

CDRC starts process of removing ice from arena

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex (CDRC) has made the decision to remove its ice surface as the province wide lockdown forces closure of the local recreation centre.

The decision to remove the ice surface was made last Monday (Jan. 18) by Chris Gerrits, chair of the CDRC board of management, and staff at the arena citing uncertainty for the remainder of the ice season.

“There would be no guarantees that we would definitely be able to offer anything come February or whenever the lockdown is supposed to be lifted,” said Gerrits. “There’s the possibility it could be extended or that it could be dialled back a bit, but no guarantee that the rec centre will be able to be open again.”

Gerrits also noted the decision was made due to the operations costs to keep the ice surface in, while not in use.

“It comes down to the feasibility of continuing to operate a plant, to keep the ice surface in and the cost associated with that, for an entire month without having anything coming in,” Gerrits told the Free Press. “With COVID, we’re losing more money than normal and so the responsible thing was to not operate an ice plant for an entire month with no money coming in.”

The CDRC was originally closed on March 16 of last year, after Ontario enacted a declaration of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CDRC board of management made the decision back in September to have the ice put for the season after being approached by Skate Canada Shelburne and Shelburne Minor Hockey.

Gerrits said with the removal of the ice it is the end of winter programming at the rec centre.

With the province lockdown both user groups, Shelburne Minor Hockey and Skate Canada Shelburne told the Free Press they had made the decision to end their seasons prior to the decision to remove the ice.

“Everything that’s been going on with respect to the COVID numbers, it presented a significant risk for us, and Shelburne Minor Hockey doesn’t want to be the cause of any spread with COVID,” said President Mike Scace. “In terms of player safety and the type of hockey that we were going to be able to provide, we just had made the decision that we weren’t going to run Shelburne Minor Hockey for the rest of this season.”

“It was a mutual decision with lots of discussion between the arena, arena board, and user groups. It was the right decision to make with the cost it takes to keep the ice in,” said Bill McCutcheon, chairman of Skate Canada Shelburne. “It’s not an inexpensive thing to keep pace in that facility, especially when nobody is using it.”

Shelburne Coun. Lindsay Wegner, who sits on the CDRC board of management, said in a Facebook post that she approached town staff in increasing the number of outdoor rinks in town. Unrelated, public works has been working on constructing two more outdoor rinks in town.

Despite the current closure of the CDRC, Gerrits said they are still planning for full summer programming, with day camps and the swimming pool. The CDRC is advertising for lifeguards and day camp hires.