

## **Cool idea explored**

By Felicia Carboon

PLANS for Bendigo's proposed new ice rink have this week been boosted with a visit from a Canadian ice rink expert.

The visit is part of a City of Greater Bendigo investigation into the construction of a new ice rink for the city.

The investigation is likely to be complete by the end of March, and follows a 2004 proposal for a similar project from the YMCA.

City of Greater Bendigo mayor David Jones said the city had been working with the YMCA and local ice sports groups to determine the economics and possible location of a new rink.

Cr Jones said the city had formed a partnership with the Canadian Government, and Marius Lavoie, from the Natural Resources Canada refrigeration action program, would be in Bendigo for a week.

Last night, Mr Lavoie met with local ice sports clubs.

"We hope to gain information about some of the technical specifications required for a new stadium, as well as energy saving techniques that are presently being used in Canada," Cr Jones said.

"Ultimately the information provided will assist the council in making an informed decision on the future of the project."

Recreation and youth services manager Mark Hands said the technology that Mr Lavoie was investigating for Bendigo was "advanced and exceeds what we have seen here in Australia".

"The technology he has discussed can be picked up and put with a rink, wherever it is," he said.

And while he said no definite locations had been considered, the new site would have to be community-owned, have better visibility and could possibly be linked to an existing recreation facility.

The Advertiser believes the council could be considering the Schweppes Centre as a possible site, and could use energy made from ice manufacturing to heat the facility.

Mr Hands said while the investigation had stemmed from the YMCA's original proposal for a rink in Kangaroo Flat, the council was looking at the latest plans "from square one".

"Keeping a block of ice cold in this environment takes a lot of power, and we want to make sure what we are doing is viable and environmentally sensitive."

Among the sports clubs involved in discussions is the Bendigo Raiders ice hockey club.

President Brien Baxter said a new rink could provide "endless" opportunity for all three sporting clubs based at the present rinkthe hockey, curling and ice skating clubs.

"International Hockey Australia has five male levels and one female level tournaments a year, but none are held in Victoria because the rinks aren't up to standard," he said.

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