

November 2005

Rink petition

In **April 2001**, the **Budget Committee** recommended a **major cut** in the rink season in their budget. They called for "harmonization" of the rink season across the city, so that our 47 compressor-run neighborhood outdoor ice rinks would be open only **ten weeks a year**. **City Council voted for the cut**, on the grounds that people could skate at indoor arenas during the time lost outdoors.

The total time lost at outdoor rinks because of that vote was 100,000 hours of shinny hockey time and 120,000 hours of pleasure skating time. In exchange, indoor arenas offered a total of **185 hours of shinny hockey time and 750 hours of pleasure-skating time.**

Since that vote, rink friends across the city have negotiated with Parks and Recreation every year to get the rinks opened sooner. Last year it seemed that City staff had finally fixed the problem. Some of the most popular rinks were opened on Nov.27 and many others were opened Dec.4.

But it turns out that the council's 2001 budget restrictions were never lifted. So this year, harmonization is back, and so are cuts to the rink season.

This year, all neighbourhood outdoor compressor-run rinks, small or large, popular or orphaned, are scheduled to NOT open until Dec.10.

In response to the first wave of protests by rink friends, **Parks and Recreation general manager Brenda Librecz** sent out an e-mail saying that the overall rink season has actually been *expanded* because some of the small single pad-rinks are opening earlier than last year. However, there's a problem with the department's math. In fact **there's a loss of four weeks overall, and most of the most popular city rinks have lost two to three weeks each.**

This kind of "Harmonization" shows an unacceptable lack of responsiveness to citizens. It creates a situation where people who want fresh air and exercise are firmly turned away, at the same time as Parks and Recreation's mandate is supposed to be increasing physical activity.

City staff and city councillors need to find out that the citizens want to use their existing facilities, in this case the outdoor rinks, for the whole season, i.e. **outdoor rinks should be open 15 weeks, from the third week of November to the end of February.** Rinks that can handle the March sun can then be kept open if March is cold.

The councillors at the 2001 Budget Committee meeting where the reduction was decided were: **David Shiner, Paul Sutherland, Olivia Chow, Ron Moeser, Joe Pantalone, Jane Pitfield** (she moved the motion), and **David Socknacki**. All but *Paul Sutherland* and *Ron Moeser* are still on council. In addition, there were quite a few other councillors present at that committee meeting, though not on the Budget Committee: **Brian Ashton (now the chair of the Economic**

Development and Parks Committee, *Betty Disero (gone)*, **Doug Holyday**, *Irene Jones (gone)*, *Jack Layton (gone)*, **Joe Mihevc**, **David Miller**, **Howard Moscoe**, **Frances Nunziata**, **Kyle Rae**, and *Sherene Shaw (gone)*.

The rink petition will be photocopied and sent to all those councillors with a request that they fix the problem that was created in 2001. For rink friends who would like to contact their councillors directly, all addresses and phone numbers can be found at www.dufferinpark.ca. Rink friends can also call **Parks and Recreation general manager Brenda Librecz at 416 392-8207**.