

Aurora to begin path to 'Canada's Most Active Community' with star-studded launch

By Brock Weir

Local sports groups are pulling out all the star-studded stops next month in the quest to make Aurora Canada's most active community.

It has been a long-held goal, but one that will formally come off the launch pad at Aurora Family Leisure Complex and the public is invited to come share in the fun from 1 to 2 p.m. on September 18.

According to organizers, celebrity appearances and a Sports Expo will be among the highlights where everyone is invited to come and learn what they can do individually and collectively to transform Aurora into the healthiest and most physically literate community in the nation.

'The health, wellbeing and durability of every person in our community matters to us,' said Ron Weese, project organizer of Activate Aurora, which is led by Sport Aurora, the Mayor's Task Force on Physical Activity and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Representatives from the Town, York Region Public Health, Southlake Regional Health Centre, the York Region District and York Catholic District School Boards, the Aurora Seniors' Association, Seneca College, the Canadian Sport for Life Society, and all of Sport Aurora's members, have contributed hundreds of hours in planning the campaign.

'The mission is we're going to make this Canada's most active community,' said Mr. Weese. 'It may sound audacious, but everyone in that working group says this is something reasonable. We know the relationship between positive health outcomes and greater physical activity. How are we going to do it? With an awareness and education campaign that is already underway.'

In a presentation to Council this month, Mr. Weese offered 2006 numbers from StatsCan that said children born in 2006 would have a shorter lifespan than their parents, a 'damning' stat, he said.

'After 40 years of promotion of physical activity, it is time for us to do something and that is the reason why Activate Aurora and Sport Aurora was formed: to try and make some change. A problem like this is not one person's problem, or one group's - it is everybody's problem. That means we need a cross sectorial solution and that is why the Ontario Trillium Foundation liked what we were doing because it was a collective impact grant. We need people working together and integrated in order to solve some problems.'

Program organizers said at this month's Council meeting that they initially planned on launching the program under the big top of the Magna Hoedown tent on September 18 once the previous night's party had been cleared out. But a change of venue was announced Monday.

'It became apparent it was not possible to convert the grounds to meet our needs in time for the launch the following day and we didn't want to jeopardize the launch with a tight schedule,' said Mr. Weese. 'We have permitted the Aurora Family Leisure Complex and we believe it is the perfect venue for the launch since the Activate Aurora Project is dedicated to Aurorans and the Municipality is a valued partner in our Mission. The Aurora Family Leisure Complex is one of the Town's most important hubs of sport and healthy physical activity and includes centrally located facilities for all environments and all ages and we are pleased to present the Activate Aurora launch at this venue.'