

Formed in 2007, the Ontario Aquatic Sport Council began in the form of an Infrastructure Steering Committee – Doug Ferguson, Brian Connors, Dan Thompson, Anne Bell, Linda Cuthbert and Pat Murray. This group transitioned the governance to a formal Aquatic Sport Council. The partnership between each of the five aquatic sports and with Parks and Recreation Ontario undertook the work funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, beginning in 2008.

Activities and Outcomes during the Funding Period

Transition from the Infrastructure Steering Committee in October 2009 to the Aquatic Sport Council (ASC), with Terms of Reference, Vision, Mandate and Strategic Plan and membership from five aquatic sports and Parks and Recreation Ontario. The Committee engaged aquatic sport leaders in meaningful conversations in the process of developing the Vision and Mission. Engagement of stakeholders in the development of a strategic plan was undertaken in the second year of the project.

Website launched and found at www.aquaticsportontario.ca

A consultant was hired (Clem Pelot) to write and design the website offerings around facility technical requirements.

Engagement of leadership and provision of advice for the Greater Toronto 2015 Pan Am Bid. Resulting from early communication and support to the BID Committee, the ASC developed a role in providing advice on the facilities requirements for the Pan Am Games in Toronto in 2015, and is a key player in facilitating the development of a legacy plan for post 2015. This will provide a significant opportunity to impact the access to and value of the facilities to Aquatic Sport in the long term and as part of the Master Plan for Aquatic Sport Facilities. A member of the ASC is now a member of Pan Am Games Legacy Committee.

Creation of a Aquatic Sport-Friendly Facility Business Case Template, developed in consultation with facility owners and operators. Components include templates and guidelines for:

- Needs and Feasibility Studies
- Benefits of Aquatic Sports
- Operating Cost Analysis
- Economic Impacts

Presentation in 2009 at the PRO Aquatic Conference to launch the ASC Website and to consult with stakeholders on program and costing facilities. A second engagement with discussion of the tools and knowledge gained is planned for the 2010 Conference.

Presentation to provincial sporting organizations to encourage use of the website and to engage stakeholders in the improvement of the pool inventory for the purpose of developing a Master Plan for Aquatic Sport Facilities.

Program and costing templates for five facility models have been developed to provide ideas and options to expand pool management. These will be tested with stakeholders prior to a launch on the website.

Products

From this work the ASC was able to post the following documents on the ASC website at www.aquaticsportontario.ca :

- An interactive tool to find a pool used for sport training and competition anywhere in Ontario.
- An interactive tool that describes facility specifications and requirements for aquatic sport events at both the national and regional level, with links to FINA publications.
- Basic pool designs for both regional and national event and training facilities.
- A template and guidelines for the development of a business case for a sport friendly aquatic facility. This tool will be further refined by the ASC as users have an opportunity to review, apply and expand the application of the tool. The template applies to both regional and national pool types.
- A data base of sport friendly facilities across Ontario.
- Links for other aquatic sport organizations for athletes, clubs and facility owners and operators.
- An understanding of the training needs of athletes and how they can vary from the design required for competition. This has helped us to understand that not every pool has to be built and/or outfitted for competition.
- The development of a Benefits of Aquatic Sport Case.

The quality of the products and the future value of the initiative were greatly enhanced through the engagement of aquatic sport stakeholders. These included:

- Facility designers and builders, sporting organizations and facility operators for the purpose of gathering and agreeing on the technical specifications and design for sport friendly facilities
- Sport organizations in the gathering of information about both existing and prospective aquatic sport facilities.
- Sport organizations, coaches, funders and academia in the development of a vision and strategy for the Aquatic Sport Council (ASC) and aquatic sport facilities in Ontario.
- Facility owners and operators in the development of program models, operational costing templates and in the development of a business case for sport friendly aquatic facilities.
- Aquatic sport organizations in the formation of the ASC.

Lessons learned:

The first is that we did not appropriately communicate our limitations to stakeholders at the beginning of the project. There was an immediate demand for advocacy in communities where swimming pools were under consideration. Understanding the issues allowed the ASC to better understand the challenges, but without tools and stakeholder consensus it was not possible to support the efforts of local sporting organizations to the extent that they expected at the time. The Business Case recently developed will be key to meeting their needs.

The second lesson related to the challenge of finding, understanding and classifying existing pools in use for sport training and events. This work will be ongoing, but has been a barrier in the completion of a Master Plan for Aquatic Sport Facilities in Ontario.

Finally, the misunderstandings and poorly structured relationships between facility operators and aquatic sport clubs surfaced as one of the greatest barriers to sport training. These groups require education, tools and support to work together.
