

# Apollo Curling League

## Operations Handbook

2026–27 Season

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How the league actually runs — not how it should run in theory, but what someone needs to know to keep it going.

Written so that if every current organizer stepped away tomorrow, a new group could pick this up and run next season.

**This document is a proposal — a starting point for discussion, not a final decision.** No formal steps have been taken yet to establish the non-profit society. The structure and processes described here will be refined based on feedback from the membership.

This is a living document. Update it as processes change.

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## Purpose

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This handbook documents **how the Apollo Curling League actually runs**. It covers:

- The annual cycle from post-season through wind-up
- What happens in each phase and who's responsible
- The tools and platforms we use
- Decisions that recur every year and the tradeoffs involved
- Lessons learned from operating the league

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## League Identity

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The Apollo Curling League is Calgary's 2SLGBTQI+ curling league. It was founded in 1991 by Rob Hudson, at a time when 2SLGBTQI+ community members faced significant challenges finding safe and inclusive opportunities to participate in sports without fear of discrimination. League communications were mailed to members with no return address to ensure discretion — a reminder of the era in which the league was born.

Apollo Curling historically operated under the broader Apollo Friends in Sport (AFIS) organization, founded in 1981 as an umbrella group for 2SLGBTQI+ sporting leagues in Calgary. AFIS maintained a physical roster of 2SLGBTQI+ athletes in the city and marketed to this membership to help individual leagues recruit participants. As the internet, social media, and same-sex marriage (legalized in Canada in 2005) made that centralized role less necessary, AFIS narrowed its focus to organizing the annual Western Cup multi-sport tournament — North America's longest-running 2S2SLGBTQI+ multi-sport festival, now bringing over 1,300 athletes from across Canada and the USA. AFIS's role today is focused on the tournament-wide experience: host hotels, cross-sport social events, and overall festival coordination. Each participating sport organizes its own tournament independently, at arm's length from AFIS. The curling bonspiel, at 56 teams, is the largest 2SLGBTQI+ curling bonspiel in the world.

Apollo Curling no longer operates under the AFIS umbrella. The league has outgrown that structure, which is one of the key reasons for establishing our own governance model as a registered non-profit society.

The need for 2SLGBTQI+-specific leagues hasn't diminished with broader societal acceptance. A 2024 Stonewall UK study found that 27% of 2SLGBTQI+ people still don't feel welcome in community sport groups, and 22% have experienced discrimination at fitness clubs or sports groups based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. These numbers are higher still for BIPOC 2SLGBTQI+ individuals (34% reporting discrimination at live sporting events).

The Apollo Curling League itself is primarily a **social league with a competitive element** — not the other way around.

The 2025–26 survey confirmed this: **79% of respondents** say the primary objective is to provide a safe and social environment for 2SLGBTQI+ community members and allies. 21% say the focus

is the game of curling. Both groups are served by the league, but when tradeoffs arise, the social mission comes first.

Players consistently value:

- Social interaction and community
- A welcoming and inclusive environment
- Getting enough ice time (the #1 structural complaint in 2025–26)

The league is run entirely by volunteers. No one is paid. The goal is sustainability, not perfection.

## Platforms & Tools

Platform	What it's used for	Who manages it
League Buddy	Registration, scheduling, standings, fee collection, spare requests, player directory, availability tracking, photo uploads	Operations + Tech
apollocurling.com	Public website — rules, FAQ, schedule info, sponsor listings, news, clinic info, event details	Comms + Tech
League Buddy email	League-wide and targeted email communications to members	Communications
Instagram	Photo sharing, event promotion, community engagement	Communications
AWS	Western Cup scoring, bracket generation, tournament admin portal, data backup	Tech Support
AGLC portal	50/50 raffle licensing and reporting	Finance / 50/50
Zeffy	Online 50/50 ticket sales (Western Cup)	WC Director
Google Forms	Clinic registration, ad-hoc surveys	Various
League Buddy messaging	Automated notifications: score submissions, spare requests, forfeit alerts	Automatic

**Credentials and access:** All platform credentials should be documented in a secure, shared location accessible to at least two board members. No single person should be the only one with access to any critical system.

