

STATEMENT FROM THE FORT FRANCES LAKERS HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Bernie Lynch was hired by the Fort Frances Lakers Hockey Association (FFLHA) in September 2020 to serve as the head coach of our team for the current season.

On January 1, 2021, the FFLHA was made aware of inappropriate communications from Mr. Lynch to a player. Our board took immediate action and, on January 2, 2021, we suspended Mr. Lynch from his coaching duties without pay, ordering him not to have any further contact with players or other members of our organization.

Hockey Canada assisted the FFLHA and our league in reviewing the concerns and conduct at issue. In light of the findings of that effort, Mr. Lynch's contract with our organization was terminated. Mr. Lynch's conduct demonstrated a clear breach of the applicable codes of conduct.

Members of our organization and the Fort Frances community have been deeply distressed by these events. The FFLHA prioritizes the safety, healthy development, and emotional and mental wellbeing of our players. We undertook a thorough hiring process and reviewed all available information on the qualifications and personal suitability of candidates for this position. No past misconduct was evident from any candidate during that process, including through any criminal record or vulnerable sector checks.

The FFLHA commends those who have come forward to share their experiences of abuse and misconduct in sport. We hope their courage will empower others to do the same. As we focus our efforts on supporting those who may have been impacted by the local events described in recent media reports, we ask for privacy for our players, their families, and others closely involved with our team.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020/21 season was paused on January 15, 2021 and was ended by our league on March 1, 2021. We look forward to using the months ahead to make further efforts to address this incident internally and to work with our partners in the hockey community to improve the safety and support for young athletes at all levels of our sport.

All requests are to be directed to the contact identified below.

###

Contact:

Douglas W. Judson
Counsel to the Fort Frances Lakers Hockey Association
Email: info@douglasjudson.ca