



PRESIDENT'S REPORT – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MARCH 27TH, 2021

2020 was an unprecedented and challenging year globally due to COVID-19. While New Zealand was spared from much of the disruption and hardship experienced in the rest of the world, our small hockey community wasn't immune, and I first want to wish the best to those families in our community that have been negatively impacted. I also want to thank everyone for their understanding and support in accommodating ice schedule changes, complying with safety procedures, and helping others who needed help.

I believe it's been a positive year for Canterbury Ice Hockey. As unfortunate as the COVID disruption was, the lull in activity provided an opportunity for both CIHA and our governing body, the New Zealand Ice Hockey Federation (NZIHF), to identify improvements in the way ice hockey is governed and operated.

In particular at the NZIHF level, the lull provided an opportunity to plan and trial different competitive formats for representative leagues (Under-15s, Under-18s, Women's, Men's) aimed at providing quality competitions while reducing player cost. It also provided time for the NZIHF to spearhead new initiatives for 2021, including efforts to provide players aging out of Under-18s an opportunity to compete at the national level in an Under-21 league, on a 6th NZIHL team (the Under-23 Mako), and at "triple star" camps for both Men and Women aspiring to represent NZ internationally.

At the CIHA level, the lull provided an opportunity for a detailed assessment of the way CIHA operates and how ice hockey can be improved for our members, which led to the development of a "CIHA 2020 Strategy". The bulk of this report presents:

- 2020 Strategy Overview
- Progress Against 2020 Strategy
- 2021 and Beyond

This is a long report, but I think it's important to give CIHA members insight into the thinking, effort, and progress made in advancing CBY ice hockey over the past year—and hopefully instil some confidence in the strategies put in place.

Before proceeding, I'd like to acknowledge some important contributions made to CIHA over the past year. CIHA is a charitable organisation that runs almost entirely through generous contributions of time and effort by individuals. I'd like to thank the following who contributed over the past year:

- Committee members and others who make Senior League, Minors, Women’s, Masters and more operate smoothly—CBY ice hockey couldn’t happen without you.
- Representative Under-15s: Jesse Norcliffe (Head Coach), Liam Kennedy (Asst Coach), Yvette Hodge (Manager).
- Representative Under-18s: Robbie Banks (Head Coach), Liam Dallimore (Asst Coach), Neil Carey (Manager).
- Devilettes: Matt Sandford (Head Coach), Hannah Shields and Nik Stefanissin (Asst Coaches), Lizzy Farthing (Manager), and congratulations on a gold medal season.
- Red Devils: Matt Sandford (Head Coach), Robbie Banks (Asst Coach), Neil Carey and Gary Dallimore (Managers).
- Our officials and score benchers, as well as those who update our web site with schedules and game results.
- Martin Jeffries and Michael Domigan for further assisting with the CIHA website.
- CIHA committee members, including Jill Boul (Secretary) and Alison Reid (VP), and especially Pip Scotter (Treasurer) who has put in countless hours over the past year serving as Treasurer for both CIHA and Minors.
- Donors and sponsors who give generously to fund our activities, including Spark Business and Pure Activation.
- Alpine Ice management and staff for being great partners during a difficult year marked by COVID disruptions.
- Members of the NZIHF committee for lending their time, expertise, and support—and particularly for helping arrange the generous donation of new hire gear for CIHA’s reinvigorated Learn To Play program.
- And thanks to the many others who contributed over the year.

Now on to discussing our strategy, progress, and a look to the future.

2020 Strategy Overview

I became involved in CIHA in 2020 because I was unhappy with CBY ice hockey and I wanted to help. By way of background, my wife (Yune) and I have two boys (Jackson and Lucas, 16 and 15) who've played ice hockey in CBY since we moved here from the US in June 2018. Both boys have played CBY Reps since arriving and were on the 2019 CBY Friendship team that went to Japan. Both play High Schools and recreational Under-18s, they’ve started refereeing, and Jackson is involved with the Red Devils and NZ’s Under-18 Team. I play in Senior League and Masters. I say all this because I want it to be very clear that my family, like many others in CBY, don’t “belong” to one league such as Seniors, or Minors, or whatever—we participate in lots of different leagues/teams and care about Canterbury ice hockey as a whole.

