

Ontario

Speed Skating



**High Performance
Plan 2021-2028**

Introduction

Beginning in 2019, Ontario Speed Skating (OSSA) reviewed the 2015-2019 High Performance Management Plan to initiate the process of building a new plan for 2021-2028.

In the fall of 2020, data was gathered from OSSA’s member Clubs regarding their Daily Training Environment and the [SSC Elite Athlete Pathway document](#) offered by the Olympic Oval was consulted. Race data from 2015-2020 and the annual number of skaters entering Regional Training Centres were consolidated and reviewed.

Through the review of the metrics from the 2015-2019 High Performance Management Plan, it was found that less than 40% of the established Performance Targets were met.

In summer 2021, OSSA consulted with Ontario High Performance athletes currently training with the RTC, National Team and in the Oval Program, as well as Oval Program Coaches and retired athletes to obtain feedback regarding their experience transitioning from training in Ontario to their Training Centre. Feedback from these key stakeholders indicated that the format and availability of training in Ontario was vastly different from the environment at RTCs, and skaters are not always arriving prepared for the volume and intensity of training offered by RTC programs.

The benchmark tool used in Ontario Speed Skating’s High Performance review is the SSC Elite Athlete Pathway document (Short Track), available through the Olympic Oval. Aligning with Stage 1 of the Elite Athlete Pathway benchmarks would allow for skaters to successfully transition into Regional Training Centre or Oval Programs. Table 1 outlines how OSSA’s programs compare to the benchmark tool.

Table 1: Comparing the Elite Athlete Pathway to OSSA Programs		
Parameter	Stage 1 Oval Pathway Benchmark	Average Stage 1 OSSA Club Programs
Training hours/year	300-400 hours for 1-2 years prior to leaving Ontario	No data available, not tracked by many OSSA skaters or Coaches
Weekly On-Ice Sessions	3-5	2-3
Weekly Total Training Sessions	5-7	3-4
Short Track vs Long Track	Focus on both ST and LT	Skaters are only training LT if it is available, otherwise, strictly ST
Training Focus	Develop physical capacities and basic skating technique	Many clubs are not using a Yearly Training Plan to monitor training focus or training load

Through this quantitative and qualitative data review, it appears that OSSA programs are effectively preparing athletes entering Train to Train and exiting into Competitive for Life, but not consistently preparing athletes for entry into the High Performance pathway after Train to Train.

The development of the OSSA High Performance Plan focuses on Strategy 2024 and Vision 2028, building on our previous High Performance Management Plan 2015-2019. The High Performance Plan was approved by the Ontario Speed Skating Board of Directors in July 2021.

Vision 2028

Ontario speed skating is a leader in the development of Train to Train and Learn to Compete athletes and Coaches, supported by a network of Clubs delivering quality sport.

The 2021-2024 High Performance Plan is based on Vision 2028, recognizing that many of the plan objectives will require 4 – 6 years to fully achieve. These objectives include:

- Athletes consistently progress to the high performance athlete pathway and are successful nationally and internationally.
- Coaches are highly skilled, effective leaders who can prepare athletes to transition successfully into a Regional Training Centre.
- Clubs are delivering [quality sport](#) with good programs, good people in good places.
- OSSA offers enhanced programs to complement the Club experience. Such programs include: appropriate competitive opportunities; access to Integrated Support Team services; and technical leadership for Coaches and athletes.

Key Results - Athletes

- Ontario skaters are recognized as being technically proficient from a young age.
- A pool of 16 to 24 athletes from Ontario is capable of entering the RTC pathway at any time.
- Ontario consistently qualifies 8 to 12 athletes for the Canadian Junior Championships with 3 to 4 athletes qualifying for World Junior Championships Teams (Short Track or Long Track) each year.
- Train to Train and Learn to Compete athletes throughout the province have access to a high-quality Daily Training Environment with year-round program support.
- Athletes can access developmentally appropriate competition in province through the Learn to Compete stage of development.

Key Results - Coaches

- There is at least one Competition – Development Trained Coach in every Club, and two Competition – Development Certified Coaches in each region.
- There are at least 5 professional speed skating Coaches active in Ontario.
- There is a formalized support system available to Club Coaches to access programming tools, technical expertise and mentorship.
- There is a strong sense of community and collaboration amongst Coaches throughout Ontario committed to Ontario Speed Skating's vision.

Key Results - Clubs

- Speed skating Clubs are recognized for providing safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments, which allow participants to seek out and achieve their own level of personal excellence.
- Clubs are financially viable and able to secure appropriate amounts of ice time to support their current athlete base and achieve growth.
- Clubs are able to maintain a minimum coaching ratio of 1 coach:10 athletes.
- The majority of Clubs in Ontario are implementing a recognized skill development program.

Gaps

In order to achieve Vision 2028, Ontario Speed Skating must address the gaps that have been identified in the review of the 2015-2019 High Performance Plan and other quantitative and qualitative data. The identified gaps exist in the sport system, athlete development, coaching and competition streams. The gaps identified in this section are systemic in nature, and Ontario Speed Skating recognizes that individual circumstances may differ.

