

[Back to Article](#)

Nathan Phillips skating rink reno goes \$750,000 over budget

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The cost of replacing the skating rink at Nathan Phillips Square has risen by \$750,000 to \$2.7 million due to “unforeseen site conditions,” a council committee was told Thursday.

Councillor Doug Ford blamed the cost escalation on mismanagement while other members of the government management committee were more forgiving.

Officials discovered they needed to install a missing support wall around the concrete slab that they thought was already there because it appeared on the drawings.

“The wall was never built,” said Richard Coveduck, of the city’s facilities management division. “It should have been built in 1990 because it shows on the record drawings and we expected to find it.”

It wasn’t until work began that it was discovered the wall was missing, which has reduced the 30-year life span of the rink.

“It only lasted from 1990 until now which is only 22 years and that’s not right,” Coveduck said. “I can’t account for the record drawing being different to the actual construction.”

The problem should have been caught at the time, said Councillor Paul Ainslie, the committee’s chair.

“I would expect if there was a wall being built, that a wall would be built,” Ainslie said. “And if it wasn’t there, somebody doing the final inspection would realize the wall’s not there.”

Ford blamed “bad management. In the private sector, if you run 40 per cent over, all heck breaks loose.”

Part of the increase was due to the fact 50-year-old support cables for the concrete arches over the rink had failed, and needed to be replaced. This was found when the old concrete slab was removed.

Councillor Pam McConnell said officials shouldn’t be blamed for problems that didn’t become apparent until after the old rink was torn up.

“These people are not magicians, they’re not seers, they can’t see through concrete,” McConnell said. “If it says there’s a wall and you don’t know there isn’t one until you take out the pad, you don’t have much choice. You have to replace the wall.

“To suggest that people mismanaged this is incorrect.”