

Ontario

Speed Skating



2020-2021

ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

The last year has continued to extraordinary in many respects.

The 2020-2021 season was primarily focused on preparing for the Return to Sport. As we faced ever changing regulations and lock downs, we continued to conduct training sessions and meetings virtually. And although it wasn't the season we were all hoping for we used our time to develop our strategic plan and focus on our new strategic priorities in the context of the pandemic.

Strategic Goal 1: Strengthen Member Participation

OSSA received a grant from the Canadian Red Cross COVID-19 Emergency Support for Community Organizations. The grant supported our NextGEN Virtual Training Program and the Virtual Dryland Training Program for all OSSA members that was offered in the summer of 2020. The grant also provided sport specific masks for all OSSA members and a supply of disposable Personal Protective Equipment including masks and gloves for all members clubs.

The OSSA Women and Girls Virtual Speed Skating Camp was held on June 12-13, 2021. The Canadian Women & Sport WISE Fund provided funding for this camp. The goal of this camp is to advance gender equity in speed skating by building a community of female skaters who support each other; developing speed skating competence and confidence; and inspiring women and girls to reach their potential both in and out of sport. The camp had three areas of focus: build a community of female skaters who support each other, develop the speed skating skills of our female skaters and showcase how participation in sport can shape lives outside of physical activity or competition.

Both WISE and SSC supported OSSA including skaters from BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia. This allowed our skaters to make speed skating connections with other females across Canada. We also added a Friday Night Coach Social for women coaches across Canada. 15 coaches from Ontario, Alberta, Nunavut and PEI attended and discussed common challenges when coaching Women and Girls. Another Coaches Social was held in August 2021 and their discussions focused on encouraging women and girls to return to sport and competition.

Strategic Goal 2: Grow Sport Programming

The OSSA Virtual Training Spring sessions began in May 2021. OSSA offered two (2) training sessions per week as a part of the spring session: OSSA Virtual Dryland with Sean and Ryan McAnuff and OSSA Virtual Strength and Mobility with Naime. 120 people registered for the sessions. Attendance ranged between 40-55 participants logging on for each session with 12-20 recording views per session.

Ontario Speed Skating also received funding through the Community Better Challenge to support the delivery of OSSA Virtual Training sessions during the month of June. We encouraged as many skaters as possible to register for and show up to the OSSA Virtual Training sessions in the month of June.

We tracked the number of live participants and the number of active minutes in each session, and submitted the physical activity minutes to ParticipACTION. In addition to tracking the number of overall participants and active minutes, OSSA also tracked the number of skaters from each club joining the OSSA Virtual Training sessions in June. At the end of the month, the club that showed up the most will receive \$400 to support their club.

OSSA's Physical Activity minutes were submitted to ParticipACTION; 16,550 active minutes were logged by OSSA members during the 8 sessions in June (2 sessions per week for 4 weeks). Overall, these sessions averaged 40 live skaters per session with recording views ranging from 3-25 views per session.

The winner of the ParticipACTION Community Better Challenge was Milton with 13.54% of their members attending OSSA Virtual Training Sessions.

During 2020-2021 the Ontario Speed Skating Competition Structural Alignment Working Group met and recommended a plan for the start of the 2021-2022 season. Both the Competition Structural Alignment Working Group and the Technical Committee had the challenging task of trying to provide a competition structure within ever changing regulations and lock downs, and the inability to secure ice to provide opportunities for our skaters to race.

The Working Group's mandate has been to:

- Clearly identify the purpose of each competitive circuit, as well as provincial championships and Ontario Winter Games in relation to the stages of long-term athlete development
- Identify current barriers to participation in competition/progression of skaters from one level of competition to next, and strategies to overcome these barriers
- Review the feasibility of developing a regional/interclub competition circuit to effectively introduce skaters to competition at each level
- Ensure there is an appropriate number of meaningful competition opportunities for skaters in each stage of development, including Competitive for Life
- Identify appropriate number of skaters in each circuit to provide meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and economically viable competitive opportunities
- Re-assess stages of skaters eligible to compete in each level of competition and the process by which the progress from one level to the next
- Develop a plan for the return to province-wide competition

The Working Group continued to meet through this past season and will be presenting the recommendations for the 2022-2023 season this spring.

OSSA hosted a virtual FUNdamentals Coach course on June 4-6, 2021.

OSSA held its 2020 Annual Coaches Conference. This year's virtual conference included Long Track Technique and Tactics with [Jordan Belchos](#), Canadian Long Track National Team and OSSA Member, Intuitive Eating: A Foundation for Health and Performance with [Heidi Smith](#) (BSc, RD), Safe Strength and Plyometrics Training for Youth Athletes with [Zach Skubnik](#) (R.Kin, CSCS) of Mind to Muscle in Barrie, Short Track Technique and Biomechanics with [Annie Sarrat](#), France National Short Track Team Coach and Coaching Masters Speed Skaters: Giving Due Deliberation to Age-Tailored Approaches with Dr. Bradley Young (University of Ottawa), Dr. Scott Rathwell and Derrick Motz (University of Lethbridge)

The development of officials remains a significant challenge for the organization and working within the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified this challenge. OSSA is deeply grateful for our volunteers and officials, without them, we would not have competition. We will continue to plan for

succession and lean on our qualified senior level officials to assist in guiding our new volunteers for the next season.

Strategic Goal 3: Develop the Organization and Member Clubs

Ontario Speed Skating begins a new era with a Strategic Plan formulated by the Board of Directors and passionate staff under the leadership of Mary Frances Carter as the association's Executive Director. With an eye on the long-term growth of our sport across all stages and increased success of our athletes at the National level, we feel we are in a great position to deliver programs at all levels.

