

Canadian Cycling Association
High Performance Review
Report

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INTRODUCTION

At the outset, we would like to commend the Canadian Cycling Association (CCA) for taking the initiative to do a review of their high performance program and structure as it stands today with a view to making it more effective and efficient for tomorrow.

In listening and acting upon the concerns of their members, they have demonstrated a willingness to face the issues and work together towards making effective change. It has also been our pleasure to have the opportunity to interview many of the key stakeholders in the organization. No matter what perspective each individual we met with came from, there was a passionate desire from all to make constructive changes with an optimistic view of what the future holds for the sport.

The Paralympic program is well integrated within CCA into the mainstream of the organization. This is an issue for many summer sports; however we feel that this transition is working well for cycling. There are the same issues and concerns across both programs, therefore these are not separated in this document into Olympic or Paralympic stream issues.

While overcoming the many challenges currently facing the organization, the CCA does have enormous potential to be one of Canada's highest performing sports. As one interviewee noted, "99.9% of the population has cycled as a child, we need to start to capitalize on that, there is potentially a bigger pool to draw from than soccer." Cycling, more than any other sport in Canada except perhaps hockey, could have access to a very large feeder system.

It is clear from the interviews that Cycling has very knowledgeable and passionate individuals that have a keen desire to improve and sustain the performance of Canadian cyclists internationally. With strong leadership and direction the future for CCA and its high performance programs is very positive.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

As outlined in the terms of reference the objectives for this review are:

1. To provide an objective "outside" assessment of CCA's current high performance strategy and structure
2. To make recommendations to CCA with regard to improving the coaching/high performance structure in order to increase athlete performance and international competitiveness

Information gathering took place between August and December 2007. During that time consultation with key stakeholders, namely coaches, national team athletes (current and former), CCA staff, board members and provincial representatives was undertaken. This was done by means of the following:

- One on one interviews via phone
- Face to face meetings
- Web surveys
 - Athletes (French and English)
 - Technical Staff and Coaches (French and English)
- Written responses

Feedback was excellent on the web surveys with a 50% response rate from the athletes (50 persons responding). Participation on the technical and coaches survey was lower mostly due to the fact that this group was more represented in the one-to-one interviews.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Canadian Cycling Association is Canada's oldest sport governing body. The Association was known as the Canadian Wheelmen's Association when it was founded in 1882. In 1968, it was officially named the Canadian Cycling Association.

Today, more than a century later, the CCA continues to pursue its mission to lead and support the development and growth of cycling in Canada. At the present time two official National Cycling Centers (NTTCs) exist in Canada, one in Victoria B.C., and one in Bromont, Quebec as well as other Development Centers (NDCs) including, Atlantic, Hamilton and Calgary.

At the present time of the Olympic and Paralympic program consists of the following disciplines;

- Road, is the oldest of Olympic cycling events
- Track, Olympic event since 1908
- Mountain Bike, became an Olympic event in 1996
- BMX, will become an Olympic event at the 2008 Beijing Games
- Paralympic disciplines such as Hand-cycling, Track (tandem and single) and road with both tandem and single events.

Canada’s medals historically from 1988 are as follows;

	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008*
Track Men	—	1	2	—	—	—
Track Women	—	—	—	—	1	1
MB Women	—	—	1	—	1	1
BMX Women	—	—	—	—	—	1
Road Women	—	—	2	—	—	—
Total	—	1	5	—	2	3

* Note: 2008 is the projected medal count provided to Road to Excellence by the CCA

The Canadian Cycling Association’s challenge today is to build a world class high performance strategy and structure and then provide it with the necessary human and financial resources required to put into operation the various programs and services that will be required.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Identified below are the critical factors that need to be consistently worked on and improved before sustained improvement in CCA’s high performance programs can be expected. As each becomes better they will provide a foundation upon which a strong system can be built.

1. Put in place strong leadership

Effective leadership at three key levels is absolutely critical to future success – at the CEO level, the Board of Directors level and at the Technical level. How these three areas/positions interact and support each other is important to building a strong foundation. It will be extremely important to identify the various leadership roles that are required and spend time researching and identifying the very best people to fill the roles.

