

Sport Law & Strategy Group

**National Training Centre and Facilities Strategy
Report for Rowing Canada Aviron**

Executive Summary

April 4, 2018

Submitted by:
Sport Law & Strategy Group

Objective

Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA) is committed to achieving its vision as a world leader in international rowing and as the consistent, leading medal winner for the Canadian Olympic/Paralympic Team. Its High Performance (HP) Program vision described the latter part of this commitment as the, “unequivocal quest for repeated multi-podium and Gold medal performances.” In order to achieve the vision of continued podium success, RCA identified the need for fundamental infrastructure that fostered growth in its high-performance programs and that provided a world-class daily training environment (DTE) for its elite athletes. The primary physical infrastructure that supported an optimal DTE was the National Training Centre(s). As such, the objective of this report was to review and assess studies of RCA’s existing National Training Centre (NTC) facilities, establish fact-based and stakeholder supported objectives for future NTC facilities, and develop a NTC strategy to support the RCA’s long term high performance vision.

Background

In August 2017, RCA asked its National Team athletes to re-locate to a single training centre from its current model of two training centres. This was a short-term decision made by the RCA High Performance Leadership Team (HP Director and Head Coaches), who desired to keep a critical mass of athletes in a competitive environment and on the water in the lead-up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. RCA further aimed to complete an environmental scan to inform the location of the team for the 2019 and 2020 seasons, as well as determine a longer term NTC Strategy for the following 10 -15 years. This *Strategy Review* would seek insights from athletes, coaches, HP staff, key stakeholders and performance partners to ensure the optimal plan was established to achieve the long-term vision of Canadian rowing multi-podium success. Given the importance and significance of this scan, RCA would engage an independent third-party organization to carry out consultation, subsequent analysis and facilitate a more rigorous decision-making process. RCA advised its members of the intended Strategy Review in November 2017.

In early December, 2017, RCA contacted the Sport Law & Strategy Group (SLSG) to request a proposal for a NTC and Facilities Strategy Review. After several communications a proposal was submitted, reviewed by RCA, and accepted. The proposal outlined a scope of work with key areas of focus and a timeline by which NTC Strategy recommendations would be delivered. RCA would review this Strategy Report and the recommendations therein, consider their implications, and then render long term decisions as it related to NTC facilities that support RCA’s high performance vision.

Review Teams

Sport Law & Strategy Group

The Sport Law & Strategy Group (SLSG) has supported hundreds of National Sport Organizations (NSO), Provincial Sport Organizations (PSO), Multi-Sport Organizations (MSO) and local sport organizations for the past 25 years. Through its work with these organizations SLSG has built an extensive database of high performance sport knowledge, research tools and frameworks, risk management materials, communication plans and community-building strategies that would contribute to RCA’s requirements and the achievement of its vision.

Working Group

The Working Group provided key feedback and supported the coordination of activities within the Strategy Review process. Members included RCA CEO Terry Dillon, RCA High Performance Director and three-time Olympian Iain Brambell (Bronze medalist 2008), RCA Board Member and Athlete Director Peter McClelland (World Championship medalist), two-time Olympian Emma Robinson (Silver medalist 1996, Bronze medalist 2000), three-time Olympian Andréanne Morin (Silver Medalist 2012), and SLSG lead consultant Jason Robinson. Although the Working Group was not responsible for making specific recommendations or decisions related to the NTC and Facilities Strategy Report, its contributions to the process were invaluable.

Working Group meetings were held on the following dates: January 12, January 23, February 6, February 26, March 8, and March 26, 2018. Working Group minutes were shared with the RCA Board of Directors and further updates were provided to the RCA Board via the Working Group Chair Peter McClelland.

Methodology

Through SLSG's research of the RCA HP program, it became evident that there are different opinions regarding key requirements and potential NTC strategies. The approach to identify and analyze this divergence of opinion within the community was therefore critical. SLSG developed a concise methodology for completing this Strategy Review that adhered to the defined outcomes provided by RCA. The approach remained non-biased and impartial to past RCA decisions. SLSG objectively reviewed the data collected and based its recommendations on its proven methodology for supporting Canadian sport organizations.