## Annual Operations Lifecycle

### Phase 1: Post-Season Review (March–April)

**Goal:** Capture what worked, what didn't, and what to change.

- Send the year-end player satisfaction survey (aim for 30%+ response rate — this year we hit 34% with 105 responses from ~310 players)
- Analyze results: quantitative metrics + free-form text themes

- Prepare findings for the board — this year’s analysis was delivered as a slide presentation covering key metrics, demographic breakdowns, and proposed structural changes
- Identify the top 2–3 issues to address for next season (2025–26: not enough ice time, playoff gaps too long, email volume)
- Host the season wind-up party (Cold Garden, April — RSVP-based, catered)
- Distribute prizes for playoff winners
- Close out the season’s finances

### Timing notes

- Send the survey during the final week of regular play or immediately after — response rates drop sharply once the season ends
- The wind-up party is also a good venue for informal feedback collection

**Responsible:** Member Experience (survey), President (board discussion), Finance (close books), Social & Events (wind-up party)

## Phase 2: Planning & Ice Booking (May–August)

**Goal:** Lock in ice, define the league structure, and set the budget.

The off-season (May–July) is relatively quiet. Most of the planning work happens in August when ice contracts come out from the rinks.

### The ice contract

- Receive and review ice contracts from North Hill Curling Club (and potentially Calgary Curling Club) — these typically arrive around August 1
- 2025–26 contract: 18 sheets (6 sheets × 3 draws), Saturdays 1:10 PM–7:30 PM, 21 dates offered across October–March
- Rate: in excess of \$130/sheet/week + 5% GST, typically increasing 3–5% per year
- The contract allows unused dates to be struck before signing — this season 2 of 21 dates were struck (the Saskatoon bonspiel and CPCC Nationals weekends in March)
- Payment terms: 50% due by October 31, remaining 50% by November 30. **No refunds after November 30.**
- Additional draws beyond the contract must be coordinated with the club
- NHCC: 6 sheets per draw, currently 3 draws per Saturday
- CCC: 8 sheets per draw. No contract is in place yet — CCC’s board is still considering whether they can accommodate us, as it would mean displacing their junior program. If they agree, we should aim to fully utilize all 8 sheets to justify the reputational risk CCC is taking on our behalf. Showing up with partially filled draws after they displaced juniors for us would be terrible optics.

- Garrison Curling Club (fallback): 6 sheets per draw. Located near Crowchild & 50 Ave SW, ~10 km south of NHCC. A recent possibility if CCC can't accommodate us — capacity-wise equivalent to a 4th NHCC draw but with a ~15 minute drive between venues. Nothing official yet; the 2026–27 scenario survey includes a willingness-to-travel question to gauge viability.
- This is the single most important decision of the off-season — it determines how many teams can play and how many byes they'll have

### Capacity and format decisions

- Determine league capacity based on ice available:
  - 18 sheets (3 NHCC draws): 48 teams with pools of 6 = 2 byes/round (current, unsatisfactory)
  - 24 sheets (4 NHCC or 3 NHCC + 1 CCC): 48 teams with 0 byes, 20 games/team
  - See the survey presentation slides 14–15 for detailed capacity modeling
- Decide on league format:
  - Single path (all teams same format) vs. dual path (social + competitive)
  - Number of rounds, pool sizes, playoff structure
  - Points system (the league uses win/tie/loss points via League Buddy, with different values per pool — not the Western Cup's per-rock/per-end formula)
- Set the season budget: ice costs, event budget, prizes, admin costs
- Determine team fees based on budget and expected team count

### Key tradeoffs

- More ice = more games per team, but higher cost and potential venue fragmentation
- Larger pools (6–8 teams) = more stability and longer rounds, but fewer pool movements
- Smaller pools (4 teams) = more variety and movement, but high churn and short-horizon schedules
- Overcommitting to ice creates financial risk if registration falls short
- Undercommitting limits growth and perpetuates the bye problem

### Society administration

- File annual society paperwork (if applicable)
- Procure and maintain Directors & Officers (D&O) liability insurance — protects board members from personal financial liability
- Confirm or seek new sponsors
  - Sponsorship has typically been structured in tiers: headline sponsors (which may include in-ice logo placement at NHCC, negotiated separately with the club) and associate sponsors at lower tiers