Sport System Gaps

- Most Clubs do not have access to sufficient ice-time. This is unlikely to be resolved in the short-term.
- Ontario Speed Skating has limited data collection and analysis capability.
- The current system is primarily reliant on volunteers who have limited time, resources, and therefore technical knowledge; yet these same volunteers carry significant responsibility for the success of the sport system.
- Current facilities in Ontario require developing long track athletes to train and compete in short track, instead of an integrated model where long track specific technical and tactical training offered to interested in-province athletes.

Athlete Development Gaps

- There is a lack of understanding among athletes, Coaches and parents regarding the provincial athlete development pathway.
- Athletes leaving Ontario have not consistently been ready to integrate into Oval/RTC programs at an appropriate stage upon arrival.
- There is an overall lack of technical proficiency in Ontario skaters at each stage of Long Term Development.
- Insufficient time/focus is allocated to technical development.
- The monitoring of athlete development is inconsistent and primarily focused on competitive results, not athlete development benchmarks.
- Many Clubs do not have the capacity to provide a Daily Training Environment that meets the requirements of Train to Train and Learn to Compete athletes.
- There is inconsistent access to sport science and sport medicine services.
- Clubs lack the resources to provide continuity in coaching leadership in the Daily Training Environment.

Coaching Gaps

- The evolving High Performance sport landscape places an increased workload on volunteer Club Coaches who have limited availability. This poses a significant challenge to addressing athlete development gaps.
- Yearly Training Plans are not being designed or implemented due to lack of time, expertise, and familiarity.
- Not enough emphasis is being placed on technical development at all levels. Coaches are lacking the expertise and/or tools to address technical development effectively.
- Due to lack of resources, Coaches lack an understanding of the athlete development pathway and have insufficient influence over athletes' decisions to participate in competitions.

- There is limited coaching expertise at the Club level. Each Club should have multiple developing and expert Coaches; therefore, they must be investing in the right Coaches for long term sustainability.
- There is a lack of depth and a need for succession planning at the national level events, including a specific need to develop more female Coaches at a high-performance level.

Competition Gaps

- The purpose of each racing circuit has not been clearly defined; therefore, there is a lack of understanding of the purpose of each circuit by parents, Coaches, and skaters.
- There are minimal regional/interclub racing opportunities to effectively introduce skaters to competition. There is a lack of frequency of racing experiences offered to developing skaters.
- Further alignment of the Provincial and Elite circuits is needed to provide appropriate racing opportunities in accordance with athlete stage of development. Better circuit alignment will allow for increased access to meaningful competition and depth of field.

Strategy 2024

Unite the community, develop the people and establish the programs necessary to achieve vision 2028.

At the heart of Strategy 2024 is the establishment the **Ontario Development Hub** and the creation of the **Ontario Development Hub Coaches Program**.

Ontario Development Hub

The Ontario Development Hub will support the development of Train to Train and Learn to Compete athletes, Coaches and Clubs throughout Ontario leading to increased Regional Training Centre readiness and enhanced Club programming.

Ontario Development Hub Implementation

- The Ontario Development Hub will serve and connect people by providing activities that allow for core services to be accessed province wide.
- Depending on regulations, the goal is to offer enhanced in-person training opportunities to Ontario's top skaters.
- The Hub will be led by Ontario Speed Skating's High Performance Director and supported by the Sport Manager.
- Development Hub Coaches will be responsible for leading enhanced training and competition opportunities with the support of Hub leadership and designated subject matter experts.

Ontario Development Hub Coaches Program

The Ontario Development Hub Coaches Program will identify a group of 6 to 8 Coaches who will be given leadership roles within the Ontario Development Hub. As Development Hub Coaches, they will receive mentorship and access to specific professional development opportunities to assist them in their development.

Ontario Development Hub Coaches Program Objectives

- Increase the number of highly qualified Coaches in Ontario.
- Identify Coaches who will lead Ontario Training Hub programs and support athletes in competition.
- Develop Coaches who can support Clubs in their region.
- Assist retiring athletes in making a transition into Coaching roles.

Coaches Program Overview

- A pool of 6-8 Coaches will be selected to support the Ontario Training Hub. The 2023 Canada Winter Games Coaching staff will be selected from this pool.
- Coaches will work collaboratively with subject matter experts to develop YTP templates for Clubs in their respective regions and resources to assist Coaches in increasing the technical proficiency of skaters.
- Coaches will be provided access to a series of educational workshops and mentorship support from Sport Science, Sport Medicine and Technical Experts.
- Selected Coaches will be responsible for supporting program delivery within the Ontario Training Hub, with leadership responsibilities in a designated area. Responsibilities include playing a leadership role in the delivery of training camps and attending designated national competitions.
- Selected Coaches will be paid an honorarium.

Summary

The Ontario Development Hub and Ontario Development Hub Coaches Program will build the foundation of Strategy 2024.

Through the implementation of Strategy 2024, Ontario Speed Skating will be on the pathway towards Vision 2028:

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