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Headline: World's largest natural ice rink reopens in Canada

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The frozen 7.8-km (4.9-mile) Rideau Canal Skateway, the world's largest natural ice skating rink, lies empty on the eve of its re-opening for skating for the first time in two years, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada January 20, 2024. REUTERS

The frozen 7.8-km (4.9-mile) Rideau Canal Skateway, the world's largest natural ice skating rink, lies empty on the eve of its re-opening for skating for the first time in two years, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada January 20, 2024. REUTERS

OTTAWA — Canada's renowned Rideau Canal Skateway, the world's largest natural ice skating rink, will open for skating on Sunday morning for the first time in two years, the National Capital Commission (NCC) said.

The 7.8-km (4.9-mile) Rideau Canal Skateway, which first opened over 50 years ago, is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Canada's capital city Ottawa and is also a top attraction for skating enthusiasts seeking outdoor thrills during Canada's usually biting cold winters.

The canal did not open to skating last season in early 2023 for the first time due to a lack of ice, NCC, which maintains and operates the skateway, said at the time, blaming the closure on a mild winter caused by climate change.

"Our team learned a lot from the challenges we faced last year and were able to put measures in place, helped by more seasonal temperatures, to make it happen this year," NCC CEO Tobi Nussbaum said.

"A 1.9 kilometer section between the Pretoria Bridge and the Bank Street access points will be open to skaters," the NCC said.

The NCC has previously said it can only open when the ice is at least 12 inches (30 cm) thick, for which there must be 10 to 14 consecutive days of temperatures between minus 20 Celsius and minus 10 Celsius (minus 4 and 14 degrees Fahrenheit).

The NCC and the Standards Council of Canada have commissioned a climate change risk assessment to understand the impact of climate change on the Skateway.

Under the scenario of moderate emissions, "the NCC should prepare for seasons with less than 40 days of skating approximately 50% of the time," it says.

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