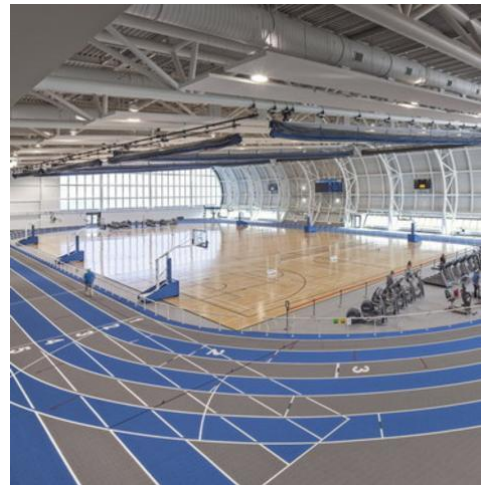




The Abilities Centre Ottawa (ACO) -- with a partnership with the Ottawa Senators has just moved closer to being realized. In addition, the ACO Board of Directors continues to work diligently to raise the funds required to build, furnish and operate this new facility.

The partnership between the Ottawa Senators and the Abilities Centre Ottawa would have the ACO being developed as a component of a Sensplex – where each would be independently operated with shared common elements to share operational costs.

The ACO is planned as a 250,000 square foot fully integrated, fully accessible, inclusive, multi-purpose recreation and community facility for people of all ages, inclusive of persons with a wide range of abilities and limitations. The unique furniture and fittings will include adapted sports equipment (i.e. specialized sport wheelchairs for basketball, rugby and tennis, hand ergometers, and racing chairs), as well as programmable weight-lifting systems to ensure customized adaptation for each client.



This facility and programming is focused on four areas: (i) recreation and sport; (ii) arts, drama, music and dance; (iii) life skills and activity of daily living; and (iv) research and innovation.

“We are excited about this partnership with the Ottawa Senators and so grateful for their commitment to accessible programs for people with and without disabilities,” said Emily Glossop, Chair of the ACO Board of Directors.

“The Ottawa Senators organization believes strongly that investing in programs and initiatives that promote both physical and mental wellness in our community, especially in children, should be a priority,” said Eugene Melnyk, owner of the Ottawa Senators. “Our organization is committed to ensuring that all people -- the young and the elderly, able-bodied and disabled -- be given the opportunity to be active, engaged and integrated together. There is a serious lack of accessible recreational space in Ottawa, and throughout Canada which this partnership hopes to address.”

The ACO is building relationships with potential partners, in particular the Abilities Centre in Whitby, along with local partners such as Carleton University’s READ (Research, Education, Accessibility and Design) Initiative and numerous national sport organizations including the Canadian Paralympic Committee and others. The ACO will also work with Ottawa’s health care providers to provide rehabilitation, fitness and training programs.

“The ACO promises to be important as a complement to our efforts at Carleton University to become the most accessible university in Canada. We support the ACO as a further commitment to full inclusion and accessibility in the nation’s capital,” said Dean Mellway, Acting Director, of the READ Initiative.

Given the aging of our population, one in seven residents in the National Capital Region currently lives with a disability, a number that is growing exponentially. When complete, the combined ACO and Sensplex will be the largest sports and recreation centre in the National Capital Region.

The new ACO will create safe, inclusive, accessible environments, programs and services for persons with disabilities, and ultimately, will enhance the social fabric of the National Capital Region and Canadian society as a whole. The development will also create a Centre of Excellence for persons with disabilities as a leading knowledge hub with national and international experts.

The ACO represents an opportunity to fundamentally change the social fabric of our society toward the full inclusion and participation of all persons. "The ACO will be an extraordinary facility in Ottawa’s city centre,” said Glossop. “Imagine the possibilities!”