

BOBSLEIGH CANADA SKELETON
2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The vision statement for Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton is to produce Olympic and World Cup champions and the past season once again proved that we continue to do this. I would like to congratulate all the athletes for the year they had with the numerous podium finishes and particularly recognize the Olympic Gold Medal for Kaillie Humphreys and Heather Moyse. Contrary to what our OTP funding partners have to say, I also believe the next level of athletes is coming forward after positive results of our junior athletes at the World Skeleton Championships, particularly a silver medal finish by Elisabeth Vathje.

Naturally the Olympics were the focus of the 2014 competitive season and while we only walked away with one medal, it was not for lack of effort and ability. Our athletes did not just go to the games to be a part of the Olympics, they went there to win. The experience and lessons learned will pay dividends in 2018, I am sure. We have an incredible group of athletes who I will always remember for their sense of team and the character and leadership they have demonstrated.

This is my last AGM as President of this organization and I must admit it is hard to believe that 8 years have passed so quickly. There have been many highs and lows and this past season reflected all of that in one season. While on one hand we had the success of the women's bobsleigh Gold Medal and a turn around on the financial side with increased sponsorships and an extremely successful hosting of a World Cup race, we have that countered with the lack of support from our funding partner OTP on our skeleton program as it goes forward into the next season. This has created a bit of a firestorm within the organization as it has allowed for a lot of verbal conjecturing. I have commended our athletes and coaching staff on the great team attitude they demonstrate but can only watch with dismay as I see the opposite happening with the membership ranks. At a time when the organization needs to ensure that it is aligned from top to bottom, there is constant dart throwing at both administrative and technical staff. Whether it be a biased parent with an athlete in the program, or a disgruntled personal coach with an axe to grind, that kind of discussion is not healthy nor productive. It is possible that adversity will make us stronger – I sincerely hope so, but it is up to each and every member to work together and ensure that the vision of Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton stays consistent and focused.

When I first was elected into this position, there was a total change over on the board. Board members were elected not with a purpose but just by who was willing to put up their hand. We have evolved from that to create a staggered election process such that there would never be 100% turnover at one time again. If that were to happen now the results would be devastating. We have also evolved to a professional procedures board that can provide guidance and policy setting for the professional staff. When I look around the board room table I am amazed at the quality and depth of experience within the group;

Bernie Asbell – former CEO of the Talisman Centre and independent sport management consultant, Bernie is currently the CEO of the National Sports Centre in Bermuda.

Bill France – former VP Sport for Winsport and Chairman of the Whistler Legacy Society, Bill was also the VP Sport for the 1988 Olympic Winter Games

Lee Genier – former Senior Vice President of Business Operations for the Calgary Stampeder Football Club

Sarah Storey – Masters of Law degree from the UK, specializing in sport law. Sarah currently works for SportAccord, responsible for relations with 109 international sport members including oversight on bylaws and statutes, commercial agreements and trademark portfolios.

Cody Sorensen / Amy Gough – as athlete reps, they brought thoughtful insight and worked tirelessly when called upon, even when competing. I cannot stress the importance of the athletes' roles on the board and the fact they have equal standing on the board to any other member.

Though many will question the board and that is every member's right, I can truly say that this group carried no agendas and made every decision with thought and discussion. Though sometimes decisions are not popular, they were made with the best interests of the athletes and federation at all times based on the facts before them.

In regards to staff, I would very much like to thank them all for the hard work and dedication exemplified. Nathan is leaving his position of High Performance Director to join the family business and he will be missed. Rising from the ranks of a competitive skeleton athlete to directing the federation's technical direction, Nathan never lost his passion for the sport or the desire to create the best high performance path possible. I also know that the federation is in great hands with Chris Lebihan whom I have the utmost respect.

Jody Griffeth has been a saviour in the financial area and though thrown to the wolves a year ago, has certainly allowed the staff and board the confidence that what we see is actually what we have.

The position of CEO has to be the least enviable position of all. No matter what decision he makes, there will be someone that is unhappy with the outcome and immediately becomes very vocal. In an organization where every action for an athlete has an opposite reaction with another, this is inevitable, but it is a thankless position. This organization was in a huge financial hole when I was first elected and through Don's stewardship, we managed to dig our way out of it within a short time frame. Unfortunately the loss of our Visa sponsorship in 2011, created a backward trend that we just have finally turned around this past year but without those hard decisions made by the CEO we would not be here at all. Throughout this time, the performance on the track was still consistently strong and I believe this was a direct result of the CEO taking care of business so that the technical people could do their job. I think the ultimate compliment came from a number of former athletes who now work with the organization when they commented on how different it looked from that side of the fence and now understood what it takes to run the organization.

I know I have not highlighted every staff member but there is just not enough time. You all have done a great job and I thank you for that.

I have probably rambled on enough but I guess I am making up for all the short President reports I gave in the past. As elections loom and you prepare to elect the next President and board members, please remember that who you elect must be free of agendas and bias. There is no room for any member who has a personal stake whether be in job aspirations or a family member

who is an athlete. Decisions have to be made with the federation in mind – this includes both disciplines of Bobsleigh and Skeleton and again biases one way or another will be harmful. Our funding partners of Sport Canada and OTP will be watching closely and though we may be not in good graces with OTP in regards to skeleton, they are still responsible for close to 1.3 million dollars towards our bobsleigh program. They will not take a backwards progression within the board as a positive sign.

In ending, if I have one regret, it is that over the past couple years, my family and business have taken more of my time then in the first years of my tenure. I have not had the chance to get to know as many of the newer athletes or board members from the provincial associations as I would have liked. Nor was I able to make it to as many of the local races as I wanted to. Hopefully you understand.

I am comfortable in saying that every decision that the board and staff made were in the best interest of the sport. Not every decision may have been the best decision but they were the correct decisions based on the facts and situations presented. Hindsight can make a genius out of anyone but if you live in the past you will never see the future.

I would like to thank you for the honour of being the President of Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton for the past 8 years and the friendships that were created.

Reid Morrison
President (for the last time)
Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton