

Sports Hall of Fame strides closer to new location at SARC

By Brock Weir

The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame is in the final heat to reach its new home ? and reaching the finish line by the end of October could be set in stone this week.

The Hall (ASHOF) is expected to take a significant step forward following Council tentatively approving a \$58,850 grant to overhaul a portion of the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex's (SARC) foyer to house the revamped and rapidly expanding showcase of Aurora's sporting legacy.

The nearly \$60,000 grant, which will be divvied up between the Town's Facilities Repair and Replacement Reserve Fund and the Sports Plan Reserve Fund, was approved at the Committee level last week, and will augment a contribution from the ASHOF of \$18,200 to make it happen.

?Tonight, we ask that you support funding the improvements to the Hall of Fame which are, in turn, capital improvements to the SARC,? said Nancy Black, Executive Director of the ASHOF, which is now located on the second floor of Town Hall. ?We joked a little [at the beginning] about this little municipal Hall of Fame being the best in Canada. Well, it's no joke. Over the course of the last two years, we have moved forward on that vision.

?The piece that has been missing that will take us over the top is happening: a widely accessible physical display space of all our sports magnificence as a tourist attraction. The Hall of Fame would be the centrepiece of sport for all people in Town.?

It doesn't hurt, she added, that their vision aligns well with a number of tenets of the Town's own strategic plan.

Helping complete the pitch last week was Shawna White, Curator of the Aurora Museum and Archives, who said an expansion into the west side of the SARC is also an expansion of her vision for what the Aurora Museum and Archives can be.

?Sport History is a special category of local history and over the past year and a half, the museum and the Hall of Fame have formed a productive partnership to increase awareness of Aurora's sporting heritage,? said Ms. White. ?Not only is the museum the official repository of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Collection, we are actively working together to document living histories from Aurora residents related to sports in new speakers' corners initiatives featured at this year's Street Sale and the upcoming community memories project on Town Park.

?The expanded presence of the Hall at the SARC allows the Museum and Archives to showcase this history in a prominent location outside of our own building supporting one of our key goals: increasing access to the collection. I see the museum as much more than just four walls. This initiative furthers my plans to expand out from our physical location and to view the Town itself as a museum. Preserving and telling stories in this Town is one of my fundamental responsibilities. The legacy of sport in Aurora is one of those stories.?

The enthusiasm of Ms. Black and Ms. White was evidently contagious as Council members embraced the idea. While some members questioned the source of where the money will be coming from ? including Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who said she didn't feel this came under the banner of ?repair and replacement? and Councillor John Abel who sought assurances that funding the project from these accounts would not derail anything already in process for next year's Canada 150 celebrations ? there wasn't a dissenting voice to be had.

?I think this is a particularly good idea because I am very familiar with that area in the SARC and it is an underutilized area,? said Councillor Gaertner. ?This would be perfect to go in there.?

Added Councillor Abel? ?I would like to thank all the good work the ASHOF has done; it deserves a home of this stature and I am

really looking forward to it.?

For Councillor Sandra Humfries, the expansion is the logical next step to the ASHOF reaching its full potential.

?I have heard from many residents how great the ASHOF looks just in the corner we have upstairs and the beautiful signage we have in one window,? she said. ?I can't even imagine how spectacular this will look in a showcase area coming into our Town. It is very worthy and we need to showcase what we have.?