

Regional Civic Centre, Leisure Cards, Minor Hockey – The facts

FACT #1: Campbellton taxpayers pay on average \$250 per year toward the Memorial Regional Civic Centre in order to provide Campbellton children and residents with access to high-end recreational infrastructure. This amount does not include capital improvements to the building.

FACT #2: Tide Head taxpayers also contribute annually to the Civic Centre as they have decided to offer access to high-end recreational infrastructure to their children and residents. The municipalities of Pointe-à-la-Croix and Listuguj have also recently committed to contribute financially to the Civic Centre.

FACT #3: Other taxpayers in the remaining surrounding communities do not contribute financially toward the Civic Centre but have been fortunate to be able to offer access for years to the same recreational services and infrastructure to their children and residents – and at no cost.

QUESTION: Is this fair? Should Campbellton’s and partnering municipalities’ taxpayers pay for all children of the Restigouche region? We do not believe this is fair or equitable.

LEISURE CARD: This is why we have decided to implement the leisure card – in order to bring back fairness and balance. Our duty is toward our taxpayers and our responsibility is toward Campbellton’s children. We also have a duty toward our partnering municipalities. Why should they support the Civic Centre financially when other municipalities don’t? We tried to get neighbouring New Brunswick municipalities on board and contribute through their tax rates, but they refused the offer.

MINOR HOCKEY: The City of Campbellton informed all minor associations, including Restigouche North Minor Hockey, on August 9 that a leisure card system could be put in place for the 2018-2019 season. They were asked not to initiate any registration without calling to obtain more information.

On August 31, all minor associations received an email indicating that the City was going indeed to proceed with leisure card implementation.

In a meeting with Minor Hockey September 10, they provided two options for consideration:

1. Pay regular rate (adult rate) for ice time and not the minor sports discounted rate and not be subjected to leisure cards.
2. Get a discounted rate for the leisure card (\$100 instead of \$200) that Minor Hockey would pay for (not the players).

Both options were looked at very carefully but were ultimately rejected.

WHY WE REJECTED OPTION 1: Paying regular ice time rate would eventually mean increases in registration fees as ice time rates would ultimately increase. Increased registration fees would impact Campbellton, Tide Head and other municipal partners’ children the same as they would impact children coming from municipalities who don’t pay toward the Civic Centre. It would not have been fair.

WHY WE REJECTED OPTION 2: Same reason with discounted leisure card rate. It would not be fair to other minor sport groups, and to children for which the card is already paid for by their municipality. Why should a Minor Hockey leisure card be less expensive than other minor associations?

TIME ALLOCATED: The City, in an effort to give time to the associations to get organized, allowed for tryouts to take place without enforcing the leisure cards.

OFFER FOR HELP: Minor sports associations were all offered help from the City with registrations. The intent was to help alleviate the pressure being put on volunteers by being present to deal with leisure card questions and comments. Some associations took advantage of this offer and registrations went very well.

CONFIDENTIALITY: We have required lists with NAMES and LEISURE CARD numbers only so we would not have to “police” the cards as much. This would also help us letting players in when they would forget their cards. We are not breaching any confidentiality rules here. We have verified with our legal counsel. All other associations are providing the required lists without issues. Minor hockey puts the list of players on their website when teams are selected. They also provide the list of players from each team to the parents.

PLAYING POLITICS: Minor Hockey is a volunteer-run organization. Many of its volunteers are from non-contributing municipalities. These individuals have decided to play politics and use the association as their vehicle to voice their frustration at the expense of our children.

They have a duty to represent all Restigouche municipalities that are part of their association. Campbellton, Tide Head, Listuguj and Pointe-a-la-Croix’s parents should be really upset with the association as the association is not recognizing those parents’s contributions toward the Civic Centre.

If Minor Hockey wants to continue playing politics, they should lobby all non-contributing municipalities and get them to pay for the leisure cards for the children of their respective municipalities.

Why does Minor Hockey think that Campbellton taxpayers and partnering municipalities should pay for children from other municipalities? Shouldn’t municipalities each be responsible for their own children and residents? We believe this is only fair and responsible.

BOYCOTTING THE CIVIC CENTRE: By boycotting the Civic Centre, Minor Hockey will be forcing parents from communities that contribute to the Civic Centre to incur costs in gas, meals, time loss. Parents should not accept these extra costs of funds and time as they already pay for a facility that they should be using.

TIME TO STOP: While other municipalities keep their tax rates lower and have money to offer other services to their citizens, Campbellton taxpayers pay for everyone to enjoy the Civic Centre. This situation must stop and is unsustainable.

THE REAL QUESTION: Let's ask the real questions. Why is Restigouche North Minor Hockey taking such a strong position against Campbellton? Is this really their role to do so? **They are penalizing the children,** not Campbellton. They are using the association to promote personal views and frustrations.

DIVERSION: And yes, other municipalities will play with numbers trying to show Campbellton's tax base growth being better than other communities. This has nothing to do with the discussion. Campbellton also has more infrastructures to maintain as well as aging infrastructure as the City was established long before neighbouring villages. Campbellton's revenues have nothing to do with this debate and are simply a diversion tactic. The point is that neighboring municipalities benefit from a regional key infrastructure that is paid for by Campbellton, Tide Head and now Listuguj and Pointe-à-la-Croix. This has to change. If Campbellton was to generate additional revenues, Campbellton's citizens should be benefiting from additional or increased services or a reduced tax rate. Why should that income be used to pay for services and benefits to those who have chosen to live in other municipalities? Residents who choose to live outside of the City of Campbellton cannot expect to benefit free-of-charge from the City's recreational infrastructure – there must be a cost assigned to non-residents.

AGREEMENT: Municipalities still have the opportunity to enter into an agreement with the City of Campbellton and pay the cost of leisure cards for their residents.

RESTRUCTURING: Municipalities contributing financially to the Civic Centre will soon have a voice with the creation of an Advisory Committee.

THE DOOR IS OPEN: Campbellton never closed the door to Minor Hockey. They are still welcome to use the building as long as they respect the implementation of the leisure card.

INFORMATION: For more information on the Leisure Card, visit our website at www.Campbellton.org or call the Civic Center at 789-2888.

Campbellton City Council