



# Minutes

## 2025 Ontario Equestrian Annual General Meeting

Monday June 23, 2025

6:00 pm Zoom

### 1. WELCOME - *Chair*

Hilary Parkes, Chair of Ontario Equestrian welcomed and thanked everyone for attending. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM.

### Land Acknowledgement – Hilary Gregory

The Ontario Equestrian office is located on the traditional lands of the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe peoples on the territory of the William's Treaties.

### 2. QUORUM CONFIRMED - *Corporate Secretary*

H. Gregory confirmed that quorum had been reached with 34 members present.

### 3. INTRODUCTION OF BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF - *Chair*

H. Parkes introduced the Board Members and thanked them for their outstanding contribution to the Board this past year – Breanna Young - Vice Chair, Andrew Woodley, Danielle Cardinal, Meghan Hewitt , Tim Arsenault, Claire Hicks and Danielle O'Bierne.

H. Parkes also introduced and thanked the OE staff for all of their work - Tracey McCague-McElrea, Executive Director; Scott Bates, Director of Finance and Administration; Brandon Hall, Director of Marketing and Communications; Charlayne Szafranski, Manager Coaching; Hilary Gregory, Manager, Sport; Helen Richardson, Manager, Community Development; Ruth Allum – Lead High Performance and Taylor Cornwell, Coordinator Membership and Administration and on contract Julia Lawrence working on special projects.



## 4. SPONSOR RECOGNITION -

*Director of Marketing and Communications*

B. Hall, Director of Marketing and Communications thanked our sponsors and partners for their continued support.

### **Sponsors**

- Acera Insurance
- Bell Canada
- King Animal Hospital
- Purina Canada - Equine
- Ride Every Stride
- McKee-Pownall Equine Services
- Ride Every Stride
- Struck Apparel
- Equine Register Canada
- Cranberry Creek Equine Veterinary Services

### **Partners**

- Government of Ontario - Ministry of Sport
- Coaches Association of Ontario
- Equestrian Canada
- Equine Guelph

## 5. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

**Motion** by T. Arsenault, seconded by C. Hicks to approve the agenda as presented.

33 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstained

**CARRIED**



## 6. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

**Motion** by C. Hicks, seconded by M. Hewitt to approve the Minutes from the 2024 AGM held on June 24, 2024.

**CARRIED**

## 7. BUSINESS ARISING

Nothing was reported.

## 8. CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT – *Hilary Parkes and Tracey McCague-McElrea*

### **Hilary Parkes**

Thank you all for attending and participating in our 2025 AGM. And thank you to Tracey and the OE team for managing these proceedings so professionally and capably, as you always do.

The AGM, in addition to the business and administrative matters, offers an opportunity for reflection and celebration of the important work that we do.

So let's take a minute to pause and reflect.

Recently, while watching a public television show, I learned that one of the earliest artifacts known to mankind is a very small statue of a horse. A beautiful little figurine no bigger than a deck of cards, exquisitely representing an equine. Wow.

Human beings have had a relationship with the horse for millennia, evolving from a primarily utilitarian partnership to one of sport, companionship, and even therapy.

Author Sharon Ralls Lemon wrote:

“The essential joy of being with horses is that it brings us in contact with the rare elements of grace, beauty, spirit, and freedom.”

We all share that passion – in all the various forms of the horse world – and that is why we are here.

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OE is committed to leading the advancement of equestrian sport across our province, creating opportunities and programs for riders of all ages and levels of athletic ability.

OE supports equestrians from the very beginning of their riding journey, with a pathway of programs to support learning, growth, and importantly, enjoyment along the way – at every level of participation. We support that continuum of learning, enhancing the experience and resources of our member.

From Rookie Rider, a school curriculum friendly program designed to introduce kids to the world of equestrian sport to the Learn to Ride Program, which provides structured progression for building riding skills and competencies to the GRIT program, a high-performance development opportunity supporting competitive athletes across multiple disciplines to OE's Young Professionals Program, launched this year, to provide support and development to emerging industry professionals.

One of OE's core values is COMMUNITY. As horse people, in whatever manner we participate, we are all members of a community, centred around a profound love of the horse – and the wonderful possibility these great creatures provide to us.

And COMMUNITY matters, because it creates a collective awareness of shared values, common purpose, social connections, and a support network. COMMUNITY is a thread that brings people together.

And that is why, earlier this year, OE launched the OE Stable Program. Stables are the heart of our community – where equestrians gather to care for, learn, train and enjoy being near horses.

I want to thank the OUTSTANDING OE staff, led by our tremendous Executive Director, Tracey McCague-McElrea.

Tracey – You are an extraordinary leader. You have a brilliant vision for OE, and you INSPIRE, MOTIVATE, and EMPOWER your team to deliver outstanding results.

The OE team is committed, passionate, persistent, creative, hardworking, and ALL-IN. And I will also add they are lots of FUN to spend time with.

The OE team serves our membership with dedication, unwavering determination, focus, and with a deep respect for the needs and goals of each individual member – each and every day.

The OE team is about EXCELLENCE.

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Whatever they do, it is through the lens of outstanding performance and strong outcomes for our members. They strive for the highest level of professionalism, quality and achievement in all aspects of equestrian sport development, delivery, and administration.

OE is about best practices, professionalism, and always seeking ways to raise the bar.

I have tremendous respect, admiration, and gratitude for the work, effort, and commitment of Tracey and the OE team. THANK YOU to all of you for everything that you do. I see it and I value it. Your work elevates equestrian sport in Ontario – and enhances our community experience – every day.

I am PROUD of each and every one of you.

Finally, OE is about LEADERSHIP.

And what is that?

It is about having a VISION for where we can take our sport in Ontario. It is about seeing possibilities and boldly taking action – always striving to be better. It is about showing initiative, advocating for our sport, and demonstrating EXCELLENCE (again!). It is about bringing members together to share their experiences, challenges, opportunities, and to explore pathways for collaboration and shared learnings.

At OE, we celebrate the privilege and opportunity to represent and serve our members with EXCELLENCE and LEADERSHIP.

It is a bittersweet moment for me as I end my 6-year term on the OE board and step down as CHAIR.

I wish the OE Board members all the very best as they serve and support this outstanding organization. Thank you for your commitment, guidance, wisdom, and dedication.

And to Tracey and all the OE staff, a million thank yous. I am deeply humbled to have served with you. It has been a tremendous honour and great privilege to walk beside you on this journey.



## **Tracey McCague-McElrea**

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On behalf of Ontario Equestrian's Board of Directors and staff we would like to thank you for your continued support. What a year we had in 2024. Membership for hit an all-time high of 24,839. We now work in collaboration with Ontario Eventing, Ontario Dressage and Ontario Hunter Jumper Association to process their memberships through the OE membership portal as well. This makes for a more seamless experience for our membership and we are pleased to partner with all three organizations.

Brandon continues to excel in the promotion of OE.

Of the 512 reviews we have received on Facebook 96% recommend the organization! And our followers increased by 2000+ in 2024.

Our Instagram is close to 17,000 followers which is an increase of 1,144.

We consistently have a fantastic open rate of 58% with our email communication compared to the industry average for NFP's of 29%.

Thank you for engaging with us and we will continue to keep you informed through all three channels.

2024 and 2025 have been our years of innovation!

1. We launched a health and dental plan with Acera for our members... and it was met with a great deal of enthusiasm. We are very pleased to do this for our members! 250 plus OE members now have access to health and dental benefits that previously did not.
2. The Hub – OE now has their own e-learning campus and Stable program home.
3. The Vault – OE training records are now being stored in the vault for NCCP programs and national education programs.
4. New website and minor rebrand – the team spent great care and a lot of time to rework the website to be more user friendly for the many diverse audiences it serves. An epic photoshoot took place at Glen Oro Farm. We would like to thank Leslie Salla and the entire team for hosting a fabulously chaotic day that resulted in the most amazing library of images.
5. Partnership with Equine Register Canada – identification, traceability and equine welfare.



6. Stable Program – the best \$100 you will ever spend!
7. Young Professionals Program – 92 applied. We selected 10. Just the beginning.

Coaching continued to be at the forefront in 2024.

We ran 24 instructor and coach training programs in 2024.

OE trained two cohorts (CCS and HP1) in 2024.

We trained 301 instructors and coaches in 2024.

We certified 48 instructors and coaches.

In August of 2022 we launched the C.H.A.R., the Coaching Handbook and Resource. At the end of 2022 there were 146 coaches in C.H.A.R. By the end of 2023 there were 334 active, in 2024 we had 543 and as of today there are 852 coaches engaged in the handbook and resource. Incredible! Another OE innovation.

Ontario Equestrian continues to lead and innovate in coaching in Canada. A few things we are working on:

### **Coach Mentorship Program**

OE identified a need and hired Master Coach Developer, Danielle Yaghdjian to develop a formal Provincial Coach Mentorship program.

OE was awarded Equestrian Canada National Education Fund to create a National Coach Mentorship Program. The program and resources will be available to all PTSOs at no additional fee. Currently being piloted in Ontario.

### **Competition Coach Specialist Cohort Pilot**

11 candidates working together in a virtual environment, with Master Coach Developers Ruth Allum (HP1 – Eventing) and Helen Richardson (CCS – Eventing) through training and mentoring to prepare for certification.

### **Competition Development HP1 Cohort**

OE took over the program from EC in March 2024. There are currently 12 candidates from various provinces working towards evaluation in the context along with 4 others completing only the training at this time. The HP1 Cohort is led by Master Coach Developer, Ruth Allum.

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## **Rookie Riders**

We ran 7 Rookie Riders Training sessions in 2024, training 41 instructors.

We submitted revisions to obtain endorsement from Phys Ed Canada to allow Rookie Riders to be delivered in all school boards across Canada.

And a very motivated Hilary Gregory has been working on adaptations for the Rookie Riders program:

- Revised Rookie Riders to include para-equestrian and social emotional learning.
- Added 3 accessibility modifications to every activity for levels of disabilities based on Para Grades.
- Added five new activities for each development stage (active start & fundamentals).
- Photo and video shot for adapted activities.
- Photos and videos produced to increase visibility and representation of diversity within equestrian sport.
- Worked with EC to develop a 45-minute asynchronous eLearning module for facilitators (teachers/community staff).

The **GRIT program** continued to evolve and thrive. We had 12 talented riders in the program in 2024 including 4 eventing, 2 dressage and 6 show jumping

The athletes attended mini camps, weekly strength and conditioning sessions, webinars on a diverse set of topics, developed Yearly Training Plans, were monitored in competition, they were coached and delivered social media campaigns, worked on their mental health and mental performance with a team of sport psychologists, and attended two 3-day training camps at Adena Springs North.

## **National Rankings**

Kyleigh Whitwell - 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1.2M Jr. Am.

Taylor Wood - 3<sup>rd</sup> - 1.3M and 1.4M Jr Am.

## **NAYC Participants**

Dressage

Sydney Bolt

Eventing

Saffron Klotz

Show Jumping

Taylor Wood

Ashlynn Crowley

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And finally, there are many people to thank...

I would like to thank the Board members for their ongoing guidance. They give their time and expertise, always with the best interest of the organization in mind. We are very fortunate to have such a strong group of individuals leading OE.

This year we will be saying good bye to two directors on the board who have been with us for the past three years. Danielle Cardinal and Meghan Hewitt started their term together at OE and have provided excellent insight into the equine side of the sport. They are young professionals with busy work and family lives and while we will be sad to see them go, we know they are only a phone call away if we need assistance! Thanks to both of you for your time at OE!

We are also regrettably going to be saying good bye to our Chair, Hilary Parkes, this year. Hilary has come to the end of her six-year tenure at OE. This incredible woman balances Chair of OE, a career as an Executive Coach, owner and rider of her beloved Thor, a very accomplished cellist, and mom of two very successful daughters. But I will leave my formal thanks to the end of the meeting.

The staff... to those of you who know me, you've heard me say for years that "it's all about the people." This mighty, small team of incredible individuals is truly one of the best I have ever had the privilege to work with. I feel incredibly fortunate to collaborate with such an outstanding group of professionals. They work hard every day. I put them through the paces and they push each other.

Brandon, Scott, Charlayne, Hilary, Helen, Ruth, Taylor, and Julia, you consistently amaze me with how you handle every challenge and opportunity that comes your way. Your unique perspectives, incredible work ethic, and unwavering support for one another is truly remarkable. You genuinely strive to provide our members with a brilliant experience and continue to innovate within the equestrian sport.

We are looking forward to supporting the equestrian community in Ontario with many exciting new projects in 2025. From the board and staff at OE...thank you for your enthusiastic support in the organizations, programs and innovations.



## **9. TREASURER'S REPORT** - *Peter Chiddy, Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee & Scott Bates, Director of Finance and Administration*

P. Chiddy indicated that the 2024 audit was performed by Bateman, Fitzpatrick and Graham CPA. He introduced Scott Bates to present the 2024 Audited Financial Statements.

### **2024 Audit**

- Audit completed by Bateman, Graham and Fitzpatrick CPA
- Clean audit opinion
- No control weaknesses identified

### **Statement of Operations**

- Membership increased by 1,775 to 24,839
- Increased program revenue and expenses
- Increase in base Ontario Government grant
- GICs capitalized on increased interest rates
- Cost optimizations to reduce office and general expenses
- New website launched

### **Excess of revenue over expenses (surplus)**

- 2024 surplus of \$115,000
- Surplus exceeded budget due to unanticipated membership revenue
- Fiscal 2025 budget targets break-even operations

### **Responsible spending of 2024 surplus**

#### **Three 2025 programs enhanced by the 2024 surplus**

- Stable Program development
- Young Professionals program development
- ESD Officials Training program development

### **Statement of Financial Position**

- Strong liquidity, maximizing GIC investment
- OE van replacement
- Lump sum mortgage repayment made with plan for full repayment by 2032



## **Net Assets**

- \$115,000 surplus added to Net Assets in 2025
- Net Assets balance \$514,000 at December 31, 2024
- Strong net asset and liquidity position
- Focus on fiscally responsible spending
- Updated strategic plan guiding financial decision making

**Motion** by T. Arsenault, seconded by B. Young to receive the 2024 Audited Financial Statements as presented.

## **CARRIED**

## **10. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS**

**Motion** by M. Hewitt, seconded by B. Young to appoint Bateman, Graham, Fitzpatrick CPA as the OE auditors for 2025.

## **CARRIED**

H. Parkes thanked P. Chiddy and S. Bates and the Audit and Finance Committee for their hard work and oversight of the OE finances.

## **11. NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT – Hilary Parkes**

Hilary Parkes acknowledged and thanked the Nominations Committee. This year's Nominations Committee was comprised of the following individuals:

- Hilary Parkes - Chair
- Breanna Young
- Danielle Cardinal
- Claire Hickes
- Scott Bates
- Tracey McCague-McElrea

A call for applications was issued on March 18, 2025 soliciting expressions of interest for the open positions. Applications were to be received by the Nominations Committee by April 18, 2025.

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Pursuant to Article 4.8 of the General By-Law dated June 12, 2023, on May 21, 2025 the Board approved the following individuals as valid nominations for election to the Board of Directors for a three-year term:

- Matt Crawford
- Sherri Whitworth-Denouden
- Meghan Hewitt
- Natasha Hope Morano
- Fiona O'Brien
- Laura Taylor

The list of candidates, their resumes and letters of interest were distributed to the membership with the AGM notice via email.

Voting took place online and closed yesterday June 23, 2025.

**Motion** by C. Hicks, seconded by T. Arsenault to close the elections for the 2025 Board of Directors.

## **CARRIED**

In a very tight race for the election of the Directors to the Board of Ontario Equestrian, the following individuals have each been elected each for a three-year term:

1. Matt Crawford
2. Sherri Whitworth-Denouden
3. Fiona O'Brien
4. And for a one-year term, Laura Taylor will be joining the board.

Congratulations and welcome. H. Parkes then asked each of the candidates to say a few words. Thank you to all of the candidates who demonstrated interest in OE. We had an outstanding group of individuals apply.

## **12. THANK YOU**

T. McCague-McElrea thanked Hilary Parkes for an exceptional six years on the board and for Chairing the Board this year.

“Thank you for your outstanding leadership over the past six years with OE. You’ve brought so much heart, humour, and integrity to the role. This is a rare and wonderful combination.



You led with steadiness and compassion, always fully present, always committed. Whether it was navigating complex decisions, **lifting others up**, or showing up fully engaged (and always looking fantastic in a gown!), you set the tone for what thoughtful, dedicated leadership looks like.

You took the role seriously, but never yourself and that balance of professionalism and good humour made you not just respected, but genuinely loved. You brought people together, gave your time generously, and made an impact that will last well beyond your term.

We are deeply grateful for everything you've contributed. Thank you for leading with heart, with grace, and with just the right amount of wit.

## 13. ADJOURNMENT

**Motion** by B. Young to adjourn the meeting at 6:44 p.m.