

## **President's report November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

To all our parents and constituents

RE: House league fee increase

Well, we are closing in on another Annual General Meeting which really is a signal that one year is over and more importantly another is going to start very soon!

In general, my sense is 2008 may in fact be remembered as a year of important discussion and decision making that ends up leading to a brighter future, combined with challenges that perhaps did not leave the club in the best of shape in terms of our constituents' eyes and therefore it may seem to be a difficult time to increase house league fees.

More specifically, with Janis choosing to step down as Club Manager, your Board of Directors spent significant time this summer really clearly trying to sort out what the club is about and I think this summer's discussions did just that. One of the key points in those discussions was Shawn Murray joining us in a newly created position, General Manager. Shawn has been with us since the end of September and I would suggest he is starting to get a sense of what this club is and I look forward to his future with this club. To me, and I am quite confident that your Board of Directors echoes my thinking, Ancaster Soccer is about life experiences for those involved whether they coach, referee, play houseleague or play competitively. That is it in a nut shell. The club is one of, if not the largest sports organization in the community and therefore it carries with it a significant responsibility in terms of what the community of Ancaster is about. Your board of Directors takes its responsibility very seriously.

On the more sobering side this past year, my sense is the club really reached it max in terms of the present operating structure, and therefore again, I think the discussions this summer really were important in that regard. In addition, on a more telling front, our overall numbers of participants did not really grow this past year and I think that may in fact tell us that our customer service offering to our constituents needs to improve. I do feel we are moving toward addressing that with changes in the amount of staff available at the office level as well as the key decision to hire a part time technical director for the club. Look for an announcement in this regard in the near future. The technical director will have the responsibility to improve coaching in our club and therefore overall play, at all levels.

I have had discussions with many in the past weeks and there is no doubt that this club has come a long way in the last few years and all involved during that time are to be complimented for their efforts. Even though the club has been around almost 30 years, I often think that in terms of its present structure and the development of soccer itself, the club is really in its infancy in terms of its potential. It is also clear that at least in Southern Ontario, soccer seems to be becoming a more significant part of Canadian culture and therefore the expectations for our club have risen. The future of the club, I believe, will be dependant on our ability to continue to change with the times.

With respect to the fee increase specifically, costs are climbing, including increased charges from the Ontario Soccer Association as well as the Hamilton District. We have no choice but to pass on those costs. Fees charged by both those bodies are not insignificant. As noted above, and really to summarize, the operational model that we worked under over the past couple of years, really was not sufficient to effectively administer this club. Therefore, at the AGM on the 26<sup>th</sup> of this month, your board of directors will be proposing a significant increase in the houseleague fee. It is proposed that it will rise to \$195 per entrant from the existing \$165. Certainly a significant increase, but in order to deliver the level of service required today (which we are struggling to do and perhaps not sufficiently), as well as plan for the future needs, the club must increase fees. I would also again put out the reminder that we therefore will continue to be one of the more expensive clubs in the area, and a portion of that reason relates to the costs we incur in respect to field space and head office space. As many know, we as a club, continue to dialogue with the city to ensure we are treated on the same playing field so to speak as other clubs. Having said that, in discussions with other clubs, we are aware that other clubs are also planning fee increases as well.

On behalf of your board of directors, thank you and we all look forward to a great 2009 season!

Jim Bethune