



2024 St. Catharines Rowing Club AGM – President’s report for 2023 calendar year

2023 was the first full year of rebuilding. After 1,150 days of restrictions, the World Health Organization declared on May 4, 2023 that SARS-CoV-2 “is no longer a public health emergency of international concern”. That was a green light to get back to normal and the Club, true to form, did just that, having really good success at Henley last August. We even tried some new things to help us more in the near future.

RCA just published its Annual Report. The SCRC was the largest club in the country in 2023 with 610 registered participants (this includes the students who rowed for their respective high schools in the spring and the Rowing League members). Congratulations and thank you to all of the people who rowed under the auspices of the club, especially those who competed wearing the cerise and blue.

We could not have successful crews without talented, dedicated coaches. Thank you for devoting your time and expertise to the club. We instituted a coaching support program in 2023 in recognition of your efforts to make the club’s crews consistently competitive.

I would ask the Members to peruse Club Captain Aaron Thompson’s report to get the full list of our coaches.

Running a club our size, successfully, requires money. The club membership fee covers much of the operating costs but more is needed to ensure we have the best boats for our crews and supports for our coaches. Vice President Fundraising Louise Hastings and her fundraising committee have done a great job this past year getting support from local businesses to sponsor the club, and raise donations through Tag Day (thank you Tracy Newman). New initiatives to raise funds were successfully launched in 2023: a 50/50 draw; tax-deductible donations through the National Sport Trust Fund; and renewing our agreement with Regatta Sport. For more details about the fundraising committee’s successes and plans for next year, please see Louise Hasting’s report.

Tracking the flow of the funds and keeping us in the black is a job ably handled by VP Finance Brian Fisher and our Co-Treasurers, Wendy Wiebe and Karl Bowley. They will be reporting in some detail on the club’s finances.

Tracking the athletes and coaches and reconciling their registrations with the membership fees and cross referencing all of that via RCA’s “Web Registration System” is VP Membership Brian Thorne’s almost year-round task which he handles with aplomb.

Rowing is fun. We try to have fun off the water too. VP Special Projects Kate Hingston makes events like the Boat Christening and the Captain’s Dinner enjoyable and memorable. Please see Kate’s report for more information.

We are not perfect. We can improve. We have director Dave Winslade and his communications committee (Brian Fisher, Dianne Wright, and Scott Anderson – club website) planning to increase our effectiveness in getting the word out through the web and social media. Thanks to Madeline Hingston for handling our social accounts until recently; we wish Madeline well in Alberta.

Which brings us back to what we are all about, rowing. VP Rowing Janet Lancaster and the Rowing Committee (Aaron Thompson and Brian Fisher) with the help of Erin Sharpe (Manager of Youth Programs) oversee the club's development and competitive programs. In 2023, under Janet's leadership, we also capitalized on RCA's *Community Sport for All Initiative* to bring people into the sport who may have previously faced barriers to participate. Please see Janet's report for the details.

Bringing additional skills and varied backgrounds to the board are directors Andrew Carr, Michele Fisher, Travis King, Stephanie Mowder and Marianne Romak. Keeping a record of all that the board does, and taking on the role of Safe Sport Lead, is our Board Secretary, Chris Blackwood.

I would like to thank all the directors and officers for their support these past 12 months.

We continue to work with our governing bodies, Row Ontario and Rowing Canada Aviron and when necessary, advocate for change in each association to ensure that the best interests of the athletes, the coaches and the club is at the forefront of their decisions. I will be representing the club at the RCA Semi-Annual Meeting in Quebec City January 28th and at the Special Meeting (virtual) of Row Ontario on January 31st.

Two directors who are leaving the board after many, many years of service to the club deserve special mention. Director Sam Baio is taking some time away from the board, but he will continue to help in whatever way he can, especially in fundraising. Sam's insights to build the awareness of the club in the community and his ability to think of new ways to get people engaged in our sport have been invaluable. His enthusiasm has been infectious. Thank you, Sam, for your support these many years. You will be missed at the table but we know you will not be far away.

Director and Past President Michelle Kerr has been a director on this board for twenty years. Michelle was president from 2013 to 2018 and the past president from 2019 until now. Michelle has always brought a reasoned passion for the sport to the board meetings. Her knowledge of how the board has handled challenging matters in the past has meant that she could be counted on to provide sage advice at meetings. Michelle is volunteering on the Organizing Committee of the World Championships. We know the OC will benefit from her involvement. Michelle has one more task as the Immediate Past President and that will be to chair the first meeting of the new board of directors when the 2024 officers are elected. Thank you, Michelle, for your many years of volunteering for the club!

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Derry

President,

St. Catharines Rowing Club