

Re: Urgent Need for Lacrosse Facility in Saint John, NB

Dear Mayor and Council members,

We are reaching out to address a pressing concern regarding the lack of affordable and suitable facilities for our Junior Box Lacrosse teams in Saint John, NB. Lacrosse is Canada's national summer sport and holds significant cultural and historical importance. Today, the sport is declining and it's not for lack of passion, interest, or participation. It is declining due to inadequate infrastructure and support.

Our Junior Lacrosse teams, representing our region in the East Coast Junior Lacrosse League (ECJLL), are facing immense challenges in accessing affordable practice space. Our athletes have been traveling to neighboring cities, sometimes as far as Moncton to practice. We are unable to source floor time in the city of Saint John.

The closure of arenas to sports, such as the Belyea, worsens the problem and leaves our teams without a dedicated facility for training and tournaments. It is disheartening to note that an available option is being utilized to store items/equipment for the city of Saint John. This underscores the pressing need for alternative arrangements. Reopening the Belyea arena to sports would be a significant step in providing a lifeline for our sport, our youth, and our community.

A couple of short-term solutions to consider:

- Consider opening the Belyea for 6-8 weeks (2-3 nights a week). We have an army of eager youth and parents who can assist with preparation, clean-up, and maintenance.
- Another valuable location is TD Station. While this is a beautiful facility, the rental fee is not within our budget. Does the city offer subsidizing for rental facilities like they do in other cities?
- Does the city currently own any empty warehouses? We have seen this to be valuable space in other cities.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the federal mandate outlined in the **Calls to Action: Sports, and Reconciliation 87-91**, which emphasizes supporting indigenous sports and recreational activities as part of reparations for residential schools and cultural genocide.

This isn't just about lacrosse; it's about the health of our community, our culture, physical/mental health, and our children's futures. By neglecting our athletes, we are letting down generations who may never know the joy and pride of playing lacrosse.

As New Brunswick prepares to host the 2029 Canada Games, our local lacrosse players are without the resources they need to develop and grow their skills. Lacrosse offers invaluable benefits to youth, promoting physical activity, teamwork, leadership skills, and a sense of

belonging. Despite the current challenges, youth in our region are eager and enthusiastic about playing lacrosse, demonstrating a strong interest in the sport and its cultural significance.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your prompt action and support in addressing the needs of our Junior Lacrosse teams and the broader lacrosse community in Saint John.

Sincerely,

The Saint John Rapids Organization

President: Megan Kingston, VP Male: Duncan Webster, VP Female: Angela Daley,
Treasurer: Shelly Hatfield, Coaches: Jacob Norton, Stephen Johnston, Chris Burgess, Team
managers: Melissa Garland, Charlene Thompson, Shelly Mason