

Tigers, Chamber of Commerce state their cases before Council



By Brock Weir

Either the Aurora Tigers will have to take 'Aurora' out of their name and look elsewhere to their future, or the Aurora Chamber of Commerce's Home Show will face a significant hit in its operations.

Those were the positions presented to Councillors at the Committee level last week as both parties made their positions clear over the use of space at the Aurora Community Centre.

The groups were in conflict over space in ACC 1, which has been used for 28 years by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce for their annual Home Show. New regulations, timetables, and stipulations from the Aurora Tigers' governing bodies, however, will make sharing the space next to impossible in the future, argued Barry Quinn, General Manager for the Team.

In his delegation, Mr. Quinn outlined the situation the Tigers found themselves in this year when, faced with an extended season, and heading into the finals for the Buckland Cup in April, the conflict forced the team to look to York University for the final round.

It was not a last-minute situation, he said, and one which was brought to Town Hall in December, but all other alternatives were exhausted, he said. Teams in the Tigers' division need to have 500 seats in their arenas for spectators, according to Hockey Canada, and no other venue in Aurora will accommodate that.

'It cost an awful lot of strife,' said Mr. Quinn of the move to the Olympic-sized ice at York University. 'You build a team to compete as best as you can in that rink. For us, to move to York, severely hurt our chances at winning the Buckland Cup. All that said, we tried to do what was right.

Hockey Canada and the OJHO came to us and they want a guarantee of venue for 2014 ? 2018 and years beyond, and you can't really blame them.

'We are very proud of the program we provide in Aurora. I think in the five years since we took over this team, we have been pretty good community citizens. We support just about everything in this Town from Aurora Minor Hockey to Central York Girls Hockey, Southlake?the kids love it. We put on over 200 dressing room tours last year so kids could physically see what goes on. Our players will go anywhere to help out, and the Aurora Food Pantry has always been one of my favourite ones.'

When you got down to the bottom line, all Mr. Quinn said they wanted was some help. They were not there to fight with anyone, not

the least of which is the Chamber of Commerce, but they were in an impossible situation.

That was a sentiment shared by Paul Smith, President of the Chamber of Commerce, in his subsequent presentation. In the 28 years they have been using the ACC, he said they have never had any conflict like this.

‘Ideally, we would love to stay at the ACC, but our first thoughts were how this impacts our Home Show and how it impacts businesses in Aurora,’ said Mr. Smith, noting it as one of the major events each year in Downtown Arora. ‘The success of this Home Show is due to the fact we have perfected all the little details [in this location.]’

In his view, the ACC provides a unique, friendly atmosphere and the ‘big question’ was whether or not this would be able to be replicated anywhere else. They bring in between 3,000 to 4,000 visitors every spring, create awareness of local businesses, activities, and organizations, but many exhibitors such as landscape companies often book up an entire season's worth of business at the home show alone.

Shifting the date of the Home Show to later in the spring would be out of the question.

‘A move means a brand new show,’ he said. ‘The current location depends on walk-ins and is very convenient to the Downtown Area. The SARC, for instance, would be difficult to access. If you have congestion and a lack of parking, visitors won't come. They will just drive by and we are very concerned about that. If we moved it to May it is just too far into the season. People have already made their decisions on what they are going to do. They have already looked at landscapers, contractors, and in May, even your landscapers are already underway doing business. Moving to another facility, however, is a possibility.’