

CHL minimum-wage lawsuit involves 351 current and former players

By Rick Westhead



Chicoutimi Sagueneens, Getty Images



Rick Westhead
TSN Senior Correspondent

[Follow](#) | [Archive](#)

A lawyer representing current and former major-junior hockey players says 351 players have registered participants in a proposed class-action lawsuit against the Canadian Hockey League.

Details of the number of players involved in the case are included in an affidavit filed in Ontario Superior Court on Nov. 25 by Brendan O'Grady, a lawyer for the players.

O'Grady wrote in his affidavit that he maintains two websites on behalf of his law firm that have been used to compile a database of players.

"We continue to receive registrations on a daily basis," O'Grady wrote.

CHL president David Branch did not respond to an email seeking comment.

So far, 145 players from the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League have signed up for the litigation, "including a number of registrants who are currently playing for QMJHL clubs."

Of those 145 current and former QMJHL players, 18 are from the Chicoutimi Sagueneens, according to O'Grady's affidavit.

Other than the case's class representatives, who include Sam Berg and Lukas Walter, the players in the case do not have to make their identities public.

Berg played eight games for the Niagara IceDogs during the 2013-14 season, and is the son of former National Hockey League player Bill Berg. Walter played two seasons with the Tri-City Americans in the WHL and one season in 2013-14 with the Saint John Sea Dogs in the QMJHL.

The former major-junior players argue the CHL's 60 franchises are making millions of dollars from ticket revenue, corporate sponsorships and TV rights fees, and are worth tens of millions of dollars. Those teams the players contend, should be sharing more of their profits with players.

Besides a payout for themselves, the former players want the leagues to be forced to pay current players least minimum wage.

Western Hockey League commissioner Ron Robison, Branch, who is OHL commissioner as well as CHL president, and several WHL and OHL owners have argued that paying players minimum wage would bankrupt some franchises. Players, the leagues contend, are student athletes who get monthly stipends and qualify for scholarships following their tenure in the CHL.

So far, 119 players from the Western Hockey League have signed up for the litigation, "including a number of registrants who are currently playing for WHL clubs."

Of those 119 current and former players, 13 come from the Moose Jaw Warriors and another 13 from the Saskatoon Blades. Twelve current and former Red Deer Rebels players have signed up.

In the Ontario Hockey League, 102 current and former players have joined the lawsuit, including 12 from the Erie Otters.