

OWN THE PODIUM | À NOUS LE PODIUM

2025 – 2026 Annual Report

A Message from the CEO



The past year has been one of resilience, perseverance, celebration and possibility for high-performance sport in Canada.

For much of the past quadrennial, Canada's sport system was challenged to do more with less. Athletes, coaches, practitioners, sport leaders and organizations across the country continued to adapt, innovate and find ways forward despite limited resources and an increasingly complex environment.

Through it all, the Canadian sport community demonstrated what it means to be a team.

That spirit was on full display at the Milano-Cortina 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Team Canada delivered a solid Olympic performance, capturing 21 medals (five gold, seven silver and nine bronze) while the Canadian Paralympic Team followed with a 15-medal performance (three gold, four silver and eight bronze).

Behind those results were inspiring and gritty performances: goals achieved, breakthrough moments, surprising victories, heartbreaking losses, setbacks and triumphs. From long track and short track speed skating, Olympic and Paralympic curling, to freestyle skiing, the next generation of talent emerging through Nordiq skiing and Para alpine, Canadians gave us countless reasons to be proud.

Each of Canada's medal-winning sports in Milano-Cortina received technical guidance and support from Own the Podium, along with financial support provided through our funding partners. These results reflect the commitment of athletes, coaches, sport organizations and Canada's sport and government partners to winning well. They also affirm the steady progress our high-performance system has made over the last four years.

The momentum extended well beyond the Winter Games. Canada's leading summer Olympic and Paralympic sports delivered strong multi-medal performances at the 2025 World Championships, with swimming and athletics among the standout examples across both Olympic and Paralympic competition. These performances demonstrate the depth of talent in Canada and the strength of the systems being built to support athletes from emerging talent through to the world's biggest stages.

Perhaps most importantly, this progress is taking place alongside a broader transformation in how we think about sport in Canada.

The voices of athletes are playing an increasingly important role in shaping that transformation. Own the Podium's Athlete Advisory Committee, working alongside the Canadian Olympic Committee and Canadian Paralympic Committee Athlete Commissions and AthletesCAN, is providing critical leadership at an important time for our sport system. Athletes are not simply participants in the system – they are essential partners in defining what a stronger, healthier and more effective system should look like.

The Final Report of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission has further challenged all of us to look critically at the system we have built and consider the system we want to create. Its recommendations have captured the attention of sport leaders and decision-makers across the country and have motivated many of us to think differently, act with greater urgency and continue the work of creating a safer, healthier and more inclusive sport environment.

At Own the Podium, we believe excellence and athlete well-being must go hand in hand.

Our unique role is to provide strong leadership, clear communication and support for a healthy culture of excellence, while helping ensure the physical and psychological safety of everyone involved in high-performance sport. Winning well means more than what happens on the podium. It means creating an environment in which athletes, coaches and support teams can pursue excellence while being respected, supported and safe.

The announcement of $755 million in new federal investment in Canada's sport system through the Spring Economic Update represents an important opportunity at this pivotal moment. This generational investment – the largest in Canada's sport system in 20 years – provides an opportunity to strengthen the pathway from playground to podium, support world-class athletes and create a stronger foundation for the future.

For Own the Podium, it also reinforces the importance of our role in helping Canada translate investment into performance.

Our Performance Sciences and Innovation team continues to connect sport science, research and innovation with the realities of high-performance sport. Our work is focused on three core areas: building a culture of excellence; advancing data science and performance analytics; and strengthening practitioner development and quality assurance. The goal is simple – to ensure coaches, athletes and support teams have access to the knowledge, expertise, resources and services they need to achieve their performance goals.

None of this work happens in isolation.

Our progress is built on collaboration with our dedicated partners at Sport Canada, Canadian Olympic Committee and Canadian Paralympic Committee.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of Milano-Cortina and the many outstanding performances of Canadian athletes over the past year, our attention now turns forward.

