

Seniors hope to get bingo back on track after shut-down

By Brock Weir

Members of the Aurora Seniors' Centre are hoping to have their regular bingo games back up and running soon after receiving a notice from the Town.

Late last month, the Town of Aurora received a complaint from at least two members of the Aurora Seniors' Centre complaining about unlicensed gaming going on within its walls.

They received a notice from Al Downey, Aurora's Manager of Parks and Recreation, shortly thereafter advising Carol Hedenberg, President of the Aurora Seniors' Association that these games had to be shut down immediately.

'It has been brought to the Town's attention that the Aurora Seniors' Association and/or its members have allegedly engaged in gaming activities at the Aurora Seniors' Centre, which may be contrary to the Canadian Criminal Code,' wrote Mr. Downey in a letter headed with 'Re: Illegal Activities at the Aurora Seniors' Centre.'

The letter outlines the relevant sections of the Criminal Code as well as Provincial standards which clearly state that such activities are allowed at seniors' residences. Yet, it is silent on the issue of Seniors' Centres.

'The gaming activities reported to the Town include wagering money for bingo, poker, bid euchre, and bridge without the required license pursuant to the requirements of the Alcohol & Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO),' the letter continues. 'This letter serves as notice that, effective immediately, the ASA (Aurora Seniors' Association) and its members must cease and desist from any such activity and/or violation of the AGCO requirements and the code. Conducting illegal activities in the Aurora Seniors' Centre is a contravention of the terms and conditions of the ASA Lease Agreement with the Town.'

The notice was met with an angry response by some members who had been regular participants in the bingo games and objected to the shut-down citing passages in legislation which permit such activities to take place in seniors' residences.

Nevertheless, Mr. Downey advised the ASA that they can submit an application for a lottery license to the Town to get these games back up and running again.

They have been doing just that, receiving an assist from the Town.

Ms. Hedenberg told The Auroran on Friday that the final applications would be submitted to the Town this week to restore the games but did not venture a guess on when the issue might be resolved.

'We're working directly with the Town to get licenses where we can and we'll go from there,' she said. 'There were several complaints and that is the only reason the Town got involved. I talked to the Government and it is not allowed at a Seniors' Centre. A home is a different story. Where there are beds you can get away with a lot of things. You don't need licenses for movies and you don't need licences for [other activities] because it is a home. It is your private home, even if it is a residence for a lot of people. 'It's up to the Town now.'