



Meeting of the Community Development and Recreation Committee
February 3, 2010

Re: Ice Allocation Practices in City Arenas Operated by Arena Boards of Management

The North Toronto Hockey Association (“NTHA”) was founded in the mid-1960’s and is one of the largest in the City, with approximately 1,650 users. Only 30% of NTHA’s current ice needs are met by North Toronto arena. The recommendation in the January 22 ’10 report to centralize the ice allocation process for the board-managed arenas is obviously very concerning for NTHA, since Parks and Rec would be in control of how much City ice NTHA receives and *where*. Our programs, and particularly the location of our programs, could be seriously affected.

NTHA supports the principle of equitable access, but we also support and value community-based sport, which has been lost in the Parks & Rec recommendations. The reports states: "All residents, regardless of where they live within the City, should have equitable access to all City-owned arenas". It is hard to imagine how this would practically be implemented. The analogy in the report with Community Centre use is flawed. The report states: “Our local community centres do not prevent residents from participation based on local address.” Arenas are not the same as Community Centres. Use of an arena at any given time by one group is automatically at the exclusion of another.

In addition, while principle # 5 allows that there will be an “attempt to allocate all city ice time in a way that allows for concentrated ‘league’ operations” there is no mention in the report, that *community* is important when allocating ice. This contradicts the current Relationship Framework governing board-managed arenas, and does not acknowledge that community-based associations are among the most successful at delivering programs to youth.

Community is hugely important to the success of minor hockey associations such as NTHA. Players are drawn from the community and take pride in playing their game in

their arena. Volunteers are numerous and local businesses are proud to support teams and hang jerseys in their stores and offices. Arena buildings are well maintained and respected because everyone has a stake. It makes no sense to undermine successful community-based associations when other means are available to satisfy the very legitimate needs of new and emerging user groups. The City must first look to improve its own prime time ice allocation so that thousands of hours (and many dollars) are not wasted. The City model is not a model of success. The arena board model is a model of success.

We are somewhat encouraged that the report recommends a consultation process with "existing, new and emerging" user groups, since to this point, the facts have not been properly represented, and the viewpoint before Council has been one sided. However, we object that the focus of the consultation and a new centralized process is on board-managed arenas, since the City does not have its own house in order when it comes to managing the 40 non-board run facilities. NTHA would gladly participate in a consultation process for a more equitable, efficient ice allocation process for ALL City-owned arenas. This may include amendments to the Relationship Framework, but would leave ultimate ice allocation with the boards to meet community needs.

I also wish to comment on the recommendation that Parks & Rec staff continue to work with the Leaside Board on plans to develop another pad. It is difficult to picture much fund-raising or other support from hockey or skating clubs for such a project if ice allocation is in the hands of the City, and an association's efforts would carry no assurance for ice time at the new rink. However, new ice facilities **MUST** be built, and NTHA will gladly participate and partner on such initiatives, at Leaside, North Toronto and other possible locations. Insufficient, quality ice in the City is at the root of this issue.

Liz Ross
NTHA