



**DATE:** February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
**TO:** Vancouver Women's Field Hockey Association  
**FROM:** Field Hockey BC Board of Directors

**ISSUE:** Impact on the VWFHA of the GVJFHL's Proposed Changes

### **BACKGROUND:**

In 2003, the BC Women's Field Hockey Federation (BCWFHF) conducted a gap analysis which identified the need to increase the opportunity for female athletes within the recreational, developmental and high performance streams, and especially in inspiring a greater number of young female athletes within the U13 to U18 age range. Such an assessment led to the creation of the BCWFHF Regional High Performance Athlete Program and an extension to the existing Provincial High Performance Program. This was the founding structure to the FHBC high performance athlete pathway in existence today, following the amalgamation of the BCWFHF and the BCFHA (Men's Association) under the FHBC banner in 2005.

During this time, FHBC female membership numbers have remained consistent year-to-year within the U13 to U18 membership category. What is most significant is the number of junior female athletes in these age groups that are now making the choice to be field hockey first athletes, which shows the increased value of field hockey participation. This is significant in that field hockey during the 2000's was very much considered an affordable secondary choice for many multi-sport athletes in BC.

Another significant change is the transition of junior athletes to senior participation is growing. Today approximately 23% of players in the VWFHL are juniors. The female adult playing population continues to rise and that there are currently record numbers of adults playing field hockey across BC. FHBC supports the adult playing population in both event based opportunity (e.g. Vancouver International Tournament, BC Masters Tournament, senior international hosting assistance) and in further investment in coaching (e.g. Provincial Coach Education) and officiating.

### **GVJFHL's PROPOSED FHBC AGM MOTIONS:**

FHBC first became aware of the GVJFHL's concerns in September 2019. An immediate effort was made to set up a meeting shortly thereafter, however, no response to the meeting invite was received. Eventually, on December 8th representatives from FHBC met with approximately 10–12 representatives from the GVJFHL to discuss the concerns brought forward. From FHBC's perspective, the meeting was



productive and a plan to work together collaboratively was agreed to. A series of follow-up meetings were scheduled in January 2020 designed to facilitate collaboration between the GVJFHL and FHBC on scheduling and Club Championship issues. Representatives from the GVJFHL attended one meeting on January 8<sup>th</sup> but failed to show at a subsequent meeting. FHBC asked the GVJFHL to nominate individuals to participate on a province-wide working group to review the Provincial pathway, and to-date no names have been put forward. On January 8<sup>th</sup> the GVJFHL advised FHBC that Tamanawis Field was no longer available to host the Train to Train (U15) Festival in April 2020 (booking was confirmed November 2019) due to a conflict with Spring League. FHBC staff have since spent considerable time and effort trying to locate an alternate host site with an incremental cost of approximately \$15,000.

The GVJFHL has requested FHBC agree to the following 3 points:

- Instruct FHBC players to prioritize club over FHBC Regional and Provincial program participation for the duration of the Junior Spring Season
- Reinstate the Club Championships as the pinnacle of the junior season
- Remove the requirement for athletes to enroll in the Regional Program in order to be selected for their provincial team

The GVJFHL has put forward [four motions](#) in support of the points listed above. In support of the GVJFHL proposals, the Vancouver Hawks Field Hockey Club and the West Vancouver Field Hockey Club have developed a [Pathways to Change](#) document.

## **IMPACT OF PROPOSED GVJFHL CHANGES:**

Contrary to what some VWFHA members might think, the proposed GVJFHL changes would have a significant impact on women's hockey. The FHBC Board of Directors would like to provide the VWFHA with information regarding the potential impact in order to ensure its members understand the consequences and risks associated with the proposed changes.

- **Club Performance Stream Programming Impact on Smaller Clubs and Player Numbers**

The shift away from FHBC performance-stream programming to the clubs could have a negative impact on smaller clubs without the player numbers and resources (coaching and facility) to support a high performance stream. Larger clubs could potentially draw players from other clubs and/or other areas, creating even larger clubs. Smaller clubs may lose players and could potentially lose a critical mass needed for retention and future club viability. Such an impact could also cause a gradual reduction in female players transitioning to adult participation if the value of the services at a lower level are not maintained, thereby creating a risk to the growth of women's hockey in BC.



- **Club Performance Stream Programming Impact on FHBC Revenue and Grants**

Changes to FHBC's Regional Program could significantly reduce grants received and program investment amounting to \$210,000+ per year. Over 50% of such revenue is currently invested directly in technical leadership and HR delivery of programming. As a result, a reduction in FHBC HR support is likely. This will potentially have a direct impact on the level and most significantly the quality of service provision to female athletes, coaches, and officials. Some examples include reduced funding available for coach education, umpire education, and fewer FHBC high performance coaches coaching at the club level. FHBC has begun to conduct due diligence on reviewing the athlete Provincial pathway and is interested in working collaboratively with a diverse range of representatives from the field hockey community to review the model and put forward recommendations for improvement. Such a process requires due diligence and consultation with all key stakeholders across the province.

