

[March 12, 2020](#), marked the day that hockey stopped. Due to the growing concerns of the Covid-19 pandemic, the *Ontario Hockey Federation (OHF)*, in support of *Hockey Canada* suspended all hockey for the remainder of the 2019-2020 season. This suspension encompassed any hockey league present in Ontario which impacted those involved in Clarington hockey including the *Clarington Toros*, the *Clarington Zone*, and the *Clarington Eagles*. The period between the shutdown to the current 2021/22 season was filled with trying and triumphant. However, with the [Return to Hockey](#) guidelines set in by *OHF*, as well as the new Vaccination Policy set in by [the Ontario government on September 22](#), it opens worries to just how successful the 2021/22 hockey season will be.

Dean Bauhamer and the Junior C, [Clarington Eagles](#) have faced a cancelled season and very restricted on-ice participation for the 2020/21 season due to Covid-19. The lack of hockey for the Eagles who have been around since [1968](#) with its members ranging from 17-21 years old, proved to be very challenging. [Bauhamer](#), who has been coaching for 20 years and became Head Coach of the Eagles in 2019, got to witness firsthand just how the pandemic has played a part on the Eagles organization. However, he was not alone.

The [Clarington Toros Minor Hockey Association](#) founded in [1973](#), comprises of 3 divisions- Double-A, Single-A, and A/E- and is in association with the [Clarington Zone](#) who is Clarington's Triple-A division since 1999. Both the Toros and Zone have age groups from 9 to 17 years of age. During the 2020/21 season the organizations played together in a very restricted 'bubble' format, which proved to be a challenge due to the [Ontario Minor Hockey Association's](#) structure and guidelines. However, this was not the last roadblock for the organizations.

In August 2021, OHF released its [Return to Hockey Plan](#), which encompassed a multi-stage plan on how hockey organizations could return to traditional hockey. It also outlines a Safety Plan required by all minor hockey associations to have to be able to run, which includes many preventative protocols such as Covid-19 screening, contact tracing, and limiting capacity. Despite the excitement that came with returning to hockey, the guidelines set in place caused issues for the Toros.

Due to the lockdowns that took place in early 2021, the Toros had to push their tryouts to September and with the Safety Plan requirement, it provided confusion and difficulty. The tryouts had a [50% facility capacity](#) at the time which resulted in multiple age groups having to split their tryout period into two parts. Capacity is not the only issue that has been faced. Despite the Covid-19 screening app that the Toros had for the 2020/21 season, tryouts for the current season did not work the same. The organization took to having handwritten Covid-19 screening that was done by executives prior to entry. However, with tryouts completed, the screening is still an issue.

Clarington facilities, unlike other cities, remain to require [hockey teams](#) to do their own Covid-19 screening upon entry to the facilities. The Toros have struggled with this conflict because the organization is made up of volunteer executives who cannot attend every game to do the screening and the parents "don't feel comfortable to do it and you know, I don't blame them" says [Dawn Mathers](#), President of the Toros. However, until Clarington comes up with a screening tool, the Toros are working to create their own in the close future.

Unlike the Toros, the Zone are a step ahead. On September 17th, the Zone released its [Covid-19 screening tool on their website](#). This form was to be filled out prior to the attendance of any practice, game, or tryout associated with the Zone. [Josh Barker](#), Assistant Coach of the U16 Triple-A (who I have known for many years) described the screening tool to be "successful in the fact that it fills out all the questions that need to be asked to figure out if a kid's sick or not to come to the rink". However, Barker also expressed that "the questionnaire is almost not even relevant because I think enough people have the

know with all, that if my kid's sick that I don't need to come to the rink and there's nobody forcing them to come to the rink". Covid-19 screening was just the beginning for hockey organizations.

On [September 3, 2021](#), the OMHA announced that all eligible participants over the age of 12 must be fully vaccinated by October 31, 2021, to be able to participate. Unexpectedly this announcement has not had much of an impact for the Toros. "There was not one Clarington member that said, "oh okay, I need a refund". But I do know other centres did. We were not affected at all. So that's surprising actually," says [Mathers](#) about the Vaccine Policy. Although with October 31 getting closer the organization is still working towards going around and checking for vaccination proof.

