

# A Parents' Guide to Hockey in the GTHL



October 2006



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## Introduction

This guide has been produced by the Greater Toronto Hockey League (GTHL) to assist parents in understanding how the League, its member organizations and their teams operate - and to suggest what to look for when choosing an organization and/or team for your child. For more in-depth information on these subjects, please visit the GTHL website at [www.gthlcanada.com](http://www.gthlcanada.com)

For the most part, this Guide addresses the operation of the Competitive Division (AAA, AA, A), but it does detail major differences between the Rules and Regulations governing the Competitive Division and the Rules and Regulations governing House Leagues.

You will appreciate that this Guide is designed to give general information only and cannot deal with every relevant detail. In all cases, it is subject to the actual wording of the Rules, Regulations or By-laws of the GTHL, the OHF and Hockey Canada.





## What to Look for in an Organization/Team/Coach

### ORGANIZATION

#### Policies and Procedures

All Clubs/Organizations are required to supply a copy of their policies and procedures to each player/parent prior to or at the time of their signing of a registration card. Be sure that you receive a copy of these policies and procedures, have read them and have any questions regarding them answered prior to signing.

#### Who runs the Club – one person/group/board/general manager?

Clubs (organizations) can be operated in a number of ways. Be sure you know who the decision-makers are for the Club and their contact information.

#### They must be non-share capital and not-for-profit

All Clubs/Organizations are required to be non-share capital corporations and operated on a not-for-profit basis.

#### Ask other parents about their experiences with the organization

If you don't have any experience with a Club/Organization, ask other parents, neighbours, or friends about their experience.

#### Ask for financials

All Clubs/Organizations are required to disclose, prior to you signing a registration card, their Club registration fee, all additional costs to you, and their expenses associated with these costs and fees. The disclosure should also describe the equipment and services (e.g. number of practices per week) that will be provided by the Club/Organization in return for such fee. Finally, you may request to see a copy of its financial statements.

### TEAM

Teams are formed each year during the spring try-out process for the following season. The team should provide you with a handout covering its proposed operations for the season. Here are some of the things that you should look for prior to signing a registration card with a team:

#### Team Financial

Before the team has your child sign a registration card, it must supply you with a written estimated team budget for the season. That budget should show all anticipated expenditures, additional costs to the parents and fund-raising proposals.

### **Quality of coaching staff**

Coaches and trainers must be certified. Ask the coaching staff what their level of training is, how long each staff member has been coaching and at what levels they have coached.

### **Practice – number of times/week**

How many hours of practice on how many days per week will there be? Will there be outside instruction? What are the team rules regarding missing practices?

### **Other parents**

You should speak to the other parents signing their children with the team. Find out their attitudes, philosophies and demeanour. Hockey tends to be a “lifestyle” and you should try to be certain that the “team chemistry” would be an enjoyable experience for your child and you.

### **Team goals and philosophy**

The team should have set goals and philosophies against which to measure its progress and achievement. Is the team in the Championship hunt, or is it in a development year? Obviously, not every team will be a champion, so realistic goals should be set.

### **How important is winning?**

Is winning everything? Let's hope not. Hockey is a game and is meant to be fun. Different philosophies prevail at different levels, but, at the core of it all, enjoyment, development and growth, both as a player and as a person, should all be high on the priority list.

*Hockey is meant to be a fun game.*



### **Will your child fit in with the children on the team?**

Picking the right level and right team is not easy. You should have a realistic view of your child's talents, ability and potential and try to judge whether your child will be able to interact appropriately with the other members of the team.

### **How many tournaments will the team enter – how will they be funded?**

Almost all competitive teams enter tournaments, some of which will be out of town. Find out: the what, where and when of the tournaments the team intends to enter; how the cost of the tournaments will be funded; and what additional cost you will incur personally to attend these tournaments (i.e. hotel rooms, buses, etc.).

### **What about school conflicts? - homework, school, hockey**

The GTHL operates all games outside of school hours and does not allow teams to practice or hold try-outs during school hours. As a general philosophy, "school comes first." However, tournament schedules tend to conflict with school hours, although usually only on Fridays. In this way, they are no different from school hockey tournaments or other extra-curricular activities. You, the parent, must decide what is the priority and it is therefore sensible to understand how often this is expected to arise during the season.

As a general rule, and as part of your child's personal development, you should develop a daily or weekly schedule that allows times for your child to complete his or her homework and assignments **and** participate in team practices and games.

