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Canada 

 

Let's enjoy the new recreation centre

The Innisfil Recreation Centre's large ice rink will open this week, amidst controversy and frustration from local constituents.

Those residents, mostly from Innisfil's minor hockey circle, are upset about the nearly three months in construction delays at the centre. The delays have forced many Innisfil parents to spend money and time driving their children to arenas in Alliston and Barrie for 'home' games.

While their frustration is understandable, maybe it's time to take a step back, and realize the potential this building has as a great place of gathering and athletics within the town.

Once complete, the \$29 million recreation centre will feature a twin-pad arena, aquatics facility, gymnasium, fitness room, and community space. It's centrally located in the town, allowing for relatively easy access for thousands of people.

Though the arena portion of the complex will probably not solve all of Innisfil's rink demands, it will significantly reduce the backlog. Town officials say the facility can run 24 hours per day, if needed. That policy could give older teams an opportunity to play at later times, and provide young players with more ice time during the day. Meanwhile, the aquatics facility, gym fitness room and community space are all necessary. The town lacks these facilities, and will be able to provide access at a reasonable

Comment

by Chris Simon

cost.

The outdoor sports fields, along with the rest of the recreation centre, is supposed to be ready by spring, just in time to accommodate summer sports like soccer, softball and baseball. Town officials won't confirm exactly when they expect to have the whole facility open though, claiming they were burned by promises for the rink phase of the centre.

They cannot be blamed for being hesitant. Nobody in government wants a controversy, especially concerning a multi-million dollar project. But the construction industry can be fickle at times. When building began, there was no way to predict a roofers union strike would cause two months in delays. Engineers have also claimed difficulty in purchasing certain construction materials, specifically steel, while the weather has been a variable at times.

While construction teams usually take these circumstances into account when they bid for these projects, perhaps it is better to be conservative with timeframes in the future. Even

Innisfil's mayor has said the construction goals were probably too lofty from the outset. These promises led to the obvious frustration town residents have shown towards the delays.

They've also forced officials to be hesitant with their comments to local media, something that could keep everyone in the dark during the development of other significant projects.

Some have also wondered why the delays have not dramatically impacted the opening of the town's new administration building, which is scheduled to be complete by mid-January. But there's no reason to believe staff are purposely pressing ahead to get the administration centre open first. The projects were at different stages when the roofer's union went on strike. The buildings are significantly unique in design and scale, and each use different construction materials and mechanical systems.

These facilities will come, and any reasonable delays are probably for the best. Both projects are contracted, meaning there will not be an increase in construction costs due to delays. It's also better for crews to take their time, and make sure the job is done properly.

Cutting corners to get the recreation centre open a few weeks early could be dangerous and costly long-term. Residents need to be patient now, so the entire town can eventually reap the rewards.

No GO station, no Innisfil patrons

Letters From Our Readers

As you know, GO train service will be extended to Barrie soon.

We are long-time users of the GO train (since 1999), and use this service from Bradford, rather than drive into Toronto whenever

possible.

We were recently shocked and dismayed to learn that Innisfil will not have a GO train stop when service resumes to Barrie. This decision, we understand, was taken by council primarily because road infrastructure was considered to be a higher priority. This makes no sense.

Innisfil residents have been waiting in much anticipation for several years for the GO train service to be extended to our area. Now that it is happening, council decides against a local train station. The two closest stations, Barrie South and Bradford, are approximately 15 and 30 kilometres, respectively, from the population centre

of Alcona — a long way on icy, snowy mornings when one is rushing to catch a train that leaves just after 6 a.m., before the plows have had a chance to clear the snow and distribute salt and sand.

The lack of a local station in Innisfil will only discourage commuters from using the GO train.

With reduced use by

Innisfil residents, the train service may be underutilized, causing the provincial powers to abandon this service once again.

For the benefit of all Innisfil residents, we strongly request council to reconsider its decision in this matter.

Susan and Ken Grace,
Innisfil

Editorial threw me off the tracks

Letters From Our Readers

I read with complete and utter bewilderment, the comments that were contained in this (GO train) editorial.

Having been a commuter to the heart of Toronto (King and York) for over 15 years now, I cannot believe that someone of your supposed intellect would actually think that driving 15 minutes (not 20 or 30) either to Bradford or Barrie (depending where one lives in Innisfil) to get on the GO train, is so inconvenient that driving all the way to Toronto is a better alternative, because there isn't a station being built in Innisfil.

What kind of sense does that make?

Have you ever commuted to Toronto in your car on a

weekday morning in rush hour?

If you have, did you pay to park your vehicle in the downtown Toronto core?

I dare say that you haven't or you would never have made the foolish comments that you did. If you don't leave by 5:30 a.m. the traffic at highways 400 and 401 is at a standstill by the time you get there.

If you don't leave the city by 3:30, good luck in getting home to Innisfil before 7:30. Try travelling on the 400 in a snow storm or whiteout conditions; both north and south are a real treat!

Do it just one winter, and you'll never do it again — and that drive to Barrie or Bradford will be your ticket to not getting early coronary disease from all that stress of white knuckle driving.

I commuted from my home in Orangeville to the Brampton GO train station to travel to Toronto (45

minute drive and a 40 minute GO train ride). I did this for 10 years.

I have lived in Innisfil for almost three years now, and drive to Bradford to get the GO train (25 minute drive and one hour and 20 minute train ride).

I can tell you right now, that I can't wait for the Barrie station to open (a nice six minute drive from my house, but adds 15 minutes to the train ride).

Once you are on the train, you can read, sleep, listen to music or just simply stare out the window at the scenery as it goes by. To say that none of this is worth it because there isn't going to be a station in Innisfil? Absolute craziness.

To add insult to injury, you think it would be great to have a station in Innisfil so that shoppers could go to Barrie?

My goodness - after reading your article, I

needed a Valium just to calm myself down.

GO is a commuter service, not a shopping service!

It goes south in the morning and then north in the evening. Get it?

Your comment that because there is no station in Innisfil, it creates a safety issue because people don't stop at the tracks anymore is insulting the intelligence of your residents.

Somehow, when the lights are flashing and the guardrails go down, I think Innisfil residents will realize the trains are running again out of Barrie. The papers and the radio have been reporting the delightful and blessed event for months now. GO has had an advertising safety blitz for several weeks now.

Unless you have had your head in the sand, everyone knows the GO train is coming back. To say

that seniors ignore rail crossings now because there hasn't been any trains is ridiculous.

Last but not least, I'm sure I read in your paper that Innisfil could have had a station, but Innisfil didn't want to pay for it.

I think the councillors of our fair town should have voted to have some of the millions and millions of dollars that are received from Georgians Downs go to building a station, rather than a palace for an office. Perhaps then all the seniors and children of Innisfil will be safe once more, because if they get a station, then they might pay attention! Come on.

Speaking from many years of experience, you need to find something else to comment on. You don't have a clue about this subject.

Wendy Szmik,
Innisfil