



TORONTO LEASIDE GIRLS HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



Dear Parents and Players,

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all new players and parents to the Toronto Leaside Girls Hockey Association (TLGHA). The demand for girls-only hockey continues to grow in Toronto. Our total membership this season has topped 900 members with waiting lists in most of our house league divisions.

Scheduling games and practices for such a large association can be challenging at the best of times, but TLGHA faces unique challenges not experienced by other hockey leagues. While many of our house league games are played at Leaside Memorial Gardens, we are not allocated enough ice at Leaside Gardens to accommodate all of our house league programs. TLGHA must purchase ice from private facilities such as Beaches and Upper Canada College at rates almost double those charged at the City of Toronto rinks.

The Background 80% of our players live in the Leaside, North Toronto, Forest Hill and Ted Reeve communities. Ice at these community arenas is not allocated by the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation department. Instead, these arenas are managed by groups of volunteers that make up each arena's Board of Management. Although the arenas are owned by the City, these Boards of Management are entirely responsible for operations and allocating the ice.

The Problem While these Boards of Management operate autonomously they are governed by a Relationship Framework and expected to do business in accordance with the City of Toronto's policies. The City of Toronto's Ice Allocation Policy is clear. Priority must first be given to community youth recreational programs. Youth Competitive programs follow with requests from Adults receiving last consideration. The City's policies governing equity and non-discrimination are also very clear.

Each year for the past 4 years, TLGHA has written to the Boards of Management at Leaside Memorial Gardens, North Toronto Arena, Larry Grossman Forest Hill Arena and Ted Reeve Arena requesting a fair and equitable allocation of ice for the TLGHA girls that live in their communities. To date, Leaside Memorial Gardens is the only Board of Management that has disclosed their ice allocation formula and has been willing to give the girls of the Leaside community their share of ice time. While we do receive a few hours at Ted Reeve and Forest Hill, they are not suitable times for our house league program and our allocation is well below the hours our membership is entitled to based on the large number of players that reside in those communities. The North Toronto Board of Management has completely denied us access to North Toronto Arena. Our players have the right to play hockey in their local community arenas. This right is largely being denied. As a result we play at widely scattered arenas and at much higher cost.

Is TLGHA trying to take ice away from other community youth programs? The answer is “NO”! We only want the same consideration given to other house league programs. At Ted Reeve arena and Forest Hill arena, there are adult leagues playing on prime time ice. At North Toronto arena there are competitive leagues playing on prime time ice. Our girls are members of the community. The Boards of Management are mandated to serve the members of their communities. We want the Boards of Management to allocate ice to our girls in an open and transparent method that complies with the City of Toronto’s equity, non-discrimination and ice allocation policies.

The Push-back from the Arena Boards Over the years, we have heard a number of excuses why our girls cannot have ice time. We’ve heard:

“We must honour our traditional users.”

“There simply isn’t any ice available.”

“We’ll consider your request if any ice becomes available.”

“We have gender equity because the majority of the figure skaters are girls.”

“The hockey league at our rink accepts girls.”

“Why would girls want to play hockey?” [actually a quote from a City Councillor]

“We tried having a girls-only program and it wasn’t successful.”

TLGHA has the critical mass to run successful Girls-only programs in all age groups. We do not have to place 10-year olds with 18-year olds on the same team in order to fill a division. We have become an association of choice for Girls-only hockey.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. Your daughters are being discriminated against. Years of polite requests, meetings and presentations have gained little or nothing. It’s time to fight for the girls’ rights. We have taken the issue to the Mayor and City Councillors. We continue to take the issue to City of Toronto Parks and Recreation. And we will take the fight further if necessary.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Please show your support for the girls’ human rights by signing our petition to Toronto City Council. You can sign online at www.ipetitions.com/petition/girlshockey or print and sign the version on our web site at www.leasidegirlshockey.org. Please ask your family, neighbours, friends and colleagues to sign as well. The petition will be presented to the Mayor later this month. And please become a fan of Fairness-for-Girls-Hockey on our Facebook page.

Thanks for supporting girls hockey. I will update you on our progress in the near future.

All the best.



Ron Baker
President
Toronto Leaside Girls Hockey Association