



## HEO's Board of Directors Announces New HEO AAA Program for 2023-24

The HEO Board of Directors is pleased to announce a significant program reset for AAA hockey in the Branch.

Consistent with its goals of a unified minor hockey AAA program based on Hockey Canada's AAA Gold Medal Pathways, HEO has developed new program standards for all of its AAA operators to follow. These standards include mandatory participation in the Gold Medal Pathways, position-specific skills development, the use of game analysis software, AAA tournament requirements, mandated player progress discussions, and a high level of operator financial transparency and accountability. A new feature is the creation of a HEO AAA Technical Director position, whose responsibility it will be to ensure program standards are upheld across the Branch, to provide impartiality in coach and player selection where conflicts of interest exist, and to oversee general competitiveness in team formation.

A key change that has been made is the establishment of the U16 category for AAA in the Branch. In making this change, the Board recognizes the importance to our players of the opportunity to compete with other U16 teams in key U16AAA tournaments.

The U16AAA season carries special significance for players as they prepare for their major junior draft. The HEO Board of Directors recognizes the importance of balancing opportunities to play at the AAA level in our Branch with safe-guarding a high level of competence. Therefore, a mandatory review will take place each and every year to determine the appropriate number of teams for the following season, taking into account demographics, the current season's AAA performance, and the evolution of comparable hockey programs in Ontario and across the country. For the 2023-24 season, the U16AAA category will consist of five teams.

The Board of Directors also took note of current U18AAA players' calls for stability and predictability in their coming season. For the 2023-24 season, the U18AAA category will consist of six teams, three in the east and three in the west. HEO will work with returning 2006/07 players to ensure a smooth transition. U16AAA players who have been released from U16AAA tryouts will be permitted to tryout for U18AAA teams.

The U15/U14/U13/U12 categories will consist of five teams each, operating in the current boundaries. Consistent with the mandatory review requirement at the U16 level, this group of categories will be subjected to mandatory boundary reviews on a five-year cycle, with the first review coming at the end of the 2023-24 season. The U12AAA category is currently operating as a five-year pilot project; a decision as to its status is expected at the conclusion of the 2024-25 season.

The HEO Board of Directors also announces the following AAA governance changes:

- A new HEO AAA Board of Governors to provide direction to the entire AAA program\*
- A new HEO AAA League, in which all categories will participate
- The intent to move all of AAA to District 14
- A transition team composed of current Zone Chairs, to support the creation of the new Board of Governors, the new AAA League, and District 14; and a plan to migrate AAA to District 14
- Provision of an annual directive to AAA operators, setting out expectations and obligations for the coming season

\*The HEO AAA Board of Governors will report to HEO's Board of Directors, and to Minor Council (which has a mandate for the delivery of all minor hockey programs). The Board of Governors will oversee the League and District 14.

In conclusion, the HEO Board of Directors is pleased to announce the following program construct for the 2023-24 season. We sincerely thank and recognize the efforts of the CCHL, the HEO U18AAA League, the HEO AAA League and the AAA Associations to provide quality programming to our players over the years.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Team Operators</b>
U18AAA	CCHL — six teams (three east, three west)**
U16AAA	Cyclones/Titans/Wild/Myers/Jr67s
U15AAA	Cyclones/Titans/Wild/Myers/Jr67s
U14AAA	Cyclones/Titans/Wild/Myers/Jr67s
U13AAA	Cyclones/Titans/Wild/Myers/Jr67s
U12AAA	Cyclones/Titans/Wild/Myers/Jr67s

\*\* Specific team operators will be selected by the HEO AAA Board of Governors.

For further details regarding HEO's AAA Program Standards, please consult the HEO AAA Reset Plan 2023-24, available on the HEO website at [www.hockeysternontario.ca](http://www.hockeysternontario.ca)