CCA has already begun this journey with the hiring of the new CEO which has been favourably viewed upon by the vast majority of interviewees. Already there is renewed but cautious optimism for a brighter future.

2. Develop a strategic plan

In CCA’s current environment, effective strategic plans and their implementation is essential. With limited financial and human resources, clear strategies and priorities

need to be established in order to be most effective. Hard choices will have to be made on all technical programs and activities, with the perspective of ensuring the greatest return on investment. A well defined strategic plan will set a strong and clear vision for CCA, identify the roles & accountabilities of all stakeholders, identify where partnerships are to be made etc. (It should be noted there is currently a strategic plan however as a result of this review will need to be revamped)

3. Engage in effective and open communication

The CCA needs to be transparent with all plans, actions and decisions clearly communicating to its constituents the direction it is taking, who is responsible for what and the specific actions that will be taken. There also needs to be a mechanism in place where key stakeholders have the opportunity to engage in the planning process and provide ongoing constructive feedback.

4. Build trust

A common theme running through all of the interviews was a lack of trust throughout the organization and the CCA's ability to deliver effective programming to national team athletes. There have been many instances in the last few years that ultimately led to the current situation. For example:

- Several staff changes have occurred leading to uncertainty in the technical leadership
- Last minute changes to National Team and World Championship selection criteria
- No follow through with planned initiatives – in other words the perception is that CCA does not “walk the talk”

The CCA has already begun the process of rebuilding trust with the key stakeholders. This review along with the resulting actions is the first step.

5. Develop an accountability framework

For all positions, volunteer or paid, it needs to be very clear what people are responsible for, their level of authority and how they will be held accountable. Expected results should be clearly articulated and assigned to the appropriate individual(s), as well as be consistent with the available resources and capabilities.

While it is true that many of the current problems can be blamed on inadequate financial resources, it has become the excuse for everything. In moving forward, it will be important to ensure the accountability parameters match the available resources of the CCA. For example, you can't hold a coach accountable to a podium performance without providing them with the resources to implement the proper training and competitive program.

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

During the review process several issues and challenges that face the sport were brought forward via the interviews and the on-line survey. Surprisingly, there was widespread recognition and agreement of what these were. Below we have documented the key issues and challenges. It is necessary they are brought into the open for all to be made aware of. In moving forward with a new high performance strategy and structure, these issues will need to be effectively addressed.

1. Coaching Issues

CCA recently chose to eliminate several positions, streamlining the technical leadership until this review has been completed and a new direction has been determined. The High Performance Director position and several coaching positions were eliminated. **The comments in this section, for the most part, refer to the previous coaching structure and not the provisional one in place for Beijing.**

- a. CCA has not clearly established the mandate for technical staff, what and who they are responsible for and what they are accountable for. This creates confusion not only with the coaches but also with athletes and other stakeholders such as personal coaches, Integrated Support Team (IST) members etc.
- b. Coaches do not feel they have been able to drive the system. The obligation the athletes have to work within the system is not made clear. Often a coach has not been given a budget to work with or last minute changes are made making it very difficult to plan and implement an effective yearly training plan (YTP).
- c. From the athletes' perspective, they might only see their coach at World Cups. In several instances there is no or very little day to day training interaction with the coach. In some cases, coaches' email plans to athletes, however this is not considered a best practice if your goal is to prepare athletes capable of performing at the highest levels internationally. In comparison, coaches for Britain and New Zealand have over 260 direct contact days a year with the athletes they coach. According to several of the coaches interviewed the fact that Canada has so little coaching contact days is one of the major downfalls in the preparation of our athletes.
- d. Canada has lost several top coaches to other countries where the coaching conditions are much better. Several interviewees indicated they did not feel there were enough quality coaches in Canada at the present moment.