Also, school trips and other such activities extending outside of normal school hours simply cannot be taken into account by the League schedule unless the team decides to use one of its 3 "scheduling exemptions" for this purpose (see scheduling exemptions below). The League schedules over 12,000 games a year and its ice contracts require it to pay for ice, whether or not it is used, from the beginning of the season to the end, except winter break - and every time one team wishes to change a game, the schedules for at least three other teams are affected.

The League schedule is generally posted one month in advance and team practices are usually set well in advance, so this should allow ample notice to schedule homework sessions so that a conflict does not arise.

### **Can the parents take a holiday with their child and miss any games – will other families be allowed to miss games?**

You should check the team rules and philosophy to see how they apply to missing games and practices. All competitive teams require a high level of commitment to the team and to each other. As you can appreciate, if a number of players are all away at the same time, the team may simply not be able to operate.

## COACHES

As a general rule, Clubs appoint the Head Coach (the “coach”) of the team, and he then appoints the rest of the team staff. Therefore the coach’s philosophy, experience and goals are a major driving force of the team.

### **Their philosophy/experience/goals**

The coach should have a clearly defined set of philosophies and goals and should make you aware of his experience and training.

### **How will they communicate with you and your child**

A clear and regular means of communicating with all members of the team should be set and adhered to.

### **Any rules regarding swearing?**

Team rules regarding swearing and other inappropriate behaviour should be clearly communicated to you and your child. Penalties and/or sanctions related to the breaking of these rules should be clearly understood and evenly and fairly enforced. If required, coaches should meet with the parents and players to discuss any ongoing issues regarding inappropriate behaviour.

### **Does any coach have a child on the team – how will this be handled?**

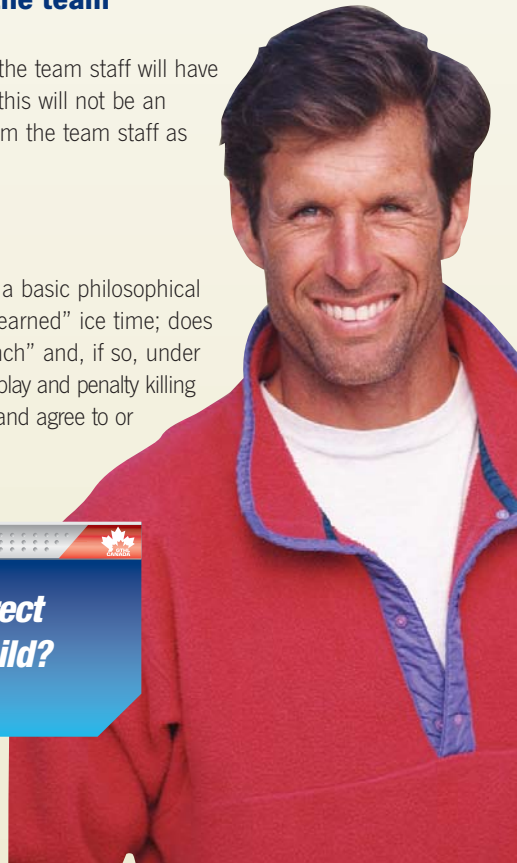
In many cases the coach and/or members of the team staff will have children on the team. In the majority of cases this will not be an issue. You should receive an understanding from the team staff as to how they will handle this.

### **Ice time – is it equal or will the coach shorten the bench?**

The allocation of ice time to players should be a basic philosophical cornerstone of the team. Is it equal ice time, “earned” ice time; does the coach reserve the right to “shorten the bench” and, if so, under what conditions? Will the team have special power play and penalty killing units? It is important that you know, understand and agree to or accept the philosophy, whatever it is.

#### QUESTION?

***How do I pick the correct level of play for my child?***





## What You Should Know About Rules & Regulations

### TRYOUTS

#### Timing – 5 days for AAA, then AA, then A

Tryouts for all Competitive Division teams (AAA, AA, A) begin in the latter half of April and run into May. The “AAA” level begins first, for a period of 5 days, followed by “AA” for 5 days, and finally “A” for 5 days. No level may hold further tryouts before or following its 5-day period until the other levels have completed their 5-day tryout period.

### Rules

Rules regarding tryouts may be viewed on the GTHL website at [www.gthlcanada.com](http://www.gthlcanada.com). Click on “Rulebook” and then “GTHL Rules and Regulations.” You will find tryout rules under the heading “Tryouts and Tampering”.

