

# The Case for Becoming a Member of the Garrison Curling Club: Why Your Rental League Should Consider Coming on Board

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Many public curling clubs across Canada program their ice with a combination of “house” and “rental” leagues.

House leagues comprise club members, participating in the usual assortment of programs: men, women, mixed, open, seniors, stick and youth. These are organized and run by the club (either with professional management or volunteers). Participants (usually) pay both a club membership and a league fee.

Rental leagues are independent groups which enter into agreements to pay for a certain number of sheets during the course of a season. The genesis of their existence is mostly based on an affiliation to a particular service organization, employer or social group; but the passage of time makes those beginnings less visible as the years progress. Their administration is undertaken by one or more volunteers: league fees are aggregated from the individual curlers, the organizer then delivers one large payment to the curling club and a draw is created by the organizer (or other volunteers).

There are some variations to the model, of course. Some curling facilities are entirely private, and do not have any associate leagues; while others have *only* rental leagues.

Both house and rental leagues often comprise long-term curlers, a number of whom are simultaneously members of the other group. They have curled at the same time on the same day for years.

So why would a curler opt for one over the other?

At the Garrison Curling Club (the “GCC”) in southwest Calgary, we’ve got approximately 1,100 members for our six-sheet facility. A number of these play in more than one league. This is supplemented by rental leagues which, in aggregate, have about two hundred curlers.

For most recreational curlers - whether still in the workforce or retired - the main considerations in deciding where and when to curl are the following (in no particular order):

- Scheduling: what day and time works for my schedule?
- The “buddy” factor: where are my friends playing?
- Location: how long does it take me to get to the curling rink?
- Cost: what is my *all-in* cost to curl?

For many curlers, the deliberations stop there. The answers to those questions, in aggregate, generate a conclusion that will lead a curler towards joining either a club and participating in a house league; or playing in a rental league.

If you go a bit deeper, however, there is another level of inquiry that *should* be considered; one that we believe tips the balance towards becoming a member of a club. The points set out below make the case from the curler’s perspective (or the rental league organizer) as to the advantages of becoming a GCC member and playing in a “house” league.

#### **On-ice**

- **Free practice ice.** GCC members have unlimited access to free practice ice which can be booked 7 days in advance. Non-members can only book 3 days in advance and pay fees for a 45-minute session.
- **Opportunity to participate in increased levels of competition.**
  - Our league structure allows teams to move within a series of flights. Depending on their records and the number of registered teams, we have a promotion/relegation after each round, ensuring that you’re playing more competitive games as your record improves.
  - Ability to participate in the GCC Club Championships. League winners face off against each other in the Club Championships, ensuring that the top teams meet during the final weekend of the season.
  - Ability to represent the GCC at the Alberta Curling Club Championships with the potential to carry on and represent the province at the national level.
- **Rejuvenation of membership.** Given the scope of our operations relative to rental leagues, the GCC has the ability to continually access new curlers to join leagues across our entire schedule. In addition to “lateral” moves from curlers and teams playing at other clubs, the GCC’s novice and development programs are constant feeders into our regular leagues. Rental leagues, on the other hand, may struggle finding new curlers as veterans leave. This proved to be particularly relevant during COVID, as a combination of factors resulted in many associate leagues struggling to fill spots relative to pre-COVID years.

- **Access to and participation in a robust spare list.** All GCC members are eligible to spare during league and playoff games; accordingly, our teams have the ability to call on a large number of potential spares should they find themselves down a curler or two. Conversely, this gives our members the ability to curl more frequently as spares, at no additional cost.

## Off-Ice

- **The existence of institutional continuity and professional management.** Because the organization of an associate league rests entirely on the engagement of one or two key individuals, the leagues are vulnerable to disruption should an organizer leave or become overburdened with administrative obligations (as many organizers experienced during COVID). The GCC, through its professional management, provides institutional continuity offering comprehensive financial, programming, communication, instruction and governance expertise.
- **Administration of the Curling Alberta Individual Curler Fee.** The imposition of this fee means that the GCC now has a commercial relationship with every associate league curler in order to aggregate data and collect/remit the individual curler fee. For many associate league curlers - and certainly associate league organizers - simply having a direct relationship with the GCC will be more efficient.
- **Membership engagement opportunities.** Although associate leagues have their own internal social and fundraising structures, these can be limited. The GCC offers its members multiple opportunities to remain engaged through volunteering; we even offer “volunteer credits” for hours donated to the club, which members can cash-in towards the following season’s league fees. We also program a number of member social events.
- **Access to promotions and discounts.** Through our sponsor/advertiser relationships, the GCC can provide our members with access to services and preferential pricing not available to non-members.

If you are an individual curler, we invite you to think about the benefits of becoming a GCC member.

If you are a rental league organizer, we invite you to shed the burden of running the league (!) and consider having your membership opt into our structure.