

SUNDERLAND LIONS CLUB SUBMISSION TO THE TOWNSHIP OF BROCK RE: SUNDERLAND MEMORIAL ARENA EXPANSION AND RENOVATION PROJECT – MARCH 15/24

1. Introduction

This submission is made further to the Township of Brock’s meeting with representatives of the Sunderland Lions Club and other user groups on March 7, 2024. The groups were asked to provide feedback on the project description provided and, in particular, the so-called “variable” items identified by the Township, which are the expansion of the ice surface and the number of new dressing rooms to be built.

2. Key Observations

2.1 With only two “variable” items identified by the Township (i.e. ice surface size and number of dressing rooms), there is little flexibility to adjust the scope of the project and reduce costs.

2.2 We believe there are other items that should be considered variable, including:

2.2.1 Whether or not a storage room is required at this time;

2.2.2 Whether or not a community use room is required at all;

2.2.3 Certain elements of the lobby renovation, once we have confirmed the details of this part of the project;

2.2.4 The use of volunteer community labour to do finishing work, including painting and light construction work;

2.2.5 Different options with respect to the refrigeration plant and associated works.

2.3 The Township has been unwilling to acknowledge that the existing structure was designed and constructed to enable the expansion of the ice surface both to the north and the west. It was understood in 1976 that the ice surface was significantly undersized and that the structure should be built to enable its expansion in the future when funding would permit. That opportunity presented itself with the successful ICIP grant application in 2020. The design drawings prepared in 1976 by Totten Sims and Hubicki, consulting engineers, show the ice surface expansion with corresponding notations.

2.4 The Township has also been unwilling to acknowledge the benefits of a larger ice surface in terms of attracting additional ice users to the facility. The arena is largely maxed-out in terms of the number of hours rented due to the unwillingness of teams to play on the small ice surface. This point cannot be overstated. Teenage and adult ice users, including Brock Wild and Central Ontario Wolves AAA hockey teams, will not book ice in Sunderland. Even adult recreational teams choose not to play in Sunderland for the same reason.

2.5 The Township of Brock’s contribution to the project is, at best, a modest one. To view this objectively, the development charge (DC) contribution to the project needs to be separated

from the tax-based contribution proposed by the Township. DCs are paid indirectly by new home buyers and not through property taxes. On this basis, the Township contribution of \$780,000 – which is yet to be confirmed – is less than the Sunderland Lions Club’s current pledge of \$800,000.

- 2.6** The Lions Club questions the Township’s decision to use ICIP funding for the replacement of the ice pad and associated refrigeration works. This should have been funded by property taxes, since it was known as far back as 1990 that it was in need of replacement. The pad is unquestionably the key component in the life cycle of any arena, yet the Township did not plan for its replacement. Had this been done, the current project would be fully funded, even at a total budget of \$12 million.
- 2.7** The Township has the financial capability to debenture or borrow internally to fully fund this project, since it has minimal debt obligations at the present time. It is possible this will not be necessary, however, if sufficient project savings can be found elsewhere.
- 2.8** The prospect of spending \$9.0 to \$12 million on improvements to the Sunderland Arena without a meaningful expansion of the ice surface is incomprehensible to our Club and the public at large. It is without a doubt the reason the Lions Club initiated the project some 14 years ago. The overwhelming refrain we hear in the community is ...” what’s the point in spending millions on new dressing rooms and a refurbished lobby if the ice surface remains basically the same.”

3. Recommendations

- 3.1.** That expansion of the Sunderland Arena ice surface to 80’ x 200’ be confirmed as the Sunderland Lions Club’s highest project priority, followed by the construction of at least four new dressing rooms.
- 3.2.** That the Lions Club increase its financial commitment to a total of \$1 million, comprised of \$500,000 in confirmed funding and \$500,000 to be raised in a community fundraising campaign, with the additional \$200,000 to go towards the two additional dressing rooms, if necessary. This additional \$200,000 would be raised over a maximum period of five years.
- 3.3.** That the Township of Brock be requested to work with the Lions Club to identify additional cost saving measures, including removal of the proposed storage room, removal of the community use room, the removal of two of the six new dressing rooms, an alternative refrigeration plant solution (e.g. refurbished vs. new) and the use of community volunteer labour, where appropriate.
- 3.4.** That the Township of Brock undertake to debenture, or borrow internally, \$1.5 million to fully fund the project and ensure the ice surface expansion to 80’ x 200’, should that be necessary.

- 3.5.** That the Township endorse a design-build procurement process based on an 80' x 200' ice surface, and that the procurement process enable negotiations with the design-builder to refine the final project plan to fall within the approved budget, as follows:
- 3.5.1.** Should the preferred bid come in below budget, the Township retain the right to negotiate the addition of appropriate items into the project, in consultation with the De-scope and Design Committee;
 - 3.5.2.** Should the preferred bid come in above budget, the Township retain the right to negotiate the removal of appropriate items from the project, in consultation with the Descope and Design Committee.

Concluding Statement

The Sunderland Lions Club appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments on the Sunderland Arena Expansion and Renovation Project. The Club began working with the Township on this project some 14 years ago. In fact, we have continuously fund-raised and provided volunteer labour to improve and expand the arena, in its many forms, since the Club's establishment in 1955.

The arena is a community hub used by many local groups, including the Lions, the Agricultural Society, the Maple Syrup Festival, Ducks Unlimited and, of course, by various sports groups. The Club is excited to be involved in this opportunity to make very significant improvements to the facility and ensure its important role in the community is continued for years to come.

We look forward to continuing our work with the Township and seeing the successful completion of a project that we can all be proud of.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Sunderland Lions Club,

Don Gordon, Arena Project Chair & Gary Brethour, Arena Project Vice-Chair