

HOCKEY CANADA

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE: BUILDING THE FUTURE OF MEN'S JUNIOR HOCKEY IN ONTARIO



MESSAGE FROM PROJECT COMMITTEE

On behalf of Hockey Canada, Hockey Eastern Ontario, Hockey Northwestern Ontario, the Ontario Hockey Federation and everyone involved with men's junior hockey in Ontario, we want to thank Brendan Shanahan for the recommendations he delivered to us, and all of the work he did as part of his review.

Brendan took the responsibility of overseeing this review with focus and passion for the game and its people, which are evident throughout his final report.

As he highlighted, it is an important moment for men's junior hockey in the province, and we are just as optimistic as he is that this initiative will help ensure Ontario is positioned to be a leading system for players, parents, teams, leagues and communities in the years to come.

Since receiving Brendan's report, we have spent considerable time carefully reviewing his recommendations and discussing how and when they could be implemented across our province.

In this initial implementation plan, we have outlined each recommendation and our vision for them, as well as the season in which we anticipate they could be realized.

There are three phases of implementation:

- Immediate Needs – 2026-27 season
- Transitional Priorities – 2027-28 season
- Long-term Solutions – 2028-29 season and beyond

We strongly believe that accomplishing Brendan's first recommendation to have Hockey Canada hire a lead for men's junior hockey in Ontario is a necessary first step before the rest of the recommendations can be implemented. We are aiming to have this person in place by January 1, 2027.

As we continue to move forward with the implementation of the recommendations, we will be sharing updates on our progress as we strengthen men's junior hockey in Ontario thanks to Brendan's work.

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IMMEDIATE NEEDS 2026-27 SEASON:

Completing these recommendations in the 2026-27 season will be critical to supporting the work to implement the remainder of the recommendations.

Recommendation	Vision for Implementation	Milestone(s)
Hockey Canada to create an executive role to oversee men's junior hockey in Ontario	Hockey Canada is committed to delivering on this recommendation as part of a regional pilot in the short-term and we are currently developing the profile for this individual with the three Ontario Members. Also, the overall job scope and reporting structure are being finalized.	Hire an executive by January 1, 2027.
*Hockey Canada to establish an Ontario men's junior hockey Advisory Committee that reviews and provides recommendations on potential rule, regulation and policy changes *This recommendation has been separated to include establishing the committee, and the anticipated first season of recommendations to be delivered.	As per Brendan's recommendation, it is important for the incoming Ontario men's junior hockey executive to be involved in the selection of the composition of the Advisory Committee members. However, the number of priority topics Brendan identified are too pressing to leave entirely until this role has been filled. In the interim, the three Ontario Members and Hockey Canada will begin to build the foundation for this work to help transition the incoming executive.	Formalize the new Advisory Committee by March 31, 2027.
All incoming 16- and 17-year-old men's junior hockey players in Ontario will be permitted to register with eligible teams across the province without the current geographic restrictions	Build on the Ontario Junior Development Model pilot that currently allows one 16-year-old player selected in the OHL Priority Selection Draft to register outside their home Ontario Member and one 17-year-old player from another Ontario Member to register with a Junior A or B team, by allowing all 16- and 17-year-old players to register with any league for the 2028-29 season.	Continue the Ontario Junior Development Model pilot for a second year during the 2026-27 season, with a view to fully implementing this recommendation by the 2028-29 season.
Adopt consistent playing rules aligned with the Ontario Hockey League across all men's junior hockey leagues in Ontario	Six of nine men's junior hockey leagues in Ontario have adopted the Ontario Hockey League Rule Book for the 2026-27 season as part of the Ontario Junior Development Model pilot, and the other three leagues will move to this Rule Book the following season.	Continue the Ontario Junior Development Model pilot during the 2026-27 season, with a view to fully implementing this recommendation by the 2027-28 season.
Develop a standardized billeting policy for men's junior hockey in Ontario	All men's junior hockey leagues will follow a standardized billeting policy that will be developed during the 2026-27 season, with full implementation for the 2027-28 season.	Finalized by June 30, 2027.



