

Proposal for Approval of Modified On-Ice  
Skating and Skills Programs in the Yellowknife  
Arena for Phase 2 of the

NWT's "Emerging Wisely" Strategy

Submitted by the Yellowknife Sporting Club

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## **1. Purpose / Objective**

With the recent release of Hockey Canada's Return to Hockey Policy ( Covid-19 Reponse) the intent of this proposal is to request the Government of the Northwest Territories to consider reopening Ice Arenas for modified Hockey programs in the category of small group gatherings in Phase 2 of NWT "Emerging Wisely strategy. Ensuring a safe and healthy environment for children, families and rink attendants is the priority and with adherence to physical distancing and risk reduction recommendations we believe facilities can be a safe environment for athletes, their fans, and the arena staff alike. Similar to other jurisdictions across Canada( BC, Manitoba, and Alberta in particular), our objective is to commit to safe standards and restrictions associated with the reopening of Ice Arenas so that Dr. Kandola and the NWT Government will support Arena openings in Stage 2.

## **2. Philosophy / Mission**

To promote and enhance healthy and safe reintegration for children into hockey programs supporting their emotional, social, physical, and mental health during the COVID 19 crisis. The Yellowknife Sporting Club is a community-based Winter/Spring / Summer Club that promotes the development of hockey skills along with supporting other community development opportunities when collaborated with. We provide an all-inclusive sport environment that engages young athletes to enhance their skills, knowledge, confidence, and love of our great game. Our model is team centered and coach inspired, integrating, community, and scholastic sport to engage players in fun, fitness, social interaction, and self-fulfillment.

## **3. Player Safety / Health**

Our goal is for the NWT Government to approve modified hockey programs that align with the guidelines and reduce the risk of small group gathering. This proposal will adhere to the policies outlined in Hockey Canada's Return to Hockey and in many cases surpass the requirements for play to continue. The COVID 19 virus has an emotional, social, physical and a developmental impact on our young and impressionable children. They have been restricted from environments that offer positive feedback, skill and knowledge development, and socialization. Extracurricular environments support children in developing diverse skill sets, resilience, and confidence. Many families want their children reengaging in these positive developmental programs and are concerned about the long-term consequences of continued isolation and restrictions. In alignment with other jurisdictions( BC, Manitoba and alberta) our plan is to place the health and safety of players,coaches, and other staff as the highest of importance

### **Positive outcomes for re-engaging children in sports**

We know that physical activity has a plethora of health benefits to all that are engaged. When we are physically active our body releases serotonin which directly contributes to our feelings of well-being. Exercise has also been found to relieve stress, depression and anxiety. Although often overlooked, children experience these emotions just as adults do and exercise is a great way to help combat these feelings. Mental health is of extreme importance at this time and is clearly a priority for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Hockey increases the likelihood of children staying active, allowing them to sleep better and keeps them mentally sharp.

Hockey can not only help encourage children to be more physically active but also help teach them valuable skills and life lessons that they can carry with them through to adulthood. Not only does Hockey increase their individual confidence but it also helps keep children social. Social skills that are learned or enhanced through hockey while assisting children in growing into

successful adults include, Teamwork, Fair play, Communication, Respect for others, Ability to follow rules, Independence, Leadership.

#### **4. Impact on Municipalities**

The economic impact of COVID 19 has reached far and wide. Offering a modified hockey program that meets risk reduction guidelines would support and maintain future programs for children and families to engage in healthy physical activity and decrease the financial impacts on facilities and municipalities.

#### **5. Program modifications and risk reduction strategies**

We are proposing the following plan that includes safe standards and restrictions associated with the opening of Arena facilities in Phase 2 of NWT's Emerging Wisely Strategy.