- In-ice logo artwork must be submitted by early August for printing — this is a hard deadline driven by the ice installation schedule
- Total sponsorship revenue has grown significantly over recent seasons and now represents a meaningful portion of the league’s non-fee income
- Sponsor leads can come from the year-end survey, member referrals, or outreach to businesses serving the 2SLGBTQI+ community

**Responsible:** President (ice negotiations, society admin), Operations (format design), Finance (budget, fees, sponsors, D&O insurance)

### Phase 3: Registration & Team Formation (Late August–September)

**Goal:** Fill the league to the target number of teams with complete, paid rosters.

- Configure League Buddy: set capacity, pricing, registration dates, roster limits
- Announce registration dates and process — communicate clearly and early
  - This season, all 48 spots filled in seconds. Expect the same or more demand.
  - If implementing phased registration (social path first, then competitive), communicate the process thoroughly
- Open registration — monitor the queue in real-time
- Process individual registrations for the spare list
- Help teamless individuals find teams (“Help me find a team” coordination)
- Manage the waitlist: communicate position, manage expectations, fill spots as they open
- Collect team fees (deadline typically 4–6 weeks into the season)
  - Enforce late penalties (4% of total team amount)
  - This year, automated League Buddy reminders continued until balance was paid — and one round fired accidentally before fees were finalized (required an apology email). Be careful with League Buddy’s automated payment reminder settings.
  - The hard deadline email with penalty warnings was needed in October
  - Be prepared to offer flexibility for extenuating circumstances — this season, a teacher strike meant some members had interrupted income, and the league offered payment deferrals
- Determine roster size policy:
  - 2025–26: up to 7 players per team (survey showed this contributes to “not enough ice” per player)
  - Proposed: 4–5 players with option to expand to 6 after both paths fill

### Lessons learned

- Registration demand is extreme. Queue-based access is essential for fairness.

- Returning teams expect priority — multiple survey respondents asked for guaranteed spots for teams with 4+ returning players. This is a policy decision for the board.
- The player checklist (pool self-placement, format preference, League Buddy profile, NHCC waiver) had only 28% completion on first ask. Build in follow-up time or simplify the checklist.
- Nametag orders depend on checklist completion — set a hard deadline and communicate it once, clearly.

**Responsible:** Member Experience (registration, spare list, team formation), Finance (fee processing), Communications (announcements)

## Phase 4: Schedule Creation & Pre-Season Events (September–October)

**Goal:** Publish the schedule and launch the season.

### Scheduling

- Assign teams to pools based on self-placement and any available historical data
- Build the round-robin schedule: who plays whom, which draw time, which week
- Allocate draw times fairly — teams should rotate through different slots across the season
  - Current draw times: 1:20 PM, 3:30 PM, 5:40 PM (shifted 10 minutes later this season)
  - If adding a 4th draw: 7:50 PM (50% of surveyed members opposed or saw it as a dealbreaker)
- Minimize consecutive byes — this was identified in the handbook draft as feeling worse when clustered
- Identify which available weekends to use and which to opt out of — the ice contract provides ~21 available weeks, but some must be skipped. See “Why do we skip weekends for out-of-town bonspiels?” in the Decision-Making Guidelines section for the full context.
- Publish the schedule on League Buddy and communicate via email

### Pre-season events

- Pre-season learn-to-curl clinics (beginner + intermediate, ~2 hours each, free, September)
- Season Opener social event (early October)
- NHCC orientation for new curlers if applicable

### Administrative

- Set up the alliances system (semi-random cross-pool groups for season-long camaraderie)
- Distribute nametags
- Configure 50/50 raffle team rotation schedule
- Brief teams on rules, spare system, League Buddy usage

**Responsible:** Operations (schedule), Skills Coordinator (clinics), Social & Events (opener), Member Experience (onboarding), 50/50 Coordinator (rotation)