Criteria Identification

The methodology for identifying a NTC evidence base (criteria) was to initially identify a comprehensive list of criteria via a widespread consultation approach, and then refine that list of criteria through additional targeted stakeholder consultation.

NTC criteria was first identified in the research phase, as several NTC 'site assessment' documents had been created in the past by RCA and they included criteria that had emerged from past consultations. Nineteen individuals were also interviewed and asked to identify criteria that they felt were critical to an optimal NTC facility strategy. These individuals, as well as others who contributed at a later date, were identified by RCA as well as recommended by their fellow interviewees. The initial 19 interviewees included a variety of RCA staff (3), alumni (3), performance partners (3), international experts (5), and community members (5) where RCA's current NTCs reside (note that seven of the individuals not categorized as alumni were also RCA alumni). From the research and the interviews, a set of NTC *base criteria* emerged. This base criteria was further vetted by the Working Group to ensure that no critical criteria was absent from the list. The criterion was slightly revised and applied to a survey format. The preliminary stakeholder survey allowed SLSG to identify themes and emerging criteria from a wide stakeholder collective.

SLSG conducted several athlete focus group sessions with its senior carded and NTC invited athletes (Next Generation (NextGen) and Para Integration Camp attendees) to rank groupings of criteria that had been repeatedly emphasized in the initial 19 interviews (as well as subsequent interviews) and that had emerged in the analysis of survey responses. As well, these criteria were ones that athletes were most suited to speak to, based on their athletic experience. Additional stakeholders (see *internal stakeholders* below) were also asked to rank specific criteria. SLSG asked current senior athletes to rank DTE and Athlete Well Being criteria, NextGen (U23) and Para athletes to rank Athlete Well Being criteria, and HP leadership staff and senior coaches to rank DTE, Athlete Well

Being and Coach Well Being criteria. These rankings, in combination with all 205 preliminary survey responses, served to identify the *key criteria* that would help to shape the recommended NTC strategy.

In total SLSG conducted 45 interviews with key rowing stakeholders. The majority of interviews took place over the phone; however, some interviews were conducted via web technology and several took place in person. In addition to the 45 interviews, SLSG received three unsolicited phone calls from individuals by phone who wished to contribute their thoughts to the NTC strategy. A feedback email (rcafeedback@rowingcanada.org) was also established and an additional five individuals shared letters or thoughts regarding the NTC strategy via this medium.

Two surveys were conducted. The purpose of survey #1 (preliminary stakeholder survey) was to assess how RCA’s various key stakeholders valued certain criteria that is related to an optimal NTC and facilities strategy and to further determine if there were any missing criteria. SLSG developed standard stakeholder questions based on feedback from the initial 19 interviews as well as the Working Group. The survey consisted of 15 open-ended questions and they reflected the base criteria identified. The intent was to utilize the results in a qualitative manner, to create a better understanding of the criteria and to inform the development of future metrics.

Survey #1 - Survey Completion	Total # Survey Issued	# Completed	%
Internal Stakeholders			
RCA High Performance Leadership Team & Senior Coaches	8	7	88%
National Team Athletes: senior carded and NTC invited athletes	67	39	58%
Interface Stakeholders			
RCA Board & CEO	8	8	100%
RCA HP Coaches & Support Staff	19	14	74%
Performance Partners	16	14	88%
External Stakeholders			
National Team alumni	164	59	36%
Key Rowing Community Stakeholders	65	52	80%
Provincial: Advisory Council, Staff & Head Coaches	19	12	63%

The purpose of survey #2 (internal stakeholder survey) was to address several topics that were related to potential NTC strategic options, as well as to assist in the prioritization of key criteria. SLSG developed standard stakeholder questions based on feedback from the stakeholder consultations which included interviews, athlete sessions, survey #1 themes and results, and internal stakeholder criteria rankings. The survey consisted of four multiple choice and one ranking question. The intent was to utilize the results in a more quantitative manner, to further inform the recommendations made by SLSG as it related to specific NTC strategic options.

