

THE ROTARY CLUB OF BRAMPTON

The Bingo Story: Working for Our Community

By Tim Hogenbirk

The Rutherford Bingo building was constructed in 1980.

The building is a modern building with 26,000 sq ft situated on a 2.5 acre parking lot .It was operated as a roller skating rink until in 1982 when business began to decline. The owner decided to change his business plan and incorporate Bingo because the conversion would be simple with a building of this size. In 1983 he chose the slowest skating nights - Monday to Wednesday. Brampton until that time had little exposure to Bingo and it was difficult to interest local participants.



Prior to the fall of 1982, our 85-member Rotary club raised money for charity through a variety of means. The annual budget was approximately \$25,000.

Our club was one of the first charitable organizations to run bingos in this hall. On average we earned about \$ 2,500 for each Tuesday night bingo session or \$150,000 per year. Eventually, the owners of the hall had difficulty carrying their debt charges and wanted to sell the operation. Rotary bought the hall, as a community investment, to ensure a continued source of funding for the organizations that raised funds through Bingo.

The purchase price was \$1,350,000 and we took ownership in the beginning of 1985. The City of Brampton backed our note at the Royal Bank. The club made a commitment to the City to replace about \$200,000 in grants – previously paid out of the city's budget.

The city started to refer grant applicants to the Brampton Community Service Foundation, an arms-length organization of charities, charged with distributing bingo time to charities based on a formula. This model was first implemented in our hall and is now the standard in all bingo halls in Ontario.

By the fall of 1985 our debt was reduced to 950,000 and we relieved the city from the backing of our note. The entire loan was repaid two and a half years into our ownership.

All the organizations that operate bingos in our hall are members of the Brampton Community Service Foundation. The foundation is made up out of 26 per cent arts and culture, 37 per cent service clubs and 37 per cent sports groups. Currently, we have 37 different organizations and they encompass all the major charities in Brampton. Rotary is represented as a non voting member on the board by the president of the Rutherford Bingo Board.

Proceeds have increased dramatically and on an annual basis 2.1 million is returned to the community through these organizations.

They operate 26 sessions per week: seven evening sessions, seven matinees, seven late sessions Monday to Sunday, two breakfast and super-late sessions and one twilight session.

Bingos distribute \$132,000 in prize money each week.

At Rutherford Bingo we employ three permanent staff members (Maria Andrade, Roxanne Jordan and Gail Riccio) and a variety of part-time employees. Our annual salaries are in the order of \$ 420,000 and or total budgeted cost is in the order of \$1 million.

The committee that oversees the business on behalf of the club consists of Bob Bell, Al Heaney, John Sudnikowicz, Jerome Dawson and every year we have the incoming President as a member of this board and this year that is Sheila Winsor who will be President in two years.

Over the years various improvements have been made to the hall to keep our clients happy and comply with the bylaws of the City and Region, including the building of the designated smoking room, where we enclosed the smoking area and provided an independent cooling and heating system. We also recently renovated the washroom areas. As you can see we have tried to create a friendly and happy atmosphere for our customers.

Out of the profits, the club has reinvested some of those funds so the business can compete with its competitors and the casinos which have taken a good chunk of the gaming market share.

Our staff is always on the lookout for what the competition is doing and occasionally goes out to other halls to see what we might improve.