## Phase 5: In-Season Operations (October–March)

**Goal:** Keep the league running smoothly week to week.

### Weekly tasks

Task	Who	Time
Review submitted scores for accuracy	Operations	15 min
Update standings (mostly automated via League Buddy)	Operations	15 min
Monitor and address spare requests	Member Exp.	30 min
Process any fee payments received	Finance	15 min
Send weekly/bi-weekly email if needed	Communications	30–60 min
Manage 50/50 ticket sales and proceeds	50/50 Coord.	30 min
Post photos/updates to Instagram	Communications	15 min
Respond to member inquiries	Various	As needed

### Periodic tasks: between rounds (every 5–7 weeks)

- Calculate final standings for the round
- Determine team movements between pools (up/down based on performance)
- Publish the next round's schedule
- Communicate changes to affected teams

### 50/50 raffle compliance (AGLC)

- A separate AGLC license is required for each raffle period
- Tickets are \$2 each — no bulk discounts are permitted under AGLC rules
- Different colored ticket rolls must be used for consecutive draws to prevent mixing
- All sold ticket stubs must be retained for 2 years for AGLC audit purposes
- Proceeds are split: half to the winning ticket holder, half to the End of the Rainbow Foundation. The league keeps none of the proceeds.
- Teams are assigned 50/50 selling duty on a rotating schedule — ensure the assigned team knows in advance and shows up. Defaulting on duty has been an issue in past seasons.
- Track results in a shared spreadsheet after each draw weekend
- Annual revenue from the 50/50 program has typically ranged from \$4,000–\$8,000 per season

### Social events (~monthly)

Execute the planned social event (Trivia, Bingo, brewery night, etc.). Track attendance and gather informal feedback.

Key lesson: with 3 draw times, events in the lounge during curling consistently excluded some teams. Schedule events to align with the middle draw or during bye weeks for maximum accessibility.

League Buddy has a scheduling feature where players can indicate social event preferences in their League Profile. The scheduling algorithm uses this data to avoid scheduling teams during events their members want to attend. **This only works if players actually fill it out.** This season, only 164 of 269 team players (61%) updated their preferences — meaning the algorithm couldn't properly protect the remaining 39% of players, who then complained about conflicts. Remind teams to update their preferences between rounds, and frame it clearly: *"if you don't tell us which events you want to attend, we can't schedule around them."*

### Ad-hoc

- Handle forfeits: team must field at least 2 players or the game is forfeited. Late arrivals: 15-minute grace period, then 1 point per 3 minutes to the non-offending team.
- Buzzer rule (per NHCC contract): game buzzers sound at 3:00 PM, 5:10 PM, and 7:20 PM. Teams may finish the end in progress but cannot start a new end after the buzzer.
- Process cancellations and rescheduled games
- Address rule violations (equipment issues, unsporting conduct)
- Offer optional practice ice when available (this season: offered March 14 and March 21 during long playoff gaps)

### Communication cadence

This season: 39 Apollo league emails over ~9 months, plus ~10 non-league messages (bonspiel promos, sponsor announcements, charity events, NHCC forwarded messages). A typical member received ~49 emails total — roughly one every 5–6 days.

At least 7 of the 39 league emails (~18%) were reminders that wouldn't have existed if members had acted on the first ask.

League Buddy also sends automated notifications (score submissions, spare requests, forfeit alerts) on top of manual emails — members may perceive these as part of the "too many emails" problem even though they're transactional.

Survey says some find this too frequent. The fix isn't necessarily fewer messages — it's better structure (TL;DR + subject prefixes) and consolidating across platforms where possible. Currently, members receive emails from two separate systems with no unified cadence.

Reserve [Action Required] for things that genuinely need a response. If everything is "action required," nothing is.

## Phase 6: Playoffs & Season Close (March–April)

**Goal:** End the season on a high note with fair competition and proper celebration.

### Playoffs

- Seed teams into playoff brackets based on cumulative standings

- Publish the playoff schedule — **avoid long gaps between games** (this season: some teams experienced waits of up to 3 weeks depending on their bracket path, which was widely criticized)
- If implementing the dual-path model: social path teams play an additional round-robin instead of playoffs; competitive path teams play single/double/triple knockout
- Handle tiebreakers for seeding (tiebreaker tool exists in Western Cup admin; could be adapted for league use)
- Communicate the playoff format clearly — this season, some players were confused by the bracket structure and timing