1. **Attendance:** Individual ice surfaces should be restricted to a maximum of Seventeen(17) participants including two goalies, and three(3)coaches. The Ed Jeske Arena has a square footage of 19,696 Sq.Ft. The Shorty Brown Arena has a square footage of 17,000 Sq.Ft. Both of these arenas will be undergoing extensive upgrades/maintenance during the summer and thus we will focus on the re-opening of the Yellowknife Arena( YK Arena) which is only slightly smaller than the Shorty Brown Arena. The size ensures the appropriate distancing parameters exceed the expectations for players and coaches on ice. Other jurisdictions in Canada currently have allowances for up to 27 people, including coaches on the ice. At no time, will there be more than the allocated numbers and there will be no increase to this without prior approval from the Chief Medical Health Officer.
2. **Dressing Rooms:** Dressing rooms remain closed for phase 2 of NWT's Emerging Wisely Strategy. All players arrive at the arena facility fully dressed in CSA approved hockey gear, excluding skates, gloves and helmet which should be accompanied by the player in a small bag that includes the player name so that it can be easily identifiable after practice. Players will enter through the main entrance( East Entrance) and upon completion of the on ice session will exit via the side door of the arena. ( South entrance).
3. **Arrival:** Here is an example of the expected procedures for arrival at the YK Arena
  - 3a. Participants arrive 10 minutes prior to the ice session and must stay in a vehicle until the doors to the arena are opened by the designated club member. Players will be expected to remain socially distant during the check in phase. Participants will enter through the front/Main doors of the YK Arena. These doors will be kept open to reduce high traffic touch points. Once the participants are all signed in, these doors will be closed as per fire regulations.



- 3b. Participants are signed in by a club member and are assigned a number as they are checked in. They then proceed to their assigned seating area on the south end of the

bleachers that are clearly identified. All participants have a 10 minute window to arrive for their designated time slot, at which time the doors will be closed and no entry will be allowed for late participants.



3c. Once all participants are checked in, a club Marshal and coaches will receive the list with the assigned seating number. Participants will proceed onto the ice sheet, as directed by the Marshal, in an easy to follow flow that does not involve coming into close contact with any other player.



3d. Upon the completion of the ice session participants will , again line up in the assigned order and proceed off the ice surface and to their assigned seating for removal of skates, gloves and helmet.

3e. Participants are given **5 minutes** to remove skates, gloves, and helmet and will be required to leave as directed by the Marshall.



3f. Once all players are ready to depart the Marshall will escort the participants out the South entrance of the building. **The participant list for this session will then be placed in a binder for future reference should it be required by the CMHO.**



3g. All sitting stations will be sanitized prior to the next ice session which will be staggered by ½ hr. ie. Participants are on the ice at 6-7. They arrive at 5:50, leave at 7:05. Ice surface is maintained by staff and club staff sanitize the participant seating area for the next group to arrive at 7:20 for their ice session at 7:30. In essence there is a 1.5 hr transition time between groups.

**ALL participants and Parents/ Guardians** must sign a waiver, prior to the program start, indicating that they will follow the expected procedure. Any failure to comply will result in the removal from the program( see Section 7)

Coaches will have a seating area below the participants, closest to the ice, to ensure participant compliance.

All players and coaches entering the facility must wear nonmedical PPE( masks) when physical distancing is not possible or if the facility requires.

All players and coaches can remove masks once on the ice surface( as Per Hockey Canada Policy).

Other plans/procedures could be approved at a later date( see 6. Evaluation)

4. **Practice Only / No Game Play**: The ice slots are designed for POWER SKATING drills and individual PUCK HANDLING / SHOOTING drills. All ice slots will only be used for player development. At no point will scrimmages be organized as part of Stage 2 of NWT's Emerging Wisely Strategy. Any small organized group drills will respect all distancing requirements. This will allow for coaches to run drills that allow for participants to maintain 2-meter physical distancing guidelines.

5. **Common Areas:** Seating will be provided for players and coaches in common areas for lacing up skates and this set-up will honour proper social distancing guidelines of at least two meters. As per Hockey Canada Policy, should the program offering include younger players requiring support( lacing skates) only 1 parent will be allowed and appropriate PPE must be worn at all times until the parent leaves the facility. Restroom facilities in the lower part of the YK Arena will only be used on an emergency basis and the designated individual bathroom will be open for use. This will allow for appropriate cleaning after each use. Procedure will be for a coach to escort the participant off the ice and close the ice door (North/East end of the ice). The coach will then be required to proceed to the South East door and wait for the participant to return to the ice. At this point the washroom will be sanitized prior to the next usage. All participants are encouraged to use the washroom prior to the ice session
  