Survey #2 - Survey Completion	Total # Survey Issued	# Completed	%
Internal Stakeholders			
RCA High Performance Leadership Team & Senior Coaches	8	6	75%
National Team Athletes: senior carded and NTC invited athletes	67	42	63%

Stakeholder Prioritization

As information and data was derived from various stakeholder groups, SLSG gave careful consideration to the opinions among them, such as the interests and circumstances of each group and their impact on the HP program. As the high performance program is driven by a small collective (HP Leadership Team) and externally influenced by other groups in various ways, the primary objective had to be considered in the context of determining the impact of those various groups. As such, SLSG and the Working Group co-developed the categorization of stakeholders into three categories:

Internal Stakeholders

- Those groups of people who operate entirely within the boundaries of the relevant program (fully immersed in the RCA HP daily training environment) and who are the key decision makers in the HP program. In the context of the Strategy Review and its primary outcome these were the HP leadership team, head coaches and senior coaches, and current Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program 'Carded' and NTC invited athletes.

Interface Stakeholders

- Those groups of people who function both internally and externally with the HP program (regularly immersed in the RCA HP daily training environment), and/or who have a direct strategic or financial impact on the HP program. In the context of the Strategy Review and its primary outcome these were the RCA Board of Directors and CEO, contracted HP coaches and RCA support staff, and sport performance partners like Own The Podium, Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Committees, and the Canadian Institute of Sport (Ontario, Pacific). As well, these included an Integrated Support Team (IST) that provides medical, sport science and therapeutic support to the high performance program.

External Stakeholders

- Those groups of people who provide input to the HP program, who compete for its resources, or who have a special interest in how the HP program functions (not regularly immersed in the RCA HP daily training environment). In the context of the Strategy Review and its primary outcome these were RCA members, provincial associations, clubs, universities, community partners, facility partners, other sports, international experts, and former RCA staff, directors or athletes.

Although each category of stakeholder was not weighted by a specific number, its impact on the applicable criteria and corresponding recommendations were considered in priority sequence, with the strongest consideration given to common themes and data that were derived from the *internal stakeholder groups*. This did not imply that interface stakeholders or external stakeholders failed to influence the applicable criteria or recommendations; interface stakeholder groups were assigned secondary priority, and external stakeholders were assigned third priority. Depending on the degree of common themes (that arose through the consultation phase) and the data (that was revealed through surveys and standardized questioning), interface and external stakeholder opinion could potentially impact how criteria was utilized or how recommendations were made. For example, if there were overwhelming data or themes that were derived from external stakeholder engagement, which were in conflict with internal or interface stakeholders, this information could be taken into account when making recommendations. Such a degree of influence was dependent on its importance to, and impact upon, the achievement of the primary outcome, as well as its general feasibility.

This methodology underlies how SLSG identified key criteria and how NTC recommendations were influenced by the three stakeholder categories. The graphic on the next page outlines the overall process by which SLSG reached its recommendations for a NTC Strategy.

DATA COLLECTION: UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

RESEARCH & CONSULTATION



RCA Database & Independent Experts



Interviews



Surveys



Athlete Sessions

BASE CRITERIA EMERGED

STAKEHOLDER INPUT PRIORITIZED
INTERNAL
INTERFACE
EXTERNAL



KEY CRITERIA

STAKEHOLDER INPUT PRIORITIZED
INTERNAL
INTERFACE
EXTERNAL



Body of water 2000m+ buoyed



Year-round access to water at NTC(s)



Body of water accommodates many



Athlete & coach living conditions



Athlete access to medical et. al.



Priority usage of the water



Athlete support system



Priority/exclusive dryland usage



Priority/shared boathouse usage



Access to family amenities

INFORMED BY:

- BEST PRACTICES
- STRATEGIC OPTIONS
- CONSIDERATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS ARE DEVELOPED FOR RCA NATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE & FACILITIES STRATEGY

Key Criteria & Metrics

The results from survey #1 and the themes extrapolated from the stakeholder interviews combined to identify a set of key criteria, with an emphasis on a quality daily training environment (foremost on the water) and several aspects of athlete well being.

