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Cc: Leah Hodges <president@squamishminorhockey.com>

Subject: Recreation Facility

Dear Council Members,

I attended the Council Meeting held on October 21st to support the President of SMHA, and the messaging and conversation that evening compelled me to write to you.

I'm writing as a parent and a 17-year community member who has seen firsthand how much our kids benefit from being active and involved in local programs — and how much they struggle when those opportunities just aren't available, which is the situation we're facing today.

My son has played hockey since the age of seven and is now in his second year of U18. We've supported his growth to the Rep level, which requires significant travel to Vancouver several days a week. Many parents have asked how we manage this commitment, whether we'd do it again, and if it's worth it. My answer is always the same: **absolutely, 100% yes.**

Youth sports aren't about wins and losses — they're about friendships, work ethic, learning new skills, and, most importantly, connection. Connection with coaches, parents, referees, and teammates. Ask any parent who spends weekends traveling to games, practices, recitals, swim meets, or tournaments, and most will tell you the same thing: the time spent together in the car is priceless.

I've learned more about my son during those drives up and down the Sea to Sky Highway, or on the way to Brennan Park, than I ever could have sitting at home. Some days we sit in comfortable silence; other days, we talk endlessly about school, friends, and life. It's rarely about hockey — it's about connection.

Not having adequate facilities for our youth is wrong. — plain and simple. When local programs are forced to turn kids away because there isn't enough space, we're failing them as a community. Let's change that.

During the meeting, it was mentioned that our community is stretched due to essential infrastructure projects, and that Brennan Park, as a recreational facility, isn't considered essential. A past referendum was also referenced — though I would argue that Squamish has changed dramatically since that vote 20 years ago. I truly believe a new recreation centre should now be considered *essential infrastructure*.

We need a new, modern space — not just another ice rink, but a true community hub. Imagine a facility with two ice surfaces for hockey and skating, a modern pool, an indoor gym for sports and training, and a theatre or performance area where dance groups, drama programs, and community events could thrive. A place that's alive year-round with families, kids, and adults all finding ways to stay active and connected.

This isn't just about sports — it's about giving our young people healthy, positive outlets. Kids today spend more time than ever in front of screens. Ask any parent of a teenager and most will agree: this is one of our biggest challenges. Research continues to show the negative effects excessive screen time has on children's mental and physical health. They need spaces that pull them away from phones and social media, and bring them together to move, learn teamwork, and build real friendships. Facilities like this don't just support recreation — they support community well-being. In my view, a facility like this is *essential*.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this. I know these projects require careful planning and resources, but I hope Council will take the necessary leadership role and make this a priority for the future of our children and community. Let's get it done and not kick the can down the road for the next generation.

Sincerely,

Brian Heslop