

Task Force  
on the State  
of Hockey in  
Scarborough

# Report to Scarborough Community Council

---

Ten recommendations to help make hockey a second language for Scarborough's growing population of new multi-ethnic Canadian families.

**June 22, 2010**

# SAVING CANADA'S GAME IN SCARBOROUGH

## HOCKEY AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR TORONTO'S NEW CANADIANS

The Task Force on the State of Hockey in Scarborough was established by Scarborough Community Council in June of 2009. The Task Force is charged with addressing rapidly declining enrolment in youth hockey leagues, and the subsequent struggle faced by minor hockey organizations within Scarborough. Our mission is to find ways to reverse this alarming trend.

In Canada, hockey is more than a sport. From coast-to-coast, it is a lingua franca that evokes passion, sparks discussion and inspires achievement. It is a cultural tradition and historical narrative inextricably linked to the Canadian identity. No other sporting activity is so uniquely Canadian.

In decades past, hockey's central role in Canadian culture ensured its dominance as new Canadians embraced the game as a means of growing roots in their adopted land. To become Canadian, they understood, meant adopting hockey.

## HOCKEY'S DOMINANCE UNDER THREAT

While healthy in many parts of Canada, this tradition is now eroding in some communities, most markedly in Toronto and some surrounding municipalities. High levels of immigration to the GTA from lands with no hockey narrative has created strong, vibrant ethno-cultural communities where the pressures to integrate rapidly are less pronounced. Moreover, immigrants have brought with them their own sports, such as soccer, cricket, badminton and basketball. Television coverage of sporting events from around the world makes it easier than ever before to preserve existing sporting preferences. For new Canadians, hockey is no longer the only compelling option available.

Other factors are also significant. Hockey is perceived by some people as a relatively expensive sport to play compared to soccer or basketball, and ice for children to practice and play pick-up games is limited in many neighbourhoods. Moreover, the time and scheduling commitments required of parents, as well as young players, can be daunting. New Canadian families often have limited funds available for youth sports, and frequently find accommodating the demands of games and practices into their busy lives is a challenge. And for young people of all cultures, a

flood of interactive digital media is attracting young people to exercise their thumbs instead of their bodies.

## SCARBOROUGH AS THE BELLWETHER

For these and other reasons, enrollment in youth hockey programs in many communities is declining. The most precipitous drop has occurred in Scarborough, where recent immigrants make up a high percentage of the population. Since the early 1980s, Canadian census data shows that the percentage of visible minorities in Scarborough (most of whom are new Canadians) rose from 13.6% in 1981 to 42.9% in 2006. This pattern is inversely reflected in hockey participation. Over the past four years, the total number of Scarborough children registered in youth hockey programs has dropped 12 percent.

Since the mid 1980s, youth participation in Scarborough Hockey Association's associated leagues and teams has plummeted from 10,000 players to fewer than 3,000. With the critical mass needed to create an educational and competitive environment now threatened, the Association's viability has been seriously, if not fatally, compromised.

Scarborough's experience may be a portent of things to come in other areas of the city where growing populations of new Canadians are not naturally drawn to hockey. It is likely that what happens in Scarborough will not stay in Scarborough.

## TIME TO TAKE ACTION

The Task Force's recommendations are designed to mitigate many of the critical disincentives influencing hockey enrolment, to create new incentives and to develop a collaborative framework that will enable stakeholders to work together to grow hockey participation once again.

The success of this process is critical for the City of Toronto, hockey leagues, related businesses and the vibrancy of our communities. If hockey participation continues to decline, rinks will sit idle, leagues will languish, related businesses weaken and communities lose much of their unity and vibrancy. Most important, the physical fitness of our young people, now at historically low levels, will be further compromised. From both social and economic perspectives, we must not let this happen.

## BRINGING STAKEHOLDERS TOGETHER

Co-Chaired by Councillor Michael Thompson and Greater Toronto Hockey League Executive Director Scott Oakman, the Hockey Task Force brings together a wide range of stakeholders with impressive credentials in the realm of youth hockey. Among the members are representatives of Hockey Canada, the Greater Toronto Hockey League (GTHL), Scarborough Hockey Association, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, Ontario Hockey Federation, the Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board, Canadian Ball Hockey, local hockey associations and members of the community. The Task Force is supported by City Parks and Recreation staff.

The Task Force met to raise issues and explore solutions. It also held an open Community Forum which brought the Task Force in direct contact with members of the community. The ten recommendations proposed for Council approval reflects input which arose through this process, and represents the consensus of all Task Force members as well as participating City staff.

## TASK FORCE PARTICIPANTS

Darryl	Boynton	Hockey Canada
--------	---------	---------------

John	Campbell	Don Mills Flyers
------	----------	------------------

Patrick	Carew	Scarborough Sharks Hockey Team
---------	-------	--------------------------------

Philip	Carter	West Hill Minor Hockey
--------	--------	------------------------

Margo	Cowie	Hockey Mom
-------	-------	------------

David	De Freitas	Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment
-------	------------	-----------------------------------

John	Del Grande	Toronto Catholic District School Board
------	------------	--

Dominic	DiGironimo	Canadian Ball Hockey Association
---------	------------	----------------------------------

Cathy	Eberts	Scarborough Sharks Hockey Team
-------	--------	--------------------------------

---

Carl	Folkes	Former Olympian & Hockey Trainer
Scott	Harrison	Toronto District School Board
John	Kelloway	Scarborough Hockey Association
John	McRae	Scarborough Coyotes Bantam Hockey Club
Phillip	McKee	Ontario Hockey Federation
Thomas	Neal	Hockey Parent
Scott	Oakman	Greater Toronto Hockey League
Howard	Ryan	West Hill Minor Hockey
Greg	Schell	Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment
Michael	Thompson	Councillor, Scarborough Centre, Ward 37
Ed	Wahl	Cedar Hill Hockey Association
Sue	Bartleman	Toronto Parks, Recreation & Forestry

---

## HOCKEY AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

**H**ockey has long been a binding force in Canada. Its magnetism encompasses all three of our founding cultures as well as the children of foreign lands who have found a welcoming home in our country. It is a sporting language that transcends culture and unites all in a common narrative.

