



BONNYVILLE PONTIACS

December 21, 2023

TO: Municipal District of Bonnyville
ATTN: Reeve and Council
RE: Community Action Grant Application

The Board of Directors of the Bonnyville & District Recreation Sports Association, operating as the Bonnyville Jr. 'A' Pontiacs Hockey Club, received news of Council's decision to decline our application for a Community Action Grant with disappointment.

In reviewing Council's discussion of our application on the MD's YouTube channel, it was noted that a Council member questioned why the MD would provide further support to the Jr. 'A' Pontiacs when they already supported the organization to the tune of \$25,000 in free ice time for practices.

The fact is the Pontiacs use afternoon ice as part of an agreement reached when the franchise was awarded to Bonnyville in 1991. A condition of receiving the franchise from the Alberta Junior Hockey League was to have priority ice scheduling to accommodate the League's 60+ game schedule and the need for adequate ice allotments for the daily practices needed for this calibre of hockey. The Recreation Board of the time agreed that using 'dead ice' in the afternoon would be preferable to having practices in the evening, thereby freeing up ice for Minor hockey and other user groups. It should be noted that at the time there was only one ice surface available for all users. In consideration of this concession, the Town of Bonnyville waived ice fees for usage of otherwise 'dead' ice times. When the new Centennial Centre was built, the agreement stayed in place, again, to free up ice time for the ever-growing numbers of user groups so that they would have access to reasonable ice times for their activities.

In essence, the \$25,000 figure thrown out was a 'red herring' in terms of the request for a Community Action Grant as this was using an agreement that goes back 32 years and presenting it as though it was a new 'concession' to our organization. Furthermore, we don't understand how the figure of \$25,000 was arrived at. The Jr. 'A' Pontiacs operate from September to March in a typical season. The team practices for approximately one hour per day for a maximum of 5 days per week. Practices are not held when the team is on the road, nor on days when there is a home game that evening. This means that on average, the Pontiacs use 90 to 120 practice hours per season. If this was translated to dollars then 90-120 hours x \$120 per hour=\$10,800 to \$14,400.00 total. This would further be split in half by the cost sharing agreement between the Town and the MD, so in effect the MD's portion would equal \$5400.00 to \$7200.00 per season. In case it is not understood, the Jr. 'A' Pontiacs pay normal hourly rates for all their games, camps and other events hosted by the team.

PO Box 5554
Bonnyville AB
T9N 2G6

Phone (780) 826-2893
Fax (780) 826-5486
Email sales@bonnyvillepontiacs.com



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The Jr. 'A' Pontiacs have proven to be very valuable partners in the operation of the Centennial Centre. Aside from the crowds the team attracts to the arena and the resulting revenues for the concessions and liquor outlets, the Jr. 'A' Pontiacs contributed \$100,000.00 toward the purchase of the new score clock in the RJ Lalonde Arena. This \$100,000.00 was further leveraged to receive another \$100,000.00 in grants by the C-2 toward the purchase of the clock. In 2009 the Pontiacs raised over \$50,000.00 in funds from their alumni to replace all the boards in the RJ Lalonde Arena to bring them to compliance with current safety standards. Furthermore, the organization hosted World Junior 'A' Challenge Championships in 2016 and 2018, which brought huge recognition to our area, both nationally and internationally. Many of the players who came to Bonnyville for those events are now playing in the NHL and collegiate hockey programs.

The benefits of having an Alberta Junior Hockey League franchise in our community are obvious. These include increased facility usage of the Centennial Centre and the attraction to our facility of over 40,000 people per year which includes fans, players, hockey scouts, camp attendees and their families along with other events hosted by the Jr. 'A' Pontiacs. The organization constantly gives back to the community through school and library programs, participation in community events, assistance with Minor Hockey programs, instruction for hockey school programs by Lakeland Catholic Schools, assisting LICA with their community garden, and many more charitable activities throughout the entire region.

Our organization remains a constant economic driver for the area. We have met the challenges of operating a successful and sustainable Jr. 'A' program while being in the smallest market in the AJHL. The \$5000.00 Community Action Grant request from the MD of Bonnyville was for rink board advertising in the RJ Lalonde Arena. This program has been in place for several years and with 30,000 to 40,000 fans attending Jr. 'A' Pontiacs games, and the several thousand more that attend Minor Hockey and Senior Hockey games and tournaments, the MD of Bonnyville rink board receives excellent exposure throughout the year and demonstrates that the MD is a valued partner in local hockey development and promotion.

While respecting Council's decision, our organization thinks it is important to present factual background information to clarify our position and to provide perspective on the information presented to Council and presumably, upon which their decision was reached.

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Rusnak
President
Bonnyville Jr. 'A' Pontiacs

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