

Montreal

Lack of sports infrastructure in Montréal-Nord means little ice time for youth hockey group

Hockey 4 Youth program needs help from borough if students are to play

[Sabrina Jonas](#) · CBC News · Posted: Oct 26, 2021 5:28 PM ET | Last Updated: October 26



Amanda La Rocca, a Grade 11 student at John F. Kennedy High School, says the Hockey 4 Youth program is the reason she still plays hockey today. The organization is trying to implement the program at a school in Montréal-Nord, but it's facing challenges due to lack of accessibility to sports facilities in the borough. (Dave St-Amant/CBC News)

[comments](#)

Grade 11 student Amanda La Rocca says she'd likely not be playing hockey anymore if not for a program at her high school in Montreal's Saint-Michel neighbourhood.

"Playing it here gave me more of a boost to play it because it was right in front of me and they encouraged us so much to do it," said the John F. Kennedy High School student of the Hockey 4 Youth foundation, which partnered with her school in 2017.

The non-profit organization seeks to make the national sport accessible for everyone by breaking down barriers that discourage girls, those in low-income households, BIPOC youths and new Canadians from playing hockey. It supplies equipment and organizes free ice time.

Now, after securing funding from the NHL, it wants to implement its program at another school — this time in Montréal-Nord. But it's hitting some roadblocks due to accessibility issues.

It's not surprising. A CBC data analysis earlier this month [revealed a lack of access to sports and recreational facilities in low-income neighbourhoods in Montreal.](#)

Moezine Hasham, founder and executive director of the foundation, reached out to CBC News after reading the report.





Moezine Hasham, founder and executive director of the Hockey 4 Youth foundation, right, says the city is not helping address the lack of sports facilities in Montréal-Nord as he scrambles to secure ice time for 30 girls at Henri-Bourassa high school. (Moezine Hasham)

"I was shocked at the lack of infrastructure and the lack of recreation facilities," he said, "and here we are providing a solution to get more kids into sport and unfortunately, we can't seem to find that the city of Montreal is willing to work with us."

The CBC analysis found that affluent boroughs have many more facilities than boroughs where the median income is lower. For example, in Île-Bizard–Sainte-Geneviève, there are 53 recreational facilities per 10,000 people. In Montréal-Nord, there are just 17.

Only 2 indoor rinks for free skating in Montréal-Nord

According to Hasham, the borough offers the use of an arena at times that are not convenient for the school Hockey 4 Youth is looking to partner with.

