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REPORT TO MEMBERS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

October 01, 2023

Dear Presidents,

The past 12 months has seen Karate Canada complete a major reset of its sport programs, staffing and governance. While the repercussions of the pandemic, and all the negativity it entailed, continues to echo in some areas, these final ripples now appear much fainter and are quickly moving to the past. Indeed, those challenges that were faced in 2021-22 have been successfully met and Karate Canada is now stronger, better managed, and more united than ever.

Three Pillars for Success

Karate Canada has many moving parts but fundamentally is based on three pillars: Operational Management, National Team Leadership and Governance. However, simply having these pillars in place is not enough, to truly be successful you also need the following:

- Firstly, you must have a strong operational leader, one who can successfully manage a very active federation including overseeing many programs and, most importantly, is a good financial steward.
- Secondly, a strong Sport Technical Leader, who can provide needed leadership for the various competition programs. This person must also have a 'playground to podium' vision while valuing each and every member of the national team(s).
- Third, a strong Board of Directors made up of passionate people whose skills can aid the federation in the development of Karate in Canada. The board must be free of Conflict of Interest and directors should be, for the most part, independent of any other fiduciary duties involving Karate.
- Lastly, and most importantly, these three pillars must work together in concert. The concept of silos, where one program isolates itself from another, is a self-defeating one that leads to underachievement. I am very happy to say that in 2022-23 the three pillars have worked very well and very successfully together. The results speak for themselves.



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Operational Programs and Management

Karate Canada programs have seen improved management and function with coaching, officiating, technical, etc. all moving forward and achieving various milestones. The most important approach is to be able to help our members get to the next level, be that coaching, officiating or other skill development.

Financial Management

With the hiring of a new Executive Director in 2022, Karate Canada has drastically improved its financial management during the last 16 months to bring it inline with the expectations of our funding partners and our members – something that had been lacking for a long time. Some challenges remain, but these are now being met and I am happy to report that we are both solvent, and well managed in this regard.

High Performance

The Independent Sport Pathway Review that was commissioned by Karate Canada, with the support of Sport Canada, has been instrumental in moving us forward. The key to a successful review and implementation was that it was a. independent b. comprehensive, and c. had sufficient resources applied to create the correct solutions. After the report was received, an additional independent consultant helped draft the position of ‘Sport Technical Leader’ which had an expanded role and scope along with greater support, hours, and responsibilities than the position it replaced. The results speak for themselves in overall performance, accomplishment, and, very importantly, athlete satisfaction. While not everyone can win, everyone should feel valued when they are on the Canadian Team, and they should have a positive team experience. Nothing is perfect, but we are far closer to this than we have ever been before.

Governance

The keys roles of the Board are to manage risk, oversee finance and budgets, oversee strategic development, maintain ‘shareholder’ value, and measure the ‘return on investment’. Of course, the shareholders are the PTSOs, the customers are the registrants, and the ROI is athletic performance, which includes overall satisfaction with the various KC programs. Moving forward, one of the next major steps for KC is to create an updated Strategic Plan.



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Governance also incorporates modernizing and updating bylaws and policies. Sport Canada has funded a Governance review for Karate Canada which is now, along with the Canadian Sport Governance Code, influencing how KC moves ahead with all aspects of Governance. This includes, but is not limited to, a more robust election process, the development of a Nomination Committee, a review of voting systems and board structure, gender equity and diversity, amongst many others. The leadership of Karate Canada should mirror its membership.

An important role of Governance is the protection of our membership from those who would exploit, bully, or harass others. Karate Canada is a signatory to Safe Sport / Abuse Free Sport and is under the umbrella of The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC). This is an important foundation for Karate Canada, and sport in Canada. Karate begins, and ends, with respect; those who would break our codes of conduct are not welcome in Karate Canada.

Major Events in Canada

Series A: Karate Canada successfully partnered this year with Karate British Columbia to host its second WKF Series A event – this time in Richmond BC. The event was a fantastic success, and we are very grateful to Sport Canada / Hosting Canada for making this possible through an international hosting grant. We can't wait to hold another in the future.

The National Championships in Laval, Quebec were also excellent. The partnership with Karate Quebec was very successful, as it always is. However, it seems we are becoming a victim of our own success. The hours were long as we had our largest ever championship. Next year the event will be an extra day. We are also committed to more referee supports.

Canada Games was a dream come true for so many of us and the event in Prince Edward Island was amazing. Canada Games and the host provinces were excellent to work with, well organized and professional. The volunteers and staff were second to none. We will be in the next Canada Winter Games in 4 years time – so someone please pack a few extra kumite flags in their suitcase!



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International Relations

I am honoured to represent Karate Canada domestically and internationally.

Domestically, I sit on the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Safety in Combative Sports Committee and represent KC to the Canadian Olympic Committee as a voting session member.

Internationally, I hold the following positions:

- Executive Committee Member – World Karate Federation
- General Secretary – Commonwealth Karate Federation
- 1st Vice President – Pan American Karate Federation.

Being able to bring a Canadian perspective to various discussions has great value. I am very grateful to the help and support I receive from our international partners.

The Future

The future for Karate Canada has never been more positive. If we look at the trends from governance, finance, high performance, program satisfaction, participation levels in programs, level of international competition, etc. it is all very positive. The trend that, once again this year, there are more Canadians doing more now, at all levels of Karate Canada than ever before, continues. This is the true indicator of success. Over the past several years, Karate Canada has been remarkably successful despite many serious challenges. Let's all do our best to keep the trend going.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

In Karate Canada, our people come first. I therefore wish to thank the Board members who volunteer their time to help develop and guide the vision for Karate Canada. I wish to thank the volunteer committees and committee chairs for their support of the federation. I wish to thank Chris Bright, the Executive Director and Rodney Hobson, the Sport Technical Leader, for going 'well above and beyond' in the support of Karate Canada, its athletes, and its members. This also goes for the team(s) of coaches, volunteers and contractors who work with KC in a variety of ways. I also wish to thank the PTSO Presidents for their leadership within their PTSO and for their support of the federation. Without volunteerism, it would be impossible for KC and the PTSOs to successfully hold events.



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I would also like to thank Sport Canada, the Government of Canada, and the Canadian Olympic Committee. Without the strong support of these entities Karate Canada would simply not exist, or, not as it exists today. I believe that, especially lately, the leadership of Sport Canada and the COC has been instrumental in improving the sport system within Canada through Safe Sport and OSC – though, I do hope that, in the future, the various levels of government will move to cover all athletes in all sports, not just the ones covered in National Federations and in some PTSOs. All athletes, recreational and otherwise, in any setting, deserve minimum protection. Unfortunately, this is not currently the case.

Internationally, I wish to thank World Karate Federation President Mr. Antonio Espinos and the team he leads at the WKF for their continued help and support of Karate Canada. Mr. Jose Garcia Maañòn, President of the Pan American Karate Federation for his trust and support, and Mr. Sonny Pillay, President of the Commonwealth Karate Federation with whom I work closely.

Conclusion

In closing, I wish to quote Mr. Nelson Mandela:

“Sports have the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sports can create hope, where there was once only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination. Sports is the game of lovers.”

It is an honour to be the President of Karate Canada and to work with such a fantastic group of people on all levels.

Best regards,

Craig Vokey
President