



HOCKEY CANADA

Action Bulletin d'action

Bulletin No.: A2309

To: Directors
Member Presidents
Member Executive Directors
Life Patrons
Hockey Canada Staff

Date: September 13, 2023

From: Hugh Fraser, Chair of the Board & Katherine Henderson, President and CEO

**SUBJECT: NON-SANCTIONED LEAGUES – LEAGUES OPERATING
OUTSIDE THE AUSPICES OF HOCKEY CANADA**

I. Overview – The LTAD Model

As the governing body of amateur hockey in Canada, Hockey Canada is committed to offering the best development programs in the world. Hockey Canada and our Members have invested significant resources in the development of officials, coaches, administrators and players countrywide. We have a committed strategy toward a cohesive long term athlete development (LTAD) model and we feel our programs are second to none in sport.

The LTAD model is intended to optimize athlete development and performance. Excessive on-ice activity, particularly in high-intensity games may: (a) hinder athlete development; (b) cause repetitive strain injuries and (c) lead to athlete burn-out. The LTAD model sets out specific parameters for weekly on-ice participation, to ensure that players are not over-competing and under training and have sufficient time for rest and recovery. The goal of the LTAD model is to keep as many players playing at as high a level as possible for as long as possible.

Hockey Canada's LTAD model includes a competitive stream and a recreational stream. The model is age appropriate, with increasing levels of on-ice activity (games and practices) as an athlete grows older. Players within the same age group engage in different levels of on-ice activity, depending on the stream in which they are participating.

The commitment level required to play on a team that is eligible to compete for a Regional

or National Championship is significant. Under the LTAD model, an athlete participating at the competitive level as a 15 year old will, on average, be on the ice at least four times per week during the hockey season. That frequency can increase even further for Junior aged players.

II. Non-Sanctioned Hockey and its Impact on the LTAD Model

Despite, or perhaps because of, our success in delivering quality programming throughout Canada, other organizations operating outside our structure form leagues from time to time that offer various levels of amateur hockey programming. These “non-sanctioned” organizations do not support the development of Hockey Canada or Member programs. Further, they operate with limited, or no consideration to the impact of their programs on minor, junior, senior, adult recreational hockey, officiating development, female hockey, coaching development or administrator development in Canada. These Non- Sanctioned Leagues choose instead, in many instances, to utilize resources already developed by Hockey Canada and its Members.

Because these Non-Sanctioned Leagues operate outside of our structure, Hockey Canada has no way of ensuring that those Leagues implement many of the fundamental safeguards inherent in Hockey Canada programs and the LTAD model. Those Leagues may not be using the same Playing Rules that Hockey Canada has implemented to protect player safety and may not provide adequate insurance for their participants. Hockey Canada also cannot ensure that the quality of play in these Leagues matches the level advertised.

III. Definitions

“**Bench Staff**” means coaches, assistant coaches and trainers.

“**Cut-Off Date**” means September 30 of the hockey season in question.

“**League**” means a Non-Sanctioned League.

“**Non-Sanctioned League**” includes any amateur hockey league that operates in Canada outside the auspices/sanctioning of Hockey Canada, or in any other country outside the auspices/sanctioning of the Member National Association of the International Ice Hockey Federation in that country. This currently does not include summer hockey leagues/teams, adult recreational hockey leagues/teams, high school hockey, college or university hockey, and/or hockey schools.

“**Participate**” means to engage, knowingly or otherwise, in an activity within a Non-Sanctioned League that could only be engaged in within Hockey Canada if the participant was properly registered on the Hockey Canada Registry. Such activity includes, without limitation, playing, managing, coaching, officiating, or acting as a trainer.

“**Participation**” in a Non-Sanctioned League will be considered to have occurred if the individual takes part in one game (including an exhibition, tournament, league or playoff game) after the Cut-Off Date.

IV. Consequences of Supporting or Participating in a Non-Sanctioned League

Hockey Canada respects the right of every individual at the beginning of each hockey season to choose between participating in a league sanctioned by Hockey Canada, or in a Non-Sanctioned League. Participating in both a Non-Sanctioned Hockey League and a sanctioned league, however, is inconsistent with the LTAD model, particularly for players and Bench Staff in Hockey Canada's competitive stream. Every individual who makes the choice to Participate in a Non-Sanctioned League, therefore, must understand the ramifications of that choice on their ability to participate in Hockey Canada's programming, as described in greater detail below.

