

Aurora's adult hockey players call for fair ice times

By Brock Weir

As Aurora gears up to officially launch its efforts to become Canada's most active community, the Town's adult hockey players are looking for a chance to keep up their end of the bargain by securing better ice times for their teams.

Paul Devlin, a representative of Adult Hockey and the Men's Monday Hockey League in Aurora, appealed to Council last week for the restoration of their former ice times at the Aurora Community Centre.

Over the years, Mr. Devlin said their regular ice times had been shifted around to accommodate other users and that has had an adverse impact on those adult hockey players looking to, as the television mantra goes, "keep fit and have fun."

"Since 1984, I have been playing hockey at the Aurora Community Centre on Wednesday afternoon from September until April," said Mr. Devlin.

"Originally, our start time was 4.30 p.m. but a number of years ago we had to move to 4 p.m. because the Aurora Tigers Junior A team needed more ice time. Last year, we were informed our start time would be moved to 3.45 p.m. and we would be using different rinks. This eliminated some of our longest tenured players."

The move surprised him, he said, as they believed there would be more ice time available to them following the completion of the La Brier Family Arena at St. Andrew's College, which shouldered the ice times of the York Simcoe Express, which formerly practiced at the Aurora Community Centre.

"My issue is that as a long-standing user group, we seem to be getting squeezed out," said Mr. Devlin. "Most of our players are over 55 and we just can't play late at night anymore because we can't stay up that late, nor can we leave work, or in many instances now, we have childcare responsibilities now for our grandchildren. Starting any earlier puts everything into chaos."

"Last month I listened to Ron Weese of Sport Aurora address Council about Activate Aurora and the importance of continuing to emphasize healthy and active living for all citizens. Older citizens are much more active today than they were a generation ago. Too often we only focus on young people, but we would be remiss to ignore the desire of older adults to remain fit and active. In keeping with the Town of Aurora's emphasis on healthy, active living for all citizens, I think a review of the ice allocation policy, with a specific intent on making sure adult hockey not be displaced from their long-standing ice times be initiated."

Their request, in a nut shell, was to maintain a 4 p.m. start time on the ice on Wednesday afternoons in ACC2 and that the Men's Monday Night Hockey be restored to ice times between 9.15 and 10.15 p.m. in the same arena.

"I think this is a fair and justified request," he concluded. "The issue is time sensitive; we are losing players."

It was a request that was taken up by Council, who voted to have a look at the Town's ice allocation policy.

"I think it would be beneficial to direct [Parks and Recreation Director Al Downey] to have a look at the ice allocation policy," said Mayor Geoff Dawe. "I haven't spoken to Mr. Devlin, but I have spoken to other people in the senior leagues and I certainly appreciate it is an issue."

For Mr. Downey, however, it is easier said than done.

"By giving equal priority to adult leagues as you do with youth leagues, which is what they are asking for, that has an impact on minor hockey and also has an impact on York Region Girls Hockey. We need to communicate that to them as well. It is a little more of a communications issue."

?I can't give you a time when I can come back to you because I need to take a look at what the impact is going to be, communicate that to the group, find out if they have any issues and if they do, we would have to figure out what we're going to do [and how] we're going to present these issues to Council. It is not a quick fix.?

From the perspective of Councillor John Abel, however, it was a quick fix as there were two very specific issues on the table.

?They are talking specifically about a Wednesday afternoon time, just one time, not a restructuring of policy equal to the girls and the boys,? he said. ?There are no league plays at 4 p.m., there is some practice. This is something they have been doing for years. We are not asking to change all the policies and equate, just see if we can accommodate them.?