

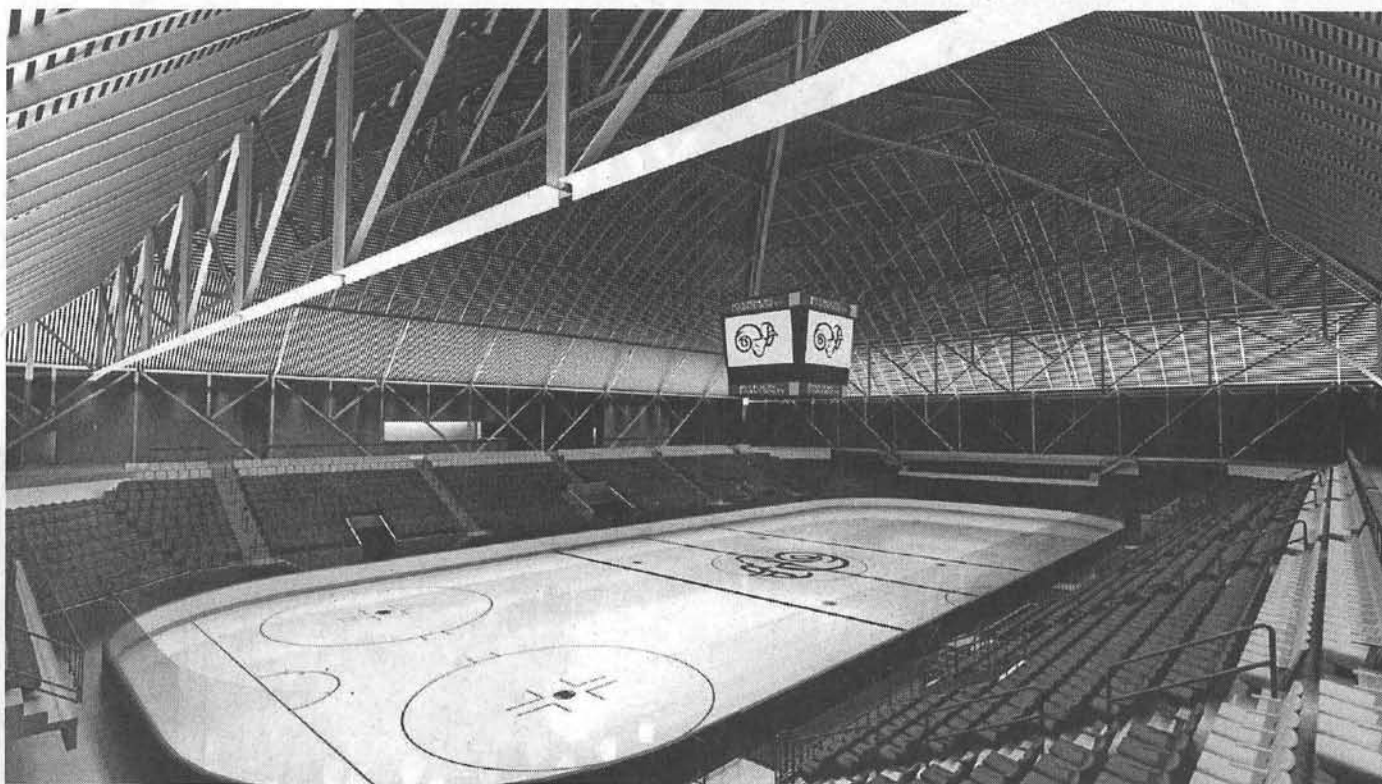
Toronto

ANGELA MURPHY, TORONTO EDITOR

RENOVATION

Spirit of Maple Leaf Gardens lives on

Ryerson's rework of upper portion of hockey shrine includes a revamped rink and a restored dome



The latest concept for the rink and seating at the Ryerson University Sports and Recreation Centre. BBB ARCHITECTS

BY ELIZABETH CHURCH

With eight months left in the \$60-million Ryerson University renovation of the upper portion of Maple Leaf Gardens, new sketches of the plans show an effort to keep the spirit of the former hockey shrine in the new, scaled-down rink. Ryerson, which is sharing the building with its new owner, Loblaw Cos. Ltd., is planning a student athletic centre for the building's new second storey, with the rink on the floor above. "People will say, wow, this is very familiar, even though it really is a different place," university president Sheldon Levy said.

THE CEILING

The dome that topped the Gardens is being restored to its original condition and will be the centrepiece of the new rink, Mr. Levy said. "It is being brought back to its original state, the way the builders first viewed it." The one big difference will be that fans in the newly created third-floor arena will be much closer to the tresses that once sat high above the ice. There are no plans to paint the ceiling with the Ryerson Rams logo – that's being saved for centre ice. "I wouldn't want to do anything with [the ceiling] other than bring it back to its original glory," Mr. Levy said.

THE ICE

The rink surface will be exactly the same size. Locating the rink on the third floor has not been a problem for the project's engineers, but changes were required to the original plans so that the new arena has the top level all to itself. The first layout, which fit a basketball court beside it, was scrapped, Mr. Levy said, because the climate needed for the two facilities was not compatible.

THE SEATS

The new arena will be a more intimate place with 2,500 seats, all in the original Gardens shades of gold and blue, which also happen to be Ryerson's colours. The side sections will keep the same 45-degree angle that was a familiar feature of the Gardens. The front row will hug the boards, the same way it did when the Leafs were battling in the corners.

THE SCOREBOARD

The huge structure that housed the four-sided scoreboard and clock is under wraps for safe keeping, hoisted up to the very top of the Gardens' roof while work goes on underneath it. It is simply too enormous, Mr. Levy said, to get out of the building. The original frame will be kept. What will go inside it is still a work in progress.