

PJHL now looking at February start for regular season

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

Fans of Junior C hockey will have to wait for a couple more months before they will even have the possibility of seeing their team on the ice this season.

The Provincial Junior Hockey League has announced a projected start date of February 1, 2021 for the regular season.

The League had originally planned to get on the ice in early December. That was changed to January 2, after it was realized a December start wasn't feasible.

After a recent meeting of League Governors the new date was announced pending the permission of all health authorities and governing bodies and will take into account the safety of our players, coaches, staff, and fans, according to a statement released by the League and League Commissioner, Terry Whiteside.

Some PJHL clubs have already been on the ice for practice and player development sessions.

The League has formed a committee called the COVID Response Committee to take a proactive approach for regular season scheduling, playoff formats, and return to play policies to ensure they have the right information for proper methods to ensure a safe return to the ice.

"We're continuously communicating with the PJHL Board of Directors and team Governors on safe and effective measures to get our league back on the ice," said Devon Young, committee chair. "We're focusing a lot of our efforts on how the regular season and playoffs will be scheduled in such a tight time frame, as well as ensuring we are providing everyone with a safe and sound plan to return to the rinks."

Some teams in the league have played exhibition games, but no fans were allowed in the building. Teams are required to play only another team that is in their Health Unit Region, and they must take a two-week break before going up against another team in the same region.

Unlike Minor Hockey organizations that are playing three-on-three or four-on-four hockey, the Junior teams are playing with five skaters on each team.

The League will have more information closer to the February start date.

If that date is deemed not suitable to start hockey by health authorities, chances are the entire season will have to be scrapped and hopefully reconvened next season.