

Bleachers would make St. Max a sport destination: Catholic School Board

By Brock Weir

An artificial turf field at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School has been hailed as a successful partnership between the municipality and the York Catholic District School Board but, according to the Board, there is room for this partnership to flourish even more.

The field is a joint venture between the municipality and the Board which allows the St. Max community to use the field for a variety of sports, including football and rugby, during school hours while being able to be enjoyed by the community as a whole the rest of the time.

It has proven popular, but there is an opportunity on the horizon to kick this popularity into high gear, according to Elizabeth Crowe, Chair of the Board and Catholic education trustee for Aurora and King.

Planned is a new bleacher structure for the field which will accommodate nearly 1,100 people. While the expenditure was already approved by the Board, they are looking for an infusion of up to \$40,000 from the Town to offset their cost of \$138,000.

According to Ms. Crowe, the Board already made their pitch to municipal staff to make these bleachers a joint venture, but she said she was told Town Hall did not see an "immediate need" for the bleachers.

"I beg to differ," said Ms. Crowe. "During the recent election I heard there is a goal to bring a hotel and convention centre to this Town and to market the Town as a sports tourism destination. The ability to attract tournaments and championships will rest with the quality of the facilities and bleachers at St. Max [and that] will only enhance the venue and further complement existing facilities at Sheppard's Bush. With ample parking and a central location, St. Max is very well situated to attract both provincial and national tournaments for soccer, football, rugby, lacrosse and even track."

The need for bleachers, at least from the YCDSB's perspective, is not a new one and has been the subject of many fundraising efforts at the school spearheaded by the Parent Council and students alike. The need was underscored recently, according to Ms. Crowe, when their plans to hold their elementary track and field competitions at York University this spring was scuttled as the university prepares to host components of the Pan Am Games.

When all is said and done, \$138,000 was approved by the YCDSB to go ahead with the project, which will accommodate 1,080 people, as well as provide for additional fencing and pathways to make a secondary entrance to the field. A "significant investment", the Parent Council is committed to continue their fundraising efforts in the meantime, said Ms. Crowe, but a grant of \$40,000 would be a sign of the ongoing partnership between the Board and Town to bring "excellent athletic facilities to the Town."