

## PC/TD Report to the 2013 AGM



Greetings SSNB Delegates and Board Members,

As I do every year, I want to, as I would like everyone else to, take the time to thank all the volunteers that work so hard at making the sport of Speed Skating, the very efficient and well run sports organization that it is. Without the diligent work, all year round, of those highly qualified and dedicated volunteers that sit on SSNB committees who set up the structure of the racing season, as well as the rules & standards associated with our competition structure, we would not be, in my opinion, a leading sport in this Province. We are not a very well known sport - But we are quite successful for our size. We need, both from a Provincial association level, as well as individual club level, to figure out how to become more visible to the general public and aware of what a great program we have to offer.

Last fall I was asked to speak at the NB Sports summit about our sports success at Canada Games and how we go about our yearly process of development and team selection. It got me to thinking about a lot of the really good things that our sport does that I think gives us a real advantage and we tend to take these things for granted.

I think speed skating has always been very progressive by having a Provincial coach / technical Director through its employee assistance program with the Provincial Government instead of having an executive Director. I do not say this because I do that job at present, But because I feel it is a very important cog in the SSNB program and I think this is an area that SSNB has to pay attention to since I am not going to be around forever and will there be government funding going forward?

The philosophy of having a qualified coach travel around to every club and assist with the club programs and give advice, is a true asset that most sports do not have. With speed skating being a very technical sport and with it being harder and harder to keep consistent coaching in clubs – It is a level of consistency that has worked well for our sport for over 20 some years.

I continue to look at speed skating's development within the Long term development of our skaters as being an asset that we need to continue to develop and promote at the club level. If we can have parents of new skaters understand our development structure and what is needed for their child, I think we will keep a lot more younger skaters. Our programs need to be fun and engaging but they also have to be education to the parent of what this sport can do for their child. At the entry level, I think SSNB needs to work harder to develop a better network of club meets that fall into the FUNDamentals meet category. The ones we have successfully run have been a hit with the participants and being a 1 day structure I am sure the parents must also enjoy it. I also like, from a skill development standpoint, the flexibility in these FUNDamental meets to race skaters on both directions throughout the day as well as the ability of FUNDamentals meets to invent races that incorporate skill requirements into actual races. .

On the competitive racing program side, I would like to see SSNB look at instituting a few changes that I think would better facilitate our racing situation today.

1. With the numbers we are presently experiencing and to suit the speed & skill development of our younger developing skaters, I think the inclusion of a 6M radius track (85M) into our racing program will give SSNB the ability to race each block without a flood. This will give us more time to hopefully accommodate more racing. Basically every club has one of these 6m tracks already for development in their group 4, 3 & sometimes 2, skill development process. Those that do not incorporate this track,

should. This smaller track would require better technical skills at the slower introductory speeds. In my opinion, this would enhance the skill level of all skaters in the province.

2. With time saved, if we can establish more racing opportunities at each meet I would like to see SSNB experiment MORE with heats, semi's & finals for the 2 shorter distances especially for older groups.
3. I would like SSNB to look at less people on the start line in the shorter, faster races as a safety measure, in our smaller ice facilities. OR as an alternative option – omit the shortest distance in smaller ice surfaces to do the three longer distances( again Heats, semis & finals where possible) .
4. A continued approach to relay development in the Province at competitions where size and time permit. The focus at the younger levels should be 1 L exchanges, strictly for experience and education of all involved. Consideration of rink size should determine number of teams/relay for the older skaters?

The technical development of younger skaters in New Brunswick continues to impress me. This development only happens from the consistent perseverance to technical skill development by coaches at the club level. I feel that the education of the SSC LTAD materials has made everyone much more aware of the proper developmental of skills through those younger years, has made a big difference. The advancements of SSNB in providing clubs and club coaches with better visual technical information as well as some video feedback of their skaters is critical in both the development of the individual skater as well as newer coaches. Good, qualified coaches are the backbone of quality on ice club programs. These are areas we need to continue to develop and promote.

SSNB is at the beginning of it's 2 year Canada Games Program. There has been a good turnout for the camps to date and the potential for the Team is pretty good, but it is sport, so only time will tell. On the short track side of the equation our Canada Games Program should be enhanced by the addition of the HP centre in Fredericton and an Olympic sized ice facility there as well. On the long track side, I am also pleased to hear skaters talking about accessing the Long track facility in Halifax more often when they have ice. While we will still access St Foy, Quebec for earlier ice, we can get in significantly more practices in Halifax. So I like our prospects for both skating disciplines. I like the Canada Games program for a small Province like New Brunswick, for its ability to focus our skaters on the sport at a higher level and there need for more commitment and dedication to their training.

Within the Development of the Canada Games Program skaters, I am very optimistic of the growth in SSNB's new HP program. This is exactly what will get this program off the ground. While this program has gone through some growing pains, the potential for this group to be self-sufficient by the end of this Canada Games cycle is a real possibility. We have the athletes with the ability to be very successful in the sport, We just need them to realize they can do it in their own back yard.

SSNB Coaching is a concern in terms of getting coaches qualified and into clubs. Having said that, there are some changes coming down the pipe from SSC that should help, like requirements for Canada Games Certification under the new structure should be changing, as well as the separation of the CAC Multi sport material from the speed skating Course materials. This will make a big difference in instruction time frames for the NB Course instructors and might make giving a FUNdamentals course a reality. So hopefully we can get a better development system started for the Maritimes.

I am really looking forward to next season

Respectfully submitted by :

Peter Steele - Provincial Coach/Technical Director for SSNB