

Durham's GM Centre suite draws broad usage

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DURHAM -- Regional Chairman Roger Anderson liked Meat Loaf, Garry Cubitt is an Alan Jackson fan, and the Ajax Rotary Club benefitted from Tim Allen.

Those were some of the users over the past year of Durham Region's corporate suite at the GM Centre in Oshawa. Of the 66 events from May 1, 2010 to April 20 of this year, the suite was used for all events but one -- an Oshawa Generals game on Tuesday, Nov. 2 that started at 11 a.m.

Each year, a report on who used the suite is presented to the finance committee.

Most of the time, use of the suite, which has eight seats with an option to buy another eight seats, is donated to charities.

Mr. Cubitt, the Region's chief administrative officer, told council's finance committee the charities "either auction it off or they use it."

Use of the suite is controlled through Mr. Anderson's office and charities approach the office about using it.

Pickering Councillor Jennifer O'Connell questioned how other organizations could use the box. "It's fairly consistent. It's the same organizations. How do other organizations take advantage of this?"

Mr. Anderson, who wasn't at the finance committee meeting, "looks for organizations with a fairly open, broad use," Mr. Cubitt noted.

Most of the events are for Oshawa Generals' games and the charities receiving the tickets include the Community Foundation of Durham, Grandview Children's Centre, the Bowmanville Hospital Foundation Harvest Ball, the Whitby Mayor's Charity Golf Tournament, Denise House and Regional staff's United Way Campaign.

Other than reports to council, there's no advertising about using the box, Mr. Cubitt stated. "It's very heavily subscribed. Yes, the tickets go very, very quickly.

"The suite isn't a secret. Every member of council knows about it," he added.

Finance committee chairman and Whitby Councillor Don Mitchell said written policy on how the suite is allocated "might be prudent."

Clarrington Mayor Adrian Foster said, "I hope the groups are raising more than they cost. This is a good thing. I hope we don't turn a good thing into a bad thing."

He didn't want a policy that would see tickets allocated on a municipal basis.

Scugog Councillor Bobbie Drew said, "I don't want to see this thing over-governed. Leave it in the hands of the office of the chair."