

OCA CurlOn Engagement Session
Thursday, February 1, 2024

Matt Allen, Executive Director, CurlOn

28 members in attendance, virtually and in person

Welcome, introduction and brief overview of CurlOn

They have an active partnership to work with member curling facilities and our provincial and national curling partners to grow and develop our sport. There is a desire to focus on what we need at the club level from them now, and for our future and ask us not to focus on the past. They want to have a more concerted focus on developing member clubs and supporting them in that initiative. Tracey Bradley was hired for a newly created 'Member Services' position. Her role will be to liaise directly with clubs to improve communication and support. In mid to late March CurlOn will send out an accountability report about what their key findings are, and will outline what CurlOn can and cannot do for us in future. Future initiatives will have a focus on transparency.

Question and Answer Session

Alana del Greco asked what Curlon currently does for clubs so we have a basis for comparison.

Response - Matt stated that CurlOn had not done a very good job of marketing or communicating their services to us. He also, stated that currently there is no clear statement about services on the website. They are working on it.

Some services currently offered are:

- during COVID provided extra funding to clubs
- developed series of templates and pathways to assist clubs in managing a non profit
- offer clinics

New services being discussed:

- want to provide tools and resources to eliminate extra work at the club level to deal with a lot of policy requirements and administrative tasks.
- want to assist clubs in building membership and support with diversity and inclusion, by sharing successful practices from other clubs.
- want to have a focused support and networking site and act as a central hub so we can share business models and learn from other clubs re: various initiatives
- want to offer resources to help with building membership, accessing funding from grants, to also help us deal with infrastructure re: club equipment, etc.
- support with attracting a younger and more diverse membership

Pat Arbuthnot shared that most of the things mentioned are not relevant to us because we are a public, city run club. We just rent from the city. We can't apply for grants and the city manages our equipment. There is more interest in finding out what supports can be offered in terms of competitions.

Response - Recognition that not everything CurlOn offers is relevant to us. They plan to put more focus on growing club membership in improved and more innovative ways. Matt referenced a club in Ottawa that grew it's membership four-fold. Under the new direction, CurlOn would have a focus on sharing best practices and innovations other clubs have used.

The second part of his answer addressed competitions, and that CurlOn currently does a good job focusing on national competitions. They recognize the need for competitive opportunities for club curlers at an intermediate level. They want to make this an initiative.

Jeannette Burnside asked about youth competitions.

Response - CurlOn works closely with Curling Canada and added the Hit, Draw, Tap, U18 competitions and a variety of other youth initiatives, and they want to address gaps where there are not levels of competitions once the youth age out. They also want to introduce other opportunities for getting more young people into curling.

Mary Jones asked about the cost structure for membership and how it works.

Response - Matt said this is based on a 'per sheet' fee and this is how we are invoiced. Pat shared that last year it was \$500.00 per sheet and this year it was \$575.00 per sheet. This is the second year of this fee structure. Clubs find out each April what their fees will be for the following year. There is an additional cost of \$2.00 per member which goes towards Curling Canada. We also pay a Safe Sport Fee of \$150.00 which covers the third party independent investigator support, which includes a written report and recommendations. This is something that wouldn't be available for another 16 months. It is a federal initiative helping address issues like sexual harassment and abuse prevention, helping to develop policies, offering discipline and investigation support if there are any abuse/harassment allegations, etc. CurlOn has a plan to put a higher percentage of funds to club development, and include initiatives like bringing in speakers, offering standardized templates to streamline paperwork and procedures for clubs to use, supporting clinics, Street Curl initiatives, etc. Matt stated that approximately 160 clubs are part of CurlOn and approx 20 are not. These numbers are not verified.

Matt stated that the new initiatives could be in place for next year, but 2025 is more realistic.

Matt asked us what benefits we are interested in.

Jeanette Burnside's response: Growing membership, building diversity and more inclusive practices, and growing our sport and our club.

Matt shared that CurlOn is also working on a process for accreditation, and offering their expertise in following the accreditation process. It is in the early days, though.

Karen Bieri asked if CurlOn is looking to do more with the education sector to encourage school participation as well as at the college and university level.

Response - Yes, they are working on this at the provincial level and also with the World Curling Association. One example of this is Floor Curling

and their efforts to try to get the program into the elementary and high schools.

Meagan Trevail asked for more information on the implementation of intermediate level competitions and timelines.

Response - CurlOn is in discussions right now with a previous sponsor and if they can secure a sponsor, they expect the intermediate competitions would be sooner than two or three years from now. They are committed to review how to navigate eligibility standards and how to move forward in a transparent way so club level curlers can easily find the information and get involved.

Matt stated that he feels one of the big gaps in our sport is that we don't have statistics. For example, we don't know how many clubs have 6 sheets, 5 sheets, etc., how many women curl, and so on. Demographic data like this would help clubs access grants and numerous other supports. Most provinces are struggling with this kind of thing as well. CurlOn is hoping to be a leader in this. No other province, to Matt's knowledge, has any initiative like this in place, so they want this to be a major focus.

Mark Todd asked about the CurlOn website and suggested some website improvements. He also spoke about the gaps at the intermediate level competitions as well as the lack of communication between CurlOn and member clubs. There is a disconnect.

Response - Matt agreed with these concerns and said this highlights the need for a club representative at CurlOn, and they have put this in place. Matt agreed the website is not up to expected standards. They have made some staff changes behind the scenes and they have improved their communication on social media. The website design is part of the infrastructure update for the website. Matt feels they now have the right people in place and now they have to get the right operating procedures in place and website updates will be made.

Trudy Burnside added a few benefits CurlOn offers that were not mentioned. They are the 8 Ender certificates and pins, the provincial banners hanging in our club from days gone by, and that we just had a

50th anniversary celebration, and CurlOn attended and presented a certificate to our club.

In summary, Matt stated that he hopes we now have some insight on where the OCA is going and what they can do for us. He mentioned that clubs felt isolated and independently had to solve problems. He feels OCA can work on this and they are absolutely committed to supporting us and letting us know we don't have to solve any problems on our own. CurlOn is there to support us. He asks us for ongoing feedback. His email is: matt@ontcurl.com