Note that these key criteria had not yet been prioritized among each other and therefore were listed in the same manner as presented in the preliminary survey.

Key Criteria

- Body of water with a minimum 2000m buoyed rowing course
- Body of water sufficient to accommodate multiple athletes and team training
- Year-round access to the water at the facility(ies)
- Priority usage of the water (with consideration to share at various times)
- Priority - shared usage of the boathouse
- Priority - exclusive usage of the dryland/auxiliary facilities (if not at the boathouse)
- Athlete access to medical, nutritional and therapeutic support personnel
- Athlete living conditions (affordable accommodation, safety, transit, area in general)
- Athlete support system (i.e. meal programs, financial support)
- Coach living conditions (affordable accommodation, safety, transit, area in general)
- Coach access to family amenities (schools, community centres, hospital, jobs for family members)

Through the research of previously identified criteria (past RCA document research) and through stakeholder consultation (athlete sessions, interviews, survey comments) a set of *metrics* was identified for the key criteria. The metrics would be measurable aspects or general considerations related to the criteria that help RCA to clearly define (score) whether a specific NTC is able to effectively meet that criteria. They would be measured by indicators such as distance, time, costs (dollars), size, dimensions, frequency, etc. Standardized index data was considered for various metrics, including water quality guidelines (Health Canada), cost of living index (Numbeo), and World Rowing Federation (FISA) course standards. This set of metrics was reviewed by the Working Group, who provided additional modifications. The key criteria and metrics identified were captured within a *NTC Criteria Scorecard*. The purpose of the scorecard would be to utilize the key criteria in the assessment of potential site locations for RCA NTCs. It was built to analyze the criteria both objectively and subjectively, because there are some criteria that are difficult to measure in a fully objective manner.

Survey #2 served to prioritize the key criteria among each other, as well address specific strategic options related to full-time/part-time NTC attendance, single vs. multiple NTC models, and year-round access to water at the NTCs.

The results in survey #2 identified that a majority of all internal stakeholders indicate a preference to be training at a single NTC in Canada, with an emphasis on utilizing a body of water in Canada that provides year round access. As well, full-time attendance at the NTC in Year 3 and Year 4 was the preferred approach by a majority of all internal stakeholders.

NTC Strategy Recommendations

The following are recommendations for RCA's National Training Centre strategy based on the in-depth analysis of the research, stakeholder consultation, evidence base and NTC considerations. They are based on the totality of the data and information contained within this report and the methodology applied to it. These recommendations are carefully considered and intended to assist RCA in maximizing the HP program vision of "the unequivocal quest for repeated multi-podium and Gold medal performances."

The intent of these recommendations is for the long term strategic planning for RCA's NTC facilities. They are intended for planning and implementation leading up to and immediately following the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. As these recommendations may require a 'shift' in RCA's current NTC approach, significant planning and engagement strategies would need to be coordinated by RCA over the next 16 months. Should RCA choose to implement these recommendations, it is recommended that a *NTC Project Team* be established to lead the organization forward in a positive and constructive manner. It is suggested that the project team include representation by RCA's CEO and HP Director, as well as a minimum of one Board member.

A summary of the recommendations is listed below:

1. **Establish a primary NTC in Canada that is considered to be the "home base" for RCA's High Performance Program, opening as early as October 2020:** In the lead-up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, select a primary NTC home base in Canada that scores highly on the NTC Criteria Scorecard tool which has been provided to RCA. The intent would be to begin the next quadrennial (October 2020) with a functional primary NTC in place.
2. **Develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) to determine potential sites for the primary NTC:** RCA develops a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) document that is distributed across Canada and allows for any 'site group' in Canada to submit its proposal to RCA as the potential site for the primary NTC. The RFP will highlight the NTC Criteria Scorecard and the value that will be placed upon a site's ability to meet the *key criteria* within the scorecard.
3. **In addition to the primary NTC, consider a secondary 'Regional Performance Centre', at one of RCA's existing NextGen Hubs:** This is a longer-term goal that would follow the establishment of the primary NTC. The *Regional Performance Centre* would be utilized on a seasonal basis for designated rowing programs and would be co-located at one of RCA's NextGen Hubs that are geographically opposite to RCA's primary NTC.
4. **Develop a transitional plan for athletes to relocate to the primary NTC once it is established, giving careful consideration to the needs of senior athletes and the support that can be provided by RCA:** RCA has a responsibility to support the transition of athletes impacted by NTC decisions and a transitional plan for 2020 would serve to outline and guide this support as well some key considerations.
5. **Decision Making Process:** SLSG has provided a decision-making framework for RCA's National Training Centre Strategy.