### Season wind-up

- Plan and execute the season wind-up party (RSVP, catered)
- Prepare and distribute prizes (cash envelopes for playoff winners)
- Send the year-end survey (see Phase 1)
- Thank sponsors publicly
- Archive the season's data (standings, schedule, financial records)

**Responsible:** Operations (playoffs), Social & Events (wind-up), Finance (prizes, close books), Member Experience (survey)

## Western Cup Operations

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The Western Cup is a separate but related operation — an annual 3-day 2SLGBTQI+ curling bonspiel held over Easter weekend in Calgary. It's part of a larger multi-sport event.

The Western Cup has its own:

- Registration system and timeline (typically opens in January, fills in seconds)
- Budget and fee structure (\$500/4-person team, \$535/5-person)
- Scoring system (AWS-based, with admin portal at wc/admin/)
- Communication stream (11 dedicated emails this season)
- Social events (kickoff mixer, Sapphic Soiree, Play Haus, prize ceremony)
- Fundraising (End of the Rainbow Foundation runs the 50/50 raffle; Apollo promotes ticket sales throughout the event)

### Key operational details:

- 2 venues: NHCC (6 sheets) and CCC (8 sheets)
- Lower/Upper division structure (introduced 2026) with half-point pool multipliers to prevent blowouts
- Tiebreaker system: "Clever or Lucky" (trivia vs. random draw)

- Scavenger hunt running across the weekend
- Quiz system for teams (scores can feed into tiebreakers)
- Team documents generated: QR codes, welcome packets, scorecards
- Transportation: sponsored bus between venues and hotels
- Spare list maintained separately for tournament substitutions

The Western Cup is documented separately in the Western Cup Handbook. This handbook covers league operations only.

## Decision-Making Guidelines

These are recurring decisions that come up every season. They're documented here so future boards don't have to rediscover the tradeoffs.

### How many teams should we accept?

#### Factors:

- Available ice (sheets × draws × weeks)
- Pool size preference (4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 teams per pool)
- Acceptable number of byes per round (0 is ideal; 1 is acceptable; 2 was the major complaint this season)
- Financial sustainability (more teams = more revenue, but need enough ice to serve them)
- Inclusivity (the league's mission is to welcome 2SLGBTQI+ curlers — capping the league excludes people)

**Historical context:** The league has fluctuated significantly over its history:

Era	Teams	Notes
1991–1997	—	Founded by Rob Hudson. NHCC burned down mid-1990s; league relocated temporarily to Westwinds Curling Rink.
1998–2002	24	Stable at 24 teams with 2 draw times at rebuilt NHCC
2003–2006	28–30	Expanded with ice at Inglewood Curling Club
2008–2013	16–22	Contraction — low point was 16 teams in 2012
2014–2019	24–28	Recovery and stabilization
2020	—	Cancelled (COVID)
2021–2022	28–32	Post-COVID rebound
2023–2025	40–48	Rapid growth with 3 draws at NHCC

The decline from 30 to 16 teams (2006–2012) correlates with both the 2008 financial crisis (oil crashing from \$147 to \$32/barrel, Alberta unemployment spiking to 6.6%) and the rise of social media and dating apps (Facebook opened to the public in 2006; Grindr launched in 2009). Notably, the league continued declining for 3 years *after* the recession ended — suggesting digital connectivity

made people feel physical community was optional. Gay nightclubs, once the only way to meet other 2SLGBTQI+ people, started closing across the country during the same period.

The recovery (2014–2019) happened despite a *worse* oil crash in 2014–2016 (9% Calgary unemployment, 30% downtown office vacancy). The league grew through it — ironically, partly thanks to the same social media that contributed to the decline: Facebook and Instagram became effective recruitment tools. But the deeper driver was that meeting people organically, in a setting where they're there for a shared purpose, is something apps can't replicate. Post-COVID, 2SLGBTQI+ sports leagues across North America reported waitlists for the first time, and the U.S. Surgeon General declared loneliness a public health epidemic (2023).

Growth only happened because new teams kept showing up — and the league kept finding more ice. The 2005–2006 expansion to Inglewood and the 2023 addition of a 3rd draw at NHCC were both responses to visible demand.

