

greaterSaintJohn

Field house project closer to reality with capital campaign

COLIN MCPHAIL
TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

SAINT JOHN • The group behind the proposed Greater Saint John Field House project announced it passed the quarter mark of its \$3 million capital fundraising campaign while it awaits word on funding from the provincial and federal governments.

The Greater Saint John Field House Foundation Inc. unveiled some of the identified donors who have so far raised \$800,000 in support of the \$24-million recreation complex slated to be constructed at Exhibition Park in east Saint John.

That brings the total of committed funds for the project to \$10 million.

"This is absolutely outstanding," said Mayor Mel Norton during the announcement in Exhibition Park on Thursday.

"This is what a renaissance city does; it builds stuff like this for the future for the benefit of the whole community."

Of that \$10 million, Common Council has pledged \$4.2 million on the condition the federal and provincial government approve the Field House foundation's pending funding applications.

The remaining \$5 million was donated by the Saint John Exhibition Park Association, the group that owns the land on which the Field House would be built. That gift includes the gifted property, valued at \$800,000.

Bill MacMackin, the capital campaign chairman, said Thursday discussions with both levels of government continue and the fundraising committee is hopeful they will gain traction now the new federal government is settled in Ottawa.

Saint John-Rothesay MP Wayne Long was present for the announcement.

Both applications, which were filed in July, requested \$6 million, up \$500,000 from the initial ask of \$5.5 million.

MacMackin highlighted several individuals, families, organizations and businesses Thursday that contributed so far to the capital campaign. A group of 14 donors collectively raised \$515,000 for the naming rights of the running/walking track.

The group will dedicate the track to the memory of the late Walter Ellis. An



Bill MacMackin, chairman of the Field House capital campaign, announced the \$24-million project is closer to being a reality with \$800,000 fundraised so far. PHOTO: COLIN MCPHAIL/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

inductee of the New Brunswick and Saint John halls of fame, Ellis founded the Saint John Track Club and was a long time coach.

The naming rights for most other components of the Field House, including the building itself, are still available.

The proposed two-phase development includes an indoor running/walking track, turf fields and multi-purpose space. The second phase would expand the building to add two ice rinks.

If all goes according to plan, MacMackin said they could break ground on the 18-month construction project next year.

MacMackin said the facility's sprawling user group would suit people from high-performance athletes to

recreational types.

"It's important that you recognize this is a one-of-a-kind facility," he said. "There really isn't anything like it east of Montreal, and it's designed really for all ages and all abilities."

MacMackin said it fills the gap for non-ice-based sports in search of a year-round, indoor facility – a "national-calibre" competitive venue that could boost sports tourism in the city, he said.

Fundy Soccer president Jean Keith said it's precisely what the organization needs – so much so they contributed \$50,000 to the campaign.

"Strategically, this is a game changer for us," said Keith, adding the Field House would allow Fundy Soccer to expand their currently limited winter

programming.

"Soccer is not a summer sport anymore. It's a year-round sport, and we really see this as an opportunity to grow our sport."

MacMackin said the facility will be able to draw from the entire region, including the Kennebecasis Valley where dollars are being earmarked for ongoing or future recreation infrastructure projects. Among the potential projects is a field house in Rothesay.

"When you look at the membership of most of the sports organizations in the city, they're all regional," MacMackin said.

"They draw from Grand Bay to Hampton, and so really all of the user groups here reflect people who live in all parts of our greater community."

Initiatives seek business involvement in refugee resettlement

SARAH PETZ
TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise Saint John are launching a number of initiatives to engage the business community in Syrian refugee resettlement in Saint John.

The organizations are inviting community members to sign a "Welcome to Saint John" banner located at 40 King Street that will greet refugees as they arrive at the Saint John airport.

Businesses can also pick up a "Welcome to our Community" window decal, written in both English and Arabic, to hang in their window.

The chamber and Enterprise Saint John are also encouraging businesses to help pay for refugees' beds through their Buy a Bed campaign.

David Duplisea, CEO of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce, said a number of businesses have expressed interest in contributing to resettlement efforts for Syrian refugees in whatever way they can. He said the chamber and Enterprise Saint John's joint initiatives are meant to help ease refugees' transition into the city.

"This will be their new home, and



We can barely imagine what it must be like for those families.

DAVID DUPLISEA

we want them to feel like they're a part of our community," Duplisea said.

"It's devastating what they're going through, and we can barely imagine what it must be like for those families and the children to leave their homelands and come to a new place."

The Buy a Bed campaign is meant to help refugees with one of the largest expenditures that they'll likely have, considering many are coming with nearly nothing, Duplisea said.

Companies and individuals can buy a bed at \$400 a piece, or make smaller donations towards the purchase of a bed.

The two organizations are also organizing workplace seminars in January to help businesses better understand how they can play a role in helping refugees find employment and integrate into the community.

Interested businesses and individuals can contact either the chamber or Enterprise Saint John for more information on how to get involved.

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In Person

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