

Where the Weather is Guaranteed: A Proposal for a Sportsdome in Miramichi

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You are looking across a green canvas. It is silent except for the soft pounding of your daughter's cleats as she runs toward the ball. You hold your breath as the two collide and the ball starts hurdling towards the net. Wait a minute. Back up. It's winter. How is anyone playing soccer when there is snow on the ground? Then you remember, you are sitting inside a sports complex. Every weekend you drive to Moncton to the Dundee Sports Dome, what if there was one at home? What if there was one in Miramichi? Building a sports dome in the area would promote wellness, help the economy and make athletes more competitive with other cities.

It would be a good idea for the people of the Miramichi area to accommodate a sports dome because of the wellness benefits it would provide. According to statistics from the Canadian Community Health survey conducted in 2006, the Miramichi region has the second highest obesity rate in Canada (Statistics Canada). Physical activity fights obesity and the development of many chronic diseases (Health Canada). Thus, a chain reaction begins. Healthier citizens will cut down on costly health problems in the future. As Carol Welch stated, "Movement is a medicine for creating change in a person's physical, emotional, and mental states." Healthy citizens would save the government money which would decrease health care costs. Furthermore, a sports dome would promote team spirit so citizens could use what they learned about working together in their everyday lives. Lorene Raymond with the School of Health and Human Performance at Dalhousie University, was recently interviewed on CBC Maritime Noon. She stated that students are no longer playing outside like they were twenty years ago. Now, people are not getting enough activity into their daily lives. Not only would

exercise be good for the body, but also for the mind. Studies show that physical activity actually makes people more intelligent (Raymond).

Not only would a sports dome benefit our citizens physically, it would also contribute to the area economically. Mark Noel, the head coach of the New Brunswick Canada games baseball team in 2009 and recently named the head coach for the 2013 Canada Games baseball team, has been involved with many sports. He explains that people keep talking about cost. How much is a healthy community worth to the city? The province? The country? Every dollar spent on recreation saves many dollars in health care down the road. In December 2010, the employment rate in the Miramichi area was 45.4% while the unemployment rate was at a staggering 17.1% (Skills Development Canada). A dome could create a public works project for the area which would give citizens some part time jobs. After completion, the dome would provide employment in the form of concession attendants, party hosts, referees and coaches. This would create some desperately needed jobs in the area. Athletes would also have to pay to use the facility, which would make the dome able to pay for its own operating costs without any major assistance from the government. A partnership with local school districts could make the dome more feasible for the city. Think of the MVHS pool where the school district owns it but the city runs it (Noel). In particular, the facility would give people one more reason to move to Miramichi, as it would be a big drawing card for new families. Miramichi's population would increase, and our economy would benefit.

If built on land that Miramichi already owns, a dome the size of the Dundee Dome in Moncton would cost approximately 1.38 million dollars. ("Miramichi Eyeing \$1.4 M...") However, that is a small price to pay for all of the economic and physical benefits a dome would provide the city. Mark Noel stated:

"As one of the most obese communities in Canada... a dome would offer citizens new forms of recreation as well as extending the season for those who are unable to play winter sports. Imagine if our seniors had a nice warm dome with a walking track that they could use every day. The poor kid who can't afford to play hockey – he could play soccer all year. We could also introduce new sports such as Ultimate Frisbee and lawn bowling. Just the novelty of a dome would attract people to come out and try it. One

other thing that is really underrated is the lift you get when it's minus 30 degrees outside and you get to go into a warm dome, with grass (artificial, but still...) and play a summer sport. It makes the winter blues go away." (Personal interview)

Mark's theory about athletes wanting to practice during the winter months proved correct when out of 120 students living in Miramichi, 95 stated they would use a sports dome if it was provided in their area. (Personal survey) Local athletes who play at a high performance level would be able to practice year round at their chosen sport without having to travel around the province. At present, top athletes in soccer, baseball, and track and field have to travel outside the local area to access indoor training facilities. The survey concluded that the most popular outdoor sport was soccer, with over half of the students involved with the sport. The dome would also offer sports such as paintball, golf and laser tag; people could come out, get active and have fun! As Bill Fleiger, a local baseball coach stated, it will provide the city with a "rain-or-shine venue to stay active." ("Miramichi Eyeing \$1.4M...")

People worry about where Miramichi will be in the future. Its health, economy, and the overall enjoyment of its citizens are a top priority. No matter what we do to make Miramichi a better place, one thing is clear: we need to make positive changes to get the city back on its feet, and 'back on the map'. As Mark Noel stated:

"Any sport that can be played on a field can be played in a dome. Soccer, baseball, field hockey, rugby, football, ultimate Frisbee, lawn bowling, paintball, golf. These are all sports that I have seen being played in other domes in New Brunswick."

In a dome, the weather is guaranteed. Young or old, athlete or couch potato, there is something for everyone inside a sports dome.

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