The road to Los Angeles 2028 is already well underway. There are gaps to close, opportunities to seize and new challenges to navigate. At the same time, we must begin building a bold and ambitious plan for the French Alps 2030 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

The next chapter will require the same qualities we have seen throughout this quadrennial: resilience, adaptability, collaboration and an unwavering commitment to excellence. But it will also require us to be ambitious about what Canadian sport can become. Sport is nation building at its finest and the opportunities are endless.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff at Own the Podium, I would like to thank and congratulate everyone across Canada's high-performance sport community. To our athletes and coaches, practitioners and support teams, national sport organizations, partners, volunteers and funding agencies – thank you for your dedication, your courage and your contributions to this never-ending pursuit of excellence.

We are also grateful to those who have served Own the Podium through our Board of Directors. We extend our sincere thanks to our outgoing directors – John Mills and Scott Hutcheson – for their leadership and commitment to the organization, and we welcome new directors – Loreley Chekay and Mohamed Bhamani – as they join the Board and contribute to our continued focus on creating a healthier, safer and more inclusive sport system.

The true power of Canadian sport is realized when we work together, support one another and share a common belief in what is possible.

The next chapter is ours to build, together.

Anne Merklinger
Chief Executive Officer

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Our Purpose

To support Olympic and Paralympic athletes in winning well.

Our Vision

For Canada to be leaders in Olympic and Paralympic sport.

Our Mission

Enhance the high-performance sport system by providing advice, delivering strategic priorities and providing funding recommendations that align with our funding partners' priorities.

OTP's Values

Own the Podium's strategic plan is guided by the organization's core values which include:

EXCELLENCE – Excellence is a habit. We strive for performance solutions every day within our team and with our partners to drive continuous improvement.

BOLD LEADERSHIP – Forging new paths takes courage. We challenge the status quo by encouraging innovation, supporting calculated risks and empowering the pursuit of excellence.

COLLABORATION – Working together is powerful. We work with our partners to achieve greater success by leveraging personal and collective strengths.

RESPECT – People and their perspectives matter. We show our teammates and partners that we care about the consequences of our actions and treat them with dignity by considering their ideas and opinions.

INTEGRITY – Integrity is the foundation of trust. We are committed to building mutual confidence and trust in all of our relationships through honesty, transparency and fairness.

ACCOUNTABILITY – Owning our actions is fundamental. We constantly meet our commitments and take responsibility for our behaviours and decisions.

DIVERSITY – Difference is valued. We believe in an inclusive culture that empowers all of us to connect, belong and grow.

Inspire Canadians through sport



Winning Well

Own the Podium is a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to support Olympic and Paralympic athletes in winning well. It is our goal to help all athletes get to the start line and know they have done everything possible to achieve their performance objectives in a culture of excellence that protects their psychological and physical health and safety. For OTP, participant well-being, both physical and psychological, is a pre-requisite to all athletes, coaches and support staff achieving their performance goals.

Our Strategic Priorities

Own the Podium's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan serves as the organization's road map in leading its purpose to support Olympic and Paralympic athletes in wining well. The plan is focused on four strategic priorities:

LEAD THE PURSUIT OF PODIUM PERFORMANCES

Enhance podium performances in targeted Olympic and Paralympic sports by providing technical guidance. This involves enhancing coaching, improving training and competition environments, delivering quality sport medicine and sport science services and backing NSO-led research programs to provide performance solutions.

STRENGTHEN THE HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPORT SYSTEM

Lead the development of a positive high-performance sport system that achieves podium performances. This involves enhancing coaching expertise, empowering technical leaders and fostering a healthy culture of excellence across Olympic and Paralympic sports and providing technical support to non-targeted sports. OTP leads by example and sets the standard in all organizational aspects.

PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPTIMAL RESOURCE ALLOCATION ALIGNED WITH FUNDING PARTNER PRIORITIES

Optimize resource allocation by providing funding recommendations based on NSO podium probabilities, athlete progress tracking, and identification of NextGen athletes on the podium pathway based on funding partner objectives.

ADVOCATE FOR AN INCREASE IN FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT

Our goal is to advocate for an increase in financial resources for high-performance sports by identifying efficiencies and gaps that hinder our ability to achieve more podium performances.

