

# **President's Report**

## **Pacers Speed Skating Club of Ottawa 2009 – 2010 Annual General Meeting April 29<sup>th</sup> 2010**

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting for the 2009 – 2010 season. What a season this has been. Every four years we enjoy the excitement of the Olympics and the attention speed skating enjoys following the Olympics but this year was quite different. This year because the Olympics were in Canada and the Ottawa Pacers had life-member, multi-medalist, Kristina Groves skating we had an enormous amount of media coverage before, during and following the Olympics. This resulted in an extremely busy season of activities and growth.

### **2009 – 2010 Highlights**

- The Pacers hosted two successful meets – The 2<sup>nd</sup> Eastern Regional Meet in October (short track) and the Provincial Mass Start Long Track Championships in January. Thank you to our Meet Coordinator, Kathie Gauthier, and her team of officials and volunteers for an outstanding job once again.
- The Pacers held a very successful Long Track Camp in January. There were a strong number of coaches and volunteers who donated their time to ensure the camp's success.
- Another great season on the Brewer Park Oval. Pete Gauthier and his team did a fantastic job maintaining the Oval Ice and Hockey Pads and an even more outstanding job resurrecting the ice when it seemed impossible.
- A very successful Festival on Ice took place in February celebrating Kristina Groves's achievements at the Olympics and the World Cup. This event was sponsored by Speed Skating Canada and the National Capital Commission and co-hosted by the Ottawa Pacers and the Gloucester Concordees. Numerous volunteers from both Clubs put on speed skating demonstrations to the Winterlude crowd. They skated on an Olympic-sized Oval which was created by the NCC for this event. Skaters also challenged members from the Ottawa Senators Alumni in a team pursuit. After the demonstrations, the public was given the chance to try speed skating with free use of over 80 pairs of skates courtesy of ZT Sports (Gavin Thulien) and the Ottawa Pacers (Rocky Lamontagne). Approximately 250 people tried speed skating that day, many for the first time. Some stayed, as night fell, to watch Kristina Groves skate her way to silver. Everyone watched to projection screen TV and cheered enthusiastically as the media recorded everyone's reactions.
- Extensive media coverage was given to the Ottawa Pacers during the Olympics which significantly helped bring awareness to the Ottawa Pacers and to speed skating.

- Life member Kristina Groves Olympic bronze metal win in the women's 3000m and her silver metal win in the women's 1500m race. As well, her gold metal win and overall champion in the women's 1500m World Cup Single Distance Championships for the third year in a row.
- The mayor of Ottawa, Larry O'Brien, declared April 5<sup>th</sup> 2010 Kristina Groves Day in the City of Ottawa. The press conference was well attended and Kristina signed autographs and allowed anyone interested to touch the Olympics metals and have their photos taken with Kristina and the metals.
- In his first 10,000m race, Leo Landry captured a bronze metal at the Canadian Single Distance Championships. This meet was also a qualifying meet for the 2010 Olympics. Leo followed this with a second bronze metal in the men's 10,000m race at Canada Cup #1.
- Michelle Gauthier was chosen to be a Forerunner and Track Stewart at the 2010 Olympics. Michelle had a track-side view of the women's long track skating events.
- The Ottawa Pacers saw skaters perform to the best of their ability and beyond. Many personal bests and milestones were achieved in the Regional, Provincial, and National levels of both long track and short track competitions.

## **Looking Towards the Future**

During the 2004-2005 season when we made our move to the Sensplex, the Ottawa Pacers had 155 members. This season our membership stands at 277 members. We have almost doubled our membership in five years. With growth comes change; change in the way we perceive the club and change in the way handle and structure our club in order to ensure it's success for many years to come. While we have taken some small steps to adapt to our growth there are still a number of issues to be addressed in the near future in order to maintain the high standard and integrity the Pacers have achieved over the years. As President, key areas I feel should be addressed are as follows:

### **Coaching**

The coaching of skaters is one of the most important aspects of this club because without coaches we wouldn't have a club. With the loss of Kelly Ball, we are in a coaching crisis. Kelly was present on both Tuesday's and Thursday's in the Intermediate and Advanced Hours. This will be an enormous task to fill as there has been a lack of new coaches coming forth. Our coaches are all volunteer-based and all have full-time jobs outside of speed skating. We are very grateful to have Ron Grossman, Alicia Weiss and B Rootham on the ice as new coaches in training. We hope this will encourage others to share their experiences and skills with others.

