

FENB Proposal for a Provincial Coach Program

The Fencing Escrime New Brunswick (FENB) Board opened a discussion with its members regarding the previous Provincial Coach and Program, and what the members would like to do going forward. This document will cover the results of that discussion, and propose a direction that we can take to promote fencing within New Brunswick, while respecting the needs and desires of the current membership.

Promoting Fencing in the Province

The current membership of fencers within New Brunswick is composed largely of athletes that are at the Learn to Train and Train to Train stages of development. The athletes are also very distributed, so that many fencers do not have consistent access to a large group of training partners. As a province, we would benefit our members if there were both centralized training opportunities for large groups, and we continue to support the existing training at the club level.

As well, there is a need for more coaches, a higher level of coaching experience, and a way to advance the skills of the existing coaches in the province. The most consistently accepted way to develop new coaches and increase the skills of existing coaches is to have mentoring and coach training opportunities. These opportunities are usually provided by a high level coach, or master, who is skilled in teaching other coaches.

In addition, it is important in sports such as fencing to have competitive level fencers that the other athletes can compete against and be inspired by. Without competitive fencers to set an example of how to achieve goals, and what the next stage of development is, any sports program will quickly reach a dead end of development.

The FENB Board believes that the needs of the Province for the next several years are (in no particular order):

- access to **more training camps** that serve the large **Train to Train** segment of fencers
- access to **some training camps** that allow **Train to Compete** athletes to develop and enrich their own skills
- access to a high level coach or master that is competent to **enhance the skills of existing coaches**
- a program to identify and train **new coaches**
- a program that **allows all clubs in all regions** of New Brunswick to have **access to any provincial resources**

Hiring a Provincial Coach

A master of the sport of fencing could be hired by New Brunswick and FENB to meet all of these needs. The Provincial Coach can be of great assistance to the province, and still meet the requirements of the P-CEP Grant that had been used by FENB previously.

It will be important to be clear about how we want to spend the time of the Provincial Coach. There are only so many hours in the week, and more importantly, only so many hours when our fencers are available to train. To develop fencing in the province, we will need both fencers and coaches to commit to supporting the program and spending their time in the program.

Coaches will need to set aside time to develop their own skills, in addition to the skills of their fencers. Learn to Train and Train to Train fencers will have to demonstrate that they are willing to spend additional time fencing. A Provincial Coach should be increasing our opportunities to become better, not replacing the existing opportunities.

Tasks for a Provincial Coach

The FENB Board believes we can find ways to use a Provincial Coach more effectively than we did with the previous Provincial Coach (Xavier Boulet). While we all appreciate the effort and time that Xavier committed, we think we can find even better ways to use a Provincial Coach, based on our needs. The FENB Board proposes that the responsibilities of a new Provincial Coach include:

- Working all available weekends, either developing athletes, coaches, or both
- Working reduced hours during the work week to match up with the limited amount of training available to our fencers (some evenings during the week)
- Making effective use of our developing coaches during weekend training sessions. By coaching the coaches, more of our membership can be served
- De-emphasizing travel outside of the province to attend tournaments
- Identifying and developing new fencers that would be well suited to becoming new coaches
- Creating an on-going and adaptive strategy for meeting the needs of our fencing community as our group of athletes continues to change and develop
- Establishing a schedule for camps to be held in all regions of the province of New Brunswick. Training opportunities should be available for all of our members.

What a Provincial Coach will Cost

The province of New Brunswick is offering a program called the Professional Coach Employment Program (P-CEP) to hire Provincial Coaches. The grant available through this program requires that we increase the quality and quantity of our fencers, and also encourage the opportunities for coaching development. We can meet these requirements with our stated goals, but we must also meet certain

financial obligations. Based on our experience with Xavier, the previous Provincial Program, and the P-CEP program, would need to find the following funds:

- A total annual salary of approximately \$45 000. Of this, \$30 000 would be paid by the P-CEP program.
- An additional \$15 000 was paid for travel expenses in the 2013/2014 season. The travel expenses were mostly comprised of travel within the province; largely going to club practices during the evening.

To meet our previous financial requirements, we were able to raise the following funds:

- \$5000 contributed by the Damocles Fencing Club as the designated centralized training facility
- \$8000 contributed by the athletes who were part of the Provincial Program
- \$2000 collected from athletes who travelled to competition with the Provincial Coach
- Approximately \$15 000 contributed by FENB as part of our operating costs. In the past, these operating costs were put towards equipment, coach training, camp subsidies, and subsidies for our competitive athletes

We are certainly capable of funding a Provincial Coach again, and without substantial fund raising efforts. However, a substantial burden was placed on a single club, and on the competitive athletes. This is not entirely fair to those athletes, and we have far fewer of those athletes this season.

What Fencers and Parents Can Expect

A final plan is not completed at this time. The FENB Board is proposing something similar to the following for a Provincial Training Program, supported by a Provincial Coach:

- Up to 30 training camps (Saturday and Sunday) throughout the fencing season (September to June). These camps are distributed across all regions and clubs of New Brunswick.
- An expected 10 camps that Learn to Train fencers attend.
- An expected 15 to 20 camps that Train to Train and higher level fencers attend.
- An expected 5 to 10 camps that are aimed specifically at competitive fencers that are representing New Brunswick outside of the province.
- An expected fee of \$50 or more per camp per fencer. FENB will be subsidizing the cost to achieve this minimal fee.
- Each region will make efforts to billet (comfortably) the Provincial Coach as he travel to the camps. Additional billets for travelling fencers/coaches would be helpful, but not required.
- Coaches who receive additional training would be expected to contribute to the Provincial Program. An estimated \$500 for coaches, although each club benefits directly from this training, so FENB suggest that clubs assist in making these payments

- Each region and/or club should provide any available equipment or space that can be used by for the training camps. Hosting the camp is of clear benefit to the club and its members who will not need to travel.

What to Spend Money On

A Provincial Coach would be a full time employee. It would benefit the province if we made the most of his or her time. Asking the Provincial Coach to travel two or more hours for a two hour training session is not a good use of his time or our resources. Similarly, asking athletes to travel for longer than their training session is not efficient. By focusing the Provincial Coach's time, and our expenses, on weekend training sessions we can be more effective in our training and our spending.

Similarly, by getting coaching development and athlete development at the weekend training, we can target multiple objectives at the same time. If the training is open to all fencers in the province, we can engage more of our membership at the same time. But these opening training camps would also be more suitable for developing coaches to practice their own skills.

There will still be a need for competitive training sessions. The demand for higher levels of training should increase if our program is successful. But expanding the base of fencing in New Brunswick should be our primary concern. We can address our coaching development needs as we expand our base. Expanding our base does not preclude our competitive fencers from having meaningful and intense training with a fencing master.

Above all, communicating the opportunities and goals of the Provincial Program should be of the utmost importance. Every member of Fencing Escrime New Brunswick should feel that their needs have been addressed, and that the way to progress in the program is clear.