**This season:** 48 teams on 18 sheets (3 NHCC draws) = 2 byes per round. 66% of respondents said they didn't curl enough. The math is in the survey presentation, slides 14–15.

**Guiding principle:** Don't accept more teams than you can serve well. It's better to have 42 satisfied teams than 48 frustrated ones — unless you can secure more ice.

### How should pools be structured?

Pool size	Games/rnd	Weeks/rnd	Churn	Stability
4 teams	3	4	High — new opponents every month	Low
5 teams	4	5	Moderate	Moderate
6 teams	5	5–6	Moderate	Good — current default
7 teams	6	7	Low	High
8 teams	7	7	Very low	Very high

This season, pools of 6 were used. Survey feedback suggests this size works well — enough variety without excessive churn.

### Why do we skip weekends for out-of-town bonspiels?

This was one of the loudest complaints in the survey (12+ comments), but the reality is more constrained than it appears.

#### How scheduling actually works

- The ice contract gives us roughly 21 available weeks per season (varies year to year)
- Some weekends are unavailable because the club is closed (Christmas, New Year's) or has committed the ice to their own bonspiels/tournaments — this is beyond our control
- Once we know how many teams we have, we build a schedule to maximize the available ice, but we often can't use every available weekend. We have to opt out of some weeks.
- When choosing which weeks to skip, we prioritize supporting other 2SLGBTQI+ bonspiels across Canada — particularly Saskatoon's Rock the River Cup. Since we want out-of-town teams to

support our Western Cup, it's good practice to reciprocate.

- This season, the Saskatoon bonspiel and the CPCC Nationals fell on back-to-back weekends in March, both during our playoff window. We opted out of both, which meant some teams experienced waits of up to 3 weeks between playoff games.

### Why “just give individual byes” isn't always possible

- During round-robin play, individual byes work — the schedule can be adjusted to guarantee a team won't play on a specific weekend
- During playoffs, this doesn't work. Playoff brackets have dependencies — one game's result determines the next game's matchup. You can't give one team a bye without stalling the entire bracket. The only option is to skip the weekend for everyone.

### The nationals complication

The teams most likely to represent Calgary at the CPCC national championship are also the most competitive teams in the league — the ones most likely to be in the A-event playoff final. Scheduling playoffs on the same weekend as nationals forces those teams to choose between being eliminated from the league playoffs or representing the city at the national championship. That isn't a fair choice to put on them. In past years, the playoff bracket has been structured so that the path to the A final avoids the nationals weekend, but this isn't always possible depending on when nationals falls.

### Possible mitigations

- Replace playoffs with additional round-robin (72% survey preference) — eliminates the bracket dependency problem entirely
- Compress playoffs into consecutive weeks with no gaps, scheduling the opt-out weeks before playoffs begin
- Structure the A-event bracket path to avoid the nationals weekend where possible
- Accept that some gaps are unavoidable and communicate the playoff schedule clearly up front so teams can plan

### Playoffs vs. additional round-robin?

**Survey result:** 72% prefer replacing the final playoff round with an additional round-robin for guaranteed games.

**Arguments for playoffs:** Competitive excitement, clear winners, tradition.

**Arguments against:** Unpredictable scheduling (teams don't know when their next game is until brackets resolve), long gaps between games (up to 3 weeks this season for some bracket paths), some teams eliminated early get no more games.

**Dual-path approach:** Offer both. Social path = all round-robin, guaranteed games. Competitive path = round-robin + playoffs. This directly addresses the survey's strongest structural preferences.

## Why registration is a scramble

The board has consistently chosen **not** to offer priority registration to returning teams:

- Priority creates a closed system — new teams stop trying, demand becomes invisible
- The open scramble grew the league from 16 teams at its 2012 low point to 48 today. That growth only happened because new teams kept showing up.
- In all years of open registration, roughly 2 returning teams have ever been displaced. They came back the next year. The actual displacement rate is negligible.
- A side benefit of the scramble: the league fills in seconds — no weeks spent chasing registrations

**The real risk of priority registration** isn't that a few new teams get shut out — it's that the league stops growing because demand becomes invisible. People accept "we didn't get in this year" much better than "this league isn't for people like us."