I became CIHA President in the middle of 2020 and spent a good deal of time conducting an honest, unbiased assessment of the state of CBY ice hockey through observation, reading years of old meeting minutes, having long conversations with dozens of people about CBY hockey, reviewing various regional ice hockey organisation constitutions and financial statements, and even executing a traditional strength/weakness/opportunity/threat business analysis.

A number of stark weaknesses and threats became apparent. To name a few:

- Our membership numbers have stayed about the same over the past 10 years, while other regions have experienced strong growth
- Our youth numbers are about 60% lower than they were 20 years ago
- With only occasional exceptions (such as Devilettes in 2020), our Representative teams have struggled mightily for years, usually placing at or near the bottom
- Our player representation at the NZ level (Ice Blacks, Ice Fernz) is low
- Overall satisfaction with our leagues is poor, and not enough focus is placed on making the leagues more enjoyable and reducing costs for our members
- Women’s league was disenfranchised in 2019 and is still feeling the effects
- We have an enormous reliance on error-prone manual processes that create points of risk and also rely on a small number of people who predictably become overworked
- We have inadequate and ambiguous governing rules – even the simple question of what it means to be a CIHA member is unclear in the current constitution
- We have poorly defined disciplinary processes, and often individuals have not been held accountable for their actions
- CIHA and CMIH (Canterbury Minors Ice Hockey) operating as two separate incorporated societies is inefficient and promotes an “us vs. them” mentality
- CIHA committee governance seems erratic, often ineffective, and occasionally completely dysfunctional
- The manner in which the CIHA committee is formed, and in particular the way CIHA Executive Officers (President, Treasurer, etc) are appointed, is problematic
- The CIHA committee spend too much time sorting out disputes and on other short-term tactical issues and are unable to concentrate on important strategic initiatives to improve ice hockey for all
- Our key threat that must form the basis of our strategy—and I can’t emphasise this enough—is our reliance on a single aging ice facility
- Lastly, many of these problems aren’t new; they’ve persisted for more than a decade despite the best intentions and efforts of many volunteers

We clearly need to improve the way we do things. And it isn’t rocket science: there are some sensible steps we can take. The analyses mentioned earlier resulted in the development of a simple 4-part strategy:

- (1) Unite CIHA and CMIH (Canterbury Minors Ice Hockey)
- (2) Adopt a New CIHA Constitution
- (3) Improve Products
- (4) Grow Ice Hockey

I’ll now present each of these items in a bit more detail and discuss progress.

Progress Against 2020 Strategy

(1) Unite CIHA and CMIH (Canterbury Minors Ice Hockey)

For the past 15 years or so, Minors operated as their own incorporated society independently, but in affiliation with, CIHA. I’m very pleased to say that at Special General Meetings in

November and December 2020, CMIH members unanimously voted to dissolve CMIH and merge back into CIHA. The end result is that Minors are once again within CIHA.

(2) Adopt a New CIHA Constitution

In order for any club to run effectively, it's necessary to have a sensible management committee in place who are focused on the good of the club and all its members. While no constitution can make that happen, the opposite can be true: a poor constitution can make it harder to put a committee in place who are focused on the good of all members.

I firmly believe the current CIHA constitution (2011) structurally embeds conflict and distrust in the management of CBY ice hockey that persists year after year. Let me explain. The current system frames CIHA as a governing body of underlying leagues and teams, with these entities—I'll call them "silos"—appointing delegates to represent them on the CIHA Committee. By definition, a delegate is there to represent their silo, not CBY ice hockey as a whole. It's great when people can rise above their silo and work cooperatively for the greater good of CBY ice hockey, but sadly that's often not the case. Far too often individuals on the Committee manoeuvre and vote solely in the interests of their silo. And I can't blame them: that is precisely how the current structure is set up.

