

Will a Jr. A team sink the Canucks?

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The possibility of a Jr. A hockey team in Dawson Creek has met with mixed and cautious reaction from both the Jr. B and senior men's teams presently operating in the city.

On Monday the City of Dawson Creek released the memorandum of understanding it had inked with Global Entertainment Corporation, the company that will manage the EnCana Events Centre in the South Peace Community Multiplex. In the agreement GEC announced it will put up \$1 million for an ice plant and a concrete floor for the centre and the company and the city will pursue a Jr. A franchise for Dawson Creek.

Should a Jr. A club come to the city, its presence will likely hurt the Junior Canucks the most, said Richard Frank, president of the local Jr. B team.

"As far as the Jr. B team goes, it will probably affect us greatly, more than the senior team, meaning we would probably not survive, but having said that if the support is there for a Jr. A team and the money is there to bring them to town I have no

trouble with it," said Frank.

"There might be a few players here in Dawson Creek who could play in the Jr. A ranks, but I have been around for a long time and to get a Jr. A team here is going to take a lot of work."

Meanwhile, Dawson Creek Canuck head coach Gene Cooper pointed out that his team likely won't be affected at the gate and a Jr. A team might even benefit the senior men's club.

"I don't think it will affect senior hockey because it's a step up even from Jr. A hockey. You are still dealing with the difference between teenagers and adults," explained Cooper. "As far as fan support, I am pretty sure that senior hockey will still have fan support in the community because of the style of hockey that it is and the rivalries that have been built over the years."

"It could possibly even help us in that some of the junior players would hang around and play senior hockey here."

But the coach wonders if a third team in Dawson Creek will cut into the limited funds of the advertisers and sponsors. Along with gate receipts both

the Junior Canucks and senior Canucks rely on local businesses to sponsor games, advertise in the program and offer giveaways.

"Where is the money going to come from?" asked Cooper. "The community is only big enough to do so much. Right now there is a Jr. B and senior team and our fan support is sufficient for us to get by, but the fan support that they would need to stay on top of their costs would be quite a bit. It will take a lot of money - the cost of fuel and road trips and bringing players in. Those costs fall on the shoulders of the community."

Former Canucks president Stu Minifie pointed out that he sees nothing wrong with a Jr. A franchise in the city, although all the teams will have to work that much harder to attract the advertising dollars.

"I don't have any problem with it and talking with some of the players they think it is a good thing," said Minifie. "Our product is a little different than Jr. A and I think we will survive. It will make it more difficult to get the advertising dollars, but that is life - if you want something you have to work at it."