



## **BOWLS CANADA BOULINGRIN**

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013**

#### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

It is amazing just how much can happen in a year and since the last Annual General Meeting [AGM] in August 2012 Bowls Canada Boulingrin [BCB] has gone through one of the most significant years since its inception due to transition and change. Consequently, I have broken down the report into sections for ease of reading.

#### **Governance**

2. Probably the most important change that has occurred during the year is that the board of directors has moved from a provincial to a skills based model. Previously, the board consisted of an executive committee comprising eight members plus 13 directors nominated by provincial associations to give a total of 21. This had always proven unwieldy to operate and, with the catalyst of new legislation in the form of the "*Canada Not for profit Corporations Act*" the 2012 board set about a serious examination of options for change.

3. As a result, in the summer of 2012, a new skills based model for the board was presented to members for consideration and endorsement. Although members duly approved the new structure, it was not possible to complete the transition in time for the 2012 AGM and so a new executive committee was installed.

4. The administrative process was eventually completed in October 2012 and the election of the new board of directors took place via electronic voting on 5 December 2012. The intention was to elect a new board comprising nine directors, but in the event there was a limited response to the call for nominations and only seven persons were elected to the following positions:

President  
Vice President  
Treasurer  
Director [International Competitions]  
Director [Domestic Competitions]  
Director [Athlete Development]  
Director [Sport Promotion and sustainability]

5. The positions of Secretary and Director [Communications] were not filled.

6. Subsequently, the Treasurer resigned from the board and, since February 2013, the board has operated with just six members. Although efforts were made to fill the remaining three places on the board this was not successful and the board has operated understrength for the last six months.

## **The Board and Personnel**

7. At the AGM last year we welcomed Tim Mason and Wayne Wright to the executive committee. However, in the lead up to and at the elections for the new board in December there were several key changes.

8. Consequently, following the elections the new board of BCB was as follows:

President:	Ian Tyzzer
Vice President:	Terry O'Neil
Treasurer:	Michael Scott
Director [International Competition]:	Davie Mathie
Director [Domestic Competition]:	Jim Roth
Director [Athlete Development]:	Wayne Wright
Director [Sport Promotion and Sustainability]:	Tim Mason

9. In consequence of these changes we said goodbye to Gary Robinson, Donna Law, Shirley Lenarduzzi and Merle Ackerman. All made significant contributions to BCB over several years and on behalf of the board I would like to express our heartfelt thanks and best wishes to them.

10. Unfortunately, there were to be two further changes in early 2013 as first, Michael Scott stepped down as Treasurer, and then our recently appointed Executive Director, Marc Leger, resigned. This left the board in a perilous position as the workload, just to keep going let alone forge ahead with plans for the future, was very heavy. Fortunately, being familiar with the job, I was able to resume the position of Treasurer in addition to my duties as President and, by default, I also became the de facto Executive Director as the Federal Government, in the form of Sport Canada, would not deal with anyone else.

11. The recruitment of a new executive director was of paramount importance and, making use of the semi-annual board meeting in Toronto in March, we interviewed a short-list of candidates. We were very pleased with their quality and consequently we appointed Anna Mees as our new Executive Director with effect from 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2013.

12. Anna joins BCB from the Coaching Association of Canada where she was a Senior Coaching Consultant.

## **Major Events and projects**

### **a) High Performance**

13. By the autumn of 2012 it was apparent that our high performance program was in difficulty especially in respect of the national team. We had lost the services of our internationally respected coach, Lachlan Tighe, earlier in the year and, despite a splendid win for the team in the North American Challenge during September, communication and procedural difficulties between the High Performance Committee [HPC] and the board was having an increasingly adverse effect on the smooth running of BCB. Consequently, it was determined that a comprehensive review of the high performance program was necessary – to be undertaken by an independent review committee.

14. However, prior to the review committee being appointed, the national team departed to compete in the World Championships in Adelaide, Australia. Aply led by interim coach Davie Mathie and with Merle Ackerman as Team Manager, Canada achieved notable success by winning one silver medal and two bronze medals – the highest total outside the two dominant nations of Australia and New Zealand.

15. Ryan Bester won a silver medal in the men's singles and a bronze in the men's pairs together with John Bezear, whilst on the ladies side Kelly McKerihen won a bronze medal in the ladies singles. The men's team also performed exceptionally well as a unit finishing 5<sup>th</sup> overall whilst the ladies finished in 12<sup>th</sup> place.

16. The high performance review committee commenced its work in December 2012 with membership comprising Terry O'Neil [Chair], Marc Leger [Executive Director and Facilitator] and with members Don Caswell and Bob North. The review itself was completed by early April 2013 and discussions within the board continued for another month before the report from the committee was accepted by the board. This allowed the appointment of a new high performance committee under the chairmanship of Don Caswell to take high performance forward.

17. Having said that, before the report and the revised policies emanating therefrom can be fully implemented they require examination from a legal standpoint and, as things stand at present, discussions continue with our legal advisors, "*the Centre for Sport and Law*". It is anticipated that the entire process will be completed by October 2013.

