

Ontario Minor Hockey announces new format for championships

Written By **Brian Lockhart**

The Ontario Minor Hockey Association has announced a new format for the 2022 provincial championships.

Over 350 teams will take part this year with more than 850 games taking place at centres around the province.

The ultimate prize in Ontario Minor Hockey is the red hat that is given to championship team members.

Leading up to the OMHA Championship weekends, there will be new league championships in each area. League playoffs will now turn into regional qualifying showdowns to see who moves on to compete.

"Our players, parents and volunteers have endured so much during the pandemic," said Ian Taylor, executive director of the OMHA. "We have been planning this for months and believe this is a great way to give them something special to look forward to and to ensure all our participants can be involved in more meaningful hockey right up to March and beyond."

At the beginning of the season each League was assigned a Tier based on the categories of teams playing within the League. This process was used for the purpose of determining the number of teams within each Tier of the League compared with the overall number of teams from across the OMHA.

This determined the number of teams that the league would send to each of the OMHA championships.

Round robin play will occur on the first two days, with the Semi-Finals and Championships being decided on the Sunday.

This removes the elimination-style series and keeps more teams playing during the year for a longer period of time. The format has been designed with players, coaches, and parents in mind and minimizes travel time.

OMHA championships will take place over three weekends in March and April and hosted in five locations around the province. Those locations include Barrie, Kingston, Oakville, Whitby, and Windsor.

Specific schedules will be released closer to the dates. The weekends will feature sponsor activations and gifts, excited crowds, official merchandise and live-streaming of games.

Round-robin style play will occur on the first two days of the tournament with semi-finals and championships being decided on the Sunday.

Consistent game-play formats will be followed at the U14 level and below, as well as U15, and above, regarding period lengths and floods.

The championships are sponsored by the Egg Farmers of Ontario.

"Since 2018, Egg Farmers of Ontario (EFO) has been a proud supporter of the OMHA and are excited to continue that partnership through our involvement in the new OMHA Championship Weekends," said Scott Helps, EFO Chair. "All teams should take pride in the hard work and perseverance that it takes to win the ultimate prize in minor hockey. These new steps to win the Red Hats will make it more exciting than ever."

The OMHA Championships will take place over three weekends: March 25 - 27, April 1 - 3, and April 8 - 10, 2022.