

Honeywood Arena to receive \$35,000 as finalist in 2025 Kraft Hockeyville Competition

By Brian Lockhart and Sam Odrowski

They didn't win the big prize, but Mulmur residents will still come out ahead in the 2025 Kraft Hockeyville Competition.

Honeywood Arena was announced as one of the four finalists in the competition to name Canada's top hockey town on Saturday, March 15.

Along with Honeywood, Lower Sackville in Nova Scotia, Crossfield in Alberta, and Saint-Boniface in Quebec were finalists vying for the most votes to be named the winning arena.

In the end, Boniface, Quebec took home the grand prize of \$250,000 for arena upgrades and a chance to host an NHL pre-season game. But Honeywood wasn't left empty-handed.

As a finalist, Honeywood Arena will receive \$25,000 in upgrades and \$10,000 worth of brand-new youth hockey equipment, courtesy of NHLPA Goals and Dreams.

However, there was some confusion about the contest's winner, with some Mulmur residents saying the Kraft Hockeyville website had Honeywood listed as the winner before the official announcement on April 5.

Kraft Hockeyville issued a statement in response on April 8, confirming that Boniface, Quebec did in fact receive the most votes and win the grand prize.

For nearly 20 years, Kraft Hockeyville has united communities nationwide through their shared love of local hockey. This year there was some confusion about the winner of Kraft Hockeyville 2025. Based on what we have heard, some visitors to our website noted seeing Honeywood, Ontario, mistakenly listed as the winning community. We read a statement from Kraft Hockeyville. We conducted a thorough investigation and can confirm with certainty that the website was working properly throughout the entirety of the Kraft Hockeyville 2025 competition.

The statement continues, We can confirm with certainty that Saint-Boniface, Québec, is the winner of Kraft Hockeyville 2025, having captured 31.8 per cent of the total vote. The other three finalists included: Lower Sackville, NS (27.4 per cent); Crossfield, AB (21.1 per cent); and, finally, Honeywood, ON (19.7 per cent).

Members of the Honeywood Hockeyville Organizing Committee planned a special two-day event leading up to the final announcement about which town would be the winner.

However, the ice storm knocked the power out in Honeywood and the arena was in darkness.

The Town of Shelburne pitched in to help and offered their arena so the event was moved to the Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex (CDRC).

The event kicked off on Friday, April 4, with a day-long celebration. There was free skating, a hockey skills competition, and former NHL players signing autographs.

A special girls' hockey game was played in the afternoon. Visitors had the chance to use desktops in the arena to cast votes for Honeywood to win the competition.

As it was also a school P.A. Day, there were plenty of kids who turned out for the event.

“We were always going to do something on the Friday (April 4) because that's when voting starts,” explained Jeanette McFarlane, lead organizer of the local Hockeyville fundraising team. “Whether or not people could gather, we were still going to do something. Kraft Hockeyville is an opportunity for older hockey arenas across Canada to win a prize ? \$250,000 ? for arena repairs and upgrades. The competition was open to the entire country. There were over 800 arenas nationwide and we were selected as one of the final four arenas. We had to fight for that position. We had to submit stories and photos and tell our story of why we should potentially win. There were times when arenas were neck and neck with points for all their submissions, but it comes down to the compelling story.”

Honeywood relied heavily on the fact that they have a lot of female hockey players who don't have the facilities to meet their needs.

“Right now, we have the highest enrollment of female athletes and hockey players and we do not have the proper change rooms ? the girls use the storage closet,” McFarlane said. “Today (April 4) is a community rally to get people to come out and vote. It's a 32-hour vote-a-thon.”

On Saturday, April 5, there was another festive event at the CDRC with an alumni game.

People gathered in the upstairs banquet room of the arena to watch Sportsnet Hockey Night in Canada when the winner would be announced live.

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) issued a statement on April 8 about the Dufferin County community coming together to ensure the Hockeyville event could take place, despite the power outages and severe weather that plagued Honeywood.

“Honeywood's participation in the competition not only showcased incredible community pride but also demonstrated resilience and unity in the face of adversity. Despite a devastating ice storm that impacted our local community, the people of Honeywood continued to rise above the challenges, embracing the spirit of togetherness that defines Dufferin County,” reads the statement from Dufferin OPP.

“A special mention must also be made to the Town of Shelburne, who in true Dufferin County fashion, stepped up in a major way to ensure the festivities continued. Shelburne opened the doors of their arena, allowing the event to go on, ensuring that the community could still come together to celebrate the spirit of hockey and the power of community.”

The Hockeyville competition started on Jan. 1, with the Nomination and Rally phase. Community members submitted nominations and explained why the Honeywood Arena is so important to them and the community.

Honeywood Arena needs new change rooms. The current rooms are small and outdated and when girls play on boys' teams, they have to dress separately in a small closet-type area.

The arena was hoping to use the money to build some new change facilities.

The current Honeywood arena was built in 1965. It is the third arena at that location.

The original rink was built in 1912. After a roof collapse due to heavy snow, a second arena was built in 1948, but tragedy struck when the building went up in flames in 1965.

As a finalist, Honeywood will receive \$25,000 in upgrades to their local arena and \$10,000 worth of brand-new youth hockey equipment, courtesy of NHLPA Goals and Dreams.

“We are very grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Kraft Hockeyville competition. It brought awareness to the

myHoneywood campaign and the needs of the Honeywood Arena. We would like to thank all of the incredible volunteers who gave their time, energy, and heart to make our Kraft Hockeyville weekend unforgettable ? we are beyond grateful,? said Roseann Knechtel, Township of Mulmur Clerk.

?While we didn't take home the top prize, we're still celebrating with \$25,000 being given towards arena upgrades and \$10,000 in equipment. And most importantly, a community that came together like never before. We are truly ONE TEAM.?