



Squash Canada 2021-22 Annual Report

Creating Impact and Excitement in a Year of Challenges

President's Remarks

We had a very productive and encouraging year as we continued to adapt and learn to live with Covid. Across the country at varying degrees, we saw a successful return to play, making headway on our courts at the grassroots and high-performance levels, and everything in between.

None of this would have been possible without the impassioned commitment of our provincial, territorial, and national bodies in continuing to strengthen our partnerships. Working as one, we began to move squash beyond pre-Covid levels.

Coaching made enormous strides forward and we increased the number of certified coaches at all levels, right across the country, from the Yukon and Northwest Territories and all the way from the Pacific to the Atlantic. That took a lot of hard work, dedication, and determination and we applaud those who worked so hard to produce such stellar results.

Officiating moved forward as well, particularly at the club level certification. It was very encouraging to see our senior officials provide further training and assessments to up and coming officials at our major tournaments. We had several officials retire during covid, so officiating worked hard to identify candidates who could be moved up the ladder to replace those who retired.

Safe sport continues to be a challenge for national sport organizations, but we are in compliance with government mandates. We have several staff, as well as our volunteer screeners, who oversee our Safe Sport program. We are close to engaging a Safe Sport software company to assist with ensuring the Safe Sport program continues to grow and provides greater protection to those in the squash community.

A good number of clinics for players, coaches, and officials were held by our Female Engagement program. It was impressive to receive a large number of funding applications from across the country for some very innovative programs - this bodes well for growing squash amongst women.

A new direction in revenue generation commenced as we returned to play, with Squash Canada taking on a bigger role in event operations. A huge learning curve for all of us! The glass court logged a lot of kilometers in a very short span of time:

- Yorkdale Mall
- White Oaks
- Bow Valley Square
- Cedar Hill
- And, a major milestone in the glass court's young life, it was featured front and centre outdoors at Vancouver's waterfront Jack Poole Plaza.

A monumental effort was made by staff over the year in helping to achieve our Strategic Plan objectives. In addition, they sourced locations, sponsors, donors, volunteers, and permits for our events! A huge shout out to our friends at McWil Canada, as well as the juniors at Sunshine Squash who donated funds. We would like to make special mention of Oxford Properties' contribution to squash in Canada, which has been invaluable, not only in providing the financial means to make these events happen but their unlimited encouragement and enthusiasm in helping to put on these events!

And of course, our high-performance athletes who with their passion and dedication, inspire so many of us. It has been a rough road over the past few years due to Covid with so many events cancelled, but our athletes kept up their training and never gave in to the many obstacles that kept appearing. We are very proud of our athletes and what they have accomplished.

Thank you all, for your vision and determination to grow squash through a very difficult time. I am excited to work on our many projects this coming year, and know that as we work as a team, this coming year will be even more successful.

Sandra Thompson
President
Squash Canada

Introduction

A second COVID impacted year presented no shortage of challenges, vaccination hopes, variants, twists, re-scheduling, going virtual/technological and inevitable pandemic fatigue. But it also demonstrated the resiliency and dedication of the Canadian squash community, and those who administer, organize and deliver squash at every level.

With safety measures in place, we saw people come back to the game, the club and the friendships with such joy, undaunted even.

Squash Canada became nimble, more responsive and creative. With stakeholder input, bold directions were forged. New funds were sourced and invested in the sport, a new illuminated cube traveled the country to shine a light on squash and its magnificent players when it needed

a kickstart, coach leaders were trained, inclusivity, diversity and safety were at the forefront of all that we do, and squash sporting heroes were honoured. This report represents a summary of highlights and activity in a most unprecedented and exciting year.

Governing in a Challenging Environment

Managing Challenging Global Issues

- Ongoing and ever-evolving pandemic, and its impact on restricted travel, cancellations, re-schedulings, and safety measures.
- The impact of the war in Ukraine, including sport participation sanctions against Russia and Belarus, removal of World Junior Championships from St. Petersburg.
- Dealing with discrimination at the international levels, resulting in the last-minute cancellation of the 2021 Men's World Team Championships scheduled for Malaysia, when that country refused to issue travel visas to the team from Israel over long held views against Israel and its citizens.

With Good Governance

- A 2021-24 Strategic Plan was developed and approved after considerable stakeholder engagement, 2021-22 saw much activity in year 1 of delivery.
- A Diversity & Inclusion Task Force led the development of a parallel 2021-24 IDEA (Inclusivity Diversity Equity Accessibility) to bring meaning and life to action steps on how our sport can become more inclusive and open.
- Full suite of governance policies, ever evolving COVID-19 Vaccination & Masking Policy.
- 12 Squash Town Halls held to continue stakeholder engagement and relevancy.
- \$25,000 funding secured from Canadian Olympic Committee to undertake a governance review project, which includes opportunity for PTs to benefit.

Achieving Best-Ever Financial Performance

- Almost tripled revenues over the previous year, to \$1.7M.
- In a Covid impacted year with many new initiatives, achieved an unprecedented \$280,000 surplus in 2021-22.
- Net assets increased to \$953,000.

