

**President's Report
2007-2008
Annual General Meeting
Pacers Speed Skating Club of Ottawa
June 1st, 2008**

Welcome to the Ottawa Pacers' 2007-08 Annual General Meeting. The AGM affords members the opportunity to reflect on another successful year for the Club and to look forward to the upcoming season and beyond.

The season past ...

Among the Club's highlights in 2007-08 were:

- The successful hosting of two short track meets at the Bell Sensplex: the Eastern Regional Ability Meet in October and the Regional and Masters Championship this past March, and the Provincial Long Track Championships at Brewer Park in January. On behalf of the Pacers, I have received many compliments on the organization of these meets -- which is a testament to the many volunteers who made them happen;
- The high profile of speed skating in the community and across Canada, evidenced by strong demand for club membership and the success of our athletes at all competitive levels;
- The long and fantastic Brewer Park Oval season, despite occasional weather challenges, thanks to Pete Gauthier and his many volunteers;
- The spirit of our many young skaters who strive for PB's every meet or simply to "skate fast, turn left!"

As you can see, "pride" and "spirit" are the operative words for the Pacers -- pride in the accomplishments of our skaters and in the spirit of our volunteers, who together have made the Pacers the largest and one of the most successful speed skating clubs in Ontario. While we continue to produce skaters with athletic skill and personal integrity, it is our small band of dedicated volunteers that sets us apart. Many of those volunteers, among them some of the most active, are not themselves skaters or even parents of skaters. Just consider the range of activities that they handle with skill and enthusiasm:

- Coaching and officiating
- Meet organization
- Skater registration and communication
- Maintaining and balancing the club's books
- Fundraising
- Providing and maintaining club equipment
- Creating and maintaining the Brewer Park Oval
- Serving as members of the Executive
- Maintaining our website (www.ottawapacers.ca)

I have been fortunate in my two years as President to work with an executive and membership that holds the best interests of the club and the sport foremost in mind -- a Pacers' club culture that has been handed down over the years through skaters, volunteers and parents. The spirit of cooperation and constructive advancement is our strongest asset, one that must be maintained and fostered. Many of us are parents who seek the best for our skaters, yet we understand this is best realized in a supportive environment in the finest tradition of speed skating.

Changes are coming for next season ...

While our club is strong and healthy, it cannot remain static. With growth comes a need for change. For the last few years, the Pacers have been looking to increase the number of practice ice hours at the Bell Sensplex, in order to meet the demand from new skaters and to respond to the needs of our existing skaters seeking to advance in their training and ice time.

Every year, the Pacers dutifully request additional ice time from the City of Ottawa, and every year, we are told that there are no additional hours to be had. In effect, their response is that many groups and organizations need more hours and there are not enough City arenas to grant everyone's requests for more prime time hours (i.e. 5 – 10 pm weekday evenings and 7 am – 5 pm weekends).

As a client of the Bell Sensplex, the Pacers have the option to purchase additional "market-rate" ice time from this privately-managed facility. The Bell Sensplex is a public-private facility developed as a partnership between the City and the non-profit group "Ottawa Community Ice Partners". In a nutshell, the partnership consists of a long-term agreement in which the City purchases 2,400 prime time hours annually from the Bell Sensplex at a negotiated rate, and then sells those hours to community sporting organizations at the City subsidized rate. The Bell Sensplex is free to market and sell the balance of the facility hours to clients at their private rate. Currently, the Pacers purchase 8 hours of ice time per week at the Bell Sensplex, with 6 of these hours purchased from the City of Ottawa at the City rate and 2 hours purchased from the Bell Sensplex at a private (higher) rate.

In discussions with the Bell Sensplex on a contract for next season, the Pacers were confronted with a proposal to shift one of our mid-week evening blocks of ice time to Sunday evening, in keeping with the Bell Sensplex ice allocation policy. This policy, which the Bell Sensplex has been applying to all of their clients, requires that all groups wishing to maintain or increase their prime time ice hours, also had to purchase non-prime time ice hours, such as Sunday evenings. Needless to say, a shift of weekday evening ice to Sunday evening was completely unacceptable, as it would have a disastrous impact on the Pacers' training program and competition schedule, not to mention the impact on our membership and volunteer base.

After considerable negotiation, the Pacers have arrived at tentative 3-year contract that would increase our weekly ice time from 8 to 12 hours per week, of which 6 hours would be purchased from the City (subsidized) and 6 hours from the Bell Sensplex (private). The Pacers will retain the traditional Tuesday/Thursday evening blocks, however the times would run from 4:15 pm to 10:15 pm. While the practice schedule has yet to be finalized by our coaches, it is safe to assume that the Development group will begin at 5:15 pm and the Masters group will be on at 9:15 pm both evenings. The two 4:15 – 5:15 blocks are the non-prime hours that the Pacers must purchase to comply with the Bell Sensplex allocation policy. In effect, in order to gain 2 hours of prime time ice per week, we have had to purchase 2 non-prime hours per week.

While we have negotiated savings in other non-ice costs and a limit of 3% in annual increase in ice costs over a 3-year agreement, we are faced with a substantial increase in ice costs per year with the new contract. In order to maintain, as close as possible, the principle of membership fees covering ice costs, it is inevitable that membership fees will increase in 2008-09 for all of our skating groups. The increase will vary per skating group, according to the additional ice time each group will gain next season and taking into account the higher cost of private ice.

The newly elected Board of Directors will review and establish the fee schedule for next season. Although no one likes to see increased membership fees, the current Board weighed the benefits and costs of growing the club and decided that the Pacers had to move forward or risk going backward. The next year will be a crucial period in the future of the Pacers in that we must rise to the challenge of meeting substantially higher ice costs, through increased fees, innovative marketing and promotion and higher fundraising goals. I am confident the Pacers are up to the challenge.

Thank you ...

I am stepping down after 2 years as President, in order to focus on family and professional development. I have been honored to serve the Pacers and have been blessed with the tremendous support of a group of dedicated and hard working Board of Directors, not to mention the support of the membership at large. As Past-President, I look forward to serving on the new Board and helping steer the Pacers on to bigger and better things.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Landry