Whatever the board decides, communicate the rationale. People accept tradeoffs better when they understand why.

## Common Issues & How to Handle Them

### "I didn't get enough ice time"

This is structural, not a one-off issue. It's caused by too many teams for the available ice. The fix is either more ice (additional venue/draws) or fewer teams. Band-aids (like reducing byes by one) don't solve it if the ratio is fundamentally off.

### "There are too many emails"

Review the season's email log. Are any of them reminders that wouldn't exist if people acted the first time? (This season: at least 7 of 39 were reminders.) The fix is better structure (TL;DR, subject prefixes, website as source of truth) — not necessarily fewer messages.

### "The fee increased" (when it didn't)

This season, fees *decreased* \$200 (\$1,500 to \$1,300) but multiple survey respondents believed they went up. What likely happened: one or two people incorrectly claimed fees increased. That false claim combined with a true complaint (fewer games) to create a potent narrative — "we're paying more for less" — which spread because it *felt* true even though half of it wasn't.

**The organizational failure wasn't the initial misinformation — it was that other organizers who heard these complaints circulating didn't step in to correct them.**

### Lessons:

1. **Proactively communicate** the fee comparison at registration. A simple table: "Last year: \$X. This year: \$Y. Here's what's included."

2. **Every organizer is responsible for correcting misinformation when they hear it** — don't wait for someone else to handle it. A quick "actually, fees went down \$200 this year" in a lounge conversation stops the spread before it starts.
3. **Don't underestimate compound complaints.** A true complaint (fewer games) plus a false one (higher fees) is far more damaging together than either alone. Correct the false part immediately so the real issue can be discussed on its merits.

### **"Social events always conflict with my draw time"**

With 3 draw times, any event in the lounge during curling hours excludes at least one draw's worth of teams. Strategies: rotate event timing, schedule during bye weeks, use off-site venues (no conflict), or hold events outside normal curling hours.

League Buddy's scheduling algorithm avoids this — but only if players update their social event preferences. This season, only 61% did. Frame it clearly: *"if you don't tell us which events you want to attend, we can't schedule around them."*

### **"Spares are too good / unfair advantage"**

Current rules: spare list players can play at any position; spares from other teams must play lead (or lead and second if two spares).

**Proposed change:** In bottom-tier pools, all spares play lead or lead and second regardless of source. This equalizes the experience gap for newer teams without restricting upper pools.

The survey showed tension on this: some want more flexibility ("allow front-end positions"), others want more restriction ("ringers change the game"). The bottom-pool-specific rule addresses the strongest complaints without restricting the upper pools where skill levels are more comparable.

### **"The playoff schedule had huge gaps"**

This season: up to 3 weeks between playoff games because two opt-out weekends (Saskatoon bonspiel + CPCC Nationals) fell during the playoff window. Individual byes don't work during playoffs because bracket dependencies mean one team's bye stalls the whole bracket. See "Why do we skip weekends for out-of-town bonspiels?" in Decision-Making Guidelines for the full picture. Mitigations: compress playoffs into consecutive weeks before the opt-out weekends, or replace playoffs with round-robin (71% preference).

### **Should we adopt the No-Tick rule?**

Curling Canada has adopted World Curling's No-Tick Shot rule into its Rules of Curling for General Play. The rule prevents a delivered stone from moving a centre-line Free Guard Zone stone to an off-centre or out-of-play position during the first five stones of an end. If violated, the non-offending team may either (i) remove the delivered stone and restore all displaced stones, or (ii) leave all stones where they rest.

**The board needs to decide whether to adopt this rule for league play.** Considerations:

- **For adoption:** Aligns with Curling Canada's rules for general play. Promotes more strategic play around guards and benefits less experienced teams.

- **Against adoption:** The tick is a difficult shot that most newer curlers can barely execute. Penalizing it may add confusion without changing gameplay. Enforcement requires understanding what constitutes a centre-line guard, which can be ambiguous.
- **Middle ground:** Adopt for upper pools only, or adopt league-wide with a grace period of education before enforcing.

