

Executive Summary

BRANCH SUMMITS

BACKGROUND:

The ODHA hosted eight (8) Summit meetings within the jurisdiction of the Branch and with the assistance of summit facilitators - the state of the game was discussed and positive and constructive comments were gleaned. The facilitators opened each summit with the stated purpose of the exercise which was to discuss the current issues in the game.

A consistent comment surfaced in each of the summit presentations and that related to the extent to which the identified issues and concerns would be considered and addressed by all participating levels of the hockey structure across Canada. Notwithstanding this comment, the following ten major issues consistently emerged as an issue in the game today. The attached summary will provide a list of these ten (10) issues along with the related concerns and proposed solutions:

SUMMARY:

The ten major issues, concerns and solutions that were raised and discussed within the ODHA are as follows:

Issue	Concern
Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality of technical instruction ■ Availability of Ice time ■ Content of Age-Specific Curriculum ■ Emphasis on Winning vs Progressive Development of all players

Solutions

- Player skill evaluations conducted by qualified people,
- Ensure that players are at the correct ability level;
- Emphasize the availability of lesson plans and coaching standards for practices at all levels across the country;
- Emphasize the availability of the existing mentorship programs and networking possibilities for coaches;
- Emphasize the benefits on individual player development for practice /game ratio of 2:1;
- Prioritize as a collective (Branch, Association or league) the extent to which "winning" supercedes a progressive, individual player development plan.

Issue	Concern
Officiating (Recruitment/Retention/ Experience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Turnover of potential quality Officials ■ Lack of Quality Development Program ■ Lack of Communication between Coaches and Officials ■ Advancement Potential / Opportunity ■ Cost to Officials to Officiate

Solutions

- Consider the elimination of front-end registration fees or the pro rata recovery thereof;
- Encourage midget and junior players to become officials after their hockey careers;
- Increase the use of on-ice (and off-ice) sessions, DVD's, game films to assist in proper identification of infractions;
- Stress the usefulness of a referee's mentorship program;
- Increase the level of supervision in outlying areas;
- Consider the use of the Junior model where officials are evaluated for feedback and assignment purposes;
- Increase opportunities for meetings between coaches and officials for exchange of concerns and/or suggestions i.e., tailored workshops within the Branch to have open discussion on league standard;

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- Initiate a development plan for advancement through the officiating levels.

Issue	Concern
Player/Parent/Coach/Official Conduct/Integrity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Address irresponsible behavior / actions ■ Players as pressure points (pressure from everyone) ■ No accountability for inappropriate behavior ■ Selfless vs selfish conduct ■ Lack of mutual mission

Solutions

- Create and post templates for a code of conduct on the Branch website, in rink lobbies and any other location where the message will be continually seen by all of the participants at all levels;
- The mission statement for all Associations within the Branch should include a reference to the importance of the responsibility that everyone in hockey has a responsibility for the improvement of the individual hockey experience of the participants i.e., our collective goal revolves around the player and their development;
- Communicate the consequences for inappropriate conduct and behavior, if necessary;
- Require that parents displaying inappropriate behavior be forced to take the "Speak Out" program before being allowed re-entry;
- Formalize the coach evaluation and selection process with a contract having specific stipulations for a code of conduct and expectations;
- Utilize, vigorously, all opportunities for communication with parents by all levels of the branch, district, association and team officials.

Issue	Concern
Communication/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tactical use of available resources ■ Perception of Communication hierarchy ■ Lack of Strategic communication plan ■ Close minded approach to information sharing

Solutions

- Establish a definitive and responsible chain of communication to disseminate information in a timely fashion and thereby increase the probability of successfully educating the various types of audiences;
- Develop a strategic communication plan to foster a sense of transparency in the flow of information between Hockey Canada through the Branch and on to the local association;
- Invest in a professional branch website and it should be seen as a budget priority as it can be a very valuable communication tool to educate all those involved in the hockey structure.

