



## LEADERS IN COMMUNITY SPORT

October 8, 2020

To our OMHA Hockey Family,

I would like to start by saying I hope you, your families and communities are safe as you come to grips with the new normal. We have all been faced with living our lives differently than any of us would have expected or even believed possible seven months ago. Those changes include the way we conduct our lives, work, go to school and of course, play hockey.

As the summer progressed the OMHA Board was busy trying to decipher the constant stream of ever-changing information and trying to make sense of it to pass along to the players, parents and Minor Hockey Associations. It was certainly confusing at times and left everyone shaking their heads trying figure out exactly what was going on or expected moving forward. I want to let everyone know that the OMHA Board was diligently trying to process and provide the necessary information to our Members as it was provided to us by our governing bodies - Hockey Canada and the Ontario Hockey Federation.

The Ontario Hockey Federation produced a Return to Play framework outlining the different stages of our return to hockey operations. The minor details of the plan were in short supply but the general plan was comprehensive and provided goals to reach, as the Province of Ontario slowly opened up and got people back to work and permitted sports to start up again. It was these minor details that caused the confusion for many, including the OMHA Board. Things literally changed day to day. The OMHA has been criticized for failing to keep the information to the Minor Hockey Associations precise and complete but with the daily changes it was made impossible. The OMHA believed the most accurate information was more important than creating additional confusion by providing information that changed or was incomplete.

The OMHA's Return to Play Policy followed that of the Ontario Hockey Federation framework. It was the position of the OMHA to move forward slowly with the safety, health and welfare of our players the major determining factor as we opened up hockey operations. The OMHA believes in Hometown Hockey and as such we know community involvement is a major part of our hockey season. It was for this reason that we also took into account the safety and wellbeing of parents, siblings, grandparents and the entire community which all play a role in OMHA hockey season.

Although everyone wants to start traditional five on five hockey, it is the OMHA's position that we are not there yet. As COVID-19 cases rise in the more populous areas it has become more evident a return too early is not safe nor in the best interest of our communities. We will not be pausing our OMHA programming at this time but may do so if advised by the Province of Ontario, the Public Health Unit or our governing bodies advise we must do so. We will eventually get back to hockey, but patience is required.

I would like to thank our Minor Hockey Associations and OMHA Regional Directors for their hard work preparing the return to play plans. This is an exercise that no hockey administrator ever thought would be their responsibility when they joined their Associations or the OMHA Board. To the players and parents - please support your home Associations, team and on-ice officials so we can get everyone of you back on the ice and watching hockey safely.

The OMHA can assure the players and parents that we want you on the ice as soon as possible but we will not jeopardize your safety and rush a return to the game before we are certain it is safe to do so.

Please be safe, take the advice of the medical community on the steps to prevent the spread of this disease and we will all get back to the game we love sooner than later.

Bob Hill  
OMHA President