See Curling Canada’s No-Tick Rule reference at [curling.ca/rules](http://curling.ca/rules) for the visual explanation.

## Financial Quick Reference

Item	2025–26 Amount	Notes
Ice rental	Largest expense (~75% of revenue)	In excess of \$130/sheet/week + GST, 18 sheets, typically increasing 3–5% per year.
Team fee	\$1,300	Down from \$1,500. 48 teams × \$1,300 = \$62,400 gross revenue.
Spare fee	\$7/game (max \$105/season) per rules	<b>Not enforced in 2025–26.</b> Board decision needed: enforce, change amount, or drop.
Late penalty	4% of total team amount	Applied to entire balance, not just overdue portion.
Western Cup 50/50 proceeds	\$500 (4-person) / \$535 (5-person) Half to winner, half to charity	Separate from league fees. Per AGLC rules — the league keeps none of the proceeds.

### Payment infrastructure:

- The league maintains two bank accounts (main operating account and a secondary account for e-transfers)
- Two signatories are required for all financial transactions
- Fee payments are primarily processed through League Buddy
- Credit/debit card payments are accepted via a Square account
- E-transfer capability is available for ad-hoc payments (spare fees, sponsor payments)
- As the league transitions to a non-profit society, banking relationships may need to be updated — some institutions require incorporation before opening business accounts

## Contacts & Key Relationships

Relationship	Contact point	Notes
North Hill Curling Club	President	Ice contracts, facility access, lounge usage. Apollo has had members on the NHCC board in the past and at present — a current Apollo member will serve as NHCC board president next year. Maintaining representation on their board is important for protecting our interests as a tenant league. Branding opportunities (in-ice logos, banners, trophy case) are negotiated annually and subject to NHCC board approval.
Calgary Curling Club	President	Potential second venue (8 sheets per draw) — no contract yet; CCC board is considering. Would displace their junior program.
Curling Alberta	External Relations Coordinator	Provincial affiliation, demographic data sharing
CPCC Committee	External Relations Coordinator	National championship representation. Calgary hosting 2029 Nationals — committee needed. See <a href="http://pridecurl.ca">pridecurl.ca</a>
End of the Rainbow Foundation Sponsors (8 current)	Finance Director Finance Director	50/50 charity partner Annual sponsorship renewals and benefits delivery
League Buddy	Technology Support	Platform support and configuration
AGLC	50/50 Coordinator	Raffle licensing and compliance

## Calendar at a Glance

Month	Key Activities
April	Season wind-up party, year-end survey, close finances, Western Cup
May–July	Off-season. Review survey results, sponsor outreach. Relatively quiet.
August	Ice contracts arrive from the rinks. Set fees, finalize budget. Configure registration, announce dates. Registration opens late August / early September (fills fast).
September	Team formation, learn-to-curl clinics, player checklists, roster completion
October	Season starts, schedule published, Season Opener event, fee deadline
November	Round 1 in progress, social events, bonspiel promotions begin
December	Round 1 ends, pool movements, Christmas party, Western Cup registration setup
January	Round 2 begins, Western Cup registration opens (fills fast), strategy workshop
February	Round 2 continues, playoff seeding prep, social events
March	Playoffs (or Round 3), survey sent, season winds down

## Appendix: What Changed for 2026–27

Based on the 2025–26 season survey (105 responses, ~34% response rate):

Change	Why	Survey support
Potential dual-path model (social + competitive)	Different players want different things	79% social; 21% competitive
Potential ice expansion (CCC, Garrison, or 4th draw)	Not enough ice for 48 teams	66% didn't curl enough
Replace final playoff with round-robin (under consideration)	Guaranteed games, predictable schedule	72% prefer this
Structured email format (TL;DR + prefixes)	Email fatigue + info not landing	Multiple comments; fee misperception
Smaller rosters (4–5 instead of 7)	More ice time per player	Addresses 2-bye-per-round problem
Named volunteer roles with clear scope	Reduce burnout, enable succession	41 members willing to volunteer
Non-profit society incorporation	Formal governance, liability protection	Board decision
Avoid opt-out weeks during playoffs (under consideration)	Playoff gaps were #2 scheduling complaint	12+ survey comments