



May 4, 2020

Board of Directors
BC Hockey
6671 Oldfield Road
Saanichton, BC V8M 2A1

Re: Working Together in the Best Interests of the Game

Dear Directors:

In this time of transition for hockey in BC, we hope we can open a dialogue and be a support to you. Making a leadership change was a bold decision and one that we know was difficult, but it shows leadership and purpose from you. It is our desire to work with a shared purpose as you undertake to select a new CEO.

Fundamentally, we believe that for the future success of the game a new focus and support for the grassroots, particularly as it relates to programming and growing the game, is needed.

Our perception is that BC Hockey's focus has been too much on top-down programming instead of focusing on where "the rubber meets the road" and helping minor hockey associations deliver the best possible hockey experience to their members. There is an opportunity for a fresh partnership.

The following is an outline of priorities we have identified:

1. Lobbying for the Game

We believe not enough is done to lobby for the interests of the game with provincial and local governments and other public bodies and stakeholders. A BC Hockey priority should be to further and protect the interests of its members in the public forum. In other words, to be a strong voice for the game in government and the media. BC Hockey, with its 60,000 members, is well-positioned to advocate and be heard.

An example of topics may include:

- Increased funding and grant programs for youth sports;
- The need for arenas in the Lower Mainland;
- Recognition of hockey as part of the fabric of Canadian society (hockey is often not mentioned by government when youth sports are mentioned);
- Recognition of the work hockey has undertaken to improve its safety culture;

- Recognition of the many “good deeds” performed by the hockey community.

2. Growing the Game

We perceive a lack of focus and a lack of initiatives to grow the game. Growing the game should be a top priority for everyone in our sport. In recent years, marketing and community engagement initiatives have mostly been left to MHAs. The results have been disjointed and uneven. Some areas where BC Hockey could take leadership include:

- Preparation of a “Grow the Game” strategy and marketing campaign;
- Direct advertising via traditional media/social media;
- “Travelling road shows” aimed at drawing community participants;
- Participating in community events/festivals (i.e. info booths);
- Communications and joint programming with schools;
- Ideas/support for MHA initiatives (sample marketing collateral etc.);
- Efforts to reach out to non-traditional hockey families (new Canadians, etc.).

3. Education and Continuous Learning

In addition to protecting and furthering the interests of its members, we believe a fundamental priority for BC Hockey should be to educate and teach its members. There is some good information on the BC Hockey website, and there are a few good but not very well-known programs to assist MHAs, but we believe there must be much more emphasis on providing resources, guidance, advice and leadership that supports the growth of a robust minor hockey association-led delivery system. For example:

- Directly supporting and educating key MHA personnel during the hockey season, such as RICs, Risk Managers, Hockey Directors, etc. via regular meetings and communications.

4. Accountability and Communication

There is an opportunity to improve communications and engagement with key stakeholders. While member engagement efforts have been made in recent years, it is not effective if there is little meaningful consideration of feedback or a lack of follow-through on action items.

Good communication entails both giving and receiving information. Good communication will lead to the sharing of best practices and ideas and will result in increased accountability and responsiveness on all sides. Some suggestions include:

- Ensuring that action items resulting from member feedback are communicated and executed in a timely fashion;
- Inviting a cross section of stakeholders to the table; key decisions can be executed with greater buy in and trust;
- Be more knowledgeable of the work and programs that are being delivered by MHAs and share best practices with the membership.

5. Hockey Programming

We believe there should be less emphasis on delivering hockey programming directly, particularly on what appears to be a singular focus on high-performance programming. BC Hockey is best positioned to focus on “big picture” management. This means being a leader at the Hockey Canada level, as well as with local government and other PSOs.

The focus should be on assisting MHAs to deliver programming directly or via partnerships with BC Hockey. MHAs are better positioned to respond to the needs of their members and their local communities and constituents. For example:

- Provincial Bantam and Midget leagues could be run as partnerships in conjunction with a strengthened minor hockey system. BC Hockey can provide strategic leadership and ensure provincial standards, but a pathway framework built in conjunction with the minor hockey system should be enacted.

As indicated above, BC Hockey as an umbrella organization should be working on strategic projects such as ensuring greater investment in arenas, player recruitment partnerships, bringing the game to new generations of Canadians, re-invigorating player safety initiatives, among other areas.

6. Fiscal Responsibility and Fundraising

- Mindfulness of budget creep and seeking ways to reduce costs as much as possible while delivering on the priorities identified above.
- Explore ways to fundraise especially for marketing campaigns and “growing the game” initiatives, possibly through corporate partners and lobbying for grant opportunities.

COVID-19

PCAHA MHAs have been holding weekly calls to support each other and to share best practices. We believe there is a need for a common approach and consistent messaging in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also a need to educate the public and the authorities on how we deliver our programming and our ability to quickly respond and implement change as directed by the health authorities. We need to prepare and be ready to be first in line to return to play when it is permissible and prudent to do so.

BC Hockey is in a key position to communicate with government and the public regarding a return to play. In addition to Hockey Canada, contact should be made with organizations such as ViaSport, SportBC, the BC Recreation and Parks Association, and especially with the Ministers and Deputy Ministers of the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Sports, Recreation, Arts & Culture of the Province. To be most effective, BC Hockey’s messaging and communications with the various authorities should be shared with its members on a timely and regular basis to ensure consistent messaging from all parties.

Messaging should include the dissemination of factual information (there seems to be a lack of understanding about our sport in the public realm). Examples could include:

- Water bottles have not been shared in hockey for at least a decade;
- Hockey is the only sport with rostered safety people and is able to implement change quickly and effectively;

- Hockey is played in a controlled environment;
- Hockey equipment such as gloves provide barriers that many other sports don't have.

There was an article in the Vancouver Sun on April 27, 2020 suggesting that soccer and field hockey would return to play in the near future while indoor sports (i.e. hockey) may be a year away from resuming play. It is imperative that BC Hockey have a strong voice at the table to ensure informed and reasonable decision-making.

MHAs are ready and willing to assist BC Hockey. There is significant collective expertise among our membership. We believe strongly that by supporting the grassroots, particularly as it relates to programming and growing the game, hockey will thrive in British Columbia for years to come.

Thank you for your dedication and service to the game.

Yours truly,

Abbotsford MHA

Arbutus Club MHA

Cloverdale MHA

Langley Female MHA

New Westminster MHA

North Shore Winter Club

Port Moody MHA

Semiahmoo MHA

Sunshine Coast MHA

Vancouver Thunderbirds MHA

Abbotsford Female MHA

Burnaby MHA

Coquitlam MHA

Langley MHA

North Delta MHA

North Vancouver MHA

Richmond Jets MHA

South Delta MHA

Surrey MHA

West Vancouver MHA

Aldergrove MHA

Burnaby Winter Club

Hollyburn MHA

Mission MHA

North Shore Female IHA

Port Coquitlam MHA

Ridge Meadows MHA

Squamish MHA

Vancouver MHA