

AYSC seeks Town's help for new facility

By Brock Weir

The Aurora Youth Soccer Club has recently made great strides in helping their players take the next steps to the big leagues, but despite top-notch soccer fields in the area, the one thing that is lacking has been looming over the club for quite some time.

According to Jimmy Brennan, Executive Director of the Aurora Youth Soccer Club (AYSC), the elephant on the field is a lack of dressing rooms and the AYSC is seeking the Town's help in addressing that deficit, ideally at Sheppard's Bush.

"The Aurora Youth Soccer Club is an organization that continues to rapidly grow and strives to be one of the top clubs in Ontario," said Mr. Brennan, who made his pitch for a \$750,000 contribution from the municipality to construct a new change room and shower facility in the Town that could be used by all sports and teams that happen to be using the fields. "The facilities are absolutely brilliant in this Town. When hockey players come off the ice, the first thing they do is go into the dressing rooms, shower, and get changed. [But] the problem we're having is we don't have one dressing room in this Town.

"We are bringing in teams from all over the Province, players are coming from Windsor and Ottawa, from up north, the GTA, and all over, and they have to get changed in their cars, play a game for 90 minutes in the middle of summer, and then they have to get back in their cars and drive home for another five hours, or to wherever they came from. We are asking for your help in helping us provide a dressing room and a great environment we can be proud of, just like every organization in Town is."

Such a facility, he said, would be open to rugby and lacrosse teams using the Sheppard's Bush fields, or any other sports that happened to be on the turf, so it would be an investment in the community as a whole.

This past December, the AYSC was named one of two organizations involved in an expansion into the semi-professional League 1 Ontario ahead of the upcoming season through Aurora United FC, which will field a squad for men and women to allow players to stay with the club in Aurora before determining their next steps.

But there are certain criteria that need to be met with this next step.

"For the last number of years, we have kind of been pushing it off and trying to get away from it, but it is something that is haunting us now," Mr. Brennan told Councillors. "They are really pushing for us to make this happen and get our facilities right so we can meet these standards."

Founded in 1964, the AYC now boasts over 5,000 youth and adult members from across the community and beyond, providing not only youth programs and leagues for men and women, but also opportunities for special needs players. Mr. Brennan said the club would try to contribute to the estimate \$750,000, but by getting some "expertise" on board, this number could probably get "a lot lower."

Councillors received Mr. Brennan's comments at the Committee level last week and referred them back to staff to come back with a report.

With files from Jake Courtepatte