



PRINCE GEORGE MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

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Official response from Prince George Minor Hockey to the July 14, 2020 media release that arenas will remain closed indefinitely.

Today's City of Prince George announcement to keep arenas closed indefinitely is devastating to the youth of Prince George and all surrounding Northern Communities. It is especially disappointing when Northern BC has gone 36 consecutive days without a positive COVID 19 case. Having reached out to our points of contact within the City of Prince George consistently since March, the sudden news of indefinite rink closures without notice, consultation or communication is shocking. PGMHA is one of, if not the biggest, user group of ice in Prince George having spent \$585,000 in 2019-2020 on ice rental.

At a City Council meeting held June 15, 2020 we were given an opening date of August 4, 2020. The news today undermines this decision. We are now having to react to our members on the uncertain future of hockey in our city. Hundreds of volunteer and paid hours have been logged planning for a very detailed and safe Minor Hockey season since June, as we imagine is true with the other arena user groups.

Prince George Minor Hockey registration numbers are on par with this time last year. These members have registered with very little documentation, faithfully looking forward to a modified season of hockey. We have worked hard in conjunction with BC Hockey, Hockey Canada, and viaSport at planning to provide a detailed product where families are getting value, feel safe, develop and have fun. Return-To-Play documentation for summer ice times was provided to our point of contact with the City of Prince George prior to this announcement. PGMHA was releasing season Return-To-Play documentation to our membership this week and still plans to do so. We were planning and excited to announce our summer camps, our Annual General Meeting as well as a new staff member to PGMHA this week. Some of these plans will now have to change as the mood certainly has.

The impacts of the arena closures on school programming, school registration, billet families, etc. will be significant. All hockey in Northern BC will be driven out of the North. Hockey players will go elsewhere. Families are currently travelling to outlying communities to get ice in preparation for the season, players cannot just take a year off from hockey and continue their development. These are dollars that should be staying within our community to keep our economy going. This travel increases the risk of exposure to Covid-19 and the risk of bringing the virus back to our community. Throughout the Province many civic and private facilities have reopened with success and low risk to the user, there is no reason why Prince George should not follow suit.

Health:

It is reported that 80% of BC children are currently not getting enough activity. We need to get our facilities back open and provide the health and activity component that children and adults need. This could have a big impact in the fall when the potential of a second wave hits and children and adults are not as physically fit to fight off infection.

It is also reported that mental health issues are on the rise in children and adults due to the lack of physical activity. We need to get back to activity through our facilities because the longer we wait the harder it will be to get citizens reengaged in activity.

Safety:

We have parents and youth leaving our city traveling on the highways just for the sake of activity that we are currently not providing. This additionally removes revenue from our community.

Revenue:

Residents are spending their money in other communities which is hurting not only our non-profit groups but also our local businesses. People are having to make difficult choices in these tough times to spend their money on their children in other communities and choose not to spend their money at our local restaurants, stores, and community groups.

In conclusion, we need to know that our facilities will be open and flexible enough to provide the services that our users require. Our citizens need to know that their mental and physical health needs are a top priority. Each member group is designing and following all the regulations that have been put forth by BCPRA, viaSport and their own governing PSO and NSO. We are doing our best to conform to the new normal and provide a much-needed community service. We are asking that the City supports all user groups along with all of their members and open our arenas.

Glynis Vennberg, President of Prince George Minor Hockey
With support of PGMHA Board of Directors