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Lancers need money for hopes of competing

By Nick Olynky
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The recent resignation of Lancer men's hockey coach, Pete Belliveau, raises an important, unknown issue at our school—Lancer athletics, particularly men's hockey, are terribly under-funded. I knew committing to the Lancer men's hockey team would mean making some sacrifices. I didn't think those sacrifices would be made on the ice.

All Ontario University Athletics (OUA) member universities, except the inaugural University of Ontario Institute of Technology, invest in a full-time coach, paid to manage and recruit for their programs. Our coach works on a part-time basis, throwing our perennial last place team in the basement before the season begins.

A part-time schedule allows few hours to adequately scout new players who could improve our team's record, worst in the province. Of course, our school is small and many say we don't have the funds. However, under-funding erroneously steals money from student's pockets because it dooms a program to failure.

Our season suffered from the beginning. During training camp, a veteran defenseman separated his shoulder. Since we had no qualified training staff in attendance, the player drove himself to the hospital. Lawsuit anyone?

Finally, two months into the season we attracted human kinetics student, Leo Culhane, to help us. Leo drastically altered his class schedule around our practices—as every athlete must do—so adequate services could be provided to our team. Even still, most OUA teams have full-time trainers hired from outside of the university, who not only tend to injured players, but also maintain equipment and team facilities.

While other comparably sized schools in the OUA, such as Lakehead (regular season champ) and Brock (division leader), root their hockey teams in lavish arenas, complete with workout facilities and offices, we are based in the Adie Knox Arena. Granted, our residence is moving—slowly—downtown to the ancient Windsor Arena, we still will practice out of the Knox, having to haul our own equipment, sticks, jerseys, water bottles, and more in our car's back seats. This inconvenience is compounded by half of our players not having cars.

The Knox is an average ice surface, but the dressing rooms are laid out terribly. Before games, we often stretch beside opponents. Our room, or should I say 'rooms,' are a joke. Half our team dresses in one room, while the other half dresses in another. The arena lacks laundry facilities, a basic requirement, so we haul our wet, stinking laundry to the St. Denis Centre for washing.

The St. Denis Centre is a beautiful facility with various offices. However, our coach's office, 'the dungeon' as we call it, is an unheated crawlspace beneath the Knox's cemented seats. Before bringing space heaters into this moldy hole, seeing your breath in the cold was common. I find these conditions hardly bearable for a professionally run organization's management.

On the other side of the bleachers, on the ice, we are provided with Christian and MK3 sticks instead of reputable Reebok's and Easton's our rivals, Western, receive. Imagine racing mini-vans against Mustangs. No wonder we didn't beat them once this year. Skaters are offered relatively new pants and gloves free of charge, but must buy their own skates, which cost \$750 per pair. For me, that cost equals nearly three month's rent.

As a player, taking pride in our team, program, and school is something I dearly want to do. The feeling of representing our school is why I give up 25 weekly hours of free time during the hockey season. I came over halfway across the country to play for the Lancers. However, I find it awfully hard to be proud of something our university only puts a half-hearted monetary effort into.

All Lancer teams need more funding. I wish the university luck in finding the men's hockey team a qualified, experienced coach willing to work under present conditions.

Hire a full-time coach and pay him adequately so we can improve our school's hockey team, and restore some pride around campus.