



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

Changing Landscape for Minor Hockey on the Horizon.

Minor Hockey has some big changes coming for the 2025/26 season. With the borders open players can now choose where they wish to play. We are no strangers to this concept as APR has been part of a 20-year-old agreement with the OHF where there was freedom of movement with LOR centers. While it will take a few years to see how this all plays out for associations, we believe that the impact will be minimal to the association.

We have seen that when players do leave a very high percentage return after 1 year and almost all return after 2 years. When exploring alternative playing opportunities make sure you are looking at every option and not just making a rash decision. Returning players are always happy to come back as their experiences were not what they were expecting. Regardless of where you choose to play, we respect your choice and welcome everyone back upon returning.

Congratulations to our U16AAA, U18AAA and our U15AA team making it to the OMHA Championship weekend. Just to get to the weekend is a big accomplishment. Hats off to the coaches Joe Trentadue, Mike Battah and Daryl Felgemacher respectively. We had many more teams on the edge of making it through to the OMHA weekend and continue to see progress with our programming and a marked improvement with our competitiveness. I want to congratulate Raider U18AAA player Layne Gallacher who signed an OHL Scholarship and Development Agreement with the Brantford Bulldogs. Keep your eyes on the upcoming draft! Go Raiders.

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 thank all our volunteer coaches and bench staff for the hard work and effort they put in all season long.

We are starting to see more of the younger referees enter the system and a return to our pre-covid levels. The new green arm band for the younger refs did help with the abuse issues, but this remains the number 1 reason refs leave the system. Many fans do not understand the pressure they are

under with split second decisions which could affect the outcome of a game. Thank you to all our referees!

We want to wish Justin Montgomery and his family well after their son Bobby was diagnosed with a brain tumor while seeking attention for a concussion related injury. Justin has been a coach with us for a long time and his teams were always well coached and have made it to the OMHA weekend. It is tradition for Raider teams to step up to provide support where needed and our U16BB teams held a rally for Bobby. Please check out link below for more information.

[https://ajaxpickeringminorhockey.com/Articles/11479/APR\\_RALLIES\\_FOR\\_A\\_RAIDER/](https://ajaxpickeringminorhockey.com/Articles/11479/APR_RALLIES_FOR_A_RAIDER/)

We will pray for Bobby and continued improvement and hope to see them back at the rink soon.

On the coach front I want to thank Jim Horlock, Brendan O'Hanley, Liam Tierney, Ted Stewart, Wayne Yearwood, Justin Montgomery, Paul Renaud and Dave Smith 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.

We cap off the 2024/25 season with our House League tournament, our Spring Thaw Tournament, prep skates and then right into tryouts. A busy end to the season followed by the summer months which continue to be a busy time getting ready for the season ahead. Our admin staff works tirelessly through this busy period to ensure a smooth transition to the next season.

Sincerely,

Leo Nat

Executive Director and General Manager