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City plans \$2.2 million air-conditioning upgrade at Progressive Auto Sales Arena

Sarnia is eyeing an HVAC system upgrade at Progressive Auto Sales Arena.

Tyler Kula

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Sarnia facility and park services manager Tom Burnard at Progressive Auto Sales Arena Jan. 13, 2026. (Tyler Kula/ The Observer)

After sellout crowds during a Samia Sting playoff run three years ago required temporary additional air conditioning, the city plans an upgrade at Progressive Auto Sales Arena.

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That playoff run, that ended with a third-round Sting exit, is “kind of where this project originated from, when we realized that the units that were failing weren’t providing . . . adequate cooling,” said Tom Burnard, Sarnia’s facility and park services manager.

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Temporary air conditioning units have been used since and the city is planning a permanent replacement, he said.

Council will be asked Monday for \$2.2 million to contract Innovative Construction Services to install new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning units for the twin-pad arena's main ice surface.

Existing rooftop units have reached the end of their lives, Burnard said.

The replacement, expected to improve cooling, heating and dehumidification, includes installing condensing units, replacing vestibule fans, relocating humidity sensors, modifying ductwork and updating a building automation system, a city report says.

The HVAC system for the arena's secondary ice pad still works well, Burnard said.

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Other recent work at PASA includes bathroom updates last year, new main rink boards and glass in 2024, a four-year roof replacement project that wrapped up in 2025 and dressng room improvements. Burnard said.



Progressive Auto Sales Arena. (Tyler Kula/ The Observer)

"Next season, we're hoping to replace boards and glass on rink No. 2," and improve concourse lighting, upgrade the concrete pad outside the arena's main entrance and improve exterior lighting, he said.

"We're always investing in this facility as it is kind of our crown jewel . . . and we have significant user groups, especially with the partnership with the Sting."

Lighting, boiler and condenser failures at the arena have been cited as extra expenses in recent city deficit-tracking reports.

Hopes are work like the HVAC system upgrade will let the city get ahead of breakdowns and mitigate [emergency repairs](#), Burnard said.

Other work on the docket includes replacing temporary flooring throughout the lower lobby and in change rooms, installed after [rainstorm-related flooding](#) last summer, he said.

“When we close the facility in late spring this year, that will be one of the projects to be completed.”

Sarnia's [2026 budget](#) notes a new laundry facility is planned, to address health and safety concerns in back-of-house operations, along with direct ice access from the Sting dressing room area.

There was \$1 million allocated to the arena in the budget, building on investments from previous years, [the document](#) says.

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