A. Players Participating in a Non-Sanctioned League in Canada

- 1) In recognition of the high level of commitment required from players participating in the competitive stream under our LTDP model, Hockey Canada Regulation M.3 only allows those players to register with one team, if that team is eligible to compete for a Regional or National Championship. Consistent with those Regulations, any player who chooses to participate in a Non-Sanctioned League after the Cut-Off Date will be ineligible to register with or affiliate to a Hockey Canada team that is eligible to compete for a Regional or National Championship for the remainder of that season, subject to paragraph (2) below.
- 2) Notwithstanding the consequences listed in paragraph 1), any player who Participates in a Non Sanctioned League after the Cut-Off Date and ceases that Participation at some point during the hockey season, is entitled to seek early reinstatement of their privileges within Hockey Canada prior to February 10 by appealing to Hockey Canada's Non-Sanctioned Hockey Reinstatement Committee, which may grant early reinstatement only if it is satisfied that: (a) special circumstances exist; and (b) the player seeking reinstatement will not be displacing a player from the team of the roster he or she is seeking to join. **Any player who Participates in a Non-Sanctioned League after the Cut-Off Date and is seeking reinstatement, shall be ineligible to register with, or affiliate to, any team that is eligible to compete for a National Championship for the remainder of the season. No team that is eligible to compete for a National Championship may rely on Regulation G.10 to prevent the player from returning to Hockey Canada programming in a lower Division or Category through the reinstatement process.**
- 3) In an effort to be as inclusive as possible, and in recognition of the fact that a lesser commitment level may be required of players not playing on a Regional or National championship eligible team, the provisions of this section IV.A shall only apply to players who are seeking to play on teams are eligible to compete for a Regional or National Championship. In accordance with Hockey Canada By-Law 10.2 Members shall have the right to apply the policy more restrictively, as described in section V of this Policy, to meet the unique program delivery issues within their respective geographic regions.

B. Players Participating in a Non-Sanctioned League Outside Canada

Hockey Canada's Regulations prescribe the manner in which players are permitted to move

from teams registered with other Member National Associations (MNA) of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) to Hockey Canada. For leagues that choose not to register with the Member National Association in their country, Hockey Canada must implement appropriate measures to control orderly player movement from those leagues to Hockey Canada teams.

Any individual who participates in a Non-Sanctioned League outside Canada after the Cut-Off Date, and wishes to register with *any* Hockey Canada team after the Cut-Off Date must follow the reinstatement process described in section IV.A.2 above.

C. Non-Player Participants (Bench Staff)

Hockey Canada believes that it is important for its Registered Participants, particularly those involved in the game in the competitive stream, to subscribe to and support the principles found in the LTAD Model. This includes Bench Staff, who are expected to be role models for the players, and champions of the LTAD model. If a non-player Participant chooses to Participate in a Non-Sanctioned League after the Cut-Off Date, they will not be permitted to be a member of the Bench Staff of any Hockey Canada team for the remainder of that season.

D. Non-Player Participants (Officials)

On-Ice Officials, including referees and linesmen, are representing Hockey Canada when they officiate Hockey Canada sanctioned games. It is expected, therefore, that they will be strong supporters of Hockey Canada's LTAD model and will not generally engage in officiating in Non-Sanctioned Leagues. If any Official chooses to officiate Non-Sanctioned League games, that participation may be taken into account in determining whether that Official will be granted assignments for Hockey Canada sanctioned programming for the remainder of that season.

V. Further Restrictions re. Non-Sanctioned Hockey

Members may implement more restrictive Non-Sanctioned Hockey policies for Divisions and Categories of hockey that do not compete for Regional or National Championships. Any Member implementing such a policy must take appropriate measures to ensure that no player who has Participated in a Non-Sanctioned League after the Cut-Off Date, is able to play on a team that is eligible to compete for a Regional or National Championship, either through registration with, or affiliation to, that team, for the remainder of that season, without following the reinstatement procedure described in section IV.A.2 of this Policy.

VI. Other Considerations

This Policy should only be applied to individuals who are Participants in Non-Sanctioned Leagues. A parent or sibling should not be prevented from participating fully in Hockey Canada programming solely because their child, brother or sister is playing in a Non-Sanctioned League.

As the governing body of amateur hockey in Canada, and in the interests of bettering the game of hockey in our country, Hockey Canada recognizes that its mission to lead, develop and promote positive hockey experiences, extends to the sharing of its expertise with anyone who might benefit from it, including those who have chosen to Participate in hockey programming in a Non-Sanctioned League. Individuals should be permitted to participate in Hockey Canada coaching, officiating, and trainer clinics, therefore, even if they are currently Participating, or intend to Participate, as a coach, official, or trainer in a Non-Sanctioned League. Members may wish to consider charging Participants in Non-Sanctioned Leagues a higher fee for these clinics, as a means of illustrating the value of being a Registered Participant of Hockey Canada.

The consequences described in this Bulletin will remain in effect even if the Non-Sanctioned League or team folds, or the Participant is released, suspended or fired from that League or team.