

Eastern Ontario AA Ringette Program

A virtual Town Hall will be held on **May 14, 2024 at 7:00pm** to discuss this program. Please join us if you are interested in hearing more from the Working Group about this exciting new program.

Topic: Ottawa U19AA Town Hall

Time: May 14, 2024 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88514446616?pwd=cVhDY09WekJaVnFpNTFmajFDUnRqdz09>

Meeting ID: 885 1444 6616

Passcode: 393883

Overview

The purpose of this Program Overview is to communicate details regarding the new Eastern Ontario U19AA Ringette Program.

Our Mission

The Eastern Ontario U19AA Ringette Program will provide a high-level ringette program focused on fostering a culture of excellence, teamwork, and individual growth. We aim to prepare athletes for success on and off the ice and lifelong passion for the game.

Vision

The Eastern Ontario U19AA ringette teams will strive to be consistent contenders in league (LERQ), provincial and national/regional competitions. Competitions will be meaningful.

The program will provide a high performance environment and development path for athletes who are committed to compete at the highest level of their ability and who may have ambition to be considered for Team Ontario / Team Canada programs, National Ringette League, University Ringette programs, as well as participating in the Ringette Ontario High Performance (AAA program).

[LTAD](#) and [True Sport](#) principles will be reflected in the program.

What is Eastern Ontario U19AA Ringette?

A U19 Competitive Working Group has come together to create the new Region-wide program, and will continue the work necessary to launch the program. The Eastern Ontario U19 AA program was approved by ERRA (Eastern Region Ringette Association) board on February 5, 2024.

The Working Group (WG) is Chaired by Phyllis Bergmans (1st Vice-Chair, ERRA) and includes ringette leaders from across the Region with a variety of backgrounds. In addition, each Association has identified a member to join the Working Group. These Working Group members provide years of ringette experience within Associations and with AA and High Performance programming as players, coaches and ringette leaders. Additional individuals have contributed their knowledge, or may be called upon at the request of the Working Group should more assistance or expertise be sought. Consultations with various Provincial Associations and AA programs across Canada have been critical to inform and help in the design of the Eastern Ontario AA program.

Association Presidents, with input from their individual Boards, will continue to participate with the ERRA Board throughout the Program design, implementation and evaluation phases to offer input and recommendations.

Ringette Ontario has endorsed this change and is providing resources and support to our efforts.

Why change?

Following the Ringette Canada [Competition Review](#) and knowledge shared by the Pursuit of Excellence Workgroup, there is a desire to further strengthen the U19AA program in the Eastern Region to be able to consistently compete with the top teams across the country and contend for medal positions at the national level. U19AA teams within our Region have had success at the provincial level and top 5 finishes at the Nationals, however an Eastern Region U19AA team has not medalled at the CRC's since 2015.

Over many years, Eastern Ontario associations have considered improving the U19AA programs but have not been able to adapt the Association-led structures that currently exist. The programs have not consistently been in the best interest of the athletes and their development, but rather on ensuring associations host teams.

Competition structures across the country are not designed for the current U19AA program Eastern Ontario offers, including participation in the LERQ.

The new program will also address other challenges and lead to great certainty in forming and confirming teams, increased cooperation, more effective placement of players and improved competition for players/teams.

While other regions and associations have long ago adapted their U19AA programming and aligned these with High Performance standards, ERRA Associations have yet to adopt a different model. The Eastern Ontario AA program will be modernized and viewed as a leading-edge program. It will more closely align with other progressive programs such as [Calgary AA Ringette](#) which has been running a program successfully for many years. Québec AA

Associations apply a similar approach in streaming multiple local association athletes to their AA programs. And other regions of Ontario such as Waterloo / Cambridge / Kitchener and Ajax/ Pickering/Whitby/Oshawa have already come together in a similar approach.

