



908 Rainy Lake Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron

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Dear Mayor June Caul and Town Council,

Re: 908 Rainy Lake Air Cadets use of Memorial Arena

It has come to our attention that an application is being sought for sole use of the arena upper hall. We have concerns about this proposal, as the arena is a community-based and owned facility and granting such a proposal would exclude the 908 Air Cadets from its shared use.

The 908 Rainy Lake Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron was established in March 2003 as a local unit of the Canadian Cadet Movement, which has been in Canada for over a century. The three aims of the Canadian Cadet Movement are to promote good citizenship, promote physical fitness, and foster an interest in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Air Cadets are sponsored by the Canadian Forces, and the Air Cadet League of Canada. This partnership helps provide uniforms to cadets, training, leadership and mentorship to cadets and staff, opportunities for exciting employment in Canada and abroad for cadets who are selected for International Exchanges. Another focus of the Air Cadets is to nurture and foster an interest in Canadian aviation, of which our squadron has successfully trained several pilots. The Canadian Cadet Program has produced many leaders in our country, including Former Prime Minister Joe Clark, General Walter Natynczyk (Former Canadian Forces Chief of Defence Staff) and Commander Chris Hatfield (Canadian Astronaut and Commander of the International Space Station), to name only a few. We are not a recruiting arm for the Canadian Forces; we are a sponsored leadership program.

908 Rainy Lake Air Cadets, as with other cadet units across the Canadian Cadet Movement, do not charge for membership or uniforms, which is a rare feature in today's youth organizations. Air Cadets offer our youth leadership and unique summer employment opportunities. Youth sports are also an integral part of a young person's development. Besides engaging in physical training at Cadets, several of our cadets are also involved in school teams and sports clubs.

The Air Cadets in Fort Frances average approximately 25 cadets annually, joining at age 12 and retiring from or "aging out" at 19. We are among very few programs in our community offered to youth at no cost, and will continue to do so, in order to not leave out youth whose families might not otherwise be able to afford membership in other organizations or teams. The Air Cadets are also among very few youth programs in our community, like 4H, Girl Guides and church youth groups, whose sole focus is not sports. Fundraising is integral to our no-cost program, and the cadets participate in fundraising to cover the cost of sports equipment, certain office supplies, and team equipment such as marksmanship supplies. Our squadron even sent a small number of cadets to Juno Beach last year for the 75th Anniversary of D-Day. The trip

overseas was a first for our squadron. Most of our cadets also complete the community service hours needed for their High School diploma through their involvement with our program.

The sponsor of the 908 Air Cadets is the Royal Canadian Legion, who has always been a steadfast supporter of our unit and believes that today's cadets become tomorrow's leaders. Unfortunately, unlike many Legion facilities in Canada, our Fort Frances Legion does not have enough space in the upstairs hall to conduct our training. In order to conduct "march past" and military formation drill, we need a large space such as that available at the arena to be able to conduct drill. Drill promotes both coordination and esprit de corps, a tradition which connects our cadets to both their mentors in the Canadian Forces, and the traditions of those who served proudly in uniform over our entire nation's history. Marksmanship training in the arena teaches eye hand coordination and focus, as well as developing the ability to remain calm and goal oriented. The arena hall offers a large enough area for us to conduct training in aviation, leadership, history, and citizenship.

Unlike some organizations in our community, we do not have the benefit of corporate sponsorship or the means to build ourselves a facility to accommodate the necessary space for marksmanship, sports, drill, as well as have office space for storage and administrative space to prepare lessons. The arena has uniquely afforded us the opportunity to have those resources since our inception for which we have been grateful. At a minimum, we need an auditorium as well as an office for storage and administration to meet the various needs of the program. We have benefitted from and have been assisted by the Moffat Grant, which has been crucial for us to help pay our rent. Our unit has always been willing to share our community arena with other organizations. The intention of the expansion of the arena was to serve the needs of the community, including social events, graduations, athletic clubs and others. We demonstrated this by changing our former meeting night of Wednesdays to Mondays this year to accommodate the new gymnastics club. Switching to Mondays has required us to be more flexible with our scheduling as we often miss training nights due to long weekends.

We understand that the Gymnastics organization has requested sole use of the facility we currently share. While we recognize the frustrations the Gymnastics organization have with sharing the space with us as well as the other user groups, we also have the needs of our own organization which are difficult to meet outside of this facility. This facility was built with the intention of providing an area that community groups could share. Equitable use of the facilities should be considered for all organizations; judo and karate clubs are tasked with finding similar independent locations. We would ask that Council take pause and consider the impact to not only our organization but all users of the facility.

Respectfully,



Capt Andrew Saciuk CD

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