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Inside the \$560K financial trouble at Markham Soccer Club — and why youth players are paying the price

The club says it is committed to accountability. As soccer surges in popularity, the handling of player fees has landed some GTA clubs in turmoil.

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As questions about the debt mount, the 55-year-old soccer organization is faced with families looking to take their kids to other clubs.

Nazar Abbas Photography Getty Images

By **Jeremy Grimaldi** Reporter

A major youth [soccer](#) association north of Toronto is in disarray, chasing answers for how it ended up hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt and stripped of licenses that give kids a chance to compete at elite levels.

Markham Soccer Club (MSC) owed back-taxes to the [Canada Revenue Agency](#) totalling at least \$300,000 and overdue payments to multiple vendors totalling \$260,000, according to multiple sources familiar with club matters. The sources requested anonymity to speak candidly about confidential discussions at the board of directors level.

The club, which takes in [millions of dollars a year](#) mainly from registration fees from [thousands of youth players](#) and sponsorships, has known about the unpaid debts for two years but still has not said anything publicly about it.

Club president Tony Cardinale, who started in the role about 14 months ago, said the club would release an audit but then refused to do so. He later said once the document is finalized, the board will decide whether to release it.

“It’s ludicrous ... This is the people’s money,” said Sal Malandrino, whose two sons played with MSC and who ran the club’s finances for seven years as board vice president. “If any parent wanted to come in and see our books, I’d show them then and there. I had nothing to hide. I wanted transparency.”

Malandrino said that when he left the club in 2015 it was several hundred thousands dollars in reserve.

Club stripped of status, and kids feel the impact

As questions about the debt mount, the 55-year-old soccer organization is now faced with [families looking to take their kids](#) to other clubs after the revocation of its Ontario Player Development League (OPDL) license.

The licence allowed the club’s best players to be selected by rep teams that travel the province. Some view it as the equivalent of hockey’s Triple A status.

MSC won’t say why the OPDL license was revoked for the 2026 season. The league’s parent organization, Ontario Soccer says, in general, that it enforces rigorous standards for licence holders, particularly around financial reporting and long-term sustainability.

Ontario Soccer said it pulled the license after MSC first lost its National Youth license, which is given to associations that meet governance, safety, and player development standards. Neither licensor would specify why MSC had its licenses revoked.

“I was shocked and saddened that these revocations were allowed to occur, since it took us years to build the club to where it was during my tenure,” said Perry Galanis, who was club president for 15 years, until 2025.

His successor, Cardinale, stressed that the club’s new board was “not involved in ... any of the past matters being referenced” and he declined to comment on the financial trouble or license revocations. He said MSC is committed to accountability and transparency.



MSC President Tony Cardinale, left, took on the role after signs of financial trouble became apparent to club officials. At right in this photo posted online in March 2025, is Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti.

Markham Soccer Club's Facebook account

As soccer popularity surges, money pours in

The management of the player fees and sponsorship money has recently landed some associations in trouble. After an Ajax soccer club [cancelled its 2025 indoor season](#), parents wondered where their money went. The treasurer of the Simcoe and District Youth Soccer Club was jailed in 2024 after siphoning \$94,285 from the group's savings.

Markham Soccer Club has four staffers handling the incoming fees, money and sponsorships from Toyota, Tim Hortons, 407 ETR and others. An unaudited financial statement posted on the club's website says MSC took in \$4.5 million from registration fees, sponsorship and team charges in 2024.

Formed in the early 1970s as a not-for-profit, small, recreational league, MSC now presides over about 5,000 players, including some adults, on about 250 teams. Annual costs for families range from \$200 to \$6,000.

A former insider said that when he attended his first annual general meeting, shortly before the pandemic, he was struck at how little transparency there was into the finances. "It was a joke," he said.



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The AGM, meant to give members a chance to review the club's finances and hold leadership to account, offered neither, the former insider recalled. There were no audited financial statements allowing scrutiny of the club's financial affairs, he said.

The former insider, as well as Malandrino, who last worked for the club in 2015, said they were aware of concerns within MSC that money was allegedly misspent on hiring family members of club officials.

Parents raise some of the money that flows to MSC. A parent from King City said he collected \$60,000 from business contacts and through fundraisers and was told the money would help defray additional apparel and tournament costs for other parents. Other than a team meal following a tournament, the parent doesn't know where the money went.

He requested anonymity out of concern that his complaint could negatively impact his son's soccer career.

"We didn't go to additional tournaments, we didn't get extra coaching or training and didn't get separate apparel," he said. "It was actually pretty pathetic." He said his son left the league after learning the league was going to lose its OPDL license for the 2026 season.

After an exodus of senior staff, details are scarce

In January 2025, the club put out a statement that vaguely referenced "systemic" challenges within the club. The statement mentioned that there had been turnover in the executive director position, and that Galanis would be stepping down along with four unnamed board members.

But the statement offered no other detail, nor did it explain the "systemic" issues or the organizational tumult. An [unaudited financial statement from 2024](#) and posted online by MSC, shows almost \$1 million in "accounts payable," "carryover from past books" and other liabilities, but the document provided no further details.

Galanis said he had grown concerned over a lack of transparency into the club's financial affairs. When he dug deeper, Galanis said, he discovered taxes had gone unpaid and calls from the Canada Revenue Agency to MSC's office had gone unreturned. He said it was unclear to him how the debt had accumulated. Galanis said he tried to implement additional financial controls but became frustrated at the club's inability to right the foundering ship, and he quit.

The press release did not name the departed board members nor did MSC answer questions about them.

The release also did not name the people who had been turned over in the executive director position. Archived pages of MSC's website show that Tommy Bianchi had served in the role in the fall of 2024. He declined to be interviewed.

Before him, Kent Green, a longtime operations manager for MSC, served as executive director. He also declined to comment.

A soccer ball deal collapses

Controversy has pursued Green since his departure from MSC.

In 2024, Green started work as a salesman for apparel supplier Avanti Sports Group, a job he held for almost nine months, though a lawsuit centred on a soccer-ball sale that Green was involved in during that time, remains ongoing.

Green sold 4,000 custom soccer balls to Whitby FC for \$35,000, Avanti president Michael Clayton said. Clayton said he discovered Green was also working for Whitby Football Club and had set up a separate email address to obscure the fact



Kent Green, seen here in a photo posted to Facebook in January 2024, presenting a donation to SickKids Foundation.

Markham Soccer Club's Facebook account

that he worked both sides of the soccer ball deal. “I honestly didn’t know what to think,” Clayton said.

The whole thing is so convoluted.” Clayton said he was unable to cancel the custom order and the soccer balls remain in his warehouse.

Avanti sued Whitby FC, one of the club’s directors and Green for the \$34,425 allegedly owed Avanti for the soccer balls.

Green said in his statement of defence that Avanti knew about his simultaneous employment with Whitby soccer. “My action to order the balls for Whitby FC was not, in any way, a decision made to injure either party,” Green said in his court filing. He said his communication “could have been much better. ... I must accept responsibility for my shortcoming in this area.” He said the deal made sense for Whitby FC as the Avanti balls are superior.

Whitby FC did not respond to repeated requests for comment. York Regional Police said it is investigating an allegation of fraud made by Avanti but did not provide details.

None of the allegations have been proven in court.

Green is now the executive director of Peel Halton Soccer Association.



Jeremy Grimaldi is Metroland's courts, crime and justice reporter.

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