- e. There are not enough opportunities for regional centre and club coaches to grow and improve via national projects and mentoring programs.
- f. National Coaches, personal coaches and pro-teams (where appropriate) are not partnering with each other to create and deliver the ideal training and competition plans for athletes

There were many more specific incidences and frustrations mentioned during the interviews. All of them are symptoms of the fact that there is not a coaching structure or plan in place that clearly articulates the expectations, roles and responsibilities and associated costs of every technical leadership position within the CCA.

2. Training, Development and Competition Issues

Training conditions and competitive opportunities vary greatly across the country and from athlete to athlete. Where it is working well, is when the coach has daily contact with the athletes and is able to drive the training accordingly. There are “pockets” of this happening and several respondents were satisfied with the quality of their day to day training environment. Unfortunately this is not the case with the majority.

Interestingly, in interviewing several athletes that were competing in the 80’s and 90’s, their experience in the sport was quite different from the current situation. At that time the athletes felt very well supported by the CCA and felt strongly that the partnerships and sharing of responsibility with the pro teams was positive and effective. The general consensus was there was a “National Team Program” in place that included training camps and yearly competition plans that were supported by the CCA, the athletes and the coaches.

As the sport has evolved with more disciplines and events added to the Olympic program, the CCA has not been able to adequately provide the programs and services required to operate a world class training and competitive environment for all disciplines. Everything has been watered down in an effort to give everyone a “little something”. The result is that athletes are not being optimally prepared to perform well at the highest levels internationally causing frustration among athletes and coaches as they see the rest of the world taking off. Many of the current athletes feel they have been left on their own to fend for themselves.

- a. Perhaps the single largest issue in this area is the fact that there are not any fully developed and financially supported National Team programs for any discipline. Currently the CCA runs National Team “projects”, which are for the most part, one-off activities that are supported often without consideration of a well prepared individualized YTP. Frequently an athlete and coach will not know if a particular event is being support until the last minute.

The CCA, in its current financial reality, does not have the capacity to support full National Team programs for every discipline. Tough questions need to be asked and decisions made around how to deal with this issue. Do you support all a little bit or do you target fewer and fully support? This will be a critical piece to address with the new technical leadership and as CCA develops the strategic plan.

- b. The long term athlete development (LTAD) plan needs to be completed and implemented. The bulk of the work was done 18 months ago and has been sitting in limbo ever since. This is another case in point reinforcing the belief that CCA does not follow through on initiatives.

Once the implementation process begins, it will take care of several issues. For example, what roles the NSO, PSO, regional training centres and clubs should play in athlete development and talent ID. This will ultimately lead to the seamless progression of an athlete through the system.

- c. Currently there are two National Training Centres identified, one in Bromont, Quebec and one in Victoria, BC. Generally there was no clarity around the role and purpose of these centres. They have been under resourced and do not have a clear mandate on how they are to deal with National Team athletes and personal coaches. Their potential to deliver world class training, coaching, sport science/medicine, testing and monitoring has not been maximized.

There are also 3 regional centres (Calgary, Hamilton, and Dieppe) which receive minimal funding and support from CCA. Generally athletes and coaches working in this environment are happy with the centre's ability to provide day to day programming and coaching.

- d. For track athletes, the fact that Canada has no indoor velodromes that are up to competition standard for training seriously hampers their ability to train in the country. It is also interesting to note that several Olympic medals have been won by athletes on the track despite this. The question should be asked: "How many more possibilities could open up for athletes on the track if there were good indoor facilities to train in?" Currently the track athletes are forced to train in other venues such as the USA and Australia, often at their own cost.
- e. With respect to equipment, several athletes noted that it was often difficult to get access to national team equipment such as SRM's. It was unclear how and who had access to the national team equipment. There were also several comments around being under-resourced with tires, inner tubes etc. while at competitions.

