Playing Dads” (Saturday mornings) the “Ottawa South Old-Timers Outdoor Hockey League” (Thursday evenings 9 – 10pm) and a one-time permit for Westboro Academy’s “Skate Day” on Feb 22.

Relationships with and support by City personnel, including electricians, park maintenance and arena and program staff continue to be very positive and are fundamental to the success of the Brewer Skate Park. Coordination with City crews for ‘hard services’ support (lights, trailer hook-ups, board storage, Zamboni scheduling) is excellent, but snow dumping from the Zamboni operation in the arena continues to present problems.

All equipment was stored and facilities tidied over the months of March and April. The storage of office supplies (in the blue locked box), safety mats, shovels, garbage cans, tools, equipment and rental skates in the extreme east end of the shack around the hose reels seemed not to be a problem last summer, and is very convenient for closing in the spring and opening in the fall. The same arrangement has been undertaken this spring, and hopes are that there will be no complaints. The shack is used only for storage of soccer balls and nets (as well as the hockey nets) during the summer.

## **Recommendations**

The continuing increase in use of the ice surfaces at Brewer, especially at peak times, requires continued adjustment of operations. Maintenance of the ice-path to the old rink is more difficult, machinery operation is compromised and the confluence of minor hockey teams, public skaters and hockey players and speed skating practices during the evening over-fills the field house. Space limitations imposed by the new rink and the greater number of users at peak times is troublesome and constitutes a safety issue related to the mix of children, tools and machinery in a constricted area. The condition of the field house (“The Shack”) has also become a safety issue, with frequent overcrowding, deteriorating floors, doors and electricals, exposed light bulbs and heaters and broken wall and ceiling panels.

The past several annual reports to the Pacers membership have highlighted the need for discussion with City program and facilities staff about Brewer Skate Park operations, and it appears that this is the year progress may be made. We have received a note from the City coordinator (Carmen Renaud) that they are involved in “infrastructure and long term planning” and have asked us to provide them with a ‘vision document’ related to future skating activity at Brewer Park. I will be pleasantly surprised if they are thinking about a refrigerated Oval, but we must take this opportunity to become engaged. There are a large number of improvements required if the current and growing level of use is

to be accommodated in a safe and harmonious manner. The Brewer Committee will prepare and forward to City staff a comprehensive list of incidents, issues of concern and recommendations for infrastructure and program needs.

***The Brewer Committee needs additional volunteers*** to take on specific tasks such as office management, trailer coordination, track marking, mat installation and public relations. An office manager would be responsible for tasks such as scheduling and administering rink attendant activities, serving as City and public contact, scheduling and notification of Club and community events and coordinating skate rentals and skating instruction. Other activities such as coordinating trailers and track setting are more of a 'one-duty' nature and would require less time commitment. All of these activities are established and routine and there is no mystery involved – just a bit of time.

One of last year's recommendations was to shift the focus of volunteer activities at Brewer away from ice maintenance (except for base ice preparation) and toward attendant duties. The purpose of that was to extend the time in which attendants are on duty (add weekend mornings, start earlier in the evenings) and to present a stronger 'official presence' at the Park. Since attendant activities can be scheduled well ahead of time, it was felt that it might be better suited to volunteers. Without maintenance duties, those persons could also spend more time on public relations and 'policing' duties. Our salaried staff could then be allocated to ice maintenance at other, less-busy times (after 10:00 pm and during the day), which would also establish a presence at the Park during those times. The alternative is ever-increasing labour costs, as the City has suggested that we may need to expand 'supervision' of the site. The Committee attempted to identify volunteers for attendant duties, but was unsuccessful and we were forced to again schedule the paid staff for all shifts plus off-hours maintenance. Only the shortened season kept salary costs reasonable in 2006-2007.

Despite the short season, Brewer Skate Park remains as a cornerstone of winter activity in Ottawa and Long Track speed skating in Ontario.

Finally and personally, I would like the Pacers, Concordes and the skating public to note that I 'resign' as Manager of Brewer Skate Park as of this date, and I have so informed the City. I will remain on the Brewer Committee if appropriate, and I will be available for advice, guidance and volunteer shifts as a hoser, but I can no longer commit the time and responsibility required as manager. My involvement with speed skaters, hockey players, public skaters and City staff, and the friends, recognition and thanks it has brought me has certainly been a highlight of my life and I will treasure it always.

But now it's my turn to skate!

Submitted by

Ted Huffman  
Brewer Skate Park Manager, 2006 – 2007  
Pacers Speed Skating Club of Ottawa