After the election of new Board Directors in 2020, many of the Board Directors meetings centred around developing many of the elements that were essential to the overall governance of the organization. The Board of Directors and staff revisited the past strategic plan, the accomplishments, and challenges over the past several years and had many purposeful discussions about the association's priorities for the next four years. Continued engagement with our stakeholders to gather feedback will occur during the duration of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, and adjustments will be made to refine our strategy.

OSSA received funding from the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Sport Relief Fund. As we recover from the impacts of COVID-19, Ontario Speed Skating wants to welcome our members back and attract new members to the speed skating community with policies and programs that prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion. Ontario Speed Skating's primary goal is to implement policies and programs that are built on a core of inclusivity for all participants at all levels.

Ontario Speed Skating would like to be an outstanding option for families considering returning to sport. Families may prioritize returning to an informed sport that offers an inclusive and diverse sporting environment, in addition to following public health guidelines, to ensure the safety of its members. The Jumpstart Sport Relief Fund has helped us ensure that our staff, member clubs, coaches, policies and initiatives are inclusive and informed, reaching more participants of minority groups and identities. A wider and deeper reach into the community has helped us demonstrate the true essence of Jumpstart initiatives: creating an inclusive Canada where all kids can access safe sport and play.

In order to undergo an innovative reset of our policies, programs and services, the Ontario Speed Skating Association invested in training and development that will help our staff, directors, member clubs, officials and coaches better understand and implement equity in the speed skating community.

Ontario Speed Skating, through the Jumpstart Sport Relief Fund, purchased eLearning resources for staff, directors, officials and each of our 24 clubs in Ontario (one club leader and one coach from each club):

Additionally, staff completed the Sports Inclusion Program through the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity and the Canadian Indigenous Culture Training - Truth and Reconciliation Edition offered by Canadian Sport for Life. With a deeper-rooted understanding of inclusion and equity in sport, our staff and directors continue to review and implement changes to all of our policies, marketing and social media initiatives to improve access to speed skating programs in Ontario and make speed skating an informed and desirable sport to return to following COVID-19.

Through the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Sport Relief Fund, we have been developing a marketing and communications plan. We look forward to sharing our plan and updated print and digital material with you in the late spring.

We continue to share as much information on Twitter/Instagram/Facebook as possible and have used these platforms to stay connected with the skating community during these unprecedented times. We will continue to develop social media strategies to bring awareness of speed skating and opportunities to get involved. Our newsletter continues to be one of the main sources of communication with our members. In the 2020-2021 season, we shared 14 newsletters with our members.

Strategic Goal 4: Support Excellence

While there were no competitions this season, we used this time to review and evaluate our plans and programs.

Through a series of virtual meetings, the Ontario Speed Skating staff engaged in a process of reviewing the 2015-2019 High Performance (HP) Plan. In reviewing the progress between 2015 and 2019, it is clear that the pillars of Athlete Development, Coach and Official Development, Communications and High-Quality Training and Competition Environment remain relevant.

Over the season, we continued to gather information, review and analyse data, and interview past and current athletes. We are pleased to announce that we have an updated High Performance Plan that we look forward to sharing with you in early March.

The 2020-2021 Virtual NextGEN Provincial Training Program focused on Learn to Compete skaters who are bound for Canada Cups (Stage 2) as well as skaters who participated in the Ontario Elite Circuit and High Performance Long Track Camps in the 2019-2020 season (Stage 1).

The goal of the program was:

- to develop speed skaters who are prepared to yield performance results at future Canadian Youth Championships and Canada Cups in both Short Track (ST) and Long Track (LT) (Stage 1) and
- to develop speed skaters who are prepared to yield performance results at Canada Cups in both Short Track (ST) and Long Track (LT), and to prepare those skaters to successfully transition to regional and national training centres (Stage 2).

These goals were addressed by supplementing existing club and OSSA programming through the delivery of Support Team services via virtual sessions for the identified NextGEN Skaters. The NextGEN Program will promote regular year-round training, appropriate to each skater's stage of long-term development.

This year-round training model was initiated with the introduction of the OSSA Live Dryland Training Program during the summer of 2020. This year's NextGEN program included virtual training sessions that focused on Support Team services, including nutrition, mental preparation, and functional movement training. Sessions were conducted either in a virtual group setting or through virtual individual sessions.

The NextGEN program contracted services with Dr. Judy Goss, Mental Performance Lead at the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario; Heidi Smith, a Registered Dietitian who has been consulting for over 20 years and has worked alongside some of the worlds top athletes; and Zach Skubnik, Registered Kinesiologist and Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist.

OSSA NextGEN Program also hosted a session focused on safe Social Media use and how athletes can effectively promote themselves using Social Media. CBC Broadcaster and Media Relations Specialist Pj Kwong hosted the interactive sessions for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 athletes.

Strategic Goal 5: Enhance Financial Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unexpected and extraordinary impact on our lives and clubs. The Provincial Government provided funding to Community Sports Clubs who are members of Provincial Sport Organizations. OSSA was required to establish a funding application and process. Successful applicants received funding to support clubs to sustain their organizations and prepare for when sport was able to return safely.

The Federal Government announced that it will be providing relief funds to sports entities throughout the country to help address the financial impacts of COVID-19. The distribution of these funds will be done through the provinces. For our speed skating community in Ontario that resulted in \$64,000 being provided to OSSA to help offset the many costs that we as a sports community have had to deal with as a result of COVID-19. Each member club of OSSA was given \$2,500 to help address increased operating costs and/or reductions in enrollment due to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus.