April 19, 2007

David E. Branch
Commissioner
Ontario Hockey League
305 Milner Avenue, Ste. 200
Scarborough, ON M1B 3V4

MEMORANDUM FROM DR. ROBERT KYLE, COMMISSIONER & MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, DATED APRIL 5, 2007 RE: MIDDLESEX-LONDON BOARD OF HEALTH RESOLUTION.

Mr. Branch, the Health & Social Services Committee of Regional Council considered the above matter and at a meeting held on April 18, 2007, Council adopted the following recommendations of the Committee:

"a) THAT the following resolution of the Board of Health for the Middlesex-London Health Unit respecting fighting in amateur hockey be endorsed:

1. That the Thames Valley District School Board resolution concerning the banning of fighting in Junior A hockey be endorsed; and further

2. That all organized amateur hockey leagues in Ontario be petitioned to ban fighting in hockey; and further

3. That copies of this Report be forwarded to all Ontario Boards of Health seeking endorsement of the banning of fighting in amateur hockey at all levels.

b) THAT the Commissioner of the Ontario Hockey League, the Thames Valley District School Board, the Minister of Health Promotion, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health and all Ontario boards of health be so advised."

Pat M. Madill, AMCT, CMM I
Regional Clerk

PMM/daj

c: see following page
c: The Honourable Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion
Bill Bryce, Director of Education and Secretary, Thames Valley District School Board
Dr. George Pasut, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Long-Term Care (Acting)
Ontario Boards of Health
Dr. R.J. Kyle, Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health
VIOLENCE IN HOCKEY

Recommendations

It is recommended:

1. That the Board of Health endorse the Thames Valley District School Board resolution concerning violence in hockey and thereby petition the Ontario Hockey League Commissioner to ban fighting in major Junior A hockey; and further

2. That copies of this Report be forwarded to all Ontario Boards of Health seeking endorsement of the Thames Valley District School Board resolution.

Violence in society, in particular violence against women and children, is a serious public health concern of epidemic proportions. While all community members are capable of perpetrating violence, it is recognized that males are the predominant instigators. The Board of Health has had a leadership role within this community in actions related to the prevention of violence and abuse and in addressing its consequences. The Board’s establishment of the Task Force on the Health Effects of Woman Abuse and the endorsement of the Task Forces recommendations are examples in this regard. Health Unit staff have for many years been involved in violence prevention programs and services. Report No. 010–07 re Muslim Family Safety Project Workshop is a recent example.

Addressing violence requires a multi-strategy approach aimed at persons of all ages. It requires a cultural shift – one where violence and abuse are seen as unacceptable. Strategies aimed at boys and men are an important means of achieving this end. One vehicle for condoning violence in Canadian society, especially for boys and men, is the practice of fighting in hockey. No other major organized team sport permits fighting as a regular part of the game. In hockey, players who fight are assessed a 5-minute penalty. When contrasted with a 10-minute penalty for “diving”, (i.e. embellishing a tripping fall) it is evident how acceptable fighting is within hockey. Hockey players are role models for children and adolescents particularly, boys and young men. It is an unnecessary aspect of the game as recognized by the banning of fighting at college, university, secondary school and Olympic hockey levels. This is not the case at the major junior and professional levels.

The Thames Valley District School Board recently undertook an important action in this regard. At the December 19, 2006 meeting, school trustees passed the following resolution:

Be it resolved that the Thames Valley District School Board request that the Ontario Hockey League Commissioner take a leadership role in major Junior A hockey by banning fighting and that the Thames Valley District School Board request support from the London Knights organization in these efforts.

Consistent with previous actions taken by the Board of Health, Board members are requested to endorse the Thames Valley District School Board resolution and thereby petition the Ontario Hockey League Commissioner to ban fighting in major Junior A hockey.

Graham L. Pollett, MD, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health
February 9, 2007

Ms. Pat Perkins
Board of Health Chair
Durham Region Health Department
Regional Municipality of Durham Headquarters
605 Rossland Rd. E., PO Box 730
Whitby, Ontario L1N 0B2

Dear Ms. Perkins:

At its January 18, 2007 meeting, the Middlesex-London Board of Health considered Report No. 003-07 re Violence in Hockey and passed the following resolutions:

1. That the Thames Valley District School Board resolution concerning the banning of fighting in Junior A hockey be endorsed; and further

2. That all organized amateur hockey leagues in Ontario be petitioned to ban fighting in hockey; and further

3. That copies of this Report be forwarded to all Ontario Boards of Health seeking endorsement of the banning of fighting in amateur hockey at all levels.

A copy of the report has been attached for your information.

It is the position of the Middlesex-London Board of Health that for fighting to be banned, the disciplinary action related to such incidents must be significant enough to act as an effective deterrent. What those measures are should be determined by each hockey league. To assist in this regard, amateur hockey leagues are encouraged to review the practice of those leagues such as college and Olympic hockey, where fighting has been banned.

If you require additional information, please contact my office at (519) 663-5317 ext. 2444.

Yours sincerely,

Graham L. Pollett, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Secretary-Treasurer
Middlesex-London Board of Health

GP/VBe

Encl.