Securing New and Added Human Resources

- Board vacancies in 2021 were quickly filled with capable candidates; enhanced diversity (5 of 8 female members, under-represented groups identification).
- PTs and Nominating Committee helped bring three exceptional candidates forward for Board service beginning in 2022.
- Added Samantha Cornet and Tammy Lyle-Gravlev to staff complements, and 2 excellent summer students.
- Over 60 volunteers on 10 active committees providing important input and productivity.

Plotting Return to Squash and Membership

- Witnessed a return to squash in the past year, all PTs and clubs actively monitoring and communicating public health authority restrictions and safety measures.
- Membership as at April 1, 2021 still very much impacted, down 40% over pre-pandemic levels.
- Some good news stories re membership, a few PTs experienced increases, a few clubs saw re-vitalized returns from the 'brink' with membership resolve and rescue.
- 50% dues dispensation by SqCan.
- Bounce Back campaign developed, visual tools shared.
- Work still lay ahead.

Partnering for Success

- Unprecedented sponsorship – more than 50 sponsors and over \$550,000 generated in the last 12 months!
- Donor support for major events – over \$40,000 received.
- Profitable events – 2021 Oxford Properties Canadian Junior & Senior Championships. 2021 Canadian Junior Open including with the addition of the glass court, return of the Canadian Open with the Oxford Properties Canadian Open at Bow Valley Square.

Showcasing our Stories

Shining a Spotlight -- Glass Court Purchase & Deployment

- A state of the art all glass showcourt was purchased, Power Court naming rights generated \$150,000.
- Toronto 2015 Pan Am Games Legacy Court covered \$89K, Sport Canada \$56K in fiscal 21-22, \$25K AMJ logistics sponsorship to help with shipping.
- Deployed with great fanfare and exposure in Toronto, Niagara on the Lake, Calgary, Victoria, Vancouver.
- Leveraged in many ways:
 - Athlete development – opportunity to play on a court encountered in international play.
 - Partnership success – not achievable without a glass court in high visibility locations
 - Promotion – CBC GEM coverage only possible with glass court, spectator interest, media coverage, millions of impressions in print, TV and digital media.
 - Partnership with host PTs who leveraged opportunity/time with the glass court for outreach and corporate activities/activations.

Promoting and Communicating

- Promo toolkit developed with more than 50 visual assets.
- Photo library of available images for community use.
- 12 monthly enewsletters published to the community.
- Over 75 news releases.

- Over 40 PT Communiques.
- Increased digital media reach in last 12 months:
 - 3,894 Facebook likes
 - 4,545 Twitter followers
 - 2,613 Instagram follows
 - 37 LinkedIn followers
 - 1,000+ images added to Flickr photo albums
- Embarked on a major TV commercial project - scheduled for release beginning in August.

Building our Sport through Events

Advocating for and Participating in Major Games

- Being part of major, multi-sport Games is a critical sport development and athlete pathway element. The last year has seen:
 - Acceptance of Squash Canada's application for squash inclusion in 2027 Canada Winter Games.
 - Revamped, consultative 2023 Canada Winter Games Technical Package issued, enhanced schedule.
 - Squash confirmation in 2023 Pan Am Games, increasing our financial support to the Federacion Panamericana de Squash in order to help cover costs offloaded on the federation that were necessary to negotiate inclusion.
 - Liaised with and submitted a proposal for squash's inclusion in Hamilton 2030 Bid Committee's possible bid for the 2030 Commonwealth Games.
 - An inaugural Junior Pan Am Games launched in 2021, squash included with Canadian Squash Team participation.
 - Received double the athlete quota (4) for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.
 - Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Summer Games to consider adding 1 to 2 more sports by 2023 -

Bringing New Excitement to Squash Canada Events

Oxford Properties Canadian Junior & Senior Championships

- A return to squash splash with an integrated Championships as held at Yorkdale Mall and Urban Squash Toronto. Some highlights:
 - junior event capped at 16 highest ranked players per category, resulted in extremely competitive matches in every round.
 - Glass court coming out party yielded impressive impact:
 - 4.8M Twitter impressions (Source: Smithcom)
 - 3.5M media impressions (Source: Smithcom)
 - 250,000 foot traffic impressions (Source: Statista 2022)
 - Total broadcast viewership of 65,000 (Sources: CBC GEM, SQUASHTV, YouTube)

2021 Canadian Junior Open

- Enhanced by use of glass court and audio-visuals.
- Added first-ever PSA U23 Satellite event, very well received.
- Travel restrictions reduced international participation, COVID transmissions at play.
- 28,000+ views of the digital broadcast

2022 Canadian University & Colleges Championship

- Short notice announcement to help kickstart return to competition after another COVID-19 variant

2022 Oxford Properties Canadian Open

- First Canadian Open since the 1990's, a \$30K Women's event, \$12K Men's.
- Garnered Sport Canada international hosting support.
- Another highly visible Oxford Properties office/mall location.
- Sold out tickets and VIP tables.
- CBC GEM broadcast with 33.3K viewership.
- 3 of 4 semis finalists women were Canadian; Hollie Naughton and David Baillargeon were finalists.
- 126 different media story pushouts.
- Squash Alberta activations – used the court for its Open event, junior training, and club sessions.

