

Council should change course on Complex renos

(Re: Residents angered by Complex closure. October 16)

As you are probably aware, the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC) is scheduled to close down at the end of this month or shortly thereafter, and will remain closed for at least one year.

This is being done in order to carry out extensive renovations and additions to the existing complex, the most significant of which will be the addition of extra space and facilities for the young people of Aurora, a concept referred to as ?Community Space for Youth.?

According to the existing plan, these additional spaces and facilities for youth will not be concentrated in one section of the AFLC, but rather distributed throughout the complex.

The addition of ?Community Space for Youth? is fundamentally an excellent idea, and I support it wholeheartedly. What I object to is the manner in which the above changes will be implemented and the lack of consultation between Town Council and the users of the facility during the formulation of the design and implementation plans.

Although a stakeholders committee was set up during the planning process, it included only municipal employees, representatives from CS&P Architects, and eight teenagers from various High Schools in Aurora. The only attempt to consult with all the other people who actually use the facility, i.e. the membership of the AFLC, took place at an open meeting in mid September attended by sixty to seventy members.

During that meeting town officials gave a description of the construction plans and announced that a final decision had already been made to close the AFLC for a full year at the end of this month. The reaction from the members to this unexpected announcement and to the fact that they had been consulted only ?after the fact? was very intense and definitely negative.

What the members were not told at the meeting was that a previous plan, approved by Council, would have included the extra space and facilities for young people and all the other essential changes to the AFLC without it being closed down for a year. This earlier plan would have concentrated all the extra youth space and facilities within a separate dedicated ?Youth Center? attached, as an addition, to the AFLC, thereby eliminating many costly changes throughout the main complex that would be required under the ?distributed throughout? concept.

Another fact that was not made apparent at the meeting was that the existing plan is not yet written in stone, since no contracts have been finalized. This means that it can be changed, and in my view, should be changed, but in a manner that will be based on adequate input from all the users of the facility, in all age groups.

In particular, a way should be found to keep the facility, that is to say the pool and especially the gym, open during the renovations.

Ralph Jessup
Aurora