Other factors:

The Ringette High Performance Program: 2024-2025 is an off year for AAA and therefore an ideal time to implement change at U19. Associations, volunteers, coaches, and players will have more time to execute and adjust to the new programs at AA and A.

Impact on AA Play in the LERQ: It is expected that LERQ will see this as a positive change as the Québec teams will experience a more comparable competition structure.

General Program Overview

At AA, Eastern region players will come together to create a high performance U19AA program. Athletes will have an equal opportunity to earn a spot in the U19AA program regardless of their home association. A new, independent Association is currently being set up with the assistance of Steve Indig at Sport Law and will be in place for the 2024/25 season.

Athletes will be selected based on their skills which will be assessed by experienced assessors through a credible, transparent selection process. Program details will be clearly communicated and implemented with consistency, transparency, and fairness.

It is anticipated that the new program will offer opportunities for players, including:

- 3-4 ice times per week including both games and practices
- Weekly dryland/off-ice training
- Goalie training
- 4-6 tournaments
- Access to sport psychology/mental performance supports

It must be highlighted that the new program is not intended to reduce the number of competitive teams at the U19 level. In the current 2023/2024 season, there are 8 Eastern Region U19 competitive teams and while there may be a realignment of teams between AA and A, a reduction is not anticipated.

2024/25 tryouts:

The U19 tryouts will be held in the fall (similar to the model in Alberta and parts of Québec). Scheduling U19 tryouts in the fall instead of June will provide university aged athletes the time they require to confirm their post-secondary location and help them confirm their intent for U19 tryouts. Tentatively, tryouts will start in the week of August 26 and continue over the next 7-10 day period. Associations will follow by hosting their A tryouts. This planning is subject to ice availability.

NRL/University Tryout Liaison

In an effort to assist 3rd year players, we have established the role of a liaison who will foster communication between local ringette organizations where U19AA candidates may also be trying out such as Nepean NRL, Gatineau NRL, Carleton University, University of Ottawa and GAARA (Gloucester and Area Adult Ringette Association). Our goal is to ensure that at-calibre athletes are not inadvertently disadvantaged due to the timing of tryouts or releases. In the past, NRL and University teams have released at-calibre athletes due to a shortage of available positions on their teams. By then, it may be too late for these athletes to try out for another team.

U19A Programs:

A Working Group lead will be identified to provide input and focus on the impacts to the U19A program and model. Coordination, communication and education will be an important aspect of supporting the U19 age group, particularly in the transition years.

At U19A, there will be minimal program changes, however there is recognition that the goal is to have positive impacts at all levels. Associations will work together, as usual, to host teams, run evaluations and form teams based on their own policies.

It is recommended that Association led U19A level programs more closely resemble current AA programs, in terms of practice time, skating development programs, off-ice training and player expectations. It is expected that U19A programs will benefit and be strengthened as a result of the Eastern Ontario AA program, for example:

- Association volunteers will be able to increase focus and support towards this program
- Eastern Ontario AA Coaches will be expected to cooperate and support A level teams by sharing resources, coach mentoring and program details. These relationships will help develop U19A level athletes who aspire to play in the U19AA program in the following years.

Q & A

Can this be done in time for the 2024-25 season?

Yes. There is time to complete the work necessary to offer a program this season. There are processes and policies already in place in local associations and in other provinces, some of which can be used to shape those of the new program. The full vision for the program will evolve during the first season or two.

We are currently working with legal counsel to incorporate the Eastern Ontario U19AA Ringette Association. In addition, work on the new association's website is starting and we've been in touch with apparel providers to give us designs and estimates for new apparel.

Who will the head coaches be?

A Coach Selection Committee was chaired by Kristy Biddle, president of MDRA. The committee members included John Mezenburg, Sherri Markle, Jackie Banning and Kristy Biddle.

The head coaches selected by the Committee for the 2024-2025 seasons will be Celine Leduc and Dave Mainwood. These head coaches will work collaboratively with the Coach Selection Committee to assign Assistant Coaches to the bench.