There are other problems with the current constitution. At an unspecified time after the AGM, leagues appoint their delegates to form the CIHA Committee and this Committee then votes on who among them will be the 4 Executive Officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary), without really knowing whether anyone is even competent to be Treasurer, for example. This process excludes hundreds of adult CIHA members from volunteering, many of whom might be qualified and willing to serve as Treasurer, for example.

The 4 Executive Officers have functional roles: while their duties are poorly defined in the current constitution, it's clear by tradition that the bulk of the workload falls on the shoulders of these 4 individuals. The other 7 members of the committee have no functional role, other than to vote in the interests of their silos.

In sum, this structure may be reasonable for the governance of a wide range of disparate entities, but it is far less appropriate for a small ice hockey club like Canterbury. Our current constitution promotes an "us vs them" silo mentality and leaves a few individuals highly overworked while others have little motivation to even show up at committee meetings, unless there's some issue that affects their silo.

The new constitution (2021) was devised to address these issues, and many other issues that are unclear or ambiguous in the current constitution. We borrowed heavily from the constitutions of other regions that are operating successfully and took guidance from the Companies Office and legal counsel. The new constitution won't magically solve our problems, but I believe it is far better than what we have, fixes certain issues, and can always be modified at a Special General Meeting, if we discover parts of it don't work for CIHA.

Of the 10 CIHA Committee members who voted on whether or not to support the Special Resolution to rescind the 2011 constitution and adopt the new 2021 constitution, 9 out of 10 committee members support the new constitution.

Now that we've discussed merging CMIH into CIHA and adopting a new CIHA constitution, let's turn to progress on improving products and growing our membership numbers.

(3) Improve Products

CIHA can improve its "products" (our leagues, clinics, teams, etc) by making them more accessible and enjoyable, by reducing costs (or at least slowing the growth rate), or both.

We made some progress over the past year on this:

- Women's ice hockey returned in 2020 and will continue in 2021 with a longer season.
- We reintroduced an Under-21 Canterbury Rep team for 2021.
- We ordered 4 brand new NHL-quality goals, which should be here in time for the winter season.
- We moved Adult and Youth Learn To Play, Under-9s, and Under-12s to a concession card system to make getting started in ice hockey easier and more affordable
- We upgraded our web site to be mobile device friendly. It turns out that nearly 70% of our web site traffic comes from mobile devices, so this change was needed.
- We built from scratch, and at no cost to CIHA members, a new ciha.org.nz "landing web site" that has information that's actually relevant for first time visitors, while also providing information to existing members.
- We moved to more professional email addresses, such as "president@ciha.org.nz" where you can contact me. We consolidated many of the CIHA files in a central location to make it easier for future CIHA committees to continue operating with a smooth transition.
- We appointed 2 funding coordinators and they've begun applying for grants.
- We moved to a 2-tier financial payment approval system to ensure no CIHA member funds are used without a high level of scrutiny and formal approval process.
- We're launching an exclusive benefit for CIHA members to view and book available ice directly through CIHA for their own ice hockey trainings and scrimmages.
- Minors purchased a set of red jackets with "CIHA" on the back, which are worn by coaches and off-ice staff during Minors sessions so parents and players can easily identify them. It's a little thing, but it makes CIHA appear more organised and professional, and we've received great feedback.
- In Term 1, we moved Minors to an online registration system that is integrated with our accounting system and automatically generates the invoices. This initiative has been spearheaded by NZIHF and AIHA, and we have been collaborating with them to roll it out for CIHA. This is simpler for players/parents, far easier on our overworked volunteer Treasurer, less error prone, and better for CIHA.
- In Term 2 and beyond, we will be moving the yearly CIHA membership registration to this online system, making it easier for members to register. It will help standardise registration, reduce delinquent fees, and greatly simplify our registrar's task.

