

Plans continue this week to make Aurora one of 'Canada's healthiest communities'



By Brock Weir

Like minds are putting their heads together this week to develop ideas to get Aurora on the road to becoming one of Canada's healthiest communities.

Based on the Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) philosophy of improving the quality of sport and physical activity across the country through integrating diverging sports systems while providing better opportunities and training to budding, emerging and established athletes, stakeholders from local sports groups, colleges, school boards and Southlake Regional Health Centre will be mapping out a series of projects that would 'help lead us to become Canada's healthiest and most active community,' according to Ron Weese of Sport Aurora.

While that ultimate goal might be 'two or three years' down the road, there is no time like the present to get started, he said.

Friday's talks capitalize on the momentum gained last week when Bal Gossal, Minister of State for Sport, visited Aurora accompanied by Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown to take in a number of projects already underway, including the recently re-opened Aurora Family Leisure Complex, and to host a roundtable discussion with a number of sports, municipal, and cultural leaders.

'The first thing we discussed was what the Federal Government was doing with respect to the Year of Sport,' says Mr. Weese, referring to the declaration of 2015 that was enacted on the Federal and Municipal level to coincide with numerous sporting activities hitting Canada this year, not the least of which is this summer's Pan Am Games in Toronto.

'From our standpoint, the Town was interested in seeing whether there were any infrastructure grants or opportunities that were different this year than previous years. We wanted to share with the Minister the emphasis on the Town and Sport Aurora was putting on sport through the proclamation of the Year of Sport and we had a very good working group that was looking at projects designed to bring physical literacy, increased participation and increased capacity to the Town.'

While they may have come up short in increased support for CS4L beyond Sport Canada, they were heartened by the Ministry's support for increasing physical education in schools, including mandatory phys-ed at the elementary school level. While the Federal government has no particular jurisdiction to make that a reality, they recognize the importance of encouragement, says Mr. Weese.

'They felt the Federal Government's responsibility should be to encourage quality, daily physical activity in the school system and this, they felt, had a positive effect in communities' health. There was an economic imperative to change the health of communities because the healthcare system is just becoming more and more expensive year after year, and measures for prevention include physical activity, and proper nutrition, particularly at the younger ages, is particularly important.

?They also suggested the Governor General was also very keen on helping develop healthy communities and they felt they would also be interested in making connections with us, building a healthy community with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health in the Province of Ontario, which we are following up with as Sport Aurora. We have a meeting that has now been scheduled with Lois Brown in the next week or two to explore some of those other options.?