Who else is using this approach?

The following are just a few using this approach. There are very few AA ringette programs being run by individual Associations in Canada.

- Central Region has announced that they will only be hosting one U19AA team in their Region for the 2024-2025 season. This team will be hosted by Ajax-Pickering.
- Guelph and Kitchener will be combining to co-host one U19AA team for the 2024-2025 season.
- [Calgary AA](#) (includes: [Bow View Ringette](#), [South Calgary Ringette](#) and [North West Ringette](#))
- [Rive Sud](#): (includes: Boucherville, Brossard, Intrepides, Longueuil, Roussillon)
- [Lac St Louis](#): (Pierrefonds/DDO/Île-Bizard, St-Laurent, Pointe-Claire, Beaconsfield/Kirkland, and 4-Cités)
- [Québec](#): Includes: Levis, Quebec City, Lotbiniere, St Marie de Beauce, Thetford Mines
- [Laurentides](#): includes: St Eustache, Blainville, Deux Montagnes

Related Program: Ringette Ontario's High Performance [AAA program](#)

This will take work to organize and execute. Who will be involved? How will decisions be made?

The working group has come together to create this program and plans to continue the work necessary to make it successful. Association Presidents identified one person from their association to join the working group. Additional people have been added or called upon to contribute at the discretion of the working group as more assistance or expertise becomes necessary. The working group will stay in place through the season to continue the development of program details, assist volunteers and gather feedback.

Working group participants are required to identify any real or perceived conflicts of interest at any point where they may arise. For example, some potential coaches are part of the working group and provide input as such experience and perspective. However, they were not involved in any decisions related to coach selection.

Who will host the teams?

Ringette Ontario rules require that an association host the teams, not the Region. It is expected that a new AA Association will be in place for the 2024/25 season. The Association will have a new name, new branding, new apparel and a new website.

Players are currently registering their intent to try with their home association.

How many U19AA teams will be formed in 2024/25?

The number of teams will be determined following an analysis of the Player Intent data. A recommendation will be made by the Working Group and reviewed by the Region. In order to provide certainty for players/families, facilitate coaching selection/announcements and guide ice commitments, the number of teams will be set by early summer. The number of teams may vary from year to year. Regardless of the number of teams, the teams will be balanced. In the event the data determines an extra team is warranted after coach selections have been made, the coach selection committee will reconvene to select the coaching staff for the extra team.

How will teams be formed?

Tryouts will be held in late August / early Sept. Assessing will be completed by a capable group of people, experienced at recognizing skill and ability of athletes at the U19 level. Assessment criteria will be finalized and made available to athletes in advance on the ERRA website. Skills will be assessed using a combination of skating drills and scrimmage sessions. The AAA assessment model will inform the process to be used for this program.

Where will practices and games be played?

Ice times can only be confirmed once fall ice contracts are secured. Association ice schedulers will assist the U19AA ice scheduler by collaborating to book ice needed to support the program. The Working Group is exploring options in an attempt to centralize practice ice to some extent, and to ensure exposure of the U19AA program to other ages/levels across the Region. However, it will be necessary to use ice in arenas across the city in order to have a sufficient amount to run the program efficiently. Options such as alternating east/west end ice times will be looked at so that travel is not overly burdensome for players/families.

Game ice will be rotated amongst arenas throughout the city. Efforts will be made, depending on ice availability, to have consistent practice nights and provide schedules well in advance to accommodate players' school and work commitments.

What is the expected cost for the U19AA Program?

Fees are expected to be similar to existing U19AA programs with the expectation that some variable costs may increase, such as ice costs, apparel, tournaments, etc. A financial policy will be developed.

Will parents be expected to volunteer?

Yes – nothing will change in this area. In the same tradition that exists today, parents will undertake minor official roles (shot clock, clock, scorekeeping), treasurer, manager, trainer, tournament organizing, fundraising etc.

