

January 13, 2010

Dear Cochrane Hockey Parents:

We hope that you had a relaxing holiday season and we would like to wish you all the best for 2010.

As we approach the midway point of our hockey season, we are pleased and rewarded to see the continued development of our players' hockey skills their smiling faces at the arenas. We thank you for your patience and understanding in dealing with our ice scheduling challenges. Your support has been appreciated.

We would like to take this opportunity to update you on the status of our season and to outline our plan to fix any deficiencies. We are very pleased with the long term opportunities available to us in Cochrane, in what we believe to be one of Western Canada's premier hockey facilities, Spray Lake Sawmills Family Sports Centre.

First of all, we believe it is necessary for us to accept our share of the responsibility for underestimating the scope of changes necessary in going from two rinks and a minimum program size, to the 4 rinks and an expanded program for the 2009-2010 season. The ice scheduling process is a complex and fluid one that requires for us to manage and coordinate over 800 players on 58 teams in 7 different leagues against teams in communities all over Central Alberta. We realize that additional resources were required to handle the critical task of communicating back to you, our parents. We are taking the necessary steps to ensure that we have the necessary resources in place to facilitate a seamless communication process going forward.

In September, the two new sheets of ice opened both a full year early, and at the same time, a week or so later than expected. We are proud of the fact that our access to ice and the quality and option of the programs offered by CMHA (Cochrane Minor Hockey Association) are second to none in any similar community.

As most of you know, our administrator resigned in November after working many long hours during the registration, tryout, and initial scheduling period. Transitioning administrators could not have come at a worse time with CAHL (Central Alberta Hockey League) re-tiering. We have hired a new administrator on an interim basis.

**We provide this update to both inform and solicit feedback from our membership. Please provide your comments, feedback and questions by email to [cmhadmin@telus.net](mailto:cmhadmin@telus.net). We look forward to hearing from you, be it**

**good or instructive. The identity of respondents will be maintained as confidential.**

## **STATUS UPDATE**

- **Registration**

We used a new on-line registration system this year and quickly discovered its limitations in consolidating the necessary personal information. This has created some delays in crediting some refunds and obtaining full payment for previously unpaid registrations. This will be completed shortly. Last year we collected full fees from 100% of our participating players, but as always it took some work. Next year we plan to allow credit cards for on-line registration which will make registration easier for you and reduce the work load for the Registrar and Finance Director.

- **Tryouts**

Tryouts this year were a mixed success. We chose not to contract Cremona ice for tryouts, but likely should have because the new Spray Lake ice was a week later than we'd planned (although a full season earlier than originally promised). We included a two "coach pick" skating format for Rep hockey, and more goalie evaluations, both of which were well received but used up ice time. Unfortunately, this impacted our House program tryouts, as they were the least time sensitive. We regret the fact that the House program got off to a less than fully successful start.

- **House program**

Our House program is managed in conjunction with Airdrie and Canmore. The Novice and Atom house leagues are run jointly with Canmore, and the Peewee, Bantam and Midget house leagues are run jointly with Airdrie. By running joint programs we no longer have to wait until registration is completed to determine whether we have enough players to run a house program. The Midget house program is in its first year, and feedback has been positive. Scheduling of house ice is now complete and program standard for total ice for the season will be met.

- **Female program**

Our female Peewee and Bantam teams are playing this year in the Rocky Mountain Female Hockey League, which includes Calgary and surrounding towns. This means significantly less travel than playing in CAHL. The female teams also were impacted by the ice shortage during evaluations.

- **Rep and AA programs**

With the start-up of two new sheets of ice at the Spray Lake Sawmills Family Sports Centre, we have increased practice time for the Rep program and AA program by 50%. This is a significant increase, and was funded by a proportional increase in fees. Feedback has been positive, with players and

parents appreciating the extra practice time. More practice time leads to greater player development. We have also consolidated all of our practice ice in Cochrane. In past years we used significant practice ice in Cremona, primarily for our AA program.

- **AAA program**

This year we have two AAA teams playing out of Cochrane. The AC Avalanche is the Minor Midget (15 year olds) AAA boys' team which is jointly managed by Cochrane and Airdrie. Airdrie hosts the Bantam AAA boys, and Strathmore hosts the Midget AAA boys. Also we have a AAA Female Bantam team (Raiders) who have half their practices and all their games in Cochrane. The AAA Midget Female team alternates practices between High River and Cochrane (so in effect we have one full female AAA team). This has substantially reduced travel time for our female players, since the alternative was to run the Bantam AAA team out of Blackie.

- **Ice schedule**

Coaches have the complete season schedule and we would like to thank our coaches and you, our parents, for accommodating some earlier practice ice times (4 pm). We will be posting our January, February and March game schedule in the next few days. We remain hopeful that we will deliver our program standards for all of our teams with the Cochrane ice plus the game ice that we have booked in Cremona, Canmore and The Edge School. Eric Diggins, our Facilities Director, is currently working through our post-season and provincials schedules. **Team managers are reminded to contact Eric directly ([digginsfamily@shaw.ca](mailto:digginsfamily@shaw.ca)) with any scheduling inquiries or requests.**

## **ENHANCEMENTS**

CMHA and Spray Lake understand the need for partnership. Gerry Smith, former VP Operations for CMHA, has just joined the Spray Lake Sawmills Recreation Parks Society Board, and is working with CMHA to address the scheduling issues. Additionally, we are studying the possibility of purchasing ice management software that will be compatible with the Spray Lakes systems and we expect that all scheduling challenges will be fully resolved for the remainder of the season and next year. Lastly, we are also considering changing the CMHA administrator role to full time from part-time. Clearly, we will need to consider the impact on fees and are working hard at raising funds through various grants, sponsorships and our upcoming casino.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Casino Fund raising**

The Casino is important because it brings in significant funds every few years, and this helps cover the cost of the programs and reduce fees. This year, our casino is to be held on March 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> at The Silver Dollar Casino. Please check our website for further information or to secure a volunteer position and to earn a credit towards your child's registration fees for next season.

- **Referees**

We face an ongoing challenge in Cochrane recruiting experience referees. This is not unique to Cochrane; it is a common problem throughout Alberta. Therefore, we are asking parents to consider becoming a referee. The Cochrane Referees Association will provide training, and, unlike other volunteer positions you will be paid for your work. At the same time being a referee allows you to learn more about the great game of hockey and develop along with your children. You would have the opportunity to start refereeing younger kids and move up as you gain skill and experience. You would have the chance to work with young referees, which I think could be really a good experience for everyone. If you are interested, please contact the Cochrane Referees Association. Kendell Waiting may be reached at (403) 650-5278, and by e-mail at [cochranerefs@hotmail.com](mailto:cochranerefs@hotmail.com).

- **Board positions**

Finally, it's early but we have a number of board members leaving this year, so we'll be looking for some energetic individuals to step up and join the board. At a minimum we are looking for a) President, b) AA Director, c) Registrar, and d) Facilities Director (responsible for the ice schedule). This would be a great way for you to give back to the community and to your children's extra-curricular and athletic development.

In closing, we appreciate your patience as we move through the 2009/10 season. This year was a transition year. We are excited about our substantially increased program, permitted by the start-up of the new Spray Lake facilities and about the future of hockey in Cochrane.

Yours truly,

Cochrane Minor Hockey Association Board