Conclusion

The primary objective for this project was to deliver recommendations for a National Training Centre Strategy, that would inform RCA's High Performance program's decision making in the lead-up to and post-2020. This Strategy Review would seek insights from athletes, coaches, HP staff, key stakeholders and performance partners to ensure that the optimal plan was established to achieve the long-term vision of Canadian rowing multi-podium success

We believe that we have addressed this objective through our methodology and through the establishment of a new tool (NTC Criteria Scorecard) and recommendations to assist RCA moving forward. The implementation of this tool and recommendations will provide RCA with a clear direction for its future NTC programming and planning.

Throughout the Strategy Review, all criteria were considered and none was ignored, and there is a rational justification and methodology for the prioritization or 'weight' given to various criteria and stakeholder feedback. Stakeholder consultation attempted to be balanced, with an objective analysis focused solely on the project outcomes.

The recommendations within this Strategy Review provide an opportunity for RCA leadership to build a new "home" for high performance rowing in Canada. This home will feature the key requirements, as identified by RCA stakeholders, to support its athletes in achieving repeated Olympic and Paralympic success. It will serve to elevate the DTE and compliment the critical role of coaching and leadership. Although a National Training Centre is only part of the equation in producing world class athletes, a true home for high performance rowing in Canada may contribute significantly towards RCA's goal to be a world-leading rowing nation.

Sport Law & Strategy Group
March 2018

APPENDIX A

Stakeholder Interview List

* All interviewees below agreed to be listed by name

**Additional individuals declined to be interviewed or did not reply to email request

Name	Stakeholder Group
Adam Parfitt	HP Leadership Team
Al Morrow	RCA HP Support Staff
Andrew Matheson	International Expert
Andy Holmwood	National Sport Organization
Brenda Taylor	Key Community Stakeholder
Carsten Hassing	International Expert
Catherine Gosselin-Després	Performance Partner
Chris Marshall	Provincial Representative
Dave Calder	Provincial Representative
Dave Thompson	HP Leadership Team
Dick Tonks	HP Leadership Team
Donna Atkinson	Key Community Stakeholder
Doug Hamilton	Key Community Stakeholder
Gianni Postiglione	International Expert
Graham Burton	National Sport Organization
Iain Brambell	HP Leadership Team
Ian Gordon	RCA Board
Jacques Landry	National Sport Organization
Jennifer Walinga	RCA Board
John Atkinson	National Sport Organization
John Keogh	International Expert
John Wetzstein	HP Leadership Team
Jordon Clarke	RCA HP Support Staff
Kim Van Bruggen	National Sport Organization
Kurt Innes	Performance Partner
Mario Woldt	International Expert
Mark Hahto	Performance Partner
Marnie McBean	Alumni
Martin Goulet	National Sport Organization
Matt Draper	HP Leadership Team
Matt Imes	International Expert
Michelle Darvill	RCA HP Support Staff
Mike Murphy	Key Community Stakeholder
Murray McCullough	Performance Partner
Peter Cookson	Key Community Stakeholder
Peter Eriksson	Performance Partner
Peter McClelland	RCA Board
Phil Monkton	Key Community Stakeholder
Rick Crooker	Key Community Stakeholder
Roger Jackson	Alumni
Silken Laumann	Alumni
Terry Dillon	RCA CEO
Terry Paul	RCA HP Support Staff
Tommy Wharton	Performance Partner
Tricia Smith	Performance Partner
Volker Nolte	Key Community Stakeholder