### Protected Players

In the GTHL, players from Minor Bantam and up are signed to what is sometimes referred to, incorrectly, as a “two-year” card. These players are, in fact, members of the Club they sign with until released and are considered to be “Protected Players.” Such a player, prior to attending a tryout for any other Club, must obtain either a “permission to tryout” or a “release”. The player’s current Club is not required to provide a “permission to tryout” or a “release” and may do so at its discretion. A “permission to tryout” is not a “release” and only allows a player to participate in an other team’s tryout. A “release” allows the player to sign with another team. (Please note that the “protected player” rule in the GTHL differs from the rule in the rest of Canada, where players are considered “protected players” at all levels.)

“Protected player” status does not exist in House League.

### Releases – who can grant them/when?

Releases may be issued **only** by the President or the General Manager of a Club and must be **in writing**. They may issue releases from the period commencing at the end of the season (defined as the last official day for minor hockey in the province of Ontario) up to November 15th of the following season. No release may be issued by a Club from the period commencing November 16th to the end of a current season. Releases may also be issued by order of a GTHL Special Committee as a result of an “Appeal” or as a result of an appeal of a Special Committee’s decision to a higher body (OHF, Hockey Canada). Please see “Disputes” below.

Players registered in House League are released automatically at the end of each season at all age groups.



## Permission to Tryout

A "Permission to Tryout" is issued by a "protected player's" current Club at the discretion of the Club and must be signed by either the President or the General Manager.

Players who were registered in House League in the season immediately prior to tryouts and wish to tryout for Competitive Division teams do not require a "Permission to Tryout."

## Promises/commitments – what's binding?

Team budgets and Club Policies distributed at tryouts are binding. To be binding, any other promises/commitments by the Club or a coach must be confirmed in writing by the President or General Manager and may not contravene the Rules and Regulations of the GTHL or the Club. As stated earlier, only the President or General Manager may promise and issue a release.

## Registration

A player must be registered and must sign, together with a parent (unless the player is 18 years of age or older), a registration certificate (card) that the Club must then register with the GTHL office.

A player may not be registered with more than one Club at the same time.

For more information on player registration, please visit the GTHL website at [www.gthlcanada.com](http://www.gthlcanada.com) and click on "Rulebook."

## Numbers of cards per team, minimum number of players

All teams, other than Juvenile teams, may at any time have a maximum of 19 registered players. Juvenile teams may at any time have a maximum of 25 registered players.

Teams from Minor Atom to Pee wee inclusive may dress a maximum of 17 players per game. Teams from Minor Bantam to Minor Midget inclusive may dress a maximum of 19 players subject to certain restrictions. Midget and Juvenile teams may dress up to 19 players for any game.

All teams must have a minimum of 15 legitimate players.

### QUESTION?

***Can we register with more than one Club?***



## Imports – how many and from where?

An Import is a non-resident player as defined by the “Lake Ontario Region Guidelines”. Each team in the GTHL may register Import players in accordance with the following quotas:

<b>AAA (Major)</b>	<b>5 imports maximum per team</b>
<b>AA</b>	<b>3 imports maximum per team</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>3 imports maximum per team</b>

For more information or a definition of an “Import,” please visit the OHF website at [www.ohf.on.ca](http://www.ohf.on.ca) and click on “LOR Guidelines.”

## SCHEDULING EXEMPTIONS/TOURNAMENTS

### Each team is allowed only 3 "regular season" scheduling exemptions

Each team can choose to use up to three scheduling exemptions. They are typically used to allow the team to attend tournaments, to avoid conflicts with religious holidays or school trips or to hold team functions.

Each team must apply to the GTHL for permission to participate in sanctioned tournaments and cannot participate in unsanctioned tournaments. No tournament participation is allowed during playoffs, unless the team has been eliminated. If a team needs a scheduling exemption in order to participate in a tournament, it must use one of its three scheduling exemptions. Such exemptions are not required for pre-season/Early Bird, Christmas-New Year and post-season tournaments..

**A team is required to give the GTHL at least 5 weeks' advance notice for scheduling exemptions.**

#### QUESTION?

*Where do I find the schedule or standings of the team?*

## SUSPENSIONS

### Player, Coach and Spectator Suspensions

Players and coaches may be suspended for a number of rule infractions as contained in the GTHL Rules and Regulations.

Spectators, including parents, may be ejected and/or banned from GTHL arenas for a breach of conduct rules and/or inappropriate behaviour.

For further information, please see the "OHF Minimum Suspension List," visit the GTHL website at [www.gthlcanada.com](http://www.gthlcanada.com) and click on "Suspensions".

### Most common infractions leading to suspensions or arena bans

- Checking from behind
- Checking to the head
- Abusive language
- Parent (spectator) abuse of referee, team staff member(s), players or each other.

## SCHEDULES

### How many games?

The regular season schedule for competitive teams is 36 games at A/AA and 33 games at AAA. In addition, the team may participate in exhibition games, tournaments and playoffs that may extensively increase the number of games played per season.

### Available on GTHL website and 1-800-TIPS-303

The league regular season and playoff games are posted on the GTHL website well in advance, and on the "Bell Minor Hockey Hotline" daily.

To find the schedule on the website, visit [www.gthlcanada.com](http://www.gthlcanada.com) and click on "Game Centre". A new window will open and you must then enter the schedule you are looking for, "regular season" or "playoffs", and then the level you are interested in (e.g. Atom AA West). The site will then display the schedule for all teams in that level. You may adjust the dates to expand or limit the time frame you are looking for, and, if you click on a team (e.g. Streetsville Tigers), it will display only those games involving that team. Game results and standings may also be accessed in the same way.

### How far in advance are games scheduled?

Regular season games are scheduled 5 weeks in advance except at the end of a season when short notice may be necessary.

Playoff games are scheduled as early as possible but the amount of notice depends upon the urgency of the moment. In some cases less than 24 hours' notice will be provided.

## DISPUTES

### With your coach/team

At any time that you have a dispute with your coach and/or team, speak with the coach. Many teams have a “cooling down” rule of 24 or 48 hours prior to bringing disputes to the coach. Follow this rule, as it will give you and the coach the opportunity to consider your grievance and discuss it in a calm frame of mind.

Should discussions with the coach not reach a satisfactory conclusion, you should then contact the Club's General Manager and attempt to reach a conclusion through the Club's Dispute Resolution process, which should be set out in its Club Policies.

If this proves to be unsatisfactory, you may appeal to the GTHL to have your grievance heard by a GTHL Special Committee if, and only if, the Club has not followed its Dispute Resolution policy and/or failed to enforce its rules and policies.

### With your Club

- Speak with the Club's General Manager.
- Should it become necessary, you may appeal to a GTHL Special Committee.

### With the GTHL

- Generally speaking, the line of communication is from you to your coach, from the coach to the General Manger and from the General Manager to the GTHL. The League is simply not equipped to receive individual communications from over 20,000 parents.
- You are therefore likely to approach the GTHL only when you have an unresolved issue with the Club (as opposed to the team itself), unless you are seeking an appeal hearing as set out below.

### How to approach an appeal

If you are appealing a suspension, that must be done through the Club's General Manager.

If you are appealing a grievance you have with the team/Club, you **must** make an appeal directly to the GTHL.

- The Special Committee holds hearings every Wednesday during the regular season, and as necessary during the playoffs.
- Who attends – All parties related to the appeal should attend.
- Most common reasons for hearings
  - Releases
  - Suspensions
  - Others Grievances



## What You Should Know About Your Child's Safety

### CONCUSSIONS

**Background (as defined by the Brain Association of America and the Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine)**

- A concussion may be sustained through a variety of mechanisms. A direct blow to the head, blow to the jaw, sudden twisting or shearing force and a sudden deceleration of the head (similar to a “whiplash” – type injury) can all produce concussive signs and symptoms.
- Both closed and open head injuries can produce a concussion. A concussion is the most common type of traumatic brain injury.
- A concussion is caused when the brain receives trauma from an impact or a sudden momentum or movement change. The blood vessels in the brain may stretch and cranial nerves may be damaged.
- A person may or may not experience a brief loss of consciousness (not exceeding 20 minutes). A person may remain conscious, but feel “dazed” or “punch drunk.”
- A concussion may or may not show up on a diagnostic imaging test, such as x-rays, CAT Scans and MRIs.
- Skull fracture, brain bleeding or swelling may or may not be present. Therefore, concussion is sometimes defined by exclusion and is considered a complex neurobehavioral syndrome.
- A concussion can cause diffuse axonal type injury resulting in permanent or temporary damage.
- A blood clot in the brain can occur occasionally and be fatal.
- It may take a few months to a few years for a concussion to heal.

