

Aurora in the elite number of 2017-18 OMHA registrations

By Jake Courtepatte

The Aurora minor hockey scene continued to roar in the 2017-18 season.

The community is one of just a dozen across Ontario to have reached the 1,000 registered minor hockey player mark last season, according to a release from the Ontario Minor Hockey Association on Sunday.

Topping out at a registered number of 1,166, Aurora fell just outside of the top ten in the province.

Among those numbers, Aurora saw some of its most exponential growth at the introductory levels of the game: Initiation (5-6 years old), Tyke (7-years old) and Novice (8-years old) saw a combined growth of one-percent in the province, with Aurora coming closer to the 2-percent mark, while the Initiation stage saw a whopping 35-percent increase in registration.

"We are already seeing the benefits of scaling the game at the introductory age groups of our sport, which allows young players the opportunity for more puck-touches, promotes greater skill development and increased engagement," said OMHA Executive Director Ian Taylor in the release.

"With more options today than ever before, we hope to continue to make hockey the sport of choice for families in Ontario and ensure kids get the most out of the game, both on and off the ice."

In March, the OMHA, in partnership with Hockey Canada and the Ontario Hockey Federation, formally announced a transformation in programming, which includes the implementation of a cross/half-ice game rollout-out through to the 2019-2020 season for Novice and below players.

The OMHA also launched its first-ever marketing campaign across the province in the spring, focusing on building character for young players through its Long-Term People Development campaign.

Playing on an acronym common to many amateur sports "Long-Term Player Development" the campaign accentuated the fact that there are "enduring life values to be learned through Canada's game."

Fall of 2018 will also see the introduction of a new branch of the Aurora Minor Hockey Association to get kids in the game at an even younger age, the Tiger Cubs. Participants ages 4 and 5 will get the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of the game in a slow-paced, on-ice environment, with a focus on "fun, development, and instruction", according to the organization's website.

Newmarket moved into the ninth-spot among the most registered communities in Ontario with a number topping 1,200, while Oakville's total of just over 3,500 meant it remained the busiest in the province.