

If Ryan Smith can't afford his own entertainment district, I have no choice but to assume he is poor

If you haven't heard, Ryan Smith, the so-called billionaire owner of the Utah Jazz and the Utah Unnamed Hockey Team (#OutlawsOrBust) wants almost \$1 billion in taxpayer money to help build an entertainment district in downtown Salt Lake City.

The reason he wants to build an entertainment district is so that the Smith Entertainment Group can own the place where people spend money before and after sports games, not just during sports games. This public money would come via a 0.5% increase in Salt Lake City sales tax, and if he doesn't get it, there are credible threats that he'll move both teams to the bustling cultural hub of "checks notes" Draper.

Yes, Ryan Smith is a billionaire who needs a billion more dollars to complete this project that will earn him billions of dollars. Which leads me to what I believe is a logical conclusion — he is not, in fact, a billionaire. Because if he had billions of dollars, he would be able to invest those billions in the project that would earn him billions. He can't, and so I'm beginning to doubt that those billions exist.

Ryan, let's talk poor person to



BRIAN HIGGINS

poor person. You can't just keep asking public money.

Sure, it starts out innocently enough. You burn some cash off your buddy for a round of drinks. You ask your roommate to cover the electric bill this month. You increase taxes on a city that's already getting more unfavorable for everyday people each year. It's a slippery slope.

Because what if people start asking for their money back? Any fellow poor person will tell you that those Venmo requests start to pile up fast. \$10 for lunch. \$15 for your share of the bar tab. \$40 for concert tickets. \$54 million annually for 30 years for three blocks of downtown Salt Lake City. You can't ignore those notifications



Ryan Smith, co-founder of Qualtrics, helps kick off the X4 tech conference summit at the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City on May 1.

forever!

Doubtless to my "Ryan Smith is poor" theory might point out that Ryan Smith's entertainment group is contributing \$3 billion of its own money to the project. Exactly — its last \$3 billion. Now, flat broke, Ryan Smith needs help finishing a project that was way more expensive than he thought it would be.

Anyone who has ever tried to build a deck understands.

It's tough out there, Ryan, but you can't just ask people for hand-outs. You've gotta find ways to stretch your dollar instead. Here are some everyday tips for saving some green:

» Make coffee at home instead of going to the cafe.

» Incorporate more legumes into your meals; they're a cheap way to get protein.

» Buy generic. (I know you've got an exclusive deal with Coke products at the Delta Center, but with a little imagination, Kroger brand can taste just as good.)

» Donate plasma. It's an easy way to earn some money on the side, and you can make over \$700 in your first month!

» Don't buy things you can't afford, like a flashy new smartwatch or a cool new jacket or a professional hockey team.

We're all facing challenges in these hard economic times, Ryan, whether that means figuring out where your next rent check is coming from or how to use public money to create an enormous new income stream that will fundamentally change downtown SLC.

But we're all in this together! Feel free to reach out to me if you need any more tips on how to have fun on a budget. Half-priced movie nights are always a fun time, and Jazz tickets are usually pretty cheap because, boy, do they suck.

Brian Higgins is a writer and comedian in Salt Lake City.

Parry

Did you know that the Iroquois Nation leadership does not make any decisions without considering what effect that decision will have on seven generations ahead? Think about the implications for our future, if that is how leaders are governed. There is an old Native American proverb that says, "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children." What kind of world are we leaving them? What will their world like?

By embracing the principles of community, stewardship and sustainability, which is inherent in Indigenous cultures, we can pave the way for a more harmonious future.

By forming new kinships, forging new solidarities and renewing our relationships, we can address both the social and ecological needs that our current capitalist system is failing to address.

Scientists are finally discovering what tribal elders have been teaching for generations, that we are all connected. Politicians are finally discovering what the Iroquois already knew, that we must govern for the benefit of future generations. We cannot sacrifice our children and grandchildren's future, for the sake of short-term profits. There is not enough science in the world to overcome our selfish behaviors.

We are in the midst of a massive paradigm shift. Now is the time to build together Indigenous knowledge and values about our

stewardship, with cutting-edge science and innovation to create policies that steward our water and our environment and our climate for the foreseeable future. This will require a collaborative approach that recognizes the importance of both knowledge systems. When you assume that scientific knowledge is superior to Indigenous wisdom, you make collaboration impossible.

The proposed Inland Port and the continued pursuit of the Bear River Development not only threatens to pollute our air and congest our streets — they risk depleting the precious water resources needed to sustain the Great Salt Lake.

Almost 10 years ago, the Standing Rock Sioux tribe from South Dakota found themselves in an environmental crisis. This movement was the largest gathering of

Indigenous peoples and allies in over a century. A central theme that motivated tens of thousands of people to participate was, "Mni wiconi," or "Water is Life." This phrase meant was that the growth and prosperity promised by an oil pipeline was not worth sacrificing our sacred obligation to protect the water that nourishes all of us.

Some fossil fuels are inevitable, and will be needed until other forms of green energy are developed, but by investing in green infrastructure, promoting renewable energy and implementing water conservation measures, we can protect our environment and ensure that our community thrives without sacrificing our natural and cultural resources. These solutions honor the earth and preserve it for

future generations, fostering a legacy of environmental stewardship and justice.

Darren Parry is the former Chairman of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation. Darren serves on the Board of Directors for Utah Humanities and the PBS Utah. He attended the University of Utah and Weber State University and received his Bachelor's Degree in Education. In 2024, he received an Honorary PhD in Education from Utah State University. Darren is the author of "The Bear River Massacre, A Shoshone History" and teaches in the Environmental Humanities department at the University of Utah. He lectures around the country on Native American issues surrounding history and Indigenous views related to sustainability.

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