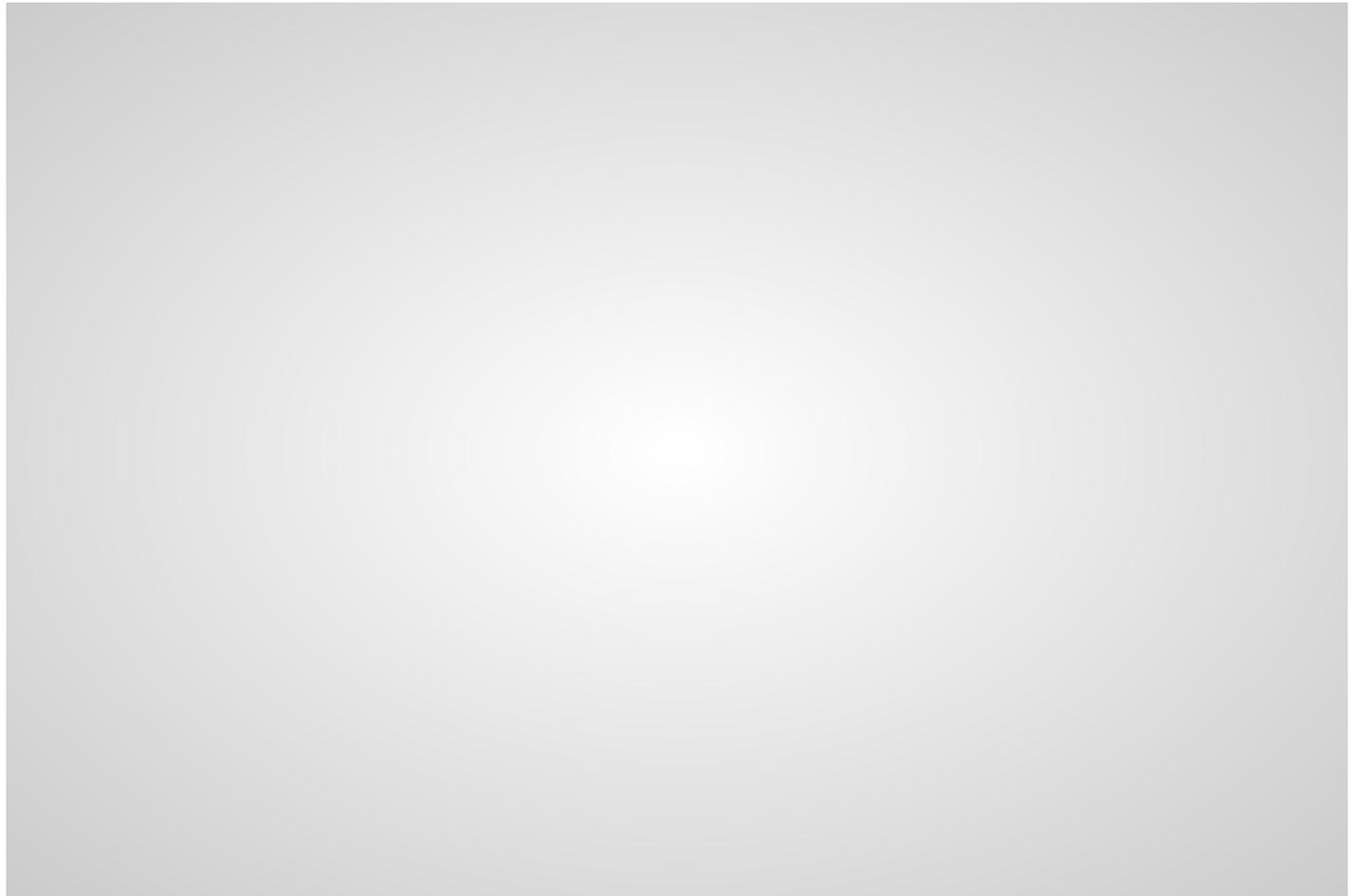
"We've been offered ice time during the [school]day, a 15-minute drive from École Henri-Bourassa," he said.

The organization is being offered the Fleury arena instead of the more convenient Rolland arena, an eight-minute walk away from the school.

"We're not going to pull kids from school to go play in a hockey program, but after-school is the time we're looking for."

Joseph Lamantia, a social science teacher at JFK school and co-ordinator of the hockey program, says the program offers only benefits to its students.

"It's a program designed for students who would not normally have access to ice hockey outside of school because of high registration fees and the cost of equipment," he said.



Massimo Arcaro says the hockey initiative at JFK is important for students because "the equipment is kind of expensive so not many people can afford it," otherwise. (Dave St. Amant/CBC News)

Student Massimo Arcaro adds not everyone has parents who would wake up early or have the means to get their kids to hockey practices should the program not be offered by the school.

"It's a really good stress reliever after school so yeah, it helps a lot," he said.

In a statement from the the borough of Montréal-Nord, a spokesperson says it's aware of how important sports are for young people and it is working to give more options to free and safe facilities.

“I'm not going to stand by and watch young people be denied access to recreation facilities.”

- Moezine Hasham, Hockey 4 Youth

That said, "there are only two rinks in two arenas for the periods of free skating for the citizens of the borough," the statement reads.

Moreover, the borough says Hasham's request for ice time came in past the deadline.

The borough says it has put Hasham in contact with the city of Montreal's sports department to help him find free ice that meets his needs and will continue working with Hockey 4 Youth to discuss reservations for next season.

- [Getting youth back to sports vital as restrictions begin to lift in Canada](#)
- **DATA ANALYSIS** [How sports and recreation facilities are unequally spread across Montreal](#)

That doesn't cut it for Hasham.

"I'm not going to stand by and watch young people be denied access to recreation facilities," he said.

"All we're saying is can you turn [some free skating time] into an opportunity for young people — in this case it's going to be 30 girls who have never skated before, never played hockey. Let's give them an opportunity to get out onto the ice."

Based on reporting by Chloe Ranaldi

CBC  Radio-Canada

©2021 CBC/Radio-Canada. All rights reserved.

Visitez Radio-Canada.ca