### GTHL PHILOSOPHY

***The GTHL believes that the participant's safety and health is paramount and should be first and foremost in determining the most appropriate time which a player may return to play once that individual has suffered a suspected or identified head injury.***

**GTHL Policy:**

- 1) Any player who suffers a SUSPECTED Concussion must stop participation in the hockey activity immediately. If there is doubt as to whether a concussion has occurred, it is to be assumed that it has and that the player's parents/guardian be encouraged to have the injury properly diagnosed at a hospital ASAP. A hockey activity is defined as any on-ice or off-ice team function involving physical activity.  
*AND*  
If there is any doubt as to whether a concussion has occurred, it is to be assumed that one has occurred and the player's parent or guardian should be encouraged to have the injury properly diagnosed at a hospital ASAP.
- 2) Team Officials are responsible to recommend to the individual's parent or guardian that they seek medical attention immediately, especially if the injury occurred in any form of hockey participation.
- 3) The participant is not permitted to return to any hockey activity until a medical Doctor gives written permission.
- 4) Copies of such written permission MUST be submitted to the GTHL Office prior to the participant's return to any hockey activity.

**EQUIPMENT****Purchasing quality, proper fitting equipment lessens the risk of injury**

If you are inexperienced in purchasing and/or fitting of hockey equipment, you should consult a professional sports equipment retailer who is knowledgeable and experienced in this field.

**TRAINER****What qualifications are required?**

Every team in the competitive and House League Select divisions is required to have on the team bench at all times a trainer with "Trainer certification". Trainer certification is obtained through the Hockey Development Centre of Ontario (HDCO). You can find out more about the Trainer Certification Program by going to the GTHL website [www.gthlcanada.com](http://www.gthlcanada.com) and clicking on "Trainer's Room".

Many House Leagues require a certified trainer to be in the arena during all games.

## CHECKING FROM BEHIND OR CHECKING TO THE HEAD



### Penalty plus suspension

“Checking from Behind” and “Checking to the Head” carry mandatory penalties and must be called. Depending on the severity of the “check,” this could result in a number of penalties with escalating sanctions. The basic “Checking from Behind” penalty is two minutes and a game expulsion, plus a further one game suspension. The basic “Checking to the Head” penalty is 2 minutes plus 10 minutes where the guilty player sits out 12 minutes and the team plays shorthanded for two minutes. In more severe cases for both infractions, the penalty is a 5 minute major plus game expulsion plus 3 or more games.

### Penalty even if other player turns at the last moment

Unlike the NHL's rule, Hockey Canada's rule is that, regardless of how either of these infractions occurs (even if the other player turns his back at the last moment), the offending player is penalized. It is the player's responsibility not to check from behind or to the head.

## INSURANCE

### All registered players are insured for all sanctioned team activities

All players and carded team officials registered in the GTHL are insured through Hockey Canada for all sanctioned team activities from the time that they leave their home until the time they return home. Maximum coverage for Accidental Death & Dismemberment is \$1,000,000.00 per occurrence.

Sanctioned team activities include games, practices, fundraising events and team parties.

For specific detailed information about insurance coverage, please see the booklet distributed to all players annually by the GTHL entitled “Safety Requires Teamwork. An information guide to Hockey Canada's Risk Management and National Insurance Program”.

## INJURY DURING GAME

### When will the referee stop play when a child is injured?

When a player is injured in the course of play the referee will generally stop play when the injured player's team gains possession of the puck, except in cases where the referee judges the injury to be severe, in which case the referee will stop play immediately.



## What You Should Know About Money, Costs & Finance



### GENERAL

#### Where does the \$5 admission go?

Other than funds raised through sponsorship, the GTHL's sole sources of income are gate proceeds (\$5 for all players and all spectators over 12 and under 65 years of age) and "team fees" of \$1,000 per team. These funds are used to pay all of the League's operating expenses including, but not limited to, the cost of game ice. For the 2005-2006 season, that cost alone is expected to exceed \$3,500,000.00

#### Cost of ice

Arena ice time is very expensive and ranges from a low of \$140.00 per hour for some municipal ice facilities to in excess of \$300.00 per hour for "prime time" usage at some private facilities. All GTHL game ice and much of the Clubs' practice ice time fall into the "prime time" category.

