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Short-term oval for long-track skaters

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05 August 2010 12:21

After the final concert of the summer clears out of the Halifax Common next week, crews will start building the Canada Games Oval.

It will be the first artificially refrigerated long-track speed skating oval built in Eastern Canada, and the ice surface will be the equivalent of three NHL rinks.

The \$2.1-million oval is expected to be finished by December — two months before the 2011 Canada Winter Games begin.

And before the professionals get on the ice, it will be open to the public for free.

There will be clinics, D.J. nights, a mayor's skating party, and after-school programs.

Chris Morrissey, CEO of the host society, said a number of organizations are interested in doing activities on the oval.

"We expect it to be a very busy site," he said.

The oval will be located near the corner of Cogswell and North Park streets.

The track itself will be 400 metres long.

It will be a free venue during the games and thousands of spectators will be able to watch the action from bleachers.

And once it's torn down next spring, its legacy will live on: Six chillers — 500 tons of refrigeration which keep the ice cold — will be distributed throughout the province.

"There are discussions of a (new) destination ice rink within HRM," Morrissey said.



Ryan Taplin/Metro Halifax

The Halifax Common as seen from the Atlantica Hotel yesterday. Once the concert stage for this weekend's country music show is taken down, construction will begin on the Canada Games Oval for long-track speed skating.

A decision has yet to be made on building the new ice rink, but Morrissey said it won't be on the Common.

"There are other locations that are being identified," he said, adding HRM will make that decision.

Why not keep it?

While spending over \$2 million on a temporary long-track speed skating venue, why not construct a permanent building?

"To build a structure around this and to operate an oval is a very costly venture," explained Chris Morrissey, CEO of the Canada Games host society.

"There are only two of these in the country right now: the Calgary oval and the Richmond oval and the Richmond oval is being converted (into) gymnasium space and hockey rinks."

Timeline

- Tuesday Teardown of Country Rockfest 2010 to be completed.
- Throughout August Playing fields will be levelled.
- November Installation of oval.
- December Speed-skating oval open to the public.
- January 2011 Competitive event to test facility.
- February 2011 Canada Winter Games are held.
- Summer 2011 Crews reconstruct playing fields.
- Fall 2011 Improved fields ready for use.

Metro Halifax