

## First Shift program helps outfit young players for hockey

**By Brian Lockhart**

For some kids, playing hockey becomes a life-long passion.

For others, being on the ice may not provide the athletic outlet they are looking for, so buying all the equipment just to find out that a kid doesn't enjoy playing can be a disappointment.

When it comes to hockey, suiting up a new player for the sport can be expensive.

The First Shift program allows young players to receive full hockey gear at a nominal price so they can experience the game.

The program is sponsored by Bauer and Hockey Canada, and is open to players ages six to 10 who have never previously enrolled in minor hockey in Canada. It is designed to ensure a positive experience for new-to-hockey families by offering a low-cost entry experience to the sport.

When you sign up, the \$229 price tag includes full gear and six on-ice trial sessions. The on-ice sessions with drills, are focused on a fun range hockey experience to stimulate a desire for continued participation in the sport.

When a family arrives at a First Shift program, they are supplied with proper-sized Bauer equipment fitted by NHL / NHLPA First Shift fit experts and Hockey Canada provided insurance.

The organization offers several different programs including co-ed programs for boys and girls, girl's programs, and para-hockey so children with physical disabilities can play.

When a child arrives at a 'welcome event,' they will go from station to station to be fitted for each piece of equipment. Equipment like skates and sticks are fitted to each child's physical size to make for the best experience on the ice.

Orangeville Tigers Girls Hockey association has hosted the event for several years and will again be taking part this season as young girls interested in playing hockey turn out to get their equipment and introduction to the game.

The event has proven very popular in Orangeville and the Tigers have already sold out their November 2 welcome and fitting day.