

Permanent Long Track Oval Venue

Frequently Asked Questions

Update – In March 2011, Halifax Regional Council approved a recommendation that a permanent skating oval be installed on the Halifax North Common in the same location as the hugely popular Canada Games Oval.

The work to create a permanent facility will be divided into two phases:

- **Phase One** will happen over the next few months (summer 2011) with basic ice surface preparations. The Oval will be converted from a sand base to a concrete base and the infield will be sodded. Site grading along the perimeter of the Oval will be improved to better integrate with the remainder of the North Common. Enhancements to the electrical building onsite will facilitate the relocation of the chiller units, consolidating mechanical and electrical functions.
- **Phase Two** will involve public consultation to seek feedback on the look and feel of the site venue and the character of a proposed permanent structure which will be constructed for the 2012/2013 winter season.

Why is HRM building a permanent Oval? – Originally the Canada Games Oval was to be a temporary venue built to serve the needs of the 2011 Canada Games. In response to overwhelming public support HRM Regional Council agreed to make the facility permanent.

How did the community express their support for the Oval? In the winter of 2010/11 over 100,000 people skated on the Oval. Over 9000 people added their names in support to a “Save the Oval” website. Emails and letters received by HRM were 83% in favour of making the facility permanent. A Corporate Research Associates poll stated 84% of respondents supported a permanent Oval. The will of HRM residents drove the decision to make this a permanent fixture on the North Common.

Questions and Answers about the Construction of the Oval Venue:

Where will the permanent Oval be located? The permanent Oval will be located in the same place as the temporary Oval– Halifax North Common. Other locations were examined but this location offered the best solution. There will be a slight shift in site placement to improve ice surface entry and exit points, to facilitate the future installation of permanent facilities onsite to house ice cleaning machinery, skate and helmet distribution, washrooms, etc.

When will the permanent Oval be constructed? Phase One of the construction will begin this summer (2011) targeting substantial completion by December 15, 2011. Operations for the 2011/2012 winter season will require the leasing of temporary structures to house equipment and public amenities. The tentative construction schedule is:

- June 2011 – Consultants hired for site design work and creation of tender packages

- Summer 2011 – Construction tenders awarded
- November 2011- Concrete slab installation
- Mid-December 2011 – Open to the public

Will there be permanent facilities at the Oval? Yes. Pending HRM Council approval, Phase Two (2012/2013) of the project will see construction of a permanent building to house ice maintenance equipment, skate and helmet distribution, washrooms, etc.. During the 2011/12 winter season temporary structures, similar to what existed in 2010/2011, will be leased. In the longer term, there is a desire to make the site an attractive year round venue avoiding a seasonal look.

Will public input be sought on Oval “look and feel” and amenities? Yes. HRM will consult with the community before any final decisions are made on the “look and feel” of the venue. Please join Facebook (skateHRM.ca) or Twitter (skateHRM) to receive updates or visit www.skateHRM for additional information.

When will the Oval open again? Construction of the Oval venue should be substantially complete by December 15, 2011. Depending upon the weather, the facility should remain open until early March 2012. A period of transition to non-ice use would follow in the spring and then the facility would be reopened without the ice for spring/summer activities.

How much will the permanent Oval venue cost? The Phase One Capital Budget is \$3.75 million. The Phase Two Capital Budget is \$1.4 million. The Operating Budget will be \$410,000 annually. Onsite refrigeration equipment will be retained as a legacy to the Canada Games. As the Oval will be a regional facility, financial support will come from the general tax rate and private donations.

What will the Oval be called? Regional Council has directed staff to develop a market evaluation for potential naming rights and sponsorships to support the oval. Once completed, an action plan will be developed. Additional information will be available in the near future.

Will there be security fencing around the oval? The Oval venue will be accessible year-round. Once construction is completed the temporary construction fencing will be removed. French barricades will be placed around the ice surface itself to designate specific access points and to address safety.

Questions and Answers about the Operation of the Oval Venue:

How long will the operating season last? – The skating season is expected to last from mid-December to March. Other uses will take place from April – October annually.

