

## 2019 Report of AM President to AGM

This is my last report to the Members of Athletics Manitoba as President. It has been a privilege to serve in this role for the past 5 years. But, it is time for a change. I am elected to the Board of Athletics Canada for a one-year term, and will serve as Past President at AM for the next 2 years, per our by-laws.

I believe I am leaving AM in good shape (that is, AM is in good shape; not me). Our finances are in a similar position to when I became President, with a healthy reserve and an annual financial statement that is close to balanced. We continue to develop excellent athletes, and to enjoy terrific support from our clubs and our officials. Our membership numbers are solid. We have consistently received positive feedback from Sport Manitoba. During my years as President (not claiming credit here), Canada has won a record number of medals in major international Athletics competitions and so far this season, the Canadian athletes have been performing exceptionally well.

The Manitoba Runners Association, which was in a difficult position for volunteers and finances only 3 years ago, is now doing extremely well and growing, even testing its capacity. Our PSO has excellent staff in the office, led by Alanna, Noelle and Shirley, and supported by some enthusiastic summer students, some of whom have continued to contribute after the summer season. We have added some new skill sets among our board members. The other 3 members of the executive, Kathy, Jessica and Brian, have all agreed to continue on the executive, and Omena Babalola has agreed to join the executive, despite her hectic work and track schedules. Kathy has agreed to be a candidate for President, and can be a wonderful leader for AM. She already has her share of connections at Athletics Canada and will build more if she is elected president. Alanna is a strong presence at the Branch Council table among our colleagues across Canada.

We have begun a strategic planning process that will be completed under the new executive. We have sought input from all stakeholders, and had a brainstorming session of board members with Carolyn Trono facilitating the discussion. Although we have identified many strengths in AM, we have noted numerous threats, weaknesses and opportunities, and will continue to work on these. Some of the changes our Members can anticipate are: term limits for presidents, which most branches have; we will establish more standing committees and ad hoc committees to increase our board engagement; we will search for ways to build relationships in the corporate community to solidify our financial future through diversification; we will take steps to build the brand of AM and to be better known and understood in the sport and general community. These are but a few of the priorities that Members can expect to see identified in the strategic planning process.

At the recent Athletics Canada AGM, which Alanna, Kathy and I all attended, there were several topics addressed, two of which might be of particular interest to Members. There has been a well-publicized investigation into a sexual harassment/sexual assault complaint at the Ottawa Lions Club, involving respondents Andy McInnis (coach) and Ken Porter (board chair). The report of the investigation revealed major violations of Respect in Sport violations but also blamed board members at the Lions for failing to take more initiative to stop the abuse earlier and to conduct a more rigorous investigation once that was undertaken. The report names not only McInnis and Porter but several board members and athletes. Athletics Canada and the Commissioners Office are working to refine policies on balancing the public's right to know with protection of privacy, especially the privacy of non-perpetrators. There was a vigorous discussion, including an interview with the chief commissioner, and various opinions expressed. One aspect of the investigation that was revealed and discussed was that AC has already

spent \$183,000 on this case. For a smaller branch such as Manitoba, such a cost would be more than we could manage. For that reason, the board's position is that while minor infractions can be handled within our Branch, major infractions should be referred to the Commissioner's office.

A second topic was the recent IAAF decision concerning the competitive status of female athletes with higher than normal testosterone levels, as for example with Caster Semenya of South Africa. There were strongly held views on both sides of this controversy, including some passionate opinions in support of the decision. On the other side, Canada has generally allowed athletes who self-identify as female to compete on the female side of our events, respecting the human rights of athletes like Semenya. Based on the direction from the federal Department of Sport, it is likely that we will continue with that current practice in our domestic competitions, but we will be bound to follow the ultimate IAAF decision (Semenya has appealed) in international competitions.

Thank you to all of our Members, our staff, our board and our sport partners for your support during my tenure as AM president. It has been a wonderful and memorable experience and I have learned a lot and still have a lot to learn. That process will continue as I move on to the AC board.

Grant Mitchell  
June 18, 2019