



MANITOBA U18 AAA HOCKEY LEAGUE



Hon. Brian Pallister
Room 204 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8

January 21, 2021



Hon. Heather Stefanson
Room 302 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8



Dr. Brent Roussin
4004 - 300 Carlton St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 3M9



Dear Mr. Pallister, Ms. Stefanson, and Dr. Roussin,



The Hockey Community is concerned about the mental, physical, and social health of the citizens of this province. We are particularly concerned about the well-being of children and youth in Manitoba.



Physical activity and social interaction contribute to the health of individuals and are essential for healthy growth and development of children and youth. Physical activity helps prevent and reduce the effects of depression, stress, and anxiety. It increases energy levels, helps maintain a healthy body, and improves sleep quality. Social interaction contributes to the development of interpersonal skills, relationships, and emotional capacity.



In contrast, the continued prohibition of social interaction and limitation of permitted physical activities has caused immeasurable harm to the children of this province. They are socially isolated, increasingly depressed, and at greater risk of physical and emotional abuse. A recent survey by Hockey Canada found that 45% of parents are concerned about the mental health of their children.



Organized sport plays an important role in coordinating and facilitating physical activity and social interaction for children and youth. Since mid-November, however, restrictions have been in place that prohibit organized sport. Recreation facilities, gyms, and fitness centers have all been closed.



The Manitoba U18 AAA Hockey League calls on you to reopen recreation facilities, gyms, and fitness centers for use by children and youth. It can be done safely, and it must be done now to curtail the harms inflicted.



In the Fall, the Hockey Community, under the direction and leadership of Hockey Manitoba, developed comprehensive plans to safely start our season. Across the province, facilities, associations, leagues, and teams all implemented protocols to mitigate risk. We made the use of Manitoba's COVID screening tool compulsory for all participants before every on- and off-ice activity, contact tracing was added, mask use was made mandatory, arrival and departure time for participants and spectators was limited, social distancing was enforced, dressing rooms were sanitized frequently, travel was reduced, bus capacities were limited, spectators were limited and then prohibited, off-ice warm ups were restricted, and handshakes were eliminated.

From the top down, the Hockey Community worked together to provide a safe environment for our children to participate in physical activity, continue in their social development, and ensure their mental health needs were met.

At the U18 level, we did not have a single positive case. As a whole, the number of positive cases in minor hockey was limited. These events did not contribute to outbreaks and they were not super-spreaders.

We are committed to implementing the same protocols, to prohibiting spectators, and to ensuring the safety of our communities and members. We are asking you to work with us to immediately reopen facilities for children and youth, and to permit them to participate in organized sport. The mental and physical health of our children requires your immediate action.

Sincerely,

Manitoba U18 AAA Hockey League

**Per: Levi A. Taylor, J.D.
Commissioner**

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