What is the impact on the existing North Common? – Placing a permanent Oval venue on the North Common will eliminate a ball diamond used by recreational bantam baseball and softball. One other sport field will also be displaced. Dialogue is underway with the affected user groups to reach an appropriate solution.

What will be in the centre of the Oval? A flat grass field will be installed in the centre of the Oval during Phase One construction. A flat, at grade, interior is required to maintain competition site lines for the speed skating competitions. This field area will provide other programming opportunities in the spring, summer and fall such as Ultimate Frisbee.

Who can use the Oval? Everyone! As in the 2010/2011 season the site will be open for all citizens and visitors. All ages and skill levels will be welcome.

Will there be lighting for evening and night skating? Yes, permanent lighting will be installed during Phase One construction.

Will the skating still be free? Public skating will be free. There may be fees for ice rentals and other more specialized activities and events.

Will there still be free skate and helmet usage? Yes, limited quantities will be available for loan on a first come, first serve basis.

Will there be lockers onsite? No lockers will be added during Phase One construction. There is a possibility that a limited number of lockers may be installed in the future. These details need to be worked out and public feedback on amenities, such as lockers, will be important.

What kind of programs will be offered at the Oval during the winter season? Primarily public skating, however, there will be an extensive school program, special events and skating lessons. More information will become available once programming details are confirmed.

What will happen to the site in the off season – spring, summer and fall? Each year the ice will be laid on top of a large permanent concrete surface. Once the ice is removed this “hard scape” will be exposed. This surface will become available for additional new non-ice activities and special events. The public is encouraged to provide suggestions on activities and special events during the consultation for Phase Two.

Will there be concessions at the Oval venue? Will Beavertails be back? Yes, there will be concessions located very near the Oval. These details are being worked out. The public is encouraged to provide suggestions during the consultation for Phase Two.

How will decisions on concessions be made? A request for proposals (RFP) from interested vendors will determine specific concessions at the Oval venue. It is expected the RFP process will take place this fall. For more information on the RFP process, please watch the SkateHRM website.

What other amenities will be offered? Public consultation and interest from the private sector will help determine what additional amenities may be located at the site.

Will regional, national and international skating competitions be held at the Oval? The facility will be capable of hosting regional, national and international events to the Junior World speed skating level. The Oval will also provide a training venue for local and regional speed skating athletes who previously

had to go to Quebec or further west to train. Local athletes will now have the added benefit of “home ice” training.

What are the annual energy costs to operate the Oval? Operating costs in 10/11 were \$86,000 for energy. With the redesign and permanent installation there will be energy saving opportunities.

What are the green features of the Oval? Energy efficiency and smart sustainable construction of HRM facilities is at the forefront of all new construction undertaken by the Municipality. Green aspects of the Oval construction include: reuse of components from last year; reuse of the cooling fluid; use of waste heat from the chillers to heat under the insulation. (This is to prevent differential movement from irregular freezing of the native soils); and an energy management system for the ice to shut off the chillers when it gets cold enough. LED lights will be used for new pathway lighting.

Are helmets mandatory for everyone? CSA approved helmets will be mandatory for children 12 years of age and under.

Where can I park? Will you be adding a parking lot? There will be no onsite parking. A parking lot is not part of the plan for the permanent Oval venue. Some on street parking is available in the area and the Oval venue is accessible by public transit.

Will there be a first aid station? Yes. All Oval staff will be certified in Emergency First Aid.

Can I play hockey on the Oval? No. The Oval is specifically designed as a skating venue.

Are sleds and baby strollers permitted on the ice – No, safety will be paramount at the Oval and these types of equipment could be a danger to other skaters.

Are sledges (for persons with disabilities) permitted on the ice? Yes.

Can I walk my dog on the Oval? No, in the interest of public safety no dogs will be permitted on the Oval site, including the amenity/public areas beside the Oval.

What will be the hours of operation? The hours of operation have not been set yet but they are expected to be similar to last year. Visit the website www.skatehrm.ca for times closer to the opening date.

Can I smoke at the Oval venue? No. The policy regulating tobacco use at HRM owned outdoor recreation facilities will not permit smoking at the Oval venue.