

Canada 150 celebrations come calling with money for arena, armoury improvements

By Brock Weir

When Canada celebrated its centennial in 1967, the nation-wide party included a boatload of Federal funding for new hockey arenas dotting countless towns, including the Aurora Community Centre.

50 years on, as the country counts down to Canada 150 in 2017, the Federal government is coming calling again, this time with more infrastructure dollars to give these venerable recreation spaces ? and some of the newer kids on the block ? a bit of a face lift.

Aurora has received \$422,100 through the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program.

The receipt of infrastructure funds was announced last week and was hailed by Mayor Geoff Dawe.

?I am very pleased the Government of Canada has acknowledged Aurora's significant capital needs by offering grants through the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program,? said Mayor Dawe in a statement. ?These types of investments are sorely needed to ease the growing financial burden on municipalities, which support roughly 70 per cent of infrastructure costs with a mere eight per cent of tax revenues.?

\$140,300 of the pot will go towards improvements to the Aurora Community Centre, particularly replacing the ice plant condenser and boilers, adding LED lighting and some new exterior paint. The same amount will go to the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC) to replace the existing pool liner, improve lighting in both the pool area and the two arenas, replace boilers and improve exterior lighting.

A further \$91,500 will go towards the ?rehabilitation? of the historic Aurora Armoury near Town Park, including asbestos and soil remediation, and \$50,000 to renovate public washrooms at Fleury Park.

When the planned improvements were announced at Council last week, they were hailed by members, but also raised some eyebrows, including ? on the part of Councillor Wendy Gaertner ? the fact the pool liner at the SARC needs replacement just nine years after the facility opened, and from Councillors John Abel and Tom Mrakas over the money earmarked for the Armoury.

?I am looking at the rehabilitation of the armoury and the fact they are only giving us \$91,000 when it is going to take \$275,000 to repair the asbestos and all of that,? said Councillor Mrakas. Considering the fact [the Federal Government] gave it to us in this condition, I would have hoped they would have come up with a little bit more than that.?

Councillor Abel expressed a similar view, adding: ?We should have got that [financial commitment] when we negotiated with the Queen's York Rangers. We could have got it for nothing at that time, I am sure, because [the building] was surplus. However, it is good we're getting some of the money.?

Going hand in hand with the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program is a separate Federal fund to help communities across the country celebrate Canada's Sesquicentennial. A further report on funding available for an Aurora party, as well as some suggestions on how Aurora can mark the occasion will be before Council as early as this month, according to Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation.