

Leaside Arena Expansion Project – Backgrounder

28 February 2011

- Leaside Memorial Community Gardens (Leaside Gardens) was built in 1952 by the Town of Leaside following a successful community fundraising campaign involving a dozen local organisations and with the leadership of the Leaside Rotary and Lions Clubs.
- For sixty years Leaside Gardens has been operated on behalf of the municipality by a volunteer Board of Management (arena board) made up of local community members. Leaside Gardens serves not just Leaside but also the surrounding neighbourhoods, including those in the former Borough of East York. The current arena board chair is Brooke Biscoe.
- 100% of “prime-time” ice (defined as Mon–Fri, 5 pm–11 pm; and Sat & Sun, 6 am–11 pm) is fully booked with 95% devoted to “youth non-competitive” use by one of our three long-term primary partner groups: the Leaside Skating Club (who have been with us since 1951); the Leaside Hockey Association (1952), and the Toronto Leaside Girls Hockey Association (1974). LMCG has the highest ice usage rate, including non prime-time hours, of any municipal arena in Toronto.
- All three primary partner groups need much more ice time than can be accommodated at Leaside Gardens and have to rent a large portion of their ice requirements from other municipal and commercial rinks. In fact, for some select and competitive teams in these organisations, virtually none of their ice time is actually at their “home” arena.
- Recognising the strong demand for more ice, the arena board began discussions about building a second rink more than a decade ago. Planning began to accelerate in 2009 when the City of Toronto agreed to buy the adjacent property (formerly home to the Ontario Film Review Board) on which the second pad will be built. In 2010 an anonymous donation from a local family eager to jump-start the process enabled the arena board to hire an architect and begin working with city officials on detailed design issues even before knowing with certainty whether city council would ultimately give its approval to the project.
- The expansion proposal calls for building the second rink at an estimated cost of \$9.5 Million of which \$7 Million will come from a city-guaranteed loan to be repaid through future operating revenues, and \$2.5 Million must be raised by the primary partner groups and the local community.
- The Leaside Arena Expansion Committee, chaired by Paul Mercer, is working with the architects and city officials to facilitate the necessary city approvals and to determine the project design that best meets the needs of the users and the community while meeting the highest possible environmental standards; it has also been working with our primary partner groups and other local leaders to lay a solid foundation for a major community fundraising initiative in 2011.
- Public meetings were held in May and November 2010 to keep the local community fully informed about the project’s progress and to gather input.
- On February 24th, 2011, City Council approved the Leaside Arena Expansion Project as part of its 2011 Capital Budget. *This will be the first new rink to be built by the city in more than thirty years.*
- Thanks to the courage and foresight of the donor family, and their community-minded generosity, the committee is now much further along than would be the case if it had had to wait for council approval before beginning the design work; a number of municipal processes and approval steps remain before construction can begin but *the committee believes it’s on track to meet the target of getting a shovel in the ground in August 2011 and completing the project in time for the fall 2012 skating and hockey season.*
- The donor family did their part by expediting the process; City Council has now done its part by approving the project and providing the \$7 Million loan; now it is up to the Leaside Arena community – including the primary partner groups and the wider community – to do its part. It’s critical that commitments totalling \$2.5 million be identified prior to August 1st, 2011 to ensure the project goes ahead and stays on schedule for completion in August 2012.