



HOCKEY CALGARY

**Date:** June 3, 2015  
**To:** Hockey Calgary Members  
**From:** Kevin Kobelka – Executive Director  
**CC:** HC Board of Directors

**SUBJECT: Removal of 'Body Checking' – Bantam Divisions 4 & Lower (Background)**

In 2013 Hockey Canada along with Hockey Alberta chose to eliminate 'Body Checking' from all divisions of the Pee Wee age category (11 & 12 year olds). At that time there were a number of other recommendations communicated such as:

- Create an overall player safety strategy focusing on the reduction of serious injuries in the game at all levels
- Review and improve the Checking Skills program for all coaches
- **Review the removal of 'Body Checking' from Bantam and Midget non-elite streams**

In the ongoing efforts to ensure player safety and keep players in the game longer, Hockey Calgary in partnership with its member associations created 3 sub-committees to review options to address these concerns. The sub-committees focused on the following topics:

1. Create a Midget 15 Community league
2. Remove 'Body Checking' from the Bantam 4 Division & Below
3. Remove 'Body Checking' from the Midget 5 Division & Below

These proposals were presented to the Presidents Council (presidents of all member associations within Hockey Calgary) and after lengthy deliberation were voted on for acceptance for the 2015-16 season. Based on the result of these votes the only change to the leagues within Hockey Calgary will be:

- **'Body Checking' will NOT be permitted within the Bantam 4 division & below within Hockey Calgary league, exhibition or tournament play.**

While this rule is not being mandated by the governing bodies of Hockey Alberta & Hockey Canada, they are supportive, and Hockey Calgary is aware of numerous other LMHA's within the province and across the country that are moving in this same direction.

Below you will find some background, rationale and references for the decision.



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### **Background:**

Many hockey associations and governing bodies across Canada are currently reviewing the inclusion of body-checking in the Bantam and Midget levels of community hockey. These hockey communities are typically making changes to either remove body-checking from the lower levels, offering an enhanced Recreational league that includes practices, or creating a separate non body-checking league for players who wish to play competitive hockey but prefer not to body-check.

### **Rationale:**

- Evidence suggests the inclusion of body-checking is positively correlated with a higher rate of injuries (3.35-3.75 times more), more serious injuries (3.30 times the incidence of one-week or longer recovery time), more suspensions, and poor on-ice behavior.
- Body-checking is the predominant mechanism of injury among youth hockey players at all levels of competition where it is permitted, accounting for 45% to 86% of injuries.
- The player drop-out rate increases when body-checking becomes mandatory.
- Rec Hockey Calgary has a growing waiting list and no additional capacity due to the fixed game days.
- Players at the Bantam/Midget 4 level and below are less likely to play Elite Hockey in the subsequent season therefore eliminating the need to develop this skill.
- Delaying body-checking until players reach Bantam does not result in a higher injury rate due to the delay, however, the evidence overwhelmingly shows a higher injury rate in body-checking hockey vs non body-checking hockey. Removing body-checking reduces injuries without an increased injury risk to players who body-check in a subsequent season.
- Players moving in to the Bantam Age category for the upcoming 2015-2016 season are 2002 born who have never played hockey with 'Body Checking'.

### **Additional Considerations:**

- Many associations and leagues across Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C. have already removed body-checking from the lower levels of Bantam and Midget
  - Quebec has now removed body-checking from the lower levels of Bantam and Midget
  - Winnipeg has created a separate league for competitive hockey without body-checking
  - Nova Scotia removed body-checking at their B and C levels
  - Airdrie removed body-checking from their City Leagues



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- Lethbridge just announced a new 'Non-Contact' Bantam league for 2015-16
- Edmonton is currently studying a double-stream system for Bantam and Midget.
- The Greater Toronto Hockey League currently has no body-checking below the A level and beginning in 2015/16 will remove body-checking from the A level at Minor Bantam. As their 2002 born players move into Major Bantam and Midget those age groups will also become non body-checking at the A level. The result is that 2002 and later born players in the GTHL will only body-check at the AA and AAA levels, A level players and below will never participate in body-checking.
- The current Hockey Calgary experience suggests that players are able to easily adapt when the body-checking rules change from year-to-year. For example, 2001 born players have alternated between body-checking and non-body-checking 3 times over the last 3 seasons and were able to rapidly adapt to the rule change each season.

### References:

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