In a sprawling land coping with the centrifugal forces of vast geography, social-political disagreement and the influence of a powerful neighbor, hockey plays a critical role in preserving our national identity. Its centrality has survived two world wars, economic depression, and seismic demographic pressures. It is up to us now to play our part if we want Canada's game to remain the glue that binds our nation as it moves forward to meet the challenges ahead.

# RECOMMENDATIONS:

## THE TASK FORCE ON THE STATE OF HOCKEY IN SCARBOROUGH RECOMMENDS THAT:

### THE HOCKEY TASK FORCE FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SCARBOROUGH SPORTS COUNCIL (SSC)

- The SSC would be a volunteer-led grassroots organization
- The SSC would be the voice of sport in Scarborough by promoting the value of participation and inclusiveness in all sports including hockey
- The SSC would work proactively with leagues and organizations in Scarborough to keep sport vibrant and relevant
- City staff would support community sport development through an affiliation program

### THE PARKS, FORESTRY, AND RECREATION DIVISION TAKE A LEAD ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS, SUCH AS LEARN TO SKATE, THAT INTRODUCE AND PROMOTE THE SPORT OF HOCKEY

- PFR would review existing City and partnership programs being delivered (eg: Learn to Skate, Hockey in the Neighbourhood, Hockey School, etc.) and would work to develop a programming strategy that would strengthen linkages to the minor hockey system and to ethno-cultural groups in the Scarborough District
- PFR introductory hockey programs would be run in collaboration with community partners such as Ontario Ball Hockey Association and Minor Hockey Organizations

### THE HOCKEY TASK FORCE, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ONTARIO BALL HOCKEY ASSOCIATION, THE ONE GOAL ASSOCIATION, AND VOLUNTEER HOCKEY LEAGUES IN SCARBOROUGH, PURSUE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PILOT INTRODUCTORY HOCKEY SKILLS AND COACHING/STAFF TRAINING PROGRAM IN SCARBOROUGH

- Pilot program to be used as a template for hockey skills development in other communities

### THE HOCKEY TASKFORCE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CITY OF TORONTO PURSUE A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HOCKEY EQUIPMENT BANK

- The bank would hold both used and new equipment
- Nominal 'deposit' or 'rental' fees would be looked at

- Addresses the issues of affordability and accessibility for new participants learning how to play hockey

---

#### THE HOCKEY TASK FORCE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CITY OF TORONTO DEVELOP A HOCKEY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- Develop a broad based marketing campaign to improve promotion, and tout the benefits of participation
- Link with the TDSB and TCDSB as a point of access to share information with students in the education system
- Key to the success of the strategy will be to educate people on the language of hockey and to outreach to diverse communities in Scarborough

---

#### THE MEMBERS OF THE HOCKEY TASK FORCE PARTNER WITH THE TDSB AND TCDSB TO ENHANCE EXISTING BALL AND ICE HOCKEY PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES

- Heros (Hockey Education Reaching Out to Society) referenced as a possible partner/collaborator
- Partner with the Ontario Ball Hockey Association to enhance program opportunities
- Explore the possibility of mentoring opportunities for students using the “each one teach one” philosophy
- Leverage the schools for enhanced promotion and marketing of hockey/skating opportunities

---

#### THE CITY IN COLLABORATION WITH THE HOCKEY TASK FORCE TAKE A LEAD ROLE IN OUTREACHING TO ETHNO-CULTURAL AND UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS TO SHARE THE BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT THE SPORT OF HOCKEY CAN OFFER

- Develop an outreach strategy to bring information about hockey to diverse communities
- Engage leaders in ethnocultural communities to be stakeholders on both the Hockey Task Force and Scarborough Sports Council
- Utilize PFR’s Community Engagement Unit and Outreach staff to facilitate this strategy
- Develop a ‘Hockey Primer’ which could be used as an outreach tool

---

#### THE HOCKEY TASK FORCE APPROACH NATIONAL AND AMERICAN HOCKEY LEAGUES TO ENGAGE PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE OUTREACH AND PROMOTION OF HOCKEY IN SCARBOROUGH

- Pursue enhanced opportunities for partnership with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment
- Engage and appoint professional athletes to act as spokespeople to assist in the building of a messaging platform and to support promotional campaigns



---

THE HOCKEY TASK FORCE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CITY OF TORONTO  
PURSUE INTERGOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT FOR TASK FORCE AND  
SCARBOROUGH SPORTS COUNCIL INITIATIVES

- All levels of government to be engaged as parts of the solution

---

PARKS, FORESTRY, AND RECREATION STAFF REPORT BACK TO SCARBOROUGH  
COMMUNITY COUNCIL TO UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THESE  
RECOMMENDATIONS IN JANUARY 2011

## *SUBMITTED*

To Scarborough Community Council on behalf of the Task Force on the State of Hockey in  
Scarborough this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of June, 2010 by co-chairs:



Michael Thompson

Councillor, Scarborough Centre, Ward 37  
League



Scott Oakman

Executive Director, Greater Toronto Hockey  
League