6. **Proper Hygiene Standards:** Caution should be taken around common touch points and proper hand hygiene should be practiced. Arena facilities should be required to supply adequate access to hand sanitizers off-ice for participants and coaches. Communal water fountains should be turned off, and all water bottles will be filled at home and properly labeled. All chairs and player sitting areas off ice will be sanitized as per above section 3.  
All high traffic touch points will be sanitized prior to going on the ice and after coming off of the ice. These are identified in collaboration with arena staff and management
  
7. **Participation:** Contracts will be signed with participants and family members agreeing that if you are sick or symptomatic you will stay home. Players or coaches showing signs of any symptoms will be asked to leave the facility immediately and they will be encouraged to take the online self-assessment that is available on the NWT Health Services website at: [NWT COVID-19 Self-Assessment](#)
  
8. **Accompanied Parent / Arena Seating:** **At this time, there will be no parent or guardian allowed in the facility while a session is taking place unless they are a member of the YSC and performing a duty in line with the program.** In the future,if approved by the CMHO a participant may be accompanied in the arena by one household member so long as social distancing guidelines can be achieved and obeyed. Arena seating will be marked off using masking tape so that fans can enjoy watching their player develop in a safe, social distancing manner.
  
9. **Water Bottles / Helmet Identification:** Water bottles will be filled at home and be properly marked with the player's name so that they are easily identifiable. At no point will water bottles be shared between players. Player's helmets should include the name of the player on the front and back so that coaches can easily identify them. This increases the ability to communicate with the players all while maintaining proper social distancing standards of two meters. Players will handle only their own equipment and water bottles; coaches and other players will not touch other players' belongings.
  
10. **Ice Identification Standards:** All ice surfaces will need to be updated to include extra identifying features for player placement during instruction and skill development. These identifying features should include coloured markings on the ice surface that are at a minimum, two meters apart. These markings should consist of multiple colours to assist with communication to players and to reduce confusion during instruction (see Exhibit A below). In this illustration, the individual letters exhibit different coloured markings on the ice (for example G = Green and O = Orange). Ice markings should be indelible and not

impacted by arena resurfacing equipment. See Attached Exhibit A as an example of how the arena markings will be laid out.

11. **Coaching Instruction / Practice Plans**: Coaches are required to follow proper social distancing guidelines of two meters at all times. Practice plans should be created that leverage the extra identifying features and markings. Practice Plans should be distributed to the coaching staff in advance in order to gain understanding and to reduce confusion during practice. Please see the attached practice plan.
12. **Player / Family Understanding and Acceptance**: A short pamphlet will be prepared for parents and participants to reinforce all standards and expectations identified in this plan. This would be similar to the "Respect in Sport" videos /pamphlet parents are required to review prior to player participation in organized hockey with Hockey Canada. Parent review and acceptance of these new standards as well as the implied safety risks will be a requirement prior to any player's participation.
13. **Discipline**: Failure for any participant or coach to meet the standards as outlined in this plan, will be excused from the arena facility. Self-discipline by the participating sporting club is key here to ensure that all individuals can enjoy this experience and while ensuring public safety.

## 6. **Evaluation**

This plan will be re-evaluated on a weekly basis to assess the needs for enhanced safety and meet the dynamic Government recommendations. There will be a "phased in approach" to hockey that meets or exceeds the guidelines outlined by Hockey Canada's Return to Hockey and mirrors the NWT's "Emerging Wisely" strategy. As restrictions loosen or in approval with the CMHO a revised plan with multiple seating areas for participants may be considered to improve flow and allow for greater flexibility in the program offering( ex. Using the North and South end of the arena for players to prepare. This will allow for only a 15 minute gap between ice sessions and also gives more time to sanitize the first area used). As the phases change with the NWT, hockey will expand its offering( ie. team situational play, small 3 on 3 programming). Full hockey programming will only be allowed when we enter into phase 4 of the "Emerging Wisely" Strategy or when the Public Health Officer deems it appropriate to do so.



**Exhibit A.**



