



## 2024 BC Athletics Annual General Meeting

### Chair Report

By: Darren Willis

2024 has been another year of change for our sport and BC Athletics. As a Board of Directors, we identified officiating, Safe Sport policy, and organizational governance as priorities for the year, along with the need to recruit new members for the Board of Directors.

#### **Officiating**

No group in our sport has been facing as much pressure as our officials. They are essential to the running of our sport, yet we continue to struggle with recruitment, moving officials through the certification process, and managing the workload they are expected to handle during our track and field season.

Some key areas of focus for our officials this year were:

- 1. Officials Management System (OMS)** - After running a Zone 6 pilot of the OMS in 2023 the system was rolled out province-wide in 2024. At its most basic, it helps us track all of our officials and their certification levels in one database. It is also used as a tool in sanctioning events, identifying the number and type of officials volunteering at events and in scheduling them at competitions. The rollout was not without its challenges, but we want to thank the entire community of officials, event directors and the BC Athletics operations team for making it happen.
- 2. Certification Process** - In 2024, we learned a great deal from our officials and our Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) counterparts across Canada. We identified nationwide bottlenecks in the system for training and advancing officials through the certification pathway. In BC, we pinpointed areas where we can take direct action to help more officials reach Level 3. Additionally, we recognized the need to collaborate with our partner PSOs and Athletics Canada to implement necessary changes at Levels 4 and 5. We hope to see the impact of these efforts in the 2025 competition year.
- 3. Taking Care of Officials** - This year, we observed a strong commitment at many events to prioritizing the health of our officials. Event directors are supporting this effort by offering events with shorter schedules, ensuring our officials' well-being is considered.
- 4. Recruitment** - Ultimately, successfully recruiting more officials is essential to better support them. Having more personnel at events with full competition schedules over multiple days will help ensure that individual officials aren't overburdened with long days. Currently, we are expecting too much from our officials.

## **Safe Sport**

BC Athletics Board of Directors has been responding to the necessity to upgrade our policies and practices around Safe Sport. We have a responsibility to improve the culture of our sport to ensure that it is a safe and rewarding space for all who participate in it.

1. **AC Office of the Commissioner** - BC Athletics Board of Directors and CEO worked to revise our Safe Sport policies since the 2023 AGM and in May of 2024 we signed an agreement with the Athletics Canada Office of the Commissioner to adjudicate Safe Sport complaints.

The shift to using professionals who work in this environment helps ensure the quality and independence of our Complaint & Appeal process for those who need it.

Signing on with the Office of the Commissioner is also a move away from placing volunteer BC Athletics members, who have traditionally agreed to sit on Disciplinary and Appeals panels, at legal risk.

2. **Financial Risk** - The financial costs involved in Safe Sport complaints and investigations can be substantial. While the changes made this year will ensure professionalism in the Complaint & Appeals process these improvements come with significant financial risk to BC Athletics. This makes it a priority for all our members to work together to build safe spaces for our sport. A single investigation into a Safe Sport incident can cost tens of thousands of dollars, so if we want to continue to invest in our sport, we need to reduce the opportunity for Safe Sport violations to occur.

3. **Safe Sport Community** - Creating a safe culture in our sport is a collective effort. BC Athletics will lead training and education initiatives to support our members in adopting Safe Sport best practices over the coming years.

Requiring Safe Sport training before activating certain membership types for the 2024 season was a step in this direction. BC Athletics will continue to support improved governance practices for local organizations in the coming months and years. This includes hosting Town Halls to bring our members together to discuss these important issues.

## **Governance**

BC Athletics is undergoing change at the Board of Directors level, just as we have been going through change at the Staff level over the past two years.

1. **Recruitment for BC Athletics Board of Directors** - The Board of Directors has been actively recruiting to meet the organization's needs in a changing environment. Since our 2023 AGM, the Board has appointed three new directors.

