

INSIDE AURORA: Consenseless

By Scott Johnston

To paraphrase that famous quote, you can please some Aurorans all of the time, or all Aurorans some of the time, but you can't please all Aurorans all of the time.

And nowhere has this been better demonstrated than with the proposed renovations to the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC) to incorporate a Youth Centre.

Of course, the Leisure Complex itself has always had its share of challenges. From a leaky pool, to accessibility problems, to code issues, there always seems to be something about the place that has inspired concern. In fact, until fairly recently, a proposal was gaining steam to just knock it down and start fresh.

Then along came the Youth Centre proposal.

Certainly, kid-related programs like the late lamented 'Hot Spot' have shown that there is both a need and an appetite for such a location, specifically, for Aurora's youth.

What's really surprising about this is the length of time that has gone into making it a reality.

Normally when an idea is proposed, various options are explored, pros and cons are reviewed, tons of consultation takes place, input is received, and by the time you get to the final proposed and approved plans, everyone's on board.

In the case of the Youth Centre, these discussions have been underway in some form or another for 13 years.

To put that into perspective, 13 years ago in Aurora there was no development on Bayview or anywhere east of it, including the Magna headquarters, we still had seven digit dialing, the library, Seniors' Centre and The Auroran were still years away from reality and, well, you get the idea.

So, with that much time to do a fulsome job, you'd think that the current approved plan to incorporate the Youth Centre function into the Leisure Complex would have support from all groups, and be issue-free.

But of course, this is Aurora.

Despite a climbing \$7.5M price tag, many proponents for our Town's youth (and we assume they are actually sharing opinions of the Town's youth, and not their own ideas, but that's a question for another day) say that this is just another fix of the AFLC, adding only minimal youth-related features and spaces, none of which are solely dedicated to youth.

Others are complaining the Town didn't go with the original idea of a separate stand-alone building for the Youth Centre.

As for the folks that use the current Complex, specifically the members of the Club Aurora Fitness Centre, they are upset because they feel they weren't consulted, will end up with lesser facilities than they have now, and will be kicked out for a year while the renovations take place.

Not only is there disagreement about the space itself, but after well over a decade there still no consensus on the actual name of the youth-related space. Is it a Youth Centre, a Community Space for Youth, or something else?

I guess we'll find out when the new sign goes up.

Of course, no such project in town has ever seemed to go smoothly, no matter how long it has taken to implement.

Recent examples such as the Church Street School/Cultural Centre or Petch House, have all had their detractors.

In the case of the Leisure Complex/Youth Centre, we can only hope that while a number of Aurorans are displeased now for whatever reason, they will be happier in a year or so when the facility re-opens.

Or at the very least, by that time, they'll all be distracted by the planning for Library Square, or Heritage Park, or some other town project then in the spotlight over which we can disagree.

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