Milano Cortina 2026

Team Canada's Defining Moments

Canada's winter sport athletes delivered a collection of memorable performances, milestone moments and firsts on the Olympic and Paralympic stage in Italy. From historic podiums to career-defining achievements, Canadian athletes demonstrated the depth, resilience and sustained excellence of Canada's high-performance system. Team Canada had 206 athletes who contributed to winning 21 medals at the Olympic Games, and 50 athletes, including four guides, combining to win 15 medals for Team Canada at the Paralympic Games.



TEAM CANADA'S OLYMPIC HIGHLIGHTS:

In curling, Rachel Homan's rink (Tracy Fleury, Emma Miskew, Sarah Wilkes) captured women's bronze — Canada's first Olympic women's curling medal since 2014.

Brad Jacobs' rink (Ben Hebert, Marc Kennedy and Brett Gallant) won men's gold.

Marc Kennedy became Canada's most decorated Olympic curler.

In freestyle skiing, Mikaël Kingsbury closed his Olympic career with gold in dual moguls, becoming the most decorated freestyle skier in Olympic history.

Megan Oldham made history as the first Canadian woman to win two freestyle skiing medals at a single Games (gold in Big Air and bronze in Slopestyle).

Figure skating pair, Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier, earned ice dance bronze.

In long track speed skating, Ivanie Blondin, Valérie Maltais and Isabelle Weidemann successfully defended their Olympic team pursuit title, with Maltais also capturing her first individual Olympic medal with a bronze in the women's 3000m.

In short track speed skating, Kim Boutin claimed her sixth Olympic medal to join Canada's most decorated Winter Olympians, tying Charles Hamelin and Cindy Klassen for most career Olympic Winter Games medals.

Courtney Sarault led Team Canada with four medals.



Women's Hockey produced unforgettable moments, led by captain Marie-Philip Poulin, who surpassed Hayley Wickenheiser's Olympic scoring record with her 19th and 20th career goals.

Canada's men's and women's hockey teams both reached the gold-medal game and earned silver after heartbreaking overtime losses to the United States.



Tracking on the Road to LA 2028

+ Canada's performances in the first two years of the quadrennial have been very strong.
+ Preparations for LA 2028 are well underway with several of OTP's summer team having been on the ground for site visits on several occasions.

TEAM CANADA'S PARALYMPIC HIGHLIGHTS:

Canada's wheelchair mixed curling team continued an extraordinary Paralympic legacy, winning gold while going undefeated and extending Canada's unprecedented streak of medalling at every Paralympic tournament.

Canada's Para ice hockey athletes marked significant career milestones, including Greg Westlake's sixth Paralympic Games, Tyler McGregor's 200th game and Dominic Cozzolino's 200th career point.

Para-Nordic athletes continued to set the standard for excellence, highlighted by Natalie Wilkie's dominant Games winning gold in the women's individual standing Para biathlon and gold in the women's sprint pursuit standing.

Ina Forrest secured her fifth consecutive Paralympic medal in wheelchair curling.

Canada's Para ice hockey team earned a silver after falling to the United States.

Mark Arendz claimed silver in the men's individual standing Para biathlon and a bronze in the 10km interval start classic cross-country ski race, pushing his career medal count to 14.

Canada's Para alpine program also showcased its next generation, with Kalle Eriksson and guide Sierra Smith emerging as major new medal contenders with three medals in their Paralympic debut.

Brittany Hudak earned bronze in the women's standing 10km cross-country ski race, marking her fourth career Paralympic medal and third consecutive Games reaching the podium.



Performance Science and Innovation

Own the Podium is driven to connect sport science support, research, and innovation activity with the realities of high-performance sport so that coaches, athletes, and support teams have access to the resources and services they require to achieve their performance goals. The Performance Sciences and Innovation team is focused on the following core areas: culture of excellence; data sciences and performance analytics, and practitioner development and quality assurance.

Culture of Excellence

Own the Podium supports national sport organizations in building a healthy **Culture of Excellence** – one where people and performance are both prioritized, and where athletes, coaches, practitioners, and technical leaders feel valued and supported in the pursuit of their goals. At its core, our culture work helps ensure that people are not just seen as contributors to performance – but as central to it. By investing in culture, we're helping national sport organizations create environments where everyone can thrive, and where excellence is achieved the right way.

CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE HIGHLIGHTS:

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Released a report on the State of Culture in High Performance Sport in Canada in June 2025. Highlights include:

37

Published Paris 2024 Winning Well Research Report (June, 2025) involving 37 athletes Olympic (17) and Paralympic (20) athletes winning medals in Paris 2024.

8

Eight national sport organizations actively engaged in the culture of excellence project in 2025-2026 utilizing the CAAT.

- Since its roll-out in 2022, the Culture Assessment & Audit Survey (CAAT). has collected data from a total of 959 participants consisting of more than 75,000 individual survey data points and over 5,000 written comments.
- Data captured between August 2024 and June 2025 involved 100 athletes and 201 high- performance staff (coaches, IST members, support staff).
- A national aggregate score for 2025-2026 indicates a Culture of Quality in Canadian high performance sport, according to the Culture of Excellence Framework and Culture Index Matrix. There is an emergent focus on people and performance on a national level, with overall culture scores of 7.6 (athletes) and 6.9 (all other high performance roles).



Data Sciences and Performance Analytics

Own the Podium supports national alignment around athlete data – helping sports develop clear, responsible strategies for collecting and using data to improve performance and athlete development.

DATA SCIENCES AND PERFORMANCE ANALYTICS HIGHLIGHTS:

Completed podium potential dashboards for OTP targeted sports, informing investment and funding decisions across targeted and non-targeted sports.

Delivered Winter Games performance insights for OTP, COC, and CPC to support Games planning and post-Games analysis.

Strengthened the organization's data foundation by improving internal data management, governance, and operational workflows.

Practitioner Development and Quality Assurance

Own the Podium is committed to building stronger expert networks. Through communities like Sport Scientist Canada, we continue to bring sport scientists and practitioners together to share knowledge, explore new ideas, and support one another across disciplines.



PRACTITIONER DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE HIGHLIGHTS:

767

Sport Scientist Canada Membership Total.

224

New Members in 2025-2026.

151

New Professional Members in 2025-2026.

197

Total practitioners designated with the High-Performance Certification.

17

New practitioners designated with High-Performance Certification.

10

Practitioners accepted to the seventh Cohort for the Women in Sport Science (WiSS) program and completed the six-month program in March 2026.

21

New Affiliate Members in 2025-2026.

35

New Student Members in 2025-2026.

Research and Development

Own the Podium supports applied research and innovation project through its Innovation for Gold (i4G) program in partnership with NSOs, COPSIN and Canadian universities/colleges. These projects translate knowledge into cutting-edge processes, protocols and technology underpinning the pursuit of excellence and achieving podium results.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS:

9

New Innovation for Gold Projects (i4Gs) approved in 2025-2026.

- Summer: 44% (4/9), Winter: 56% (5/9).
- Olympic: 78% (7/9), Paralympic: 22% (2/9).

3

The top three themes of projects:

- Sport Technology and Manufacturing Engineering 67% (6/9).
- Biomechanics 33% (3/9).
- Sport Analytics & Data Sciences 33% (3/9).

Coach and Technical Leadership

Own the Podium is committed to supporting the professional development of technical leaders and high performance coaches in Canada. OTP delivers professional development opportunities customized for a coach or technical leader to first, grow themselves as leaders in sport, and secondly, enhance their technical capabilities to support athlete development and podium performances.



COACH AND TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS:

4

Canada Leads cohorts (26 participants) completed the program in 2025-26.

13

Mentorships were completed across 10 national sport organizations.

- Monthly virtual cohort sessions have run since November 2025 and continued to June 2026.

5

New Canada Leads cohorts launched at Kingsbridge in October 2025: 11 technical leaders, 18 coaches.

22

Professional development opportunities were completed across 20 national sport organizations.

- Held a national workshop on the Return to and Removal from Sport. Guidelines delivered in Calgary in April 2025 for 10 national team coaches and technical leaders, incorporating The Working Mind Sport workshop from the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

7

Coaches and technical leaders from lacrosse, football and speed skating, led by two OTP staff members, attended the Milan-Cortina Olympic Games Familiarization CTL Initiative.

6

Winter national team coaches took part in-person in the Canada Lead International Cohort (final session) in Italy in June 2025.