

September 4, 2024

Fort Nelson Minor Hockey Association

PO Box 1390

Fort Nelson, BC V0C 1R0

To Whom It May Concern,

The Fort Nelson Minor Hockey Association (FNMHA) is dedicated to providing opportunities for as many players as possible to participate in minor hockey. We understand that every minor hockey association faces unique challenges, and we strive to ensure that our policies support a successful season for all. As we approach the new season, we want to maintain transparency and clear communication. This letter aims to clarify any misunderstandings from the previous season and provide essential information about the upcoming season.

Female Player Registration

Last season, we faced challenges with both the Junior and Senior female divisions. Female athletes could register for Junior or Senior girls' teams and coed teams. Our primary goal was to support all athletes by requiring registration with female-only programs first. This approach allowed us to gauge interest and ensure these programs were available for those who preferred female-only hockey.

If there were insufficient registrants for female-only programs, we risked having to cancel the Junior and Senior female divisions, potentially excluding those who wanted to participate in female-only teams.

In cases of limited volunteer support for coed teams, team sizes might have been capped, leading to a first-come, first-served situation. Female athletes excluded from teams would still have had the option to play in the female division, while male athletes excluded from coed teams would not have had an alternative option.

Our decisions aimed to balance registration and support, ensuring opportunities for all athletes. We did not intend to discourage girls from participating in coed hockey but wanted to guarantee everyone had a place to play.

Clarification on Practice Requirements for Female Players:

It seems there may have been some confusion about the attendance expectations. To clarify, the Board never intended for female players to attend practices seven days a week. Our goal is to address this issue before the season begins. If enrollment necessitates a similar system this

season, we will provide clear written communication to parents to prevent any misunderstandings.

Competitiveness of Female Programs:

We have received feedback from parents regarding the competitiveness of our female programs. The level of competitiveness often depends on the effort put forth by both players and coaches. Although the offer for placing the female teams in the NERHL league was not an option with how many also wanted to play coed, however the offers to play in-house teams were declined by the female team's parents, coaches, coordinators, and players, citing concerns about competitiveness. The Board is welcoming suggestions on how to rectify the situation.

FNMHA is a volunteer-based organization, and the quality of our programming and the competitiveness of our teams depend heavily on parental involvement. We are proud to support female hockey and are dedicated to offering our female players the opportunities they wish to pursue.

Current Concerns:

1. **Jr. Girls Team:** We currently do not anticipate having enough players to support a Junior Girls team, and no volunteers have stepped forward for the coordinator position. Without sufficient players and a coordinator, it is unlikely that the Junior Girls team will run this season.
2. **Player Registration:** This season, we are not mandating dual rostering for female players. However, we strongly encourage all female players who are willing to play coed if the Junior or Senior Girls' teams do not run to register for both the girls' and coed divisions. This will help the board make informed decisions based on registration numbers. If a girls' team does not run, or if a player does not wish to remain in coed, there will be an option to withdraw by October 31, 2024, with refunds provided. Please keep in mind that if the majority of female players, both Junior and Senior, choose to only register for and support coed, it is likely that many female players will not have a girls' team to play on. As a result, those females who are uncomfortable playing coed may not have the opportunity to play hockey this year.
3. **U-11 Mixed:** We may face a situation with too many players for one team but too few for two. We will have a clearer picture of how to proceed once registration is closer to complete.
4. **Volunteer Roles:** Several volunteer roles need to be filled to ensure a successful season:
 - **U11 Coordinator:** This division will be canceled for the 2024-2025 season if no coordinator is found.
 - **Coaches:** Many divisions need coaches. Additionally, Hockey Canada provides FREE coach training to women across Canada through the We Are Coaches Program. Please contact our Head Coach, Branden Smith, at fnmha.headcoach@gmail.com (is this correct?) if you or someone you know is interested.
 - **Board Positions:** We have two open positions on the board, job descriptions can be found on the FNMHA website www.grizzlieshockey.ca

- **Registrar:** This mandatory role is essential for the board to function. In the short term, the previous registrar is willing to step in temporarily until a new volunteer is found. However, this is only a temporary solution, and the position must be filled permanently.

We remind everyone that our board members are dedicated volunteers who invest countless hours to ensure the success of Fort Nelson Minor Hockey. Without their dedication, FNMHA would not exist. We encourage parents and players to get involved and welcome constructive suggestions to make FNMHA more inclusive and supportive for all athletes. Please note that all communication must be respectful.

If you have any recommendations for program improvements, please contact Ryan Bulley at fnmha.president@gmail.com or Sonny Olkh at vp.fnmha@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

Fort Nelson Minor Hockey Association