



Pioneer Arena Closure

FAQ

1. What makes the Pioneer be “at end of life”?

- In 2009, the RDCK Castlegar Recreation Commission received a report from a consultant that investigated the Architectural and Structural Building Assessment of the Pioneer Arena. The consultant found that the Pioneer Arena was beyond its expected lifespan and the facility as a whole was largely exhausted and should be considered for decommissioning.

In 2017, an additional Structural Building Condition Assessment was done to ensure structural integrity of the building and found no immediate structural concern. However, considering the 2009 study, the assessment stated that carrying out the work identified in the 2009 report would prevent further degradation of the structure. They also stated that performing a more detailed structural analysis and possible additional remedial work to satisfy current code requirements to extend the service life of the building would be a large undertaking.

Since the 2009 report was received by Commission, RDCK staff have been operating and maintaining the Pioneer Arena with no major reinvestment, under the directive of Commission.

With the above information and through information presented during the Master Plan process (in 2016), and during the two failed referendums (2010 and 2018), commissions and the community’s desire was to close the Pioneer Arena and build a new secondary ice sheet at the complex as part of a larger project.

2. What was done to prepare the public of this plan to close the Pioneer?

- The RDCK has been actively engaging the community through the Master Planning process, the Complex enhancement process, and 2 proposed projects that went to referendum in 2010 and 2018, which included a secondary ice sheet at the Complex. During each of these events, the RDCK shared with the public the condition of the Pioneer Arena.

In addition, the RDCK and members of the Castlegar and District Recreation Commission met with ice user groups, at the time of the public announcement, to inform them of the decision to close the Pioneer Arena at the end of the 2023/2024 season.

3. Why did the 2018 referendum fail?

- In December 2017, residents from Castlegar and Area I & J were invited to provide feedback on what potential enhancements they would like to see at the Castlegar and District Community Complex.

Based on the information provided, the RDCK Board of Directors approved borrowing

measures to move forward with enhancements upon voter approval, sought by a referendum on an area-by-area basis (Castlegar and Area I & J). This meant that in order for the referendum to pass each area would need to vote in favour of the enhancements.

In June 2018, the referendum did not pass as all areas did not vote in favour of the proposed enhancements for the Castlegar and District Community Complex.

4. Will the public engagement process planned for “reimagining recreation at the Castlegar Complex” involve a second sheet of ice?

- The RDCK welcomes all feedback from the community and encourages all to share their thoughts on the future of recreation at the Castlegar and District Community Complex, including their thoughts on a second ice sheet in the community.

The RDCK will be engaging residents to reimagine the future of recreation in Castlegar, in the coming months. Castlegar and Area I & J residents will have ample opportunities, through a survey and 8 public meetings, to share their thoughts on how they imagine the future of recreation in their community. Part of this discussion will include the impact on ice users, due to the closure of Pioneer Arena.

Residents can sign-up to stay informed about reimagining the future of recreation at engage.rdck.ca.

5. Why should I participate in the RDCK’s engagement on reimagining recreation at the Castlegar and District Community Complex?

- This winter, the RDCK will be asking Castlegar and Area I & J residents to share their thoughts on what is needed to improve recreation in their area. This could include the need for a second sheet of ice.

In the spring of 2024, once the RDCK compiles the feedback received during the public engagement period, residents will be presented with options on what potential enhancements could look like. At this time, residents will be asked to give feedback on the options and pick which option they would prefer.

Once a preferred option is chosen it will then move to a referendum. The earliest a referendum could take place, is the fall of 2024. If a referendum was approved the earliest a new arena could open would be the fall 2026.

6. When will users know the impact of ice allocation decisions going into the next ice season?

- RDCK staff are working closely with ice user groups, using the RDCK’s Ice Allocation Policy, over the next few months. Ice user groups will know their ice allocation for the 2024/2025 season before the summer so they can plan accordingly for next season.

- 7. With the closure of the Pioneer, will ice users still be able to host tournaments and competitions?**
- Yes, user groups will still be able to host tournaments at the Castlegar and District Community Complex. The RDCK will work closely with user groups to support in the scheduling of tournaments.

- 8. With the closure of the Pioneer, is the Community Complex prepared to take on the additional ice times? How will they adjust public recreation (public skating) to fit the additional rink times?**
- The RDCK will use its Allocation Policy to determine what future programming and ice times look like. The Allocation Policy uses a benefits-based approach, which prioritizes youth programming over adult programming.

The Complex is currently not fully utilized which provides some flexibility, with the cooperation of all ice user groups. This will include shared ice times and the use of earlier and later ice times. The RDCK has the staffing required to extend the Complex hours to open earlier and later.

- 9. The numerous children's classes, hockey & figure skating, are they prepared to see a drop in enrolment as people won't drive long distances in winter to go to regular training?**
- RDCK staff are working closely with Minor Hockey and the Figure Skating Club to ensure that they receive adequate ice time at the Castlegar and District Community Complex for their enrollment numbers.
- 10. Why has the City of Castlegar and RDCK ignored the regular maintenance of the Pioneer? Or why has public offers of assistance from individuals and businesses been declined?**
- In 2014, the RDCK installed a new arena chiller (\$120,000) as the previous one was in poor condition – and without a replacement, the facility would have been closed at that time.

The RDCK operates, maintains, and schedules the Pioneer Arena but the building and land is owned by the City of Castlegar. The RDCK continues to provide regular maintenance to Pioneer Arena - we operate and service the refrigeration plant and components to maintain Technical Safety BC safety regulations – including performing annual turnaround on plant components. However, the repairs required for the facility, go far beyond regular maintenance of the components within.

The RDCK is not aware of any public offers of assistance.