

**Subject: A plea for protection of the innocent and vulnerable**

Dear Mr. Oakman, Mr. Kourtis, Mr. West, and the Special Committee,

We are the parents of the 15 year old children on the U16AA Mississauga Rattlers. We have written this to you not just as hurt and upset parents, but as advocates for fairness and protection of the innocent and vulnerable children. A Core Principle of Canadian Legislation is “to protect the innocent and the vulnerable, and ensure that ONLY those proven guilty are punished”.

19 children are heartbroken and devastated by a decision that has amounted to the forfeiture of their season due to an administrative error at the Organizational level of youth hockey that is beyond the control of the players, parents and volunteers of this team.

We are deeply concerned about the mental and emotional well-being of our children. These boys have spent years dedicated to this sport, finding purpose, confidence, and identity through their hard work on the ice. To see it all taken away in an instant has left them feeling lost and discouraged. The emotional toll is immense—frustration, sadness, and anxiety have replaced the joy and camaraderie they once felt. Their reputation has been damaged as they are teased and bullied by others for this public discipline from the GTHL. As an organization that claims to prioritize the well-being of young athletes, the GTHL must recognize the long-term harm this decision is inflicting and take immediate steps to reverse it before irreparable damage is done. Parents are also dealing with mental health challenges as a result of this.

We have watched our boys break down in tears. We have seen the pain in their eyes. We have heard their questions that we don't have answers to. How do we explain that the GTHL thinks it is ok for innocent vulnerable children to be treated this way? We expect you to protect these kids, not harm them. The GTHL verdict reads it's a “difficult lesson that they (the children) must pay the price for”. This statement is wrongly trying to justify the decision by saying the GTHL is OK with the children being collateral damage in order to punish the organization above them. The GTHL, that should be protecting our kids, cannot be ok inflicting this much damage on innocent children.

What lesson is it that these children are learning? That innocent should pay a penalty for the guilty? That we should not protect the innocent and vulnerable? That the GTHL knows better than Canada's federal legislation that wants to ensure that “ONLY those proven guilty are punished”? Or is the lesson that the GTHL sees children hockey players as pawns, used to make money and in this case leverage to flex muscle and control over others – an abuse of power.

These children had a once in a lifetime chance to win a championship this year that cannot be replaced. These kids have dedicated almost a year of hard work, tenacity, and passion to the game they love and they are now in tears with no understanding of why they are being punished and questioning if they even want to go to the rink and play. A game they loved has been ruined.

For many on the team, this season is the pinnacle of their minor hockey career. A chance to pursue the city championship. It has been their focus, their motivation, their reason for pushing themselves so hard. The current GTHL decision has shattered them.

Hockey is supposed to be more than just a game. It is supposed to build character, foster a love of sport, and create lifelong memories. But right now, all these boys feel is devastation. The message being sent to them is clear: Bureaucracy matters more than the protection of the innocent and vulnerable players themselves. This has left these children feeling hopeless and the parents are struggling too.

The parents writing you believe this decision contradicts everything the GTHL claims to stand for:

- **Integrity:** What integrity is there in punishing innocent and vulnerable youth players for a mistake they or their team had no part in?
- **Excellence:** How does taking away their hard-earned victories promote excellence?
- **Inclusivity & Community:** How is shutting out a team and 19 families that have fought so hard in the spirit of community? A community protects each other. You don't hurt each other.
- **Development:** How can young athletes develop in an environment that does not protect them? An environment where their efforts can be wiped away unfairly by the people that are supposed to be protecting them?

For 38 parents behind this team, this decision is not just statistic—it's years of sacrifice, dedication, and financial investment thrown away in an instant. Parents have spent countless hours at rinks and hundreds of thousands of dollars supporting their children in this sport, trusting the GTHL to act in the best interest of young athletes and to protect them from harm like this. Instead, the GTHL is the one harming our kids and we are needing to hire lawyers and PR firms to protect them.

The Rattlers Organization and Shelly Small has sent to you what the GTHL identified as the missing testimony on Friday. With this evidence and our note, we the parents, urge the GTHL to re-open this case and reconsider their decision this week. There are alternative

sanctions to enforce on the organization. None of them need to directly harm innocent players counting on the GTHL to protect them.

Also note, we have a petition being signed by the other organizations in the GTHL supporting our team. Other organizations don't believe the children should be punished, and the change to the standings has damaged the integrity of the U16AA loop and made the standings unfair. Some teams are getting extra points while others are not. The standings have been compromised and the only way to make it fair for all organizations is to fix this.

**Respectfully,**