



Year End Letter from Leo Nat – Executive Director and General Manager

Another year has passed as we close the books on year 2 following amalgamation.

Moving tryouts back to springtime was a welcomed change by every association in Ontario. It gave time for teams to bond during the summer months. The stress of going back to school and tryouts is now gone. It took a lot of effort to convince the OHF and we are proud that APR led the charge.

Our rep teams continued to be competitive with many finishing mid to high in the pack. We sent 7 teams to the OMHA championship weekend, with many more just on the verge of making it to the OMHA weekend as well. Our Raiders U16A team won the OMHA championship in thrilling fashion, coming back from a 3-goal deficit in the final game to win. The association could not be prouder of the team. Congratulations to Brad Lagasse, his coaching staff, and the boys. All this proves that the amalgamation was necessary and has worked. Other teams that made the OMHA weekend were U18AAA, U15AAA, U10AAA, U16A, U16BB, U15C, U14C, congrats to all. I would also like to make special mention of two players that were drafted, Colton Ashby from our U16AAA team drafted by Owen Sound Attack and Josh Bonnyman from U18AAA was drafted by Flint Firebirds. Mike Battah our U18AAA coach could not be prouder of the players.

I would also like to acknowledge our referees. It is getting harder and harder to find officials, so it is important to keep perspective. With every call and decision, one person is happy and one person not so happy. The game is fast and sometimes they may miss an icing, an offside or a penalty call. Certainly not perfect. Our younger refs sometimes find the pressure from the fans way too much and leave the system far too soon as a result. Without refs there are no games so next time you see a ref, take the time to thank them.

Our house league continued to be vibrant and exciting. We had very good numbers in all age groups which led to another exciting year. The weeklong house league playdowns were overwhelmingly exciting once again. The arena was packed full every night and seeing parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles in the arena cheering quite loudly was incredible. Congratulations to all the teams for providing us with some very exciting games this year. We also wish to thank all our volunteer coaches and bench staff for the hard work and effort they put in all seasons long.

The association came together like never before for the BR91 game which was held at Pickering Recreation Complex on January 7. The arena was packed with well over 1,000 people in support of the

event. After a moving speech from Paul Renaud, it was game-on, and our Raider team came out on top. The event raised over \$5,000 for mental health support. We want to thank Kingston Minor Hockey for being part of the special day. During the event, APR announced that we are providing three \$2000 scholarships. The winners this year are Cali Tierny, Tyler Sly, and Elijah Fraser, congrats as our first-year winners.

To continue with the busy year, Ajax Pickering Minor Hockey was also asked to host the U14C OMHA championship weekend. It was a great weekend of competition, and it was exciting to see our team go to the finals. They came up just short losing in a shoot-out following a 10-minute thrilling overtime. We were proud to be able to hand out the OMHA Red Hat to the winners as the hosts.

On the coach front, I want to thank Brad Lagasse, Mike Barbara, Jonathan Crocker, and Corey Bicker who have coached in the association for a long time. They all put a lot of time and effort into the association over the past number of years. Their dedication to the players does not go unnoticed. Thank you for being a big part of our association.

It's a very busy year for our admin staff with all the special events, tournaments, the rep season, and house league season. They don't take a moment's rest in-season to make sure everything runs smoothly all season. Our hats off them for the countless hours they put in to make the association better.

We have already started working on next season and are looking forward to seeing all of you in a short time.

Leo Nat

Executive Director and General Manager