#### **No member of the GTHL Board of Directors receives any remuneration for carrying out his or her duties - they are all volunteers, including the President.**

The League does employ a full time staff of 8 people plus additional part-time staff. All costs associated with the operation of the League are accounted for in the audited annual financial statements provided to the membership at the Annual General Meeting. In addition, the League will now publish a financial summary on its website each year.

#### Payment of Game Officials

A "Game Sheet" fee is collected from each team prior to each game and is used specifically to pay the game officials (Referee(s), Linesmen and Scorekeepers). The game sheet fee varies based on the age group, number of officials and length of game. The cost of the game sheets should be part of the team's budget.

### TEAM BUDGETS

- Proposed team budgets must be presented to you by the team at spring tryouts prior to signing a registration certificate for your child. Any significant changes from that budget, after the signing of registration certificates, must be approved by the parents of the team.
- At least two more budget updates must be presented to you during the hockey season and a final team statement must be presented at the conclusion of the season.
- Planned tournament participation must be disclosed to you with all known and estimated details included (how many/ when/transportation/how they will be funded).
- Fundraising/sponsorship plans must be detailed, including what's expected of each parent and a dollar value disclosed.





## What You Can Contribute as a Parent

### COMMUNICATION WITH:

#### Your child

- Make sure he/she is having fun.
- Keep comments positive and supportive.
- Let your coach guide her/him regarding their on-ice play.
- Don't criticize other children, parents or coaches.
- **KEEP YOUR PERSPECTIVE: Over 30,000 kids born in 1975 played organized hockey in Ontario. The number playing in the NHL in 1999 (at the age of 24) was 11, or 0.003%. And that was one of the strongest hockey birth years Ontario has ever had! The kids should have the dreams; you should have the perspective.**
- Remember, it's just a game!

#### Your child's coach

- Many coaches do not want to talk to parents after a game.
- Waiting for 24 hours to discuss a specific issue with the coach is common and sensible.
- Don't discuss other players with your coach.



#### Referees

- **Yelling at the referee serves no positive purpose and, without referees, there would be no games.**
- Referees are highly trained. All Referees (whether acting as Referees or Linesmen) officiating games in the GTHL are certified pursuant to the Hockey Canada Officiating Program (HCOP). They also attend clinics, seminars and camps to upgrade their qualifications. All officials must be re-certified annually and must attend a "refresher clinic" to be eligible to participate in playoffs.
- Referees are human and imperfect, just like we all are.
- Consistently poor referees are asked to leave.
- Supervisors watch and evaluate each referee a minimum of 3 times a year.

***Referees are re-certified annually and must attend a refresher clinic***

## Other parents

- Keep your comments with other parents positive.

Your child will stop playing hockey when he or she stops having fun. A positive and supportive environment is critical to his or her enjoyment of the game.

## Other Rules of Interest

**Rule 9.12 Adding Player's Name to Game Sheet.** Where a player is late and the player's name has been included on the game sheet prior to the game, the player will be permitted to participate. When the player's name has been inadvertently omitted from the game sheet, the Game Official shall permit the name of such player to be added to the game sheet before the game has ended, provided that the player was in uniform and on the ice or the players' bench at the start of the game.

**OHF Minimum Suspensions.** The minimum suspension list is available on the GTHL website by going to [www.gthlcanada.com](http://www.gthlcanada.com) and clicking on "Suspensions."





## Websites and other Contact Information

The GTHL website, [www.gthlcanada.com](http://www.gthlcanada.com) is updated at least daily. Additionally, scores are posted daily in the Sun.

The GTHL website contains addresses, contact information and map links for all arenas used by the League. Please click on "Arenas" on the website.

You may contact the GTHL through the website by clicking on "Contact us" or at:



### **Greater Toronto Hockey League**

Unit #4, 265 Rimrock Road  
Toronto, ON M3J 3C6  
Phone: (416) 636-6845  
Fax: (416) 636-2035  
[www.gthlcanada.com](http://www.gthlcanada.com)

Each member Club/Organization's contact information is posted on the GTHL website under "Member Clubs" and many of them maintain a website which is also listed with their contact information.



### **The Ontario Hockey Federation**

[www.ohf.on.ca](http://www.ohf.on.ca)



### **Hockey Canada**

[www.hockeycanada.ca](http://www.hockeycanada.ca)

Each of these websites contains many interesting links that you may find helpful and informative. Please browse all of them.



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