- **Club Performance Stream Programming Impact on Current Community Stakeholders and FHBC Resources**

If the GVJFHL's motion to require FHBC to **immediately** amend its selection process to no longer require participation in its Train to Train (U15) and Train to Compete (U18) Regional Programs as a condition of selection for the corresponding Provincial Programs is approved, there is every likelihood that we will see a significant percentage of the 400+ stakeholder parents write formally to FHBC with concerns and complaints, not perhaps at the time of initial communication post AGM, but most certainly following the potential for open selections to provincial programming. The Board is very concerned about the implications to the commitment made by current community stakeholders to FHBC performance stream programming. Such a change would also have a significant impact on FHBC staff resources existing athlete policies. The FHBC Board of Directors will have to rescind most, if not all, eligibility policies for the Regional Program to allow for non-regional program athlete participation and selection, and consider the impact to policy application around this summer's Provincial program.

- **FHBC Administration of Sanctioned Leagues (e.g. GVWFHL, GVMFHL, and GVJFHL) Impact on FHBC's HR Structure and/or Membership Fees**

Leagues are autonomous entities and league structures would have to change significantly in terms of governance to allow for anything remotely resembling this. With an all-male GVJFHL slate being put forward, the VWFHA is at risk of ceding control of its league to a group of men focused on junior boy's development. Such a change would require a significant investment and/or change to the Society's HR structure. Current consideration estimates the required investment at 3 members of staff and \$150K+ in revenue. Such a change would require FHBC's membership fees to double or an internal HR restructure to align existing resources to this identified need, thereby reducing or eliminating existing programs and services.



- **No Female Representation from GVJFHL Board Nominees**

The GVJFHL has nominated the following members to join the FHBC board:

- Andrew Dewberry, Vancouver Hawks, standing for President
- Jasbir Tatla, Surinder Lions FHC, standing for Finance Director
- Ronald Prins, Sea to Sky FHC, standing for Coaching Director
- Narinder Sangha, India Club, standing for Umpiring Director
- Mark Vaughn, WVFHC, standing for Business Development Director

When FHBC met with the GVJFHL December 8th, 2019 all the GVJFHL representatives in attendance were male, except for one. In addition, all of the GVJFHL representatives nominated for an FHBC Board position are male and all represent the men's league and youth development. The FHBC Board believes equal representation of both male and female board members is a very important consideration in FHBC governance and it is essential to have Board members with interests in the female athlete context.

### **FHBC CLARIFICATION – VHFHC COMMUNITY MEETING:**

At a recent Vancouver Hawks Field Hockey Club community meeting, a number of concerns were brought forward. The FHBC Board of Directors believes some of the information presented at the meeting is not accurate and therefore clarification is needed.

#### **Concern #1 - FHBC doesn't do enough to support turf advocacy – City of Burnaby West Complex turf example used.**

##### **FHBC Clarification**

FHBC provides letters of support for all projects, provides information on turf type, broad-based cost projection, and plays an active role when invited to do so. For the City of Burnaby turf application, FHBC was invited to play a role in both the assessment and strategic process instigated by the City. FHBC also offered its assistance to Burnaby Lake FHC, provided letters of support, played a role in the development of a five-year usage plan, and proposed a partnership where FHBC could assist the club to deliver year three outcomes in year one. FHBC was both mindful and respectful to the fact that the club wished to play point and offered its support according to club direction.

Langley Campus – FHBC was instrumental in having field hockey included in such a project. Considering the impact of field hockey in both the township and city, this was a major coup. FHBC was required to sign a confidentiality agreement preventing FHBC from sharing this project with community members. An outdoor water-based FIH tier one stadium pitch with permanent stands, a second water-based turf, a full size indoor facility with seating, and a shared dorm and sport science facility are just some of the highlights for field hockey. This was a three and a half year active project which is now



frozen due for the most part to a change in provincial government and now a minority federal government.

**Concern #2 - FHBC does not promote field hockey at the schools grass roots level.**

**FHBC Clarification**

FHBC runs the elementary and middle schools program and offers financial support to clubs for doing the same. Over the last five years, FHBC has delivered the elementary and middle schools six week development program to a total of 9889 male and female students. Over the last two years, this number is only 1095 male and female students due to staff transition in 2017-18 and having to reallocate staff resources to the WV Academy in 2018-19.

**Concern #3 - FHBC's decision to not enter into a formal agreement with the WV School district for a field hockey academy for the 2019-20 academic year.**

**FHBC Clarification**

Having agreed a break-even operational budget with the school district (based on 30 athletes participating in 2019-20), and having agreed that such programming can no longer be run at a net loss to FHBC – the WV Academy ran a net loss amounting \$6,000 in 2017-18 (shared between FHBC and the school district); and began the 2018-19 academic year with a projected net loss of \$9,000. Given that FHBC had made a commitment to the school district to run this program in 2018-19, FHBC was forced to move a full-time employee into the WV Academy for the entire academic year in order to offset coaching costs. The net for the WV Academy for 2018-19 does show break-even but it pays no consideration to the employee cost contribution for coaching – the rationale for not entering into a joint agreement with the WV school district for 2019-20 was a budgetary forecast net loss amounting \$33,000 to FHBC. At the athlete registration deadline for 2019-20, nineteen athletes had registered with a forecast loss amounting \$33,000.