The Zone has also faced similar results to the announcement of the vaccine policy. "I mean, I think it forced a few people who were hesitant to get the vaccine, to get the vaccine" says [Barker](#). They are also working to have proof of vaccinations, be submitted to the trainers of each team as well as the organization. However, unlike the Toros, the [Zone's Bench Staff](#) had to provide proof of vaccination in August 2021.

For the Eagles, including players and coaches, proof of full vaccination had to be shown prior to the beginning of the 2021/22 season in accordance with the [Ontario Hockey Association](#), along with the [Provincial Junior Hockey League](#). The Eagle vaccination process has been successful and different compared to those of Minor Hockey. "We take care of the opposing team.....everyone, every team in our league had to send into the league copies of every vaccination sheet and then every General Manager carries that with them as well" says [Bauhamer](#) on the Proof of Vaccination process.

Although there are many differences between the Clarington organizations, one remains transparent among them all. After September 22, [all Clarington facilities](#), required proof of vaccination and ID to anyone 12+ to be able to enter. This process is handled by a security group hired by the city. The Toros have had mostly success with the policy's implementation, but they did face 'one hiccup' as [Mathers](#) put it during their tryouts but alike with the Zone, there have been no issues since. The Eagles have also had success, despite the vaccine policy. According to [Bauhamer](#), the team's home opener appeared to be full of excitement and ticket sales appear to be good based on the attendance for the first game.

However, Clarington hockey is not out of the woods yet. With the October 31st deadline and cold weather coming soon it opens concerns to just how the Vaccine policy will affect these organizations. As [Bauhamer](#) puts it "if it turns cold and you're still having to line up outside and you have to be checked for double vax [sic] and licenses and they don't add more help to do that, it's a slow process going in. I would imagine it would affect attendance once the cold weather hits"

References

[Interview #3: Josh Barker](#)

[Interview #2: Dean Bauhaumer](#)

[Interview #1: Dawn Mathers](#)

https://www.omha.net/news_article/show/1179916

https://www.omha.net/news_article/show/1118257

<https://www.ohf.on.ca/news/2020/ohf-statement-in-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.ohf.on.ca/media/f3hoi0bb/return-to-hockey-2021-08-27.pdf>

<https://www.clarington.net/en/news/clarington-to-enforce-proof-of-vaccination-and-identification-rules-at-recreation-facilities.aspx>

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000750/ontario-makes-covid-19-vaccination-policies-mandatory-for-high-risk-settings>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarington_Eagles

https://claringtontoros.com/Articles/12510/OMHA_COVID-19_Vaccine_Policy_Announced/

[https://claringtontoros.com/Articles/11999/HOCKEY_CANADA_STATEMENT_IN_RESPONSE_TO_CORONAVIRUS_\(COVID-19\)?ListPage=4](https://claringtontoros.com/Articles/11999/HOCKEY_CANADA_STATEMENT_IN_RESPONSE_TO_CORONAVIRUS_(COVID-19)?ListPage=4)

<https://claringtoneagles.pjhl.on.hockeytech.com/>

https://claringtonaaatoros.com/Public/Documents/OMHA_VACCINATION_POLICY_V1_2.pdf

https://claringtonaaatoros.com/Public/Documents/Clarington_enforce_Provincial_proof_vaccination.pdf

<https://claringtonaaatoros.com/Pages/1212/History/>

https://claringtonaaatoros.com/Articles/5798/OMHA_COVID-19_Vaccine_Policy_-_Update/

https://claringtonaaatoros.com/Articles/5779/Covid-19_Screening_Form/

http://www.ohahockey.ca/view/oha/news/news_537343

<http://pjhleat.pointstreaksites.com/view/east/orr/teams-orr-division>

<https://www.thepjhl.ca/>