**Chris Wray**, a Senior Manager with KPMG, joins us as our new Director of Finance. His appointment comes at a time when the BCA Board of Directors is developing new policies to better monitor the organization's financial condition. These policies will also provide our CEO with the flexibility to respond to financial opportunities and challenges. This will help our staff meet the financial demands of the organization while maintaining a clear view of our financial health.

**Brittany Therrien**, an associate at Roper Greyell, with expertise in Workplace Law and volunteer background that includes work with the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre for Canada joins us at an important time.

**Julie Sillars**, from Vesta Properties Ltd. played a key role in the Langley Local Organizing Committee for the highly successful 2022/2023 Bell Canadian Track & Field Championships. Julie brings extensive experience in real estate development and construction, and she also volunteers as a track coach at Pacific Academy in Surrey, BC.

We would like to thank the following directors who are leaving us after many years of great contributions to BC Athletics.

**Ota Hally** - Ota has provided BC Athletics with invaluable guidance as our Director of Finance during the challenging years of the COVID pandemic, which tested our responsiveness to external pressures. He extended his tenure well beyond his initial plans, guiding us through significant organizational changes and a demanding recruitment process to find a credible successor. Thank you, Ota, for your dedication and exceptional service!

**Jasmine Gill** - Jasmine has been an outstanding representative for our sport and for Zone 3, 4, 5 during her time on the BC Athletics Board of Directors. She has helped support the organization through substantial change with her work on the board and in our Officials Committee. We will miss her.

**Newton Hong** - Newton has been an invaluable member of our board, advocating for governance change and the training and orientation of directors that the board has begun this past year. We will miss his strategic outlook and wealth of experience and perspective.

**Cristi Lundman** - Cristi served as our Zone 6 representative on the Board of Directors before making the move to become the new Operations Manager of BC Athletics last Fall. We were delighted to see one of our directors become an integral part of BC Athletics operations team.

**2. Governance Training** - Over the years, BC Athletics has established training opportunities for coaches, officials, and other key contributors to our sport and organization. However, we have not invested similarly in training and orientation for our Board of Directors. To address this gap in organizational leadership and oversight, we held a Directors' retreat in Squamish this March.

**3. Committees** - The Board of Directors will be changing how we use committees at BC Athletics. This change addresses the long-standing use of committees for two distinct purposes: (a) assisting the Board of Directors with policy issues and (b) undertaking work for the organization that we lack the financial resources to hire staff for.

- **Policy Committees** - Going forward, the Board will form committees to address specific policy questions. Once a committee has completed its work, it will be disbanded. There will be no standing committees.

- **Working Groups** - The majority of work our committees have done over the years has been to help BC Athletics run our sport. This work needs to continue, but its oversight and direction more naturally fall under the authority of our CEO, not the Board of Directors. Moving

forward, these working groups will continue their valuable work with much clearer and more consistent direction and support.

These changes will feel like a culture shift for BC Athletics, and they are. Change is not always comfortable, but we hope these adjustments will make those serving on our committees, on the working groups, and on our Board of Directors clearer and more rewarding.

The shift in how we use committees will also provide much needed clarity for our BC Athletics operations team. They were often caught wondering who they were taking direction from and having to wait on Board or Committee schedules to get operational work done. This should help make them more efficient.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The reward for all the work and energy put into our sport is seeing communities come together to train, compete and socialize. It's about enjoying each other's company, embracing the physical challenges that sport provides, and creating opportunities for our sport to thrive.

We rightly celebrate our Olympians, and what a fantastic year it was for BC's Olympians. However, we didn't need to look to Paris for inspiration and excitement this year. It was right here in BC, in each of our communities, throughout the year, in both good weather and bad.

On behalf of the BC Athletics Board of Directors, I would like to thank all our members for their dedication to our sport. We hope you continue to find new ways to make our sport more accessible and rewarding for everyone involved.

Darren Willis  
Chair, BC Athletics Board of Directors