**Concern #4 - FHBC has not explored establishing a field hockey academy beyond the North Shore.**

**FHBC Clarification**

Following both the first and second year delivery on the North Shore, discussion took place around a potential partnership with Eric Hamber Secondary School and the Vancouver SD but did not gain traction. FHBC has reached out to the Burnaby SD and the Delta SD and investigated where the Surrey SD sits relative to the Academy modelling. The only SD to express interest in this case was the Burnaby SD and an assessment into timetabling, facility access, and athlete population was initiated. The athlete population is insufficient to make a Burnaby SD academy currently viable.



## **FHBC CLARIFICATION – PATHWAYS TO CHANGE:**

The FHBC Board of Directors would like to clarify and correct some of the information described in the [Pathways to Change](#) document specifically relating to the description of the current field hockey landscape.

- **Governance is described as “*Inconsistent development and lack of enforcement of standards and accreditation*”.**

The facts do not support this statement. FHBC is considered a best practice model in organizational readiness and LTAD program delivery within the BC organized sport system and receives the highest funding allotment available in each case. FHBC does consider itself to be deficient in the area of coaching and coach education, and as a result the Society is making every effort to inspire club community involvement in both the coaching and officiating pathways. A new Provincial Coach Education Pathway (PCE) designed to speak to club needs, a transfer of officiating education to online delivery, and a significant financial investment to offset community candidate costs are just some areas FHBC has prioritized recently.

Following dissemination of such program information across our community, practical implementation at the club level remains a hurdle. There has been a severe lack of appetite by community clubs to comply with an enforcement of standards and accreditation. Community clubs can expect both the provincial and federal government to pass minimum standards for coaching and officiating. Mandatory minimum standards are coming and will be applied across the entire BC sport sector. Field hockey athlete participation will be at risk when it comes unless we begin to phase in mandatory requirements, and it will be felt to the greatest degree in the area of coaching.

The recent hiring of an FHBC Sport Development Manager who will oversee responsibility for FHBC’s Coach Development Program and Officials Development Program is another example of how the Society is working to develop and implement certification standards. This position is also designed to be a primary conduit to the club community sector in both the identification and support for critical sport development drivers and in the planning and execution of the FHBC elementary and middle school athlete program. FHBC welcomes any ideas and/or suggestions that will help FHBC encourage clubs to support minimum standards for coaching and officiating.

- **Marketing and Advocacy is described as “*Inconsistent promotion, low awareness of field hockey & lack of coordinated advocacy or lobbying*”.**

The facts do not support this statement. FHBC currently receives \$416K in Provincial Government Funding (Ministry, via Sport, and Community Gaming), which represents nearly 28% of the total revenue into the Society. At the time the BCWFHF and BCFHA amalgamated under the FHBC banner in 2005, \$137,000 was received from the provincial government, and only nominal program grants were attributable to the BCFHA Men’s Association. The BCFHA was a strictly member-funded



organization. The total annual revenue into the Society has grown from \$650K in 2005 to a high of \$1.7M in 2018. The progression in advocacy is clearly evident and is not possible without significant effort.

During this time, FHBC has also been elected to the Provincial Sport Organization leadership council and has sat on the viaSport Innovations Team, the BC Multi-Sport review team, the Sport BC strategic planning committee, and the BC sport sector multi-sport games expert advisory committee. FHBC has been a competition review advisor to the Sport for Life Society, and a presenter, panel member, and speaker at the Sport for Life National summit.

### **LOOKING AHEAD:**

FHBC agrees communication and consultation are important. Field hockey is a relatively small sport in Canada and we all need to work together for growth and development to occur. Responsibility for communicating and working collaboratively is mutual and the FHBC Board and staff are committed to working together to resolve issues.

When FHBC Directors learn second and third hand, months and years later that members don't like a particular element, we can't do anything to change the past. As a PSO, FHBC doesn't have a huge capacity to suddenly roll out new programming and adjust to clubs that might speak the loudest. The governance and operational structure mean that things take time.

FHBC has expanded its HR focus with a new role - the [Sport Development Manager](#) position. This role is all about growth, communication, and collaboration. FHBC is also trying to work collaboratively with the GVJFHL to reduce/eliminate scheduling conflicts between FHBC programming and spring league, create greater emphasis on Club Championships, and set up a working group to review the Provincial pathway and make recommendations for improvement that would also be inclusive for those athletes belonging to smaller clubs and/or outside the Greater Vancouver region. As a community we also need to work towards better communication and cooperation between leagues on issues such as coaching certification, field scheduling, umpiring assignments, etc.

As we approach the Annual General Meeting scheduled for February 10<sup>th</sup>, we ask you to please take some time to reflect on the future of field hockey across this province, then gather your hockey proxy votes for representatives attending the AGM so that what you feel is right for you and for is expressed at this meeting.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact Alan Waterman, FHBC President at [waterman@vjview.com](mailto:waterman@vjview.com).