- f. Much more can be done in the area of sport science, medicine and technology. There is no nationally coordinated testing and monitoring programs that provide feedback to the coaches and athletes. Additionally coaches do not feel they have been able to determine their own IST. Funding of IST's has been an issue and in an effort to maximize the resources available, CCA assigned Pacific Sport to lead the IST for cycling. This presented problems for those coaches who had already developed relationships with key individuals they wanted to work with on-site in their area.
- g. It was mentioned by the majority of interviewees that Canada is falling behind because it does not have a full time training base in Europe (for all disciplines) where much of the best cycling takes place. With a base in Europe, athletes and coaches can train and compete for longer periods of time in the same environment as the best in the world. Other countries operating full time programs in Europe are New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Many felt Canada will not be truly competitive until this happens.
- h. In terms of competitions, there are not enough high caliber events in Canada and North America. Athletes must travel to Europe to get high caliber racing experience. Many suggested the CCA apply for more UCI races to be hosted in Canada to help alleviate this problem.
- i. Due to limited funds, athletes are often not able to compete at the ideal number of competitions they need to improve.

As with the coaching issues, there were many more specific incidences and frustrations mentioned during the interviews however, those identified above are a good sampling of the types of things we heard.

3. Selection Issues

One of the greatest areas of contention among those interviewed and completing the survey was around the national team selection criteria. There were several questions about the appropriateness of an elected High Performance Committee having final authority on athlete selection. It was generally felt that the technical leaders should take on the role of determining selection criteria and be given the authority to have the final say.

4. Partnerships and Communication

For the most part those involved at the PSO and regional training centre level felt that the relationship with the NSO was weak and at times even hostile. Many felt they did not feel listened to or respected for their knowledge. Maximizing partnerships at all levels (clubs, PSO's regional centres, pro-teams, personal coaches etc.) will be one of

CCA's main challenges but it is also the area that will give the greatest return on investment when all stakeholders are working together to achieve a common vision.

CONSIDERATIONS

Before embarking on the development of the strategic plan and acting upon the recommendations outlined below, explore the following as they will assist the organization in determining what direction to go in and help in the decision making process.

1. Conduct an "environmental scan" of the current training circumstances of your athletes which would include the following:
 - a. Where your top athletes are currently training, with who (i.e.: pro teams, clubs, personal coaches) and in what discipline(s)
 - b. Which clubs/programs are producing up and coming athletes with National Team potential
 - c. Identification and utilization of the best cycling venues in Canada, including for which disciplines and specific assets (i.e.: Excellent mountain bike trails, good road access, rehab facilities on site etc.)
 - d. Current capacity vs future capacity of training venues

Consider the results of this scan and the implications to assist in making decisions around specific athlete development programs.

2. Review the licensing/registering of athletes and other participants. How could this be structured differently to maximize potential revenue to all parties concerned (i.e.: CCA, PSO's? Currently this is driven by the provinces and not the national body, which is the opposite of how most other countries do it.
3. Consider the global competitiveness of all disciplines and look for opportunities that Canada can take advantage of. Specifically, several interviewees indicated that women's cycling still lacks depth internationally and Canada may be able to capitalize on this.
4. Look into the feasibility, from a cost and logistics point of view, of operating a full time European base for multiple disciplines. Investigate the feasibility of using the UCI Training Centre in Switzerland on a more consistent basis.
5. Consider new and innovative ways to generate more revenue for the high performance programs. Common suggestions from interviewees included changing the licensing/registering of participants to provide more revenue to the CCA (similar to the soccer model) and sponsors paying higher amounts for naming rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While there was common agreement on the nature of the issues and challenges the organization faces, there was not as much concurrence around what the solutions should be. In some cases, people came forth with exact opposite solutions.

For example, some respondents would say that identifying one national team training centre where all national team athletes must train was the solution, others would say that the training centre concept would not work given Canada's geography and therefore must have training hubs in all the major urban regions of Canada. Another suggestion was to break the disciplines into "sprint events" and "endurance events" and set up training groups across the disciplines accordingly. Others thought that all athletes should start with Road and then specialize after they had built a base.

Obviously, there will not be only one "right" solution to any of the challenges the CCA faces. The important thing is to ensure that the new technical leadership understands the global reality of high performance cycling and what it takes to get there. These individuals, led by a Chief Technical Officer or High Performance Director, will then plan and implement the organization's high performance programs instituting the solutions they believe will be the most effective in developing a system capable of producing world class athletes.

