

Reopening schools safely matters to everyone

That's why the government of Ontario has worked with health officials, school boards and educators to develop a comprehensive plan to keep kids and staff safe.

- **Physical distancing** measures will be implemented such as desk separation, signs, floor markings and one-way hallways.
- **Face coverings** will be required for staff and students in Grades 4-12.
- **Hand hygiene** will be enabled with hand sanitizer and hand washing.
- **More nurses** will be in schools.
- **School cleaning** will be enhanced.



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NEWS

FEWER TEAMS, 4-ON-4 PLAY AMONG CHANGES

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returning for the leagues stage one as of Sept. 21.

In a more normal year, between 1,200 and 1,500 players register with Halton Hills Minor Hockey for the season.

"We're almost at capacity for registration," said Brenda Geim, vice president of rep hockey for the association.

Her 17-year-old son is enrolled for what will be his final season of minor hockey.

The fewer available spots coincide with fewer ice pads available through the Town, that's working with HHMH to prepare for the coming season.

Generally, minor hockey spans six ice pads at Mold-Masters Sportsplex. This year, the organization will have access to two.

Stage two, anticipated in October, will welcome back more players including league play.

Changes to the season include a shift to four-on-four hockey instead of typical five-on-five play.

Leagues will be limited to 50 players, nine skaters and one goalie, with a cap of five teams.

"You form a rivalry with teams," Matt Kelly, 16, said. "We want to beat Brampton

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- Jake Kelly

and Milton every time."

For the time being, there will be no travel for teams nor tryouts. Social distancing will also be maintained on the ice.

"Contact has been ingrained in how we play," Kelly said, "it'll be tougher to play without it but we'll adapt to get back on the ice."

While the restrictions are constantly changing, there's hope for players.

"As we move through the season, and based on the Ontario government and COVID-19 trends, we are hopeful that we will be able to increase the programming to travel limited to our public health unit," Geim said, "For now, we are

actively working on a plan to welcome back our players with safety at the top of the list."

Last season, the Town issued refunds for lost ice time after the COVID-19 pandemic closed down facilities at the beginning of March. Most players received refunds for ice time they wouldn't be able to enjoy, after the Town refunded the association once facilities were closed.

For Jake Kelly, 18, his final season was cut short during a Tri-county championship final against Erin.

"We came off the ice and found out we were done," Kelly said, recounting a loss in the first of three games for the championship. "I would have liked to have gone out in a blaze of glory, winning the championship."

While fees to play are typically several hundred dollars, more for rep league players, the organization has pushed off collection of fees. Right now, Geim said, the fee to register is \$105 per player.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: Minor hockey is set to resume this fall in Halton Hills, but players can expect some major changes when they hit the ice.

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