

Hockey Canada calls it quits on the season

By Brian Lockhart

This could end up being the hockey season that never was.

Hockey Canada announced that as of Thursday, March 12, it was cancelling all sanctioned games as a response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Without question, this is an unprecedented period of difficulty for the sports world. The health and safety of all participants in sport, including players, coaches, staff, officials, fans, family, volunteers and the general public, is of the utmost importance to Hockey Canada, said Tom Renney, chief executive officer, and Scott Smith, president and chief operating officer, in a joint statement. After much consultation with the Hockey Canada membership, our chief medical officer and public health officials, the Hockey Canada Board of Directors has made the decision to cancel all Hockey Canada-sanctioned activities, including our national championships, until further notice, effective Friday, March 13, 2020. We recognize the tremendous effort that has been put forth all year by individuals across the country as they participate in Canada's game. Although it is difficult to process the hockey season ending abruptly, we feel this is the best course of action in order to do our part in keeping our country safe.

Several professional sports leagues had already postponed games. Some teams even stopped practices to avoid having people in close quarters.

In minor hockey, teams that are still playing house league and OMHA playoffs will have to sit out. Many minor teams have already complete their seasons although some playoffs were still underway and some teams were entered in tournaments.

The Ontario Minor Hockey Association released a statement regarding the decision.

The Ontario Minor Hockey Association's foremost priority is the health and safety of our participants, volunteers and hockey families. We have been proactively working alongside Health Canada, Hockey Canada and local public health officials in regards to the Coronavirus (COVID-19). In light of recent events, the OMHA officers have made the decision to immediately suspend all hockey activities.

We will be proactive in informing our constituents on all upcoming protocols and required actions as they become available.

Rick Stevens, president of Orangeville Minor Hockey issued a statement on the organizations website saying Tonight the Ontario Minor Hockey Association has suspended any further hockey until further notice. I do not have the answers to your questions at this time. This will affect all of our teams from this point on including our House League playoffs, Rep Playoffs, exhibition games, and all tournaments until the OMHA lifts the suspension.

Junior level playoffs came to an abrupt end after games played on Thursday, March 12.

On the local level, Junior C hockey was just starting the championship round.

The Stayner Siskins and the Alliston Hornets played the first game of their best-of-seven North Carruthers championship series on Thursday (Mar.12) night in Stayner.

The Hornets left the ice with a 7 ? 4 win.

At the end of the game it was announced that all future games had been cancelled.

At first there was some discussion that the series will be postponed and could resume once things settled down, however, word for the Hornets bench was "we've played our last game," indicating the general consensus is the League will not finish the season.

This will leave the League with no champions this year, and the provincial level Schmaltz Cup will be collecting dust for another year before a team can hoist it in victory.

The move to cancel games follows a precedent set by other organizations to avoid having people congregate in large groups to avoid spreading the disease.

Ontario schools will also be shut down for an extra two weeks after the March break.

Several other local organizations have also cancelled March break activities.