Following are recommendations we believe CCA needs to act on in order to create a new, more effective high performance strategy and structure. The first and most pressing recommendation must happen before anything else can be done. The remaining recommendations are for this individual to lead and direct.

1. Hire a Chief Technical Officer (CTO)

Technical leadership is the single most pressing issue facing CCA today. The development of a world class high performance system for cycling will begin with identifying and hiring someone that has the expertise and skills required to lead the organization. This person must be given the authority, responsibility and accountability to do the job well. We are suggesting a CTO instead of a High Performance Director because we believe it better reflects the scope of this position. For example, we would also see a Director of Domestic Programs report to the CTO.

In scouting the best individual to fill this role, the CCA should look for the following qualities:

- Outstanding leadership skills – a team builder that is able to bring together all key stakeholders to work towards achieving common objectives
- Exceptional planning and implementation capabilities

- Olympic and international experience with a history of success – someone who not only understands what it takes to be the best in the world but, more importantly, how to get there.

- 2. **Identify and hire discipline specific head coaches** (this may have to be on a prioritized basis according to targeted disciplines, available funds and strategic initiatives). It is crucial that all coaches have the authority, responsibility and accountability within the scope of the position to do the job well. Together, with the CTO they would design and implement all high performance/national team programs. Clear job descriptions and performance reviews for all coaches and technical staff need to be established.

- 3. **Give the professional technical leadership (the CTO, National Head Coaches) the responsibility and authority to design and deliver all national team programs.** This includes determining selection criteria for all national teams and national team activities. Giving responsibility for this to an elected volunteer high performance committee is not a best practice and undermines the authority of the technical staff. If there continues to be a high performance committee, they should bring specific expertise and experience to the table and should act in an advisory capacity only.

- 4. **Design and deliver discipline specific training and competition programs.** These programs will have to be developed on a prioritized basis according to targeted disciplines, LTAD principals, available funds and strategic initiatives. It is imperative that fully integrated training and competitive programs are created and that the CCA move away from supporting on a project by project basis.

- 5. **Review the current method of national team selection and re-structure so the technical experts have decision making authority.** The High Performance Committee as it currently exists does not have the confidence of the athletes and coaches that they can make the best selection decisions. This area should be led by the CTO with input from the technical experts, including all the discipline specific national team coaches. The CCA should also clarify the mandate of the High Performance Committee and insure the individuals on it have the appropriate level of expertise.

- 6. **Establish strong partnerships with key stakeholders.** There are many individuals and groups that are part of the development of a cycling athlete. Each needs to play a specific, identified role in order to provide the optimum training and competitive environment for all athletes as they move through the system. Key partners will likely include clubs, PSO's, regional training centres, personal coaches and pro-teams.

