

Rob Knesaurek, a seasoned executive in the world of hockey whose passion and dedication have spanned four remarkable decades. Currently serving as the Senior Vice President, Industry Growth at the National Hockey League (NHL), Rob is a driving force behind the sport's expansion and accessibility. With a visionary approach, he orchestrates national and international programs aimed at nurturing hockey at its grassroots, creating new avenues for enthusiasts of all ages, and weaving more youth and families into the vibrant tapestry of the hockey community.

Rob's tenure at the NHL includes overseeing the Industry Growth Fund (IGF), a groundbreaking initiative with a staggering allocation of over \$170 million in investment dollars, all in US Dollars. This fund supports a multitude of programs and initiatives, designed to bolster the growth of hockey's fanbase, leaving an indelible mark on the game we all love.

One of the shining stars in this constellation of programs is the Future Goals Program, a custom, online learning program that ingeniously leverages the game of hockey to teach critical science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills to students in grades 4-7. With a total investment of \$25 million, this program has touched the lives of 3.9 million students across 22,100+ participating schools.

The IGF has also played a significant role in fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts, channeling over \$45 million towards these initiatives. These allocations encompass IGF Club Grants, Future Goals, D&I specific programming, Girls Hockey, IGF dedicated Hockey is For Everyone funding, and special projects.

Rob and his team are also responsible for the development and implementation of the NHL/NHLPA league-wide Learn to Play initiative, developed in collaboration with experts from USA Hockey. This groundbreaking program aimed to inspire more families to embrace the hockey community by revolutionizing the way youth hockey is introduced. By equipping first-time participants with head-to-toe gear and providing weekly age-appropriate, on-ice instruction led by NHL Alumni in a safe and enjoyable environment, this initiative sought to make hockey more accessible and appealing to newcomers.

Recognizing a shared commitment to investing in youth hockey, Rob led the creation of a partnership with the NHLPA, Hockey Canada and Bauer in 2019 to create the First Shift program that became the flagship Learn to Play initiative across Canada. This innovative program was designed to create a welcoming pathway into the sport, emphasizing accessibility, affordability, safety, and fun. This strategic partnership solidified our presence in the Canadian grassroots market while extending our reach to communities nationwide.

Rob's leadership within the NHL has not only transformed the landscape of hockey but has also set a standard for visionary growth, responsible stewardship, and an unwavering commitment to fostering educational and inclusive excellence within the sport. His journey through hockey began in his hometown of Toronto, Canada, where he honed his skills while playing Major Junior hockey. His passion for the game led him to the University of New Brunswick, where he continued his hockey journey at the collegiate level."

His commitment to the sport extended beyond the ice. He transitioned to coaching, dedicating his expertise to Hockey Canada's minor hockey coaching development program. His coaching prowess was further showcased on the international stage, where he led teams to victory in two world

championships. Notably, he achieved the pinnacle of success by guiding the Australian National Hockey team to gold medals, twice.

In addition to his accomplishments in the realm of hockey, Knesaurek earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Economics from the University of New Brunswick. Prior to the NHL, Rob spent 20 plus years as an executive in healthcare. Today, he calls Toronto, Canada, his home, with his wife Janet and son Alexander.