



REPORT

Public Delegation

Fort Frances High School Track and Field Facilities Upgrade

February 25, 2024

Ms Heather Campbell
Director of Education
Rainy River District School Board

Dear Ms Campbell,

I represent a group who is seeking to upgrade the outdoor athletic facilities at the Fort Frances High School. Central to our request is a proposal to upgrade the current outdoor running oval to a proper rubber surfaced track. Track and Field coach John Dutton will be making the presentation, but I can assure you that this proposal has the full support of the Physical Education and Athletics Departments, and the Administration at Fort Frances High School.

I would like to formally request an opportunity to make a presentation before the School Board at their monthly meeting on March 5th, 2024. I have included presentation notes and materials for your consideration.

I look forward to av response at your earliest possible convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Dutton".

John Dutton
Track and Field Coach,
Fort Frances High School

Email – jdutton54@gmail.com
Cell – 807-275-6309

February 23, 2024

Dear Board Member,

For the past 44 years, it has been my pleasure and privilege to teach and coach students at Fort Frances High School. And I strongly believe that the activities, the extracurriculars that happen after the bell rings at the end of the day can play a vital role in a teenager's high school experience. One of the greatest joys in my life has been helping kids realize their potential whether it be through music, drama, or sports. And I have always promoted inclusion – come on out -give it a try – bring a friend. Because while many students have found their place at high school, many more have not. Many are shy, lack confidence, or the motivation to get involved, but only dream about stepping on the theatre stage or becoming a “Muskie” and proudly wearing that big capital “M” on their chest.

Some of you may remember me as a music teacher, but for the past 17 years I have been coaching our Cross Country and Track teams at the Fort High.

What do I love about Track and Field? Track offers 11 very different running events from sprints, to hurdles, to steeplechase and relays, and 6 field events for jumpers and throwers. There is something for every athlete, and at Fort High we do them all. We can boast one of the largest teams in the Northwest and one of the most successful, having sent up to a dozen athletes to OFSAA for the past 10 seasons. We had a very modest start back in 2006, when Natasha Shack and I could fit our entire Track Team in 2 Dodge minivans and not even fill all the seats. We had no resources, no equipment, and no medals – but kids were engaged and having fun.

Fast forward to 2023- our team was 75 members strong and filled 2 highway coaches to travel to meets. We hosted 2 track meets at Fort Frances High school this past spring: a grade 7-12 Intermediate/Senior meet with 190 participants, and a grades 4-6 Junior meet with over 100 young athletes from our local elementary schools. Both of these events were made possible by the student and parent volunteers who worked long hours as timers, marshalls and a variety of other officials required to run the many events at a track meet. The level of student, staff and community participation reaches far beyond the actual competitors. As a long-time coach, I couldn't be happier with the direction our programs are headed, and I couldn't be more proud of our student athletes; our future looks very bright. Indoor practices having been going for 3 weeks now, and we have more than 90 athletes out for the team this spring.

We have been very fortunate – we have recently purchased a high jump pit, and are awaiting arrival of new javelins, shots and discus. We also manage with a set of homemade PVC hurdles.

But what we are sadly lacking at Fort High, is an outdoor athletic facility that we can use to train safely and effectively. We struggle with unlevel and inconsistent surfaces to run on, and dedicate dozens of hours each year to grade, level and line our areas of play. In short, Fort Frances High School needs a proper rubber surfaced track along with the accompanying areas for throwing and jumping disciplines – the field events.

Building a track at Fort High would not only provide a proper training/competition venue for our Track and Cross-country athletes, but it would also enhance physical education programs here, and become a hub for Elementary Schools to hold running events, field days, and track meets. It would be available for extra-

curricular teams like hockey and football to use for dryland training, while providing a great place for all students and staff to work on staying more active and fit. Not to mention how attractive this would be to the community at large – there are currently hundreds of local residents who walk or run for daily exercise.

Sincerely,

John Dutton
Track and Field Coach,
Fort Frances High School

Email – jdutton54@gmail.com
Cell – 807-275-6309