Issue	Concern
Coaching/Mentorship:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Turnover of quality coach resources ■ Impractical use of coaching resources ■ Lack of funding to support mentorship program ■ Lack of creative coach recruitment plan

Solutions

- Develop a creative coach recruitment plan and an evaluation checklist, by age and expertise category for use in the fair and equitable semi-annual review of coaches in conjunction with the coach's contract which stipulates the role and responsibilities of the coach at each level;

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- Aggressively advertise the present existence of the coaching mentorship program and the fact that an extensive reference library of information for coaches and/or general managers already exists at the Branch level;
- Consider the introduction of coaching “refresher” courses to be used as an opportunity to reinforce the exchange of methods and techniques as well as establish an easily accessible support structure i.e., Specialty Clinics;
- Consider the re-certification of coaches after a set period of time.

Issue	Concern
Volunteers (Education, Recruitment & Retention):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Turnover of quality volunteers ■ Lack of creative volunteer recruitment plan ■ Imbalanced distribution of volunteer responsibilities ■ Transparent motives to become a volunteer

Solutions

- Support systems and/or mechanisms must be developed to assist volunteers in the fulfillment of their respective responsibilities i.e., job descriptions for positions vital to an association;
- Develop and deliver information packages for the different types of volunteer positions which outlines the balanced roles, responsibilities and expectations of same;
- Develop cost-free or subsidized topical courses or information sessions to educate the volunteer;
- Develop template advertisements for arena lobby posters and local newspapers expressing the need for parent and non-parent volunteers;
- Develop and implement recognition programs to supplement those available at the national level.

Issue	Concern
Facilities Access - Cost of Participation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Perceived lack of available ice time at prime time ■ Attrition of players due to increased cost ■ Lack of creative fundraising initiatives ■ Perceived inequitable distribution of available prime time ice

Solutions

- Develop a strategy for the realistic management and rotation by an independent mediator of practice/game times between all users at all levels;
- Consider the development of a marketing strategy to increase ice rental budgets by means of exploiting government subsidies, developing financial support relationships with municipal governments and attracting local sponsorships which would be financially beneficial to the corporate community while also meeting the escalating costs of ice rental;
- Investigate the possibility of purchasing ice in bulk at discounted prices;
- Reinforce the policy which limits the number of tournaments by team by level and thereby limits the expense of participation.

Issue	Concern
Hockey Structure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of trust throughout the system ■ Impractical governance of the hockey experience

Solutions

- Each Branch should consider the appointment of an independent ombudsman to effectively and equitably manage a responsive and respected response resolution mechanism;
- Roles and responsibilities should be made an integral part of every organizational constitution and an annual performance review conducted to ensure that the organization’s goals are met.

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Issue	Concern
Canadian Development Model:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Restricts junior teams from achieving their competitive goals ■ Perception of reduced playing opportunities for elite minor hockey players ■ Perception that the model was adopted without proper consultation

Solutions

- Develop a comprehensive communication strategy and implement across the Branch to provide a better introduction, explanation and justification of the various elements contained in the CDM as it is very evident that a working understanding of the model at all levels has not been achieved to date;
- Continue with 8 imports and permit the grandfathering thereof; reduce the number of cards to 21 for the junior levels; eliminate the use of 21-year olds in Junior "B", or, if the use of two 16-yr olds is eliminated then consider the use of six 21-yr olds.

Issue	Concern
Recruitment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fear that the future registration of players will be compromised unless creative registration practices are undertaken; ■ Cannot assume that hockey registration numbers will automatically rise.

Solutions

- Research the existing hockey market (Stats Can to Hockey Canada) to fully understand and appreciate the existing voids in potential membership;
- Celebrate the existing diversity in membership (cultures, faiths, able-bodied etc);
- Acquire a full understanding of reasons why potential registrants opt out of the hockey experience.

CONCLUSION:

The honest feedback provided by the summit participants on the current state of the game requires that those within the hockey infrastructure remain open-minded and prepared to take corrective action as a partnership. Hockey Canada has the Branch support to take a lead role in promoting this partnership and providing the necessary timelines to for the necessary implementation. While it is readily evident that the progressive intentions of Hockey Canada are well supported by the Branch, it is also quite apparent that there remains room for improvement which could be achieved by the successful prioritization and implementation of energetic and strategic solutions over measured periods of time. The Branch also has to adopt a strong leadership role with the existing Branch structure for the members and also needs to be accountable to the members for the necessary delivery on the stated issues / concerns. This will take time and commitment from all levels and will only be deemed a success if it is a partnership amongst the stakeholders (players, parents, team officials and all levels of volunteers).