



STONEY CREEK MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

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To the members of Stoney Creek Minor Hockey Association:

Over the course of the past season the SCMHA together with the Associations of Hamilton, Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook, Hamilton Jr. Bulldogs, Hamilton Huskies and the Hamilton Hockey Council have all been in discussions with each other, the City of Hamilton and their respective member partners, OMHA and Alliance to try and rectify many issues facing the changing state of hockey in the City of Hamilton and the significant hurdles that drive players away from organized hockey which ultimately affects each of the above listed participants. Collectively we have identified significant factors that have led to a decrease in membership, attrition to unsanctioned leagues or frankly just leaving the sport in its entirety due to discontent. Some of these factors include but are not limited to residential boundary restrictions, right of choice of where to play, lack of competitive play, equal opportunities, sub-standard facilities and overall costs.

The unique landscape of Hamilton has resulted in seven associations allocating players based on an archaic and outdated residential boundary system. This boundary system benefited association interests when there was an abundance of players. This same system is now a hindrance on positive growth for many small associations within the City of Hamilton; it simply does not work anymore. The substantial decline in hockey participation across the community has resulted in simply not enough players to make it all work, or on the other hand, too many Representative teams in the City all fighting over a smaller piece of the pie of available registrations. Regardless of the argument or reasons for the issues, it has left many of the centres including Stoney Creek short on competitive teams and skilled players and therefore struggling in many aspects of the sport. Due to their lack of competitiveness these struggling centres inevitably begin to foster an environment of discontent as teams go winless, players, parents and coaches express frustration with the same thing happening over and over again, season after season with the same results. This has and will continue to push individuals to seek other viable options.

We are aware of rumours, statements and speculations about our very own Stoney Creek Warriors program. I have until now remained reserved in our position and the information that has been distributed amongst the hockey community. I believe in a platform based on truth and facts and until recently, there really has not been anything to openly discuss. I also truly believe that during these challenging times we need to focus on the positive aspects of our Association. I want the membership to focus on what is important and that is keeping kids on the ice enjoying this game, learning and developing to be both better athletes and people. I want the membership to focus on our Association goals: ***organizing, developing and promoting minor ice hockey for the youth of Stoney Creek, including the opportunity for all Stoney Creek youth to participate in recreational house league ice hockey and the development of and participation in competitive representative ice hockey.***

Flooding the membership with speculative statements of what hasn't transpired in my opinion is counter intuitive. Over the course of this season when asked, I have maintained that the Board of Directors for Stoney Creek Minor Hockey are working diligently to explore any and all options that will provide long-term solutions and to ensure that we are viable for another 65 years. Stoney Creek Minor Hockey will remain a leader and an advocate for the necessary changes within the hockey community and City of Hamilton. We will do this by exploring all possibilities and making decisions that are in the best interest of the sport. We will also do this with integrity to ensure we do not make false statements or claims during these times. We will do our best to ensure that all of our current relationships stay intact as we develop new and potentially positive relationships to assist in our quest for a better hockey environment. With that being said, we will also hold others around us accountable to their responsibilities within the sport and City of Hamilton. Until otherwise announced, Stoney Creek Minor Hockey will remain status quo with its current model. This does not mean we do not believe that change is necessary; we certainly recognize that change is necessary. It means that we have obligations to remain members in good standing within the hockey community and its current model and will continue to do so until a solution that is acceptable to the Board of Directors is found.

Our hope is that the beginning of change will start on February 7, 2018. The scheduled Town Hall discussion is an opportunity for the membership of Stoney Creek Minor Hockey to come together as one to collectively and openly discuss viable and constructive solutions.

SCMHA has been working with other Associations within the City of Hamilton that share our same passion and vision as it pertains to necessary change. Over the course of the last year, we have made great strides in collaborating with Dundas, Flamborough and the Hamilton Huskies. We all share similar issues and felt by coming together we would be able to solve these issues as there is strength in numbers. I will not speak to their matters, only our own, but will state on the record that I support each of these associations in their positions and desired directions as voted by their current Boards and memberships.

I will now address questions and comments that have been brought forward.

Q – Is Stoney Creek amalgamating?

A – NO, currently SCMHA does not have any intention of amalgamating with any associations. We do recognize that this would be a viable option and have explored this in the past. Our preference is to rebuild SCMHA to the level that we once held within the hockey community.

Q – Is Stoney Creek amalgamating with Glanbrook?

A – NO, this was something that was being discussed between the two Associations as far as having applications and discussions with the OMHA. However, communication has since ceased and the opportunity is no longer being discussed.

Q- Is Stoney Creek Minor Hockey bankrupt?

A – Absolutely not, of course there has been reduced income due to the lack of registrations over the past seasons but our overhead has also been greatly diminished as a result. As well, we have openly paid higher ice costs for Gateway Arena and felt this would be an investment to the future as the City of Hamilton has no intention of providing Stoney Creek with premier facilities as they have for Flamborough and Ancaster. We are a not-for-profit organization and will continue to operate above board in this capacity.

Q – Is Stoney Creek merging with the Huskies?

A – NO, there is no merger forthcoming at this time.

Q – What is going on with the Huskies?

A – SCMHA has a tentative agreement in place to work in concert with the Huskies to achieve a better balance within the hockey community and City of Hamilton.

Q – Is Stoney Creek moving to the Alliance

A – SCMHA has made a formal application to explore this possibility. However, at this time we are members of the OMHA and will continue to respect our current member partner as we explore these options. We do firmly believe that this would be a viable solution to several of our issues within Stoney Creek.

Q – Is Stoney Creek looking to move away from the AAA Hamilton Junior Bulldogs?

A – The Stoney Creek Board of Directors have voted to explore and apply to invoke our right to change our AAA zone. This is only in its infancy and we are exploring every and all opportunities as it pertains to the long-term growth of SCMHA. At this time, we are remaining status quo in our current relationship model.

This past season saw many discussions with all of the involved parties and unfortunately an overwhelming lack of support from our partners. Our SCMHA Board of Directors decided to enter into a facilitation process together with the OMHA and Alliance of Ontario for the purpose of investigating the option of changing member partners in the best interest of the Association. The Alliance model specifically fits our paradigm better. It offers us many solutions to address our needs in one action. The daily operation of any potential change will be negligible. It does not change our structure or operative model. The day to day operations remain as is. If anything, from a Recreational Hockey perspective a potential move to the Alliance will see more opportunities for inter-city play. From a Representative Hockey perspective, we will see our teams play in a competitive tiered seeded league that will ensure

competitive play through the course of season. Additional advantages to hockey under the Alliance umbrella include less weekday travel games, and in most cases shorter travel distances. As a result, it will increase Association pride, foster more confidence in the kids as they are always playing in competitive games and which will ultimately result in better development and desire to play.

This is an overview of the proceedings to date; the discussions are ongoing and the membership will be updated as more information becomes available. The views and opinions of the membership are of the utmost priority. The decisions made by your Board of Directors are made in the best interests of Stoney Creek Minor Hockey Association and to ensure its viability for the future.

Should you have any concerns, questions or would like to express your opinion, I encourage you to contact me directly at stevejohnson@scmha.ca

Sincerely,

Steven W. Johnson

Steven W. Johnson
President
Stoney Creek Minor Hockey Association