

Is Markham NHL team back on the table?

Former arena promoter Graeme Roustan says he plans to file for expansion of the NHL in the GTA and consider Markham again. Opponents say that's a pipe dream.



Graeme Roustan, Head of GTA Sports and Entertainment and is seen on the right with Paul Kelly, former head of the NHL players association, who came out in support of a Markham arena in 2013. (RICHARD LAUTENS / TORONTO STAR) | [ORDER THIS PHOTO](#)

By **NOOR JAVED** News reporter
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The dream of a NHL team in Markham may not be over yet.

With news the [NHL is open for expansion](#), Graeme Roustan, CEO of GTA Sports and Entertainment, who was behind a plan to build a 20,000-seat arena in Markham in 2012, said he intends to make a pitch for an NHL team in the GTA.

In an interview with *The Hockey News* on Wednesday, Roustan said he will file an application for expansion of the NHL in the GTA — and would even consider Markham again in his effort to find a host arena.

“I will definitely be making an application on behalf of the GTA,” Roustan said. “I’ve always believed that a second NHL team in Toronto would flourish and I’ve been preparing since 2010 for this possibility.

In 2012, Markham announced it was building a 20,000-seat arena that would be funded through a unique public-private funding scheme. Roustan was the chief promoter behind the \$325-million arena that was financially backed by a developer and would be funded through taxes on future development.

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But in December 2013, city councillors voted to shelve the project after hundreds of residents expressed concern about the funding scheme. Roustan hadn't been heard from since, according to city officials.

Councillors who opposed the project the first time say they would welcome a team to the city and Roustan — only if he brings funding for the arena with him.

“The issue in the past was never about an NHL team; it was about who was paying for the arena,” said Councillor Karen Rea, who was a vocal opponent and won her council seat on her anti-arena platform.

“Mr. Roustan is welcome to come back to Markham, if he has all of the funds, and as long as he and his investors are willing to privately build, own and operate, without any public money being involved,” she said.

But regional councillor Jim Jones, who also opposed the arena, says any such project would need an investor with deep pockets, not someone looking for a deal. It is believed that in addition to the cost of building an arena, it will cost \$300 million to \$500 million to get a franchise.

“I spent a lot of money researching his background in the U.S. He wasn't putting any money in. He was getting it from everybody else in the city of Markham,” Jones said. “At this point, I wouldn't support anything by Graeme Roustan. I'm not against an arena or a hockey team, but it would have to be privately funded,” said Jones. “This is a game for people with deep pockets. Graeme was just acting as a promoter.”

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