- We've introduced optional training clinics, such as "Power Skating" and "Devillettes and Friends" sessions, which have received excellent reviews.
- We know that these programs received excellent reviews, because last year we started doing surveys to identify what we can do better for our members. Those insights have helped us make improvements.

The better the quality of our products, the higher the satisfaction among our current members and the more likely we are to attract and retain new members. Which leads me to the fourth part of our strategy.

(4) Grow Ice Hockey

As I mentioned earlier, CIHA membership has been flat over the past decade while other regions have grown significantly. But we've started making progress in building our numbers:

- We allocated ice time in winter 2021 for Grade 4 Senior League, which had only been playing in summer. There are some passionate Senior League players and managers who are helping build our sport—and it's important that CIHA take the initiative to support those efforts and welcome new players.
- In just one month of operation this year (Feb 2021) we had about 3x more kids enrol in Learn To Play (LTP) than we did in all of 2020. Of those that did a free trial session, over 90% registered and paid in advance to continue.
- Because of our LTP success, we ran out of some Minors hire gear. At CIHA's request, NZIHF generously stepped in and provided a large amount of new equipment in order to help us meet the demand and continue to grow. This is testament to the cooperation between NZIHF and CIHA and the fact that NZIHF is there to work with and support its member organisations, especially when it sees good things happening.
- With the assistance of the NZIHF, we are launching a "Super League" in May for Under-12 and Under-9 players, which will feature super-hero themed team names, jerseys, and player of the day trophies. This program was spearheaded by AIHA and has been very successful in building youth ice hockey in Auckland and providing fantastic experiences for the players and parents. We're doing the same, and it'll help create lifelong ice hockey players in Canterbury.

2021 and Beyond

So, we've made progress on some initiatives over the past year, but we have a long road ahead. I'd like to circle back to something I mentioned earlier, which may seem distant, but is strategically critical: our biggest risk is our dependence on a single aging ice rink. If anything changes our ability to use the rink, our club is dead.

The best way to manage this risk is by ensuring the success of our most important partner, Alpine Ice. We need to have good, affordable products so current members stay in CIHA, and we additionally need marketing and grass roots efforts to raise awareness of our sport and grow our numbers. More members mean that we support Alpine more, our current members bear less of the fixed costs of running CIHA (since we have more people paying membership fees), we replenish the pipeline of youth players entering our representative teams, we can

field more teams in our various leagues to make competitions more enjoyable, and we can make progress toward justifying a second ice rink.

Is a second rink feasible? The Christchurch urban area has a population density roughly 4 times greater than what is recommended by the International Ice Hockey Federation to support an ice rink. In other words, in theory Christchurch has enough people to support 4 ice rinks. Now, New Zealand doesn't have the ice sports culture found in other countries, so maybe that number is only 3. But it's definitely at least 2. And we can build our numbers to justify a second rink: there are more than 60,000 school children in Christchurch and over 180,000 adults aged 20-55. In 2020 we only had about 11 children and 8 adults enrol in Learn to Play... We can do much better. We can sharply grow our membership, create success for Alpine Ice, and make strides towards a second rink.

Concluding Remarks

Lastly, I'd like to thank the many people who have the best interests of all of Canterbury Ice Hockey at heart and who have contributed to the thinking in this report and the positive developments over the past year.

Hockey is a passionate sport, and it's easy for all of us to get caught up in the drama of the moment, "us vs. them" conflicts, and personality differences that drain our time and enjoyment of our great sport. But let's compete on the ice and cooperate off the ice. Let's keep in mind the bigger picture of what's at stake, imagine how great Canterbury Ice Hockey could be, and work together to make it happen.

Kind Regards,

Tom Fontaine
President, Canterbury Ice Hockey Association