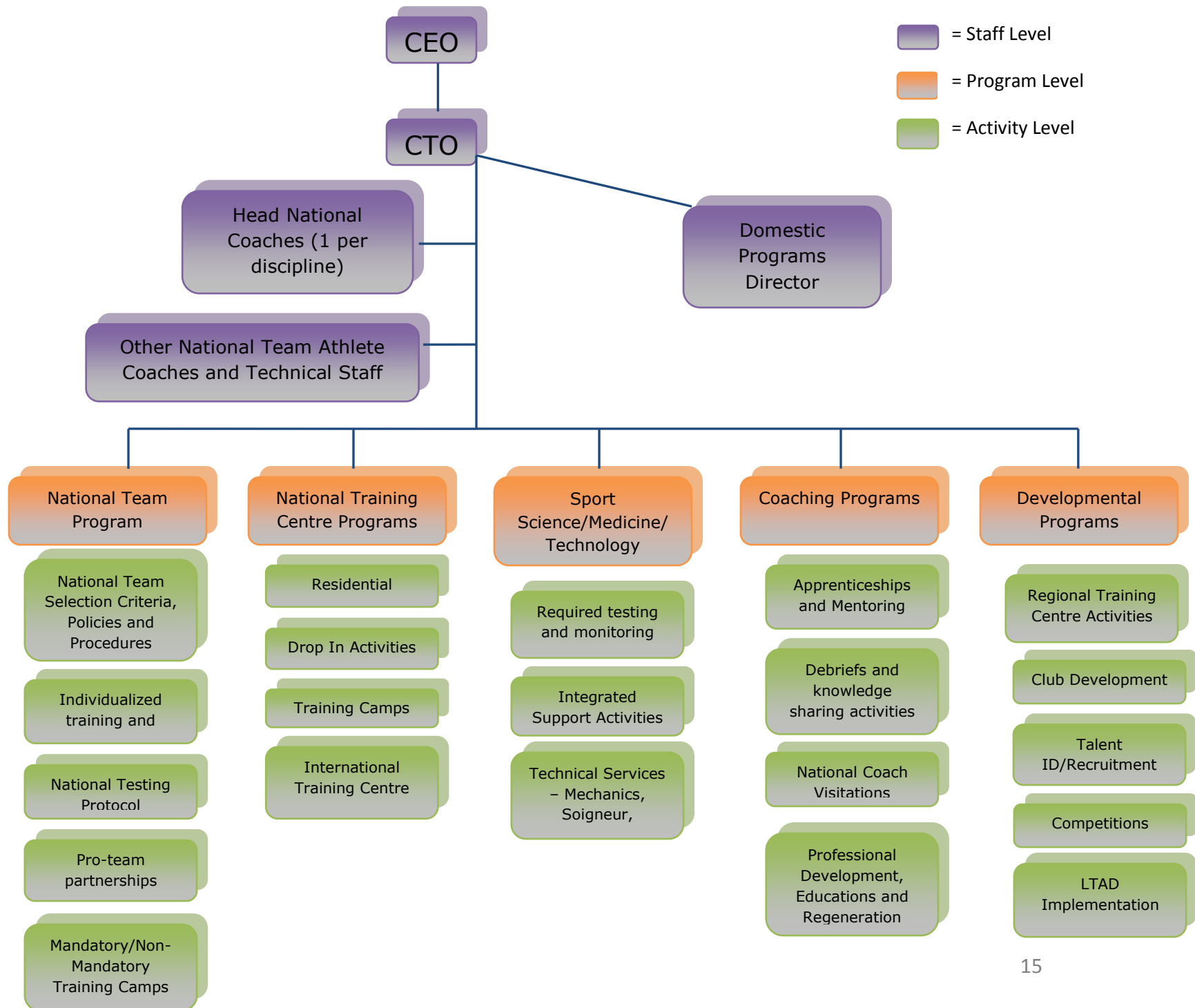
- 7. **Pro-actively advocate and lobby for an indoor velodrome(s) to be built in Canada.** If Cycling is ever to achieve status as a leading cycling nation and maximize the number of participants in the sport, an indoor velodrome will be essential. Assisting partners, such as PSO's, regional centres and clubs in the lobbying effort to build a velodrome can only be a win-win for all concerned.

8. Develop an organizational structure which outlines programs, activities and partnerships

The diagram below is a suggestion for the structure of the high performance program for Cycling.

(See next page)

Possible High Performance/National Team Structure and Programs



Explanation of High Performance Organizational Chart

- I. The Chief Technical Officer (CTO) would report to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and would be responsible for the planning and implementation of all the High Performance/National Team Programs and activities through the National Head Coaches of the various disciplines. We have chosen the lead technical position to be a Chief Technical Officer as opposed to a High Performance Director because the scope of the job as we have identified it, is much larger than it would be as a High Performance Director.
- II. All National Head Coaches in the programs would report to the CTO – one head coach for each discipline. The specifics of their job descriptions would include the design and delivery of National Team Programs, National Training Centre Programs, Sport Science/Medicine/Technology, Coaching and Developmental programs.
- III. The various high performance programs are listed and have a direct link to the CTO through the various National Team Assistant/Event Coaches and the National Head Coaches. In the diagram above, the orange indicates the program level. Those identified above are simply suggestions for the types of programs that would need to be in place. It is not meant to be limited or exclusive to these only.