18. On the active side our national representatives participated in two additional tournaments during the Spring of 2013, namely "*Tiger Bowls*" and the "*China Open*" in March and the "*World Cup Indoor Championships*" in Australia in April. Both produced excellent results with our ladies team winning the *China Open* and Kelly McKerihen adding to her collection of medals with bronze in the *World Cup*.

19. On a less positive note, the pressures placed on the board through a lack of executive director and shortage of manpower has inhibited progress on our athlete development and coaching programs, albeit we have continued to qualify *Learning Facilitators* at various levels. It is anticipated that with the benefit of our new executive director's background on the *Coaching Association of Canada*, we can start to make real progress during the next year.

20. Lastly, in this section, further fallout from our previous high performance program led to *Sport Canada* cancelling our high performance funding for 2013 -2014 and all our activities in this area are currently funded from within our own resources. However, we are optimistic that, with the fresh start that the high performance review will give us, we can recover this funding next year.

#### b) A New Start

21. The new board realized very early that, if we were to stand any chance of reversing the declining trend in active bowlers, something dramatic was required. Consequently, we embarked on a re-branding project that was intended to change the image of the sport by bringing a fresh vitality to our operations. This initiative has three principle components.

22. The first of these was to redesign our logo to give it a more dynamic feel whilst still retaining the basic concept and colours. The new logo was introduced in early April just prior to the start of the outdoor lawn bowls season and feedback so far has been encouraging.

23. This was followed closely by the unveiling of a completely new website more in keeping with other major national sports organizations. Visually appealing in Canada's own colours the new site has an eye-catching centerpiece giving the latest and important news. Once construction is complete, the site will be fully bilingual and will have several other advanced and useful features.

24. Visibility was the third area targeted for improvement and in pursuit of this we have signed a new contract with the clothing supplier, "Kukri". In addition to providing sponsorship and supplying the uniforms for the National Team, *Kukri* will also be designing a new line in clothes in our Canadian colours specifically for Canadian lawn bowlers. Availability of these clothes is imminent and ordering will be direct from *Kukri* using their on-line processing. In order to help promote the clothes, board members will be wearing them whenever performing official duties for BCB.

25. To get all these three aspects up and running in just a few months has required a tremendous effort and I would like to pay tribute to Tim Mason who has been the prime mover and engine room behind the initiatives; without his energy and tenacity none of this would have happened and the lawn bowls community at large has much to thank him for.

### c) Domestic Competitions

26. Following a review of our domestic competitions two years ago the board decided to take the national singles championships out from the "*Majors*" championships and operate it as a direct entry standalone tournament. The intentions behind this decision were to broaden the competitive base and improve the level of competition by providing the opportunity for the best bowlers in Canada to enter. From this it is hoped that Canada's performance in the *World Champion of Champions* competition will improve.

27. The inaugural championships have just concluded in Regina, Saskatchewan and, despite some logistical issues, were most successful. Feedback is currently being evaluated and will form part of a review of the championships in due course.

28. The juniors and under 25 championships have also been the focus of close examination during the past year, especially as *World Bowls* has not re-instated the *World Junior Cup* at which the winners of the under 25 competition were entitled to compete.

29. In respect of the juniors, we decided to continue the direct entry system as it worked well in 2012 and indications are, once again, that the championships will allow greater participation than the provincial representation system.

30. However, the under 25 situation continues to be of concern. There was a dramatic reduction in competitors in 2012 following the loss of opportunity for the winners to compete in the *World Junior Cup* and so a decision was taken to retitle the event to reflect that it is a true Canadian championship. Two new perpetual trophies have been acquired for the winners and, whilst discussions on future prospects are continuing, an interim opportunity has been offered to the winners by including them in a Canadian development team to attend the *Tiger Bowls* Competition in 2014 should an invitation be received. The new high performance committee has also recognized the importance of providing opportunities for up and coming bowlers and has reserved up to four places in the national team squad for deserving under 25s.

31. Our biggest national championships are, of course, the *Majors* and, with the loss of the singles to become a standalone competition the board decided to introduce a new triples championships in the *Majors* to take its place. There are several other innovations to the *Majors* this year, in Vancouver, and, as with all the domestic competitions, we will be reviewing their success [or otherwise] at the end of the season.

32. Our remaining three domestic championships, the *Senior Triples*, *Mixed Pairs* and *Indoor tournament*, have continued as previously. The entry field in the indoor championships proved encouraging last year and it is noteworthy to report that both the men's and ladies' winners came from outside British Columbia. It is hoped that once again, a diverse field of entries will be received.

#### d) Officiating

33. Our *National Officiating Committee [NOC]* has continued under the chairmanship of Nick Watkins during the past year. Aside from their continuing role to review the *Conditions of Play* for our national championships, their main focus during the year has been to implement the new training program and examination system for umpires. This has taken some time to put together, but Nick was ready to start by Spring 2013 and, after running some successful pilot courses, the program has now been passed to provinces to implement.

