

Synthetic Ice Part of Rink Crisis

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It's an all too common story with municipal rinks. Aging infrastructure, millions of dollars in upgrades and repairs, escalating cost of operations, environmental pressures and reduced budget dollars. Aging rinks all over North America face this similar situation. In Canada for example literally thousands of rinks were built through the 60's - 80's and are now facing significant operating challenges as ice plants, flooring systems, and the building envelope show their age. At the same time there is significant pressure from more and more user groups demanding more prime time ice. At a time when child obesity is raging and communities need to encourage more forms of activity sports associations that use rinks are forced to maintain or even shrink their membership to avoid reductions in available ice times.

So what is the solution?

Part of the municipal solution is to research and investigate high quality synthetic ice companies that provide very high performance and safe synthetic ice solutions. These rinks can literally save any municipality millions of capital and operating dollars by complementing, deferring or even replacing existing mechanically refrigerated artificial ice arenas.

Several manufacturers of synthetic ice have developed excellent products that are very realistic, but chances are it will never completely replace real ice. However it should become part of the overall mix for rink infrastructure moving forward. Some municipalities are very progressive in their thinking and have taken steps to run pilot projects in their communities. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo in Northern Alberta for example ran a series of synthetic ice pilots last fall to introduce the product to the community with great success. As a result of those pilots they have decided to tender a complete ice surface for the Archie Simpson Arena in Fort Chipewyan. This is a very unique situation in that this surface is a gravel base and they rely on mother nature to create the natural ice surface for 6 months of the year. Synthetic ice panels will be placed over the gravel base and then water will be added and frozen during the winter months. Spring and summer skating will then take place on the synthetic surface.

Hopefully this project paves the way for many more like it, so it will be an interesting one

to follow. The best companies offer a 10 year warranty because they know they have a great product. This provides great protection to the municipality's investment for the taxpayers. There are also products that are UV stable so they can be used outdoors. Life expectancy for the premium products is 20 - 25 years where everyday use is expected.

Synthetic ice is not the complete answer for solving North America's rink issues but it certainly needs to be taken seriously.

Author Resource: - IcePro sells the fastest synthetic ice available in the world today. For further information please visit <http://www.IcePro.ca> Tim Oldfield, company founder and President offers expert advice for your home or commercial rink project.

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