TRANSITIONAL PRIORITIES 2027-28 SEASON:

Building off the work from the 2026-27 season, these recommendations will be implemented to continue the momentum towards strengthening men's junior hockey in Ontario.

Recommendation	Vision for Implementation	Milestone(s)
Create a Player Pathway Hotline and Advisory through Hockey Canada to give players and their families independent and real-time support and guidance as they make decisions that impact their hockey journeys	This recommendation will be one of the first priorities for the incoming executive who will oversee men's junior hockey in Ontario. The mandate will be to explore existing services that could benefit players and families in addition to creating new avenues to provide them with information to support their careers.	Finalized by February 29, 2028 to support decisions for players and their families ahead of the 2028-29 season.
*Ontario men's junior hockey Advisory Committee provides recommendations on potential rule, regulation and policy changes *This recommendation has been separated to include establishing the committee, and the anticipated first season of recommendations to be delivered.	After being created during the 2026-27 season, the Advisory Committee will deliver its first set of recommendations to the Ontario men's junior hockey executive during the 2027-28 season.	Initial recommendations delivered by January 31, 2028.
**Improve communication and collaboration between men's junior hockey, accredited schools and U18 and U16 hockey **This recommendation has been separated to address the relationship between men's junior hockey, accredited schools, and U18 and U16 hockey during the 2027-28 season, and the relationship between men's junior hockey and Ontario University Athletics during the 2028-29 season.	The initial work of the Advisory Committee should include working with the three Ontario Members and other impacted stakeholders to better understand the impact they will have on the overall hockey system in Ontario, before providing a recommendation to the incoming Ontario men's junior hockey executive on how to strengthen the communication and collaboration between stakeholders.	Recommendation delivered to the incoming Ontario men's junior hockey executive by January 31, 2028.

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS 2028-29 SEASON AND BEYOND:

Recognizing that these recommendations may take longer to accomplish because of their complexity, they will be addressed following the completion of the immediate needs.

Recommendation	Vision for Implementation	Milestone(s)
Separate the governance and delivery of men's junior and minor hockey in Ontario	Following the hiring of a Hockey Canada executive to oversee men's junior hockey in Ontario, the nine junior leagues would report to this individual to better centralize leadership and strengthen consistency across the leagues. However, before addressing this recommendation, the delineation between minor and junior hockey needs to be formalized, and the jurisdiction for 16- and 17-year-old players must be reviewed.	Review the implications of this report and provide an interim implementation plan by January 1, 2028. Fully implement this recommendation by June 30, 2029.
**Improve communication and collaboration between men's junior hockey and Ontario University Athletics **This recommendation has been separated to address the relationship between men's junior hockey, accredited schools, and U18 and U16 hockey during the 2027-28 season, and the relationship between men's junior hockey and Ontario University Athletics during the 2028-29 season.	The incoming Ontario men's junior hockey executive will reach out to Ontario University Athletics, and work with them to identify formal opportunities for collaboration.	Develop a framework for what a collaboration with Ontario University Athletics could be by December 31, 2027. Formalize opportunities to collaborate with Ontario University Athletics by January 31, 2029.
Expand annual mandatory off-ice education and training courses from Hockey Canada	Following the Advisory Committee's review of minimum requirements and operating standards, deliver a recommendation for the education and training courses that Hockey Canada should implement for men's junior hockey players in Ontario.	Receive recommendation from Advisory Committee by January 31, 2029.
Require all men's junior hockey leagues in Ontario to have education consultants available to their players	Following the Advisory Committee's review of minimum requirements and operating standards, deliver a recommendation for the role of education consultants for men's junior hockey leagues in Ontario.	Receive recommendation from Advisory Committee by January 31, 2029.
Expand and enhance post-playing career pathway programs	Following the Advisory Committee's review of minimum requirements and operating standards, deliver a recommendation to expand post-playing career pathway programs for men's junior hockey players in Ontario.	Receive recommendation from Advisory Committee by January 31, 2029.



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