

December 3rd, 2010

Message to Members

This has been a very busy fall for our Association. Registration has increased across the province which means our clubs have been busier than ever introducing new members to speed skating. There have been many new faces at the Ability meets and as always the host clubs and the many volunteers who help run these races have done an amazing job this fall.

The Canada Winter Games process has reached a very important stage. The Association selected Team Coaches and Managers last spring and under their leadership a large pool of athletes were encouraged to prepare for the opportunity to earn a position on Ontario's Canada Winter Games Team. The selection process for the Short Track skaters took place in Ottawa on November 28th and 29th. On behalf of the participants and the Association I would like to acknowledge the Concordes and all the officials and volunteers for running a great weekend of racing. The Long Track selection races will be held in St Foy on the weekend of December 18th and 19th and this will complete the selection process. Some of our CWGs candidates may still earn the right to represent Canada at the World Junior Championships, an event that conflicts with the CWGs. OSSA's CWG Team will be announced after these races are completed on Tuesday, December 21st.

The games begin in Halifax on February 11th and there will be extensive media coverage of this year's event so our members will have an excellent opportunity to see our young skaters compete against the best skaters from across Canada.

Members of the OSSA Board along with OSSA's Executive Director Jackie Deschenes and Rusty Haines the Student Program Coordinator had an opportunity to meet with members, club officials and coaches during Western Regional #2. The Brampton organizers provided space for an open meeting which is a good forum for answering questions and discussing issues of concern.

We heard about the challenges that OSSA clubs and coaches face as they prepare for the Eastern Canadian Championships which will be hosted by the Toronto Club on March 24th to 26th. Skaters and coaches will be participating in the new race format developed by SSC as part of the ongoing effort to implement the principles of the LTPAD program. Details of the age groups and new race distances have already been supplied but coaches expressed a need for some practical suggestions on how to prepare their skaters for these races. Over the last few weeks we have contacted coaches and officials from the other branches who have already had some experience running meets with the new distances and format. These comments and recommendations are now available for members to review by visiting the ***LTPAD in Action*** section that can be accessed through either the [Coach's Section](#) or the [Race Section](#) of the new [OSSA website](#). Additional observations and suggestions will be added to this section as they are made available. We are encouraging coaches to write down their comments and practical suggestions on ways to handle this new challenge. When this information is sent to the OSSA Office, it can be added to the website so that we can work together to answer this new challenge.

There was also a good discussion about the best way for coaches and race officials to provide young skaters who have been injured with the appropriate guidance as they return from their injury. There was general agreement that OSSA needs to develop a concussion screening and assessment process. Other branches and other sports have already developed strategies to manage this issue and the next step will be for OSSA to present a draft protocol for members to review and discuss. The goal will be to have a new set of rules that can be adopted at the 2011 OSSA AGM for implementation next season. For the remainder of this year I can remind coaches and parents that the current rules provides the referee with the authority to keep a skater off the ice if there is any doubt about the skater's physical condition.

The OSSA Board has organized their meeting schedule this fall to be available at the Ontario Cup race in Clarington and give members an opportunity to meet with the Board and the OSSA staff. We are able to answer the many questions we receive from members directly by emails however an open meeting is a great opportunity to discuss issues together. The format will be an open drop in session to be held on Saturday, Dec 11th from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm and we look forward to meeting as many members, skaters, parents and coaches as possible.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Wilkins', written in a cursive style.

Graham Wilkins
President
Ontario Speed Skating Association