

North Carruthers Division making big changes next season

Written By **Brian Lockhart**

There will be significant changes in the North Carruthers Division of the Provincial Junior Hockey when teams return for the 2024-25 season.

Currently, the division has nine teams covering an area in central Ontario, including Alliston, Stayner, Schomberg, Caledon, Huntsville, Penetang, Midland, Orillia, and Innisfil.

The League has already announced the addition of one new team ? the Muskoka Bears ? who will join the division at the start of next season. The Bears are based in Bracebridge.

The Bears have already paid the \$65,000 franchise fee to the League.

The team is a not-for-profit, community funded and managed organization. Eight members of the management team and an additional five advisory committee members had a financial investment in the franchise.

Sponsors, donors and fans will be relied upon to provide all the funding necessary to operate the team.

When the North Carruthers Division returns next season, there will be a noticeable change in the line-up of teams.

Both the Caledon Golden Hawks and the Schomberg Cougars will be moving to the East Orr Division.

The Orr Division is east of both towns and includes teams from Clarington, Georgina, Uxbridge, Port Perry, Lakefield, Little Britain, and North Kawartha.

The PJHL confirmed the decision to move the teams to a different division.

?We have been reviewing our alignment for two years,? said Terry Whiteside, Commissioner of the PJHL. ?We have 63 franchises, and the goal is to have seven divisions with eight teams and one division with seven teams. This way, all teams make the playoffs and all divisions would have to play the same number of rounds to get to the Schmalz Cup finals. Currently we have a division with six teams and two with nine. The ninth place team in this division doesn't make the playoffs.?

The League also considered travel time and current attendance when deciding to make these moves.

?We also looked at travel time when considering alignment,? Whiteside said. ?In Schomberg and Caledon's case, their travel should be less in the Orr Division than it would be in the Carruthers Division. We hope to be able to work with the teams to develop rivals and increase their gate attendance. Neither team draws very well currently, in comparison to many other teams.?

Both Caledon and Schomberg have low attendance at home games compared to other towns like Alliston and Stayner, which have a solid local fan base.

The new team line-up will give the North Carruthers Division eight squads to start the next season.