



EASTERN ONTARIO RUGBY UNION

EORU ANNUAL REPORT RUGBY ONTARIO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING April 29, 2018

Rugby in Eastern Ontario is developing nicely enough, though there is obvious room for improvement of course.

In following its now three-year old strategic review, in 2017 the EORU was successful in increasing its Board participation and recruiting more support and volunteer activity from the rugby community. We continue to follow a developed series of Key Areas of Responsibilities for the EORU, each with its own subset of plausible goals and achievable (and measurable) objectives.

As part of this review process, the EORU embarked on a Program Audit this past off-season, with an aim of determining just how effective our programs are and how, effectively our money is being spent. Big thanks to John Platts for making sense of our community's commentary. John's Discussion Paper is available on the EORU website, with the highlights including:

1. A need for more formal communications between the EORU and RO
2. Ensuring program equity is achieved with RO programming within Branches
3. Ensuring EORU clubs are paying fair dues in being a member in RO while playing Sr. games with Quebec clubs
4. Increasing Junior participation opportunities
5. Ensuring full program support from RO, as per all Branches

And, again, the EORU feels that each Branch should have direct representation at the RO Board level. Geographically-specific challenges of each Branch require a voice to be heard directly at the RO Board. Quite simply, it makes sense. We must re-start an effective Branch-communication process.

As for activity on the rugby pitches: For the seventh consecutive season, six EORU clubs played matches within the *LPR* tiered-league (against Rugby Quebec clubs). There are always some challenges when competing clubs from different unions/provinces play in a league (mostly re: registration and discipline), but for the most part the play on the field was lively, competitive, and created the environment for enhanced rugby development – the chief reason to play with the geographically-closer RQ clubs.

The *LPR Senior Men's* results were very good for the EORU clubs: the Bytown Blues won the *LPR Super-League* crown, with the Kingston Panthers placing third. The 2017 results will leave two clubs in the *LPR Super League* (Bytown Blues, Kingston Panthers), two in *Provinciale 1* (Ottawa Irish, Barrhaven Scottish) and two others in *Provinciale 2* (Ottawa Osprey*, Ottawa Beavers-Banshees).

(*Yes, the newly-named *Ottawa Osprey* is replacing the previous club moniker for the *Ottawa Indians*. Same crowd - new name.)

The *non-LPR Sr Men's* clubs (and some 3rd XV's from the *LPR Clubs*) played again in the EORU-specific league with a 10-game regular season. Brockville showed that a smaller community with one-club can thrive, winning the EORU League Championship.

Each of the EORU *Senior Women's* teams ended up playing in the *LPR* as well. In 2018 we expect the teams in the *LPR* again, including the Barrhaven Scottish (*Super League*), Ottawa Irish, Ottawa Banshees and the Ottawa Phoenix (combined Osprey and Wolves team)

Clubs in the EORU would love to play more with the RO clubs. Distance is the obvious barrier, of course, and we strongly encourage a better *McCormick Cup* system, representative of all clubs who are dues-paying members of RO. We have approached the RO staff with a plausible FA-Cup style season-long and regionally based challenge. Whatever the format, let's get all Ontario clubs playing together and, really, it's ok to travel the odd time.

The EORU Junior program was a little down this past year. With a shortened spring season due to poor weather and with the on-going challenge from high school competitions, active development of junior rugby was less than it needed to be. 2017 Junior plans include:

- increasing number of athletes in each club
- participating in an "interbranch" type of tournament after provincial selections completed for both boys and girls
- working on closer relationships with high schools with the goal to get more kids playing rugby in general, and then playing club rugby in summer.

2017 was a very positive year for Representative Rugby in Eastern Ontario. Participating in the U19 Voyageurs program (a joint program with Rugby Quebec), the Ontario Hub and Blues programs, EORU U16/U18 Boys and U18 Girls 15s Rugby programs, and the on-going development of a 7s Rugby program, enables the EORU to provide exposure to representative rugby to more young athletes than ever before. Our challenge is to get the right players on the right pathway while concurrently recruiting new players through clubs (seems easy, but in the past this was not always the case).

The resurrected EORU Sr Men's Rep team enjoyed its third season back in operation. Great multi-club co-ordination led to positive training sessions and three well-played

exhibition games. The challenge is to sustain this development, showcase its success (and its top players) and play more matches.

The EORU continued its successful 7s rugby program in 2017, hosting two such tournaments and creating a 7s-specific development experience with a fall club season and an ambitious junior rep schedule. Both U18 Men's and Women's programs had multi-tournament success, including in the RO circuit, New York City and in Las Vegas.

U14 rugby programs in the EORU are becoming better structured and more popular each year. A group of dedicated volunteers helps this area of rugby grow. We'll do more with more resources and some of the plans, based on last year's development.

2018 Focus for the EORU

- (i) Increase the number of participants playing rugby,
- (ii) Enhance the environment for rugby development at all areas,
- (iii) Identify, measure and sustain its Key Areas of Responsibility, and
- (iv) Work with RO to enhance more formal communications and consistent program delivery.

The EORU will, of course, concurrently work closely with RO and the other Branches to advance the quality of rugby across the province. It should be a fun, productive year ahead.

And ... once again many EORU volunteers welcomed the oft-requested input and direction of the RO staff throughout the year. *Thank you RO staff!*

Submitted April 6, 2018

Yours in rugby,

Dave Best
President, Eastern Ontario Rugby Union

