



## Why propane continues to be the best choice to power up the Zamboni

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The Canadian Propane Association read with interest an online blog, [Electrify This...Zambonis](#), written by the Canadian Electricity Association's correspondent, 'Sparky Watts' and published on the CEA's website.

Yes, our ice rinks are truly a source of pride for Canadians coast to coast. Synchronous with ice rinks – whether you're on the ice or a spectator in the stands – is watching the Zambonis whirl around on the ice smoothing out the surface for the next round.

In the blog, Watts states that there is a need to “attack this Zamboni problem”, inferring that there are “fumes” in ice rinks from Zambonis running on propane. But we are having a difficult time understanding what “fumes” Watts is referring to.

Propane has been used for resurfacing equipment for over 72 years. The reason propane has a long history in ice rinks is because it's clean burning and there is NO smell of propane after combustion, contrary to what is described in the blog. You simply do not smell the machine while it's running.

Like propane used indoors for forklifts, propane provides clean combustion. And similar to the fact when you grill with propane, you don't smell like propane and your steak doesn't taste any different.

Propane is one of the cleanest burning fuels for internal combustion engines.

There are three types of ice resurfacing machines available – propane, natural gas and electric. All are clean and safe indoors. Propane continues to be the dominant fuel selected by municipalities. It's safe, clean-burning, reliable and easy to use.

It is interesting that the blog mentions Alberta's move to 'keeping arena air clean' with its electric rebate program. As per Canada's Clean Fuel Standard, that province's electrical output has 2.9 times more harmful carbon intensity than propane. The reason why Alberta's carbon intensity is higher is because some of the province's electricity is still produced from coal. So, is switching to electric really a 'cleaner' move for this province?

Full lifecycle emissions must always be considered in switching from one energy source to another. The “other side” is not always *greener*, and sometimes in fact, switching to another source may be more harmful.

The blog also does not mention the enormous price tag that comes with purchasing an electric ice resurfacer. Electric models on average cost about 50 per cent more than ones that run on propane, not to mention the additional cost of infrastructure and installing charging stations.

As per a story that ran in the *Ottawa Citizen*, after conducting its own study, the City of Ottawa chose propane over electric. “The issues with these existing electric units have included limited operating time between battery charging, facility up-costs regarding charging stations, specialized training of operators, and in particular power/performance shortfalls which limits where electric ice resurfacers can operate effectively,” says a report to the city’s transportation committee. ([Dawson: Ottawa's not going electric – at least not in hockey arenas | Ottawa Citizen](#))

Canada requires a portfolio of low-emission energy options as we transition to a low carbon economy. All have a role to play and should be chosen because they make sense and do in fact, after all factors considered, produce a greener outcome.

We would like to invite Watts and the Canadian Electricity Association to watch this informative video, [Smooth Energy on Ice](#). Note that Aaron Mcleod, manager of fleet services with the city of Oshawa, who looks after the city’s fleets, states that propane was chosen for its “environmental friendliness and its ability to keep the combustible odours to an absolute minimum...you don’t smell the machine.”

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