Members of the new AA Association will also be expected to fill roles on the Association Executive, if needed.

Will families be expected to fundraise?

Fundraising is encouraged in order to reduce team fees and make the opportunity more affordable for everyone. Fundraising decisions are determined at the team level.

What colors will the teams wear?

The working group is planning up-to-date designs, colors and logos for apparel and team jerseys.

How will U19A work?

The A program will run the same as it currently does, however we are aiming for increased cooperation and development offerings from the AA program. Players participating in U19A should have similar expectations and be on a development path for potential AA participation. Nobody should be disadvantaged by playing at the "A" level. Associations will register players and work together to ensure viable teams are formed. Players registering for AA tryouts could be asked to confirm intent to play in A if unsuccessful in AA. U19A tryout fees will be set and managed separately by individual associations.

Will U19A Out of Association policies be amended to support player movement equally?

The working group will work with associations to align appropriate policy changes that make sense in light of the AA changes and support player development.

Will Associations host more A Teams (a 2nd A team)?

Associations will work cooperatively to determine the number of A teams that makes sense and will be in the best interest of athletes and competition structures. It is not anticipated that the number of A level teams will increase, however this may depend on the number of AA teams,

and the number of athletes trying out and meeting the expectations of A programs. It is possible for additional teams to be established. All athletes should have the opportunity to play with similarly skilled athletes in a culture of teamwork and growth, regardless of level.

Proposed Tryout Process

Tryout Jersey:

Players need two tryout jerseys. Jerseys will be provided as part of the tryout fee.

Tryout Fee:

A \$200 tryout fee will be charged for two guaranteed ice sessions and tryout jerseys.

Evaluators/Assessors:

At least one assessor per association will be recommended, with three assessors per position (Center, Defence, Forward & Goalie). The Head Coach designate for each team gets one vote, just as the other assessors. If the Head Coach attends with their assistant coaches they still only get one collective vote. Assessors who are qualified to evaluate at this level will be sought out, including qualified former/current players, and with preference to people who have been involved in U19AA tryouts/coaching.

Convenors:

As always, convenors play an important role in any tryout process to inform parents, coordinate jerseys, and act as go-between for families and coaches/assessors.

Tryout Drills:

A selected group of experienced coaches will collaboratively determine which drills will be used for the tryouts. Drills will be provided to the players in advance of the sessions – to minimize the time required to explain the drill on-ice during the tryout session.

Transparency:

The assessors and the Head Coaches must know as much as possible about each player. The assessors will know each player's name, age, jersey number, playing position, and 2023-24 team. Player history and tryout results will be taken into consideration during the assessment process. This practice is followed at AAA, Team Ontario, National U18, and JNT programs along with the Calgary and Montreal-area programs.

Goalie Session:

A separate goalie-only session will be scheduled near the start of the tryout process.

Team Formation

Player numbers:

It is anticipated that each team will carry 15 skaters and 2 goalies. The two teams will be balanced.

Timeline:

The entire process from start to finish should be no longer than 10 days. It is recognized that U19A tryouts cannot start until the U19AA process is complete.

University Players:

Players coming to Ottawa for university and wanting to play for Eastern Ontario U19AA will be expected to attend tryouts as scheduled.

Injured Players/Special Circumstances:

Circumstances may prevent players from participating on the prescribed tryouts dates, such as but not limited to:

1. Injury
2. Death in the family
3. Pre-planned family vacation
4. Participation in other ringette event of a higher level (unknown at this time if such an event exists, but it must be planned for)

Players finding themselves in any of these situations must notify the convenor of the Eastern Ontario U19AA program. The convenor, assessors, and coaching staff will work together to determine what the next steps are for any athlete in this situation, based on the reason the athlete is missing tryouts, the athlete's previous playing history, and the depth of the cohort trying out at the time.

April 12, 2024

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