#### e) The Office

34. The hub of our operations is the office and, if this does not work well, we get to hear about it quickly. Therefore, I am pleased to report that we probably have the strongest team in the office that we have ever had. Kevin "Ferggy" Ferguson is the lynchpin and, since joining us in October 2011 he has gone from strength to strength. He is renowned for responding to everything in a helpful and timely manner and he has built up a strong relationship with all the provincial associations. It has not been easy for Kevin as, on two extended occasions he has had to perform significant extra duties during the periods between executive directors.

35. Kevin, together with Marc Leger and now Anna, has also been responsible for innovation in the office to help provide a more efficient service. We have reviewed our information technology [IT] needs over the last 18 months and, in consultation with our IT advisors, "*Supergeek Computer Services Ltd.*", we have embarked on a program of upgrading our equipment and services. There have been some difficulties along the way, but we are confident that we have now overcome these.

## The Future

36. I am not the first President to say that the future is exciting, but also challenging – but so it is. We have a multitude of issues to address but essentially, we see our greatest challenge as the reversal in the decline in numbers of bowlers and provision of a platform from which the sport can grow.

37. In furtherance of this we need to tackle a wide range of subject areas and I list below some of those currently in action [in addition to those covered already]:

- Review, revise and update our strategic and operational plans
- Improve communications with provincial associations
- Review the current fiscal structure of lawn bowls
- Further refine our governance structure to improve our service delivery
- Continue our examination of domestic competitions
- Examine the feasibility of hosting an international competition
- Continue building on the high performance review to establish a more effective high performance program that will offer the prospect of greater success both within Canada and on the world stage, thereby restoring our high performance funding from the Government
- As part of our high performance delivery, re-establish strong coaching and athlete development programs
- Through our website, *Facebook* and other media, communicate and build a strong relationship with bowlers across Canada
- Build partnerships in key areas such as sponsorships and the media

38. I do not intend to go into detail on all the areas listed above, but it is appropriate to expand on a few of them.

39. Our strategic and operational plans were last reviewed comprehensively in 2010 and it is now necessary to have a closer look at them to ensure that they are realistic and meet the needs of lawn bowls during the next five years and beyond.

40. Our change in governance abolished the positions of “*Provincial Directors*” and since the change there has been continuing concern across the board that a stronger relationship with provincial associations needs to be set up. It has been my goal since being elected as President to address this concern and it has only been because of my own limited capacity [doing three jobs] that I have not moved forward. However, I hope to take advantage of so many key people being in Vancouver for the *Majors* to set up what I will call a “*Council of Provinces*”. I envisage that such a council will comprise the president and vice president of Bowls Canada plus the president of each provincial association. Subject to discussion I anticipate regular meetings, perhaps quarterly, via [web] conferencing and with minutes being taken. In this way provincial associations will not only be kept informed of what is going on and have an opportunity to raise concerns, but also have the opportunity to be part of the decision making process – in other words, have “*ownership*”.

41. Earlier this year, in my capacity as Treasurer, I undertook to conduct a comprehensive review of the financial structure of lawn bowls in Canada. This was in response to concerns, especially in Ontario and British Columbia, that many club bowlers who did not participate in provincial and higher level competitions did not understand or appreciate how their \$13.50 contributions were being used. At the same time, from a BCB perspective, membership fees had not been increased for at least eight years and, with the continuing reduction in membership, BCB's income from this source was diminishing each year. Such a review would examine all aspects of financing in lawn bowls and be conducted in conjunction

with provincial treasurers. The review remains a high priority project but capacity limitations on my part have, so far, prevented me from commencing the review. In order to take this forward, it is essential that a new treasurer be elected to the board.

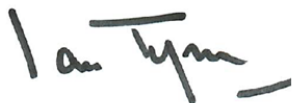
42. The new governance structure and board portfolios were always intended to be a starting point for future operations. Experience has shown that some refinements are necessary in order for the efficient working of the board. In essence, the board should be a policy making body with operational aspects taken care of by working committees in conjunction with the office staff. As we go forward with, hopefully, a full board this area will be further examined.

43. It is clear from feedback received from provinces that there is a significant desire for Canada to host an international event as soon as we can. I am committed to bringing this about and the board is now examining the feasibility. My current thinking is that we seek to introduce a tournament that we can call our own – similar to the *Hong Kong International Classic* – that can be held on a recurring basis and benefit developing bowlers in Canada in addition to established national team players.

### **Conclusion**

44. I have taken the trouble to give a comprehensive report on BCB during the last year as I hope to encourage all readers that the future of lawn bowls in Canada is in good hands. I have shown that there is a lot going on and that there are enthusiastic and dedicated people who are working extremely hard to further the sport across the country. There is undoubtedly a tremendous amount of work still to be done and, honestly, we, the board, need all the help and support that we can get. We need positive thinkers and people that can make things happen and especially bowlers who have gained from the sport both in terms of experience as well as achievement. I ask that anyone who can step forward to help seriously considers doing so and, for those critical of our work, please take the time to make contact and find out the true story before spreading gloom and despondency – I can assure you that I will personally respond to every contact within 24 hours [when I am in Canada] and, if I cannot give a satisfactory answer straight away, then I will find out and get an answer as soon as practicable.

Respectfully submitted,



Ian Tyzzer  
President  
10<sup>th</sup> August 2013