



TORONTO LEASIDE GIRLS HOCKEY ASSOCIATION



Community Update, November 19, 2009

Dear parents and players,

I would like to express my sincere thanks for your support for our work in the struggle to achieve equity in hockey – and fairness for our girls.

Beginning last Wednesday, the Toronto Leaside Girls Hockey Association has received a great deal of media attention for our efforts, including front page coverage in the Toronto Star and feature stories in our national newspapers and on radio and television.

This profile has resulted in an outpouring of support from our community, our city and the hockey and sporting communities in Ontario and across Canada. Toronto Mayor David Miller has expressed support for our assertion that city-owned arenas in Toronto should all follow the city's ice allocation policy ensuring that community youth (girls and boys, not girls versus boys) have equitable access and first priority to city ice.

We successfully launched a petition (www.ipetitions.com/petition/girlshockey) that we plan to present to Toronto City Council. We also launched a fan page on facebook, Fairness for Girls Hockey in Toronto (www.facebook.com), on which we provide regular updates to the community. We enjoyed meeting with many parents and players during the past week and have received some excellent questions. Here's an update on some of the issues:

Leaside Memorial Gardens Arena

To date, Leaside Memorial Gardens Arena has worked with our association and other primary user groups to ensure that ice is allocated in a fair and equitable way amongst all user groups. I regret that the Leaside Memorial Gardens Arena board of management was mentioned incorrectly as one of the non-compliant arena boards. The Leaside Memorial Gardens Arena board should be commended for their commitment to serve the members of their community.

Larry Grossman Forest Hill Arena

TLGHA received an allocation of ice this season from the LGFH board of management. After meeting with the Forest Hill Hockey Association, I was saddened to hear that two hours of the ice we received were taken from their house league's allocation. Prime time ice suitable for the FHHA's house league programs and/or TLGHA's house league programs continue to be used by adult groups and competitive leagues. The City of Toronto's ice allocation policy is clear: Community youth recreation programs should receive first allocation of ice, followed by youth competitive programs with adults receiving last consideration.

Ted Reeve Arena

Until last season, TLGHA received a two-hour allocation of ice at Ted Reeve arena mid-day on Sunday. This worked very well with our house league program. This season the Ted Reeve board took away the two mid-day hours on Sunday, offered an hour from 5-6pm on Thursday and a three hour block late Sunday afternoon. While it is true that the Ted Reeve board of management doubled our allocation this year to four hours, it is still far short of an equitable allocation and the unexpected change harmed our house league

program. In order to operate our house league program, TLGHA rents five hours of ice at Beaches at nearly twice the cost of ice at Ted Reeve.

The Ted Reeve Hockey Association has also posted information about a new hockey skills program for girls and women. The program will run at Ted Reeve arena from 5-7pm on Saturdays. If that ice was not being used by the Ted Reeve Hockey Association, why wasn't it allocated to other existing user groups? And adult men's leagues continue to play at Ted Reeve arena at prime-time two evenings per week.

North Toronto Memorial Arena

The North Toronto Memorial Arena board of management has stated that if they were to offer TLGHA ice at North Toronto arena, they would have to do so at the expense of the figure skaters. They have also failed to acknowledge our players as part of the North Toronto community in spite of our full disclosure of our membership's proof of residency. We do not want to take any ice away from the successful North Toronto Hockey Association's house league program nor do we want to impact the North Toronto Figure Skating Club. What is difficult to accept is this: The NTHA select and house league programs receive 32 hours of ice per week. Their 200 competitive players receive over 16 hours of ice per week while our 200 plus house league players receive no allocation at all.

We are surprised that the North Toronto Arena Board has denied the very existence of our female members who live in their community. We have submitted our membership's data in writing and in person to the members of the arena board. TLGHA players are confirmed, registered and insured players with Hockey Canada through the Ontario Women's Hockey Association. While we applaud the North Toronto Hockey Association for recognizing the need for girls-only programs, the North Toronto board must acknowledge the needs of existing TLGHA hockey players who are indeed members of the North Toronto community.

Next steps

While we've received strong support for our battle, we have much work to do before Toronto City Council meets on November 30th. This work involves:

- Continuing to meet with local community hockey programs and regional stakeholders to discuss equity and fair access to ice time for youth recreational hockey;
- Requesting meetings with city councillors to discuss our demand for fair access to ice time and our heritage of providing age-and-skills appropriate hockey to girls in the community; and
- Continued meetings and discussions with parents and players.

Please continue to show your support and if you haven't done so already, please sign our petition at www.ipetitions.com/petition/girlshockey.

Thank you for supporting girls hockey.

All the best.



Ron Baker
President
Toronto Leaside Girls Hockey Association