The green boxes are the activities that could take place within each identified program. Again, these are suggestions and are not meant to be limited or exclusive to these only.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In putting in place new leadership and improving the structure and delivery of high performance programming, having a set of principles will help in the decision making process. Listed below are some suggested "Guiding Principles" to refer to as you move forward:

1. Keep it simple. Ask yourself, "How will this help connect more athletes to higher levels of performance"? If you can't clearly see how it will then don't do it.
2. Maintain open and constant communication. This communication takes place both formally and informally, on a small and large scale¹.
3. Isolate the problem not the person: the no-blame culture. When something goes wrong the focus must be put on resolving the problem in a systemic sense, rather than blaming the person¹.
4. Don't compromise your standards in an effort to keep everyone happy. While creating an environment that is reasonable and equitable ensure the quality of training and competition is kept at a world-class level.
5. Become coach driven, athlete centered.
6. Be realistic about what can be achieved. Setting high, but realistic goals and keeping everyone apprised of progress against those goals is a key factor in driving the change process forward¹.
7. Make decisions and learn from the results. Seeing the opportunity, being decisive, and then learning from the results of one's actions is central to continual improvement¹
8. Looks for economy of scale that will leverage you're funding and maximize athlete programs.

¹ Performance at the Limit, Business lessons from Formula 1, by Mark Jenkins, Kan Pasternak, Richard West

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Key Success Factors identified at the beginning of the report act as the foundation that will need to be built as the CCA moves towards reaching its high performance goals. The stronger they are the more successful you can expect to be. The factors identified are:

1. Put in place strong leadership
2. Develop and a strategic plan
3. Engage in effective and open communication
4. Build trust
5. Develop an accountability framework

The recommendations made were based upon the interviews and all the issues that were identified through that process. Based on this we believe these are the critical actions that need to take place as soon as possible for the organization to move forward.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hire a Chief Technical Officer (CTO).
2. Identify and hire discipline specific head coaches. (taking into consideration the targeting of specific disciplines and prioritizing the budget accordingly)
3. Give the professional technical leadership (the CTO, National Head Coaches) the responsibility and authority to design and deliver all national team programs.
4. Design and deliver discipline specific training and competition programs. (taking into consideration the targeting of specific disciplines and prioritizing the budget accordingly)
5. Review the current method of national team selection and re-structure so the technical experts have decision making authority.
6. Establish strong partnerships with key stakeholders.
7. Pro-actively advocate and lobby for an indoor velodromes to be built in Canada.
8. Develop an organizational structure which outlines programs, activities and partnerships.

Note: Details of recommendations can be found on pages 12 – 16.

CONCLUSION

Canadian Cycling Association (CCA) took the initiative of requesting a high performance review of its programs and structure as it stands today, with a view to making it more effective and efficient for tomorrow.

The purpose of this review has been to critically evaluate and provide future direction for CCA's high performance structure and programs. It has been an interesting experience to have the opportunity to listening to the concerns of the members, and the key stakeholders in the organization. With this in mind, the CCA has the opportunity to change in a positive way by focusing on resolving the issues at hand.

Continual change is necessary in order to keep pace with the growth of the sport and the international competitiveness. However, one of the important lessons is that change in organizations has to take place with realistic constraints; otherwise the development process may fall apart. Setting high, but realistic goals and keeping everyone apprised of progress against those goals is a key factor in driving the change process forward¹.

We believe with the implementation of a “new” technical structure, programming and leadership the CCA has an opportunity to work with and partner with all the key stakeholders which will lead to higher levels of international performance. Better communication with all levels of the sport, will eventually re-build trust back to the organization.

As one interviewee said it “Do it Right or Not at All”, let's do it!

¹ Performance at the Limit, Business lessons from Formula 1, by Mark Jenkins, Kan Pasternak, Richard West