

New turf field will be lasting home for Aurora Barbarians rugby club



The Aurora Barbarians Football Club has a new place to call home.

Members of the local rugby organization were joined by members of Council, MP Costas Menegakis, and MPP Michael Parsa, among others, for the official dedication of a new artificial turf field at Sheppard's Bush on Saturday afternoon.

Built to World Rugby Standards, the field features LED lighting, a digital scoreboard, seating for up to 400 spectators, fully-equipped changerooms for the 'Barbs' and the visiting team, and much more – including flexibility for other sports for all ages.

The Barbs contributed \$1 million towards the project, while supplying the goal posts and changing rooms. The Town of Aurora provided the balance.

'For decades, the Barbarians have been at the heart of our sports community, building a sense of belonging, inspiring young athletes, and helping establish Aurora as a true sports hub,' said Mayor Mrakas, who was joined at the event by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson, and Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo. 'Your impact has been remarkable. You supported the development of countless athletes, with several going on to represent Canada on the world stage, and, in fact, four Barbarians are currently competing at the Women's World Cup. That's an achievement we can all take pride in.'

The Club, Mayor Mrakas added, has also produced Hall of Famers, including Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductee Marco Di Girolamo.

'What an incredible legacy and one Aurora can truly be proud of,' the Mayor continued. 'When it came time to build this new field, the Barbarians stepped up in an extraordinary way, contributing \$1 million to this project, along with the change rooms and the goal posts. Now that kind of commitment speaks volumes about your dedication not just to rugby, but to Aurora as a whole. I want to sincerely thank the Barbarians' leadership team and every single member for their support in making this project a success.'

'What makes this facility even more valuable is its versatility. In addition to being the new home of the Barbarians, it has been designed to welcome many other community uses as well. That means more kids, more families, and more residents will benefit from this investment in recreation. For me as Mayor, that's what matters most. Working alongside dedicated community partners

like the Barbarians to create opportunities that serve our whole Town.

“Today we celebrate a partnership that has made Aurora stronger, and we're not just opening a field, we're opening the door to countless new memories, achievements, and moments of pride in our community. Thank you all for being here to celebrate this milestone together.”

The milestone was also noted by Barbarians Co-President Khalil Ajram, who said the new hub at Sheppard's Bush was “made possible due to the legacy of Fletcher's Fields,” the Markham-based sports facility which was shuttered last year.

“We'll always honour Fletcher's forever,” he said. “Aurora now has seven turf fields and a dome. Aurora is open for sport. So, thank you, Town of Aurora.”

Also participating in the opening ceremony was Myles Spencer, representing Rugby Ontario.

Spencer said the event represented a “fantastic opportunity for not only the Aurora Barbarians Rugby Club, but for the Town of Aurora [and] for the growth and prosperity of sport” in the community.

“We need these facilities for our sport, which is a growing sport in this province and across this country,” he said. “To have a rugby-specific pitch right here in the Town of Aurora, just outside of Toronto? that's important. We need facilities like these to continue to pop up.

“This is made possible by the legacy of a very, very important, very, very historic rugby-specific facility that reached 60 years in this province, Fletcher's Fields. And if it wasn't for the legacy of, again, the individuals that came together back in the late 50s, early 60s, with an idea that we had the future in mind for this sport, and here we are, 65 years later, opening another rugby pitch because of what was made possible by Fletcher's Fields. I think that's incredible.”

The new facility has been designed to support both rugby and senior and junior soccer.

The Aurora Barbarians' roots in the community stretch back to 1950 with Aurora RFC and Toronto Barbarians RFC, which eventually merged in 2002.

It boasts more than 540 members, 60 per cent of which are youth.

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