2022 Canadian Junior Championships

- 197 athletes, 114 in a Gold draw and 83 in a first ever Silver-draw, cross country participation.
- Glass court well received, great reviews on well run event at Cedar Hill Squash Club as supported by St. Michael's College.

2022 Canadian Senior Championships

- Close to 400 players, using 5 Vancouver clubs and an iconic Jack Poole Plaza location for the glass court.
- Great support and leveraging of promotional opportunity by Squash BC – 2 days of court use for school outreach, club use, corporate challenges, onsite promotion with inflatable court throughout.
- Rave reviews, real buzz of excitement.
- 21.3K Viewership.

Delivering Impact with a Breadth of Programs

Safe Sport

- Met Government of Canada's mandatory requirement of safe sport training for over 400 individuals deemed under the authority of Squash Canada.

- Regrettably, had to deal with a number of cases where status needed to be revoked due to non-compliance, triggered a few ‘retirements’.

Coaching

- New Community Stream largely developed, in final stages of approval.
- New Coaching in Squash elearning module developed to provide greater access to training.
- Extraordinary Canada Winter Games provincial coach activities conducted to help coaches achieve required certification.
- Coach Developer training – numerous opportunities held both virtually and in-person to train new Learning Facilitators and Coach Evaluators (this is an ongoing initiative).
- 10 Squash Canada Coach PD Webinars conducted for important PD points towards maintenance of certification.
- Established a National Coaching Course calendar via website and Club Locker.
- Squash Canada support to create a regional, Atlantic Coach role.

Officiating

- 450+ new officials certified in the last 12 months, thanks largely to new official certification requirement for national championship participants.
- Canada Winter Games 2023 – secured \$2500 funding to provide referee development at National Championships for the Atlantic PTs (1 referee each from PEI & NB to date with more development in Fall 2022)

Grassroots

- Resource Hub created and populated with over 50 grassroots related best practices and resources.
- To accelerate Squash Canada progress, agreement negotiated with England Squash to obtain rights to receive and use 8 grassroots level programs and materials, roll out to begin later in 2022-23.
- Prepared a \$340,000 application to Sport Canada’s new Community Sport for All program, calling for PT and Club level IDEA applications in order to give best opportunity to gain new financial support that can flow to the grassroots level.

High Performance/Athlete Development

- Canadian Women continued to shine on the PSA World Tour, with Hollie Naughton, Danielle Letourneau and Nicole Bunyan all climbing to personal best world rankings, including two in the Top 20 – a first ever for Canadian women.
- Regrettably, the 2021 Men’s World Team Championships were cancelled at the last minute, depriving our top performers the opportunity to compete against other nations’ best; a short notice ‘make up’ event for Canadian players was held at the Cricket Club in lieu.
- 6-member team in inaugural Junior Pan Am Games, the Canadian Women taking home a bronze medal.
- National Junior Squad program announced, 20 athletes named to team.

- A 23 member NextGen Squad also announced and supported, U23 PSA Satellite events and championship categories delivered to emphasize post junior pathway.
- 6 member Canadian Team, at 2022 Pan Am Senior Championships, 3 medals. Hannah Blatt won a bronze medal in each of her singles, mixed doubles and women's team events.
- National skill and physical testing protocol developed, as were instructional tools to administer and benchmarks.
- Work still remains in formalizing regional training centres; activity occurred in Quebec, Ontario and Alberta.

Female Engagement

- Encouraged grassroots female engagement projects by investing \$7,000 in 10 initiatives held across the country, that engaged over 100 girls and women.
- Held a virtual doubles certification clinic for women.
- Delivered a Provincial Coaching course for women.
- Piloted a girl's clinic at Urban Squash Toronto.
- Coordinated a female coach mentorship.
- Showcased 10 Inspiring Women in squash in 2021.
- Hired a female high performance athlete to transitioning into a leadership and inspirational role.

Adaptive

- Information shared on Jumpstart funding availability.
- Sessions held with Newfoundland Inclusivity Program to share information with PTs interested in delivering programs for persons with an intellectual disability – planned for 3 PTs with some pandemic related limitations.

Ratings/Rankings

- All provincial/territorial associations now using Club Locker for competitions, all results now uploading to results database.
- Ratings and rankings have therefore 'normalized', hold greater validity.
- Ratings greatly assisted tiering of players in national championship companion/B/C events
- Planned Junior points-based system delayed due to pandemic impact on competitions, being tested.

Canadian Squash Hall of Fame

- Commission formed to re-activate, call for nominations
- 5 individuals selected for induction
- Professional and heartfelt induction ceremonies held on glass court at Canadian Senior Championships, broadcast live on CBC GEM

Anti-Doping

- Something we don't talk about very often, but much education work and coordination to implement our anti-doping program and meet national/international requirements – another 'clean' year for our athletes!

Thank You

The fuel that churns out all of the above is – PEOPLE! We thank our PT partners, and the many front line service partners, coaches, volunteers, event hosts and staff!! TOGETHER we have accomplished much, TOGETHER we are Squash Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

Squash Canada