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PEI Junior Hockey has a New Look for Coming Season

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**HOCKEY PEI
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Charlottetown, PEI – There are plenty of positive changes for the upcoming season in the former Minor Junior Hockey League. The league will operate as a Junior C league for the first time, it has acquired a new title sponsor, and two new teams have been added.

Last spring the league voted to adopt Junior C rules for the coming season, allowing a provision for 4 overage players per team and the ability to carry more players on a team's roster as well as a few other minor changes. The league has been considering this change for several years, but has been unable to make the shift for financial reasons, however, in cooperation with Hockey PEI, the league has made the move and is now on an even playing field with other leagues in the Maritimes. In order to keep insurance costs affordable, it will continue to operate with full face masks for this season. Clifford Affleck, Hockey PEI Junior Council Chair, stated that "Hockey PEI is indeed pleased and excited to see this progressive move by the league. This move can only be a positive step in improving the quality of play and opportunities for the future. With additional expansion this season we look forward to a great year."

For the first time in a few years, the league will have a title sponsor as well. Razy's Road House, a popular restaurant in the Ellis Brothers mall, will support the league and offer player of the week awards throughout the season. Glenn Gaudet of Razy's says, "We at Razy's Roadhouse are very involved in the community, and we try wherever we can to help out and get involved with community groups and teams. We see this new league as a great opportunity for young players to stay involved in hockey and maintain an involvement beyond the minor hockey level to keep the game flourishing on the island."

The league operated with 11 teams in 2003-04, and has seen its participation drop to as low as 5 in 2007-08, but a recent surge in interest has brought three new teams into the league since then. Souris re-entered the league last year and Charlottetown and South Side will participate in 2009-10.

"[Our coaching staff] are looking forward to the opportunity to coach the Charlottetown AG Electric Abbies expansion team. The Abbies have a number of prospects who are not playing in the league, so fans can expect a team that will introduce fresh talent and increase the level of competition. Fans have a lot to look forward to as a result of this year's expansion" says Troy Burke of the Abbies.

"We are pleased to be accepted into the league and are excited about bringing junior hockey back to Crapaud and offering local players a place to continue their hockey experience. We feel that the presence of several players with junior experience returning to Crapaud and a core group of recent midget graduates will provide exciting, competitive hockey to fans from the South Shore area." says Steve Watts of the Lynx.

For many players the league's light schedule (28-games) offers a great opportunity for 18-21 year-olds to continue playing competitive hockey after high-school, when most players begin to take on a more demanding personal workload such as post-secondary study. "We have great volunteers keeping these teams going, which is important once players have left the minor hockey system. Teams would not survive if they were not so generous with their time. Teams in this league operate independently from minor hockey and do not have a vast pool of volunteers to keep them going. Our volunteers deserve the credit for keeping the league growing." says Jared Doucette, Razy's Junior C League Commissioner.

Fans can keep up to date with the league this season at www.peijuniorc.com.

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