There has been concern with coaching and programming consistency in the Advanced Hour. This has been expressed to the Board by both skaters and parents. We have a number of different needs in this hour as we have Recreational, Regional, Ontario Cup and Long Track skaters sharing 90 minutes of ice each session.

- **Actions suggested:**

- Finding new recruits – new coaches such as Master’s skaters or interested parents
- More and accessible coaching programs.
- Coaches should communicate with each other more. This could involve more frequent meetings or keeping a common journal or as simple as regular email correspondence.
- Creating a plan for each hour that will be known and accessible to all coaches and skaters.
- Having a Head Coach for each hour.
- Having a Technical Director who is on the Board of Directors as a liaison between the coaches and board so coaching concerns can be addressed as soon as possible.

Many of the points are currently being addressed and should be followed through. The coaches have an incredible vision for the future of the Pacers. Now is the time to turn that vision into reality.

### **The Board of Directors**

As the club has grown, the Board has remained largely the same size and structure. As the workload increases proportionally with the size of the club, the duties of the Board have been largely undefined. This results in an unbalanced workload among the Board members. There is also the absence of a mentoring and succession plan. The needs of the Club have changed but our Constitution and bylaws have remained unchanged for several years. An update is long overdue. While change is more often easier for some than others, everyone must keep an open mind when working together. Newer members need to understand current policy and adhere to the bylaws presented. If change is required than it should be done properly. Experienced members need to listen to new ideas with an open mind before closing the door on a new idea. Negativity will only stifle pending changes needed to order to continue growth.

- **Actions suggested:**
- Changing the structure of the Board in order to disperse duties evenly and implement a succession plan.
- Create an “umbrella-type” of Board with committees and volunteers under each Board member.
- Create a mentoring program for newly elected members.
- Review and update the Constitution and bylaws as required for our current Club size.

### **Volunteers**

While our Club has almost doubled in size, our volunteer base has not. The Pacers are a volunteer-based group and it has been expected that each member should volunteer their time and talent to some degree. Some feedback from members shows that many don’t know how they can volunteer and when they want to do so they are uncertain what the

jobs entail. Many are worried about making mistakes. There is a saying that goes: “We learn from our mistakes and if we didn’t make mistakes, we wouldn’t learn.”

- **Actions suggested:**
- Create a comprehensive list of volunteer duties and approximate time frame involved. This should be included with the registration package.
- Create a mentoring program to allow a smooth transition of volunteers.
- Create committees for events to allow for more volunteer participation.

### **Ice Allocations**

We are in our final year of a three-year contact with the Bell Sensplex. We will have to negotiate another contract for our private ice. Challenges include negotiating with a new member of the Sensplex staff as Tim McDonald has left. We have been able to keep our ice costs capped at a 3% increase per year while the City of Ottawa has raised ice costs from 7%-12% per year. We are anticipating a dramatic increase in our ice costs for the 2011-2012 season.

The City of Ottawa is also planning a major change in the way they award City Allocated Ice. They are targeting Speed Skating and attempting to move a portion of our weekday ice to the weekends during non-prime time hours. This creates a major challenge to our current program and competition schedule. We will need to work with the City of Ottawa and educate them about the sport of speed skating and the programming required to help skaters reach their full potential. These changes are to take place during the 2011-2012 season as well.

We also need to find a suitable program for our 4:15 ice that will cover our costs for this hour. We also need to review the programming for the Master’s hour and set the registration fees to cover ice costs as governed by our Constitution and Financial Policy.

- **Actions suggested:**
- Start negotiations with the Sensplex as early as September.
- Prepare a plan of action to meet and negotiate with the City of Ottawa.
- Have a program ready to fill the 4:15 ice by October 2010 at the latest.
- Finalize programming details for the Masters programs and set registration fees to cover ice costs.

I would like to thank everyone for their support and guidance over the past two years that I have served as President. As I prepare to step down as President and assume a new role as Past-President, I find myself reflecting on all that has happened over this time. The experience has been incredible and very enlightening. I have encountered many experiences and contacts that I couldn’t possibly have managed otherwise. I will treasure this experience always.

Respectfully submitted  
Leslie Derro

