

The leap from 2020 to 2021

It is a tradition for presidents of associations to reflect on the year that just passed and look forward to the new year to come. Usually, we highlight all the great achievements of the previous year and make some positive announcements and predictions for the new year.

To be polite, on behalf of our Board of Directors I wish all our members and the entire table tennis family a very happy and successful New Year, and I hope that we all stay in good health.

To be pragmatic, I encourage all the table tennis family to be realistic but positive. So, let's say to be realistically positive and to find creative ways to keep table tennis active in any way. In fact, I ask that everyone in our sport have a realistically-creatively-positive outlook to 2021.

To be nostalgic, I would like to mention a few of the actions taken in 2020 despite the paralyzing pandemic, and for our Board, Committees and staff to continue to serve our Member Provincial/Territorial Associations regardless of the pandemic:

- In the first quarter of 2020 our National Team Program was in full swing with 3 selection and qualification tournaments. The selection for the World Championships (January), the Canadian Olympic trials (March) and finally the North American Olympic qualification tournament at which 3 of our athletes **qualified for the Tokyo Olympic Games**.
- The Canadian ParaTT Championships were to take place at the end of March 2020, but we missed it by a whisker as the shutdown was announced just before. The event remains in limbo until such time as facilities open up and we can stage this very important event.
- A new ParaTT Committee was formed (4 members) and a new ParaTT National Team was selected by the end of 2020.
- A new Athletes Commission was formed (7 members) and an Athlete Commission "Terms of Reference" approved.
- Unfortunately, our exciting plans to start a National Circuit with 5 tournaments across the country and a final has been put on hold until activities could resume.
- To be ready for our future competition program, a special "Tournament Enhancement Initiative" was launched to provide high quality tournament equipment, including ITTF approved tables and flooring, to the provincial/territorial association at a cost sharing basis.
- The much-awaited Team 2028 program to recruit and identify talent at the U11, U12 and U13 ages is also on hold and hopefully we can launch it as soon as activity resumes.
- The combined (Junior and Senior) 2020 Canadian Championships scheduled for Burnaby B.C. in July had to be cancelled. Unfortunately, BCTTA will not be able to host the event in 2021. The TTCAN Board will find a suitable solution to this issue and make an announcement in the near future.
- As all competitions came to a halt as of April 2020, provincial associations lost income from Rating Fees and from tournament entry fees, as well as sponsorship income. This also applies to our national association.
- In order to compensate the provincial/territorial associations for loss of income, a special "Rating Fees Compensation Initiative" was introduced providing each association with an amount proportionally equal to the previous year's income.

- Another special “Development Landscape Initiative” was introduced rewarding the provincial/territorial associations proportionally with a one-time subsidy based on their development profile.
- Our Coaching Certification program is being brought up to speed and a lot of work has gone in updating the NCCP Locker and our documentation. Hopefully 2021 will be an active year as far as coaching certification is concerned.
- The Officials Committee developed a 4-year plan for umpires and referees, which will start its implementation hopefully in the new year with an attempt to catch up on lost time.
- Several activities started and a momentum generated for Gender Equity and Equality. Two awareness webinars were presented in December 2020 and in response to a call for “creative and effective” initiatives and Gender Equity programs, TTCAN has already received proposals for 5 special programs and we hope to receive more.
- Three High Performance Training Centres were introduced in 2020 in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. The centres in Montreal and Toronto started operations but had to stop due to the local health regulations. The Vancouver program is currently at a standstill until activity could resume in the future.
- In 2020, as of the second quarter of the year, the main issue for our athletes was the lack of competitions. This is a very serious issue, and we must find a solution as soon as possible. Our athletes have all found special ways to continue training, especially those who are lucky to have a table at home. In general, most have found training solutions, but the lack of serious competition could have a drastic effect on future performance. This will be the priority in 2021.
- The TTCAN Board met on 6 occasions in 2020, there was a Special General Assembly in June 2020 and the Annual General Meeting in September 2020. In addition, the Members Council met in April 2020.
- The Minutes of General Meetings and Members Council meetings can be found on our website. The Board meeting Minutes for 2020 will be posted on our website as well for open communications and transparency.
- Due to prudent financial policies and conservative budgeting, we are succeeding in eliminating the huge deficit (\$450,000) we inherited in April 2019. Our 3-year “deficit Reduction Plan” has worked and I am proud to say that we will be in a position to eliminate the deficit completely by 31 March 2021, one year ahead of schedule.

I would like to end this quick look back at 2020 by thanking my fellow Board members for their work and their support. I must also thank the Members Council for their full cooperation and the continued work in harmony between the TTCAN Board and the member associations. I would also like to thank our Committees and I must thank on behalf of all our members our Professional Staff who worked in 2020 under difficult circumstances.

To be futuristic, and now, for the Crystal Ball. As no one can predict when and how this persistent pandemic will end, or when and how the regulations will change allowing for a return of our activities, allow me to be cautiously optimistic and to deploy the maximum Emotional Intelligence abilities that I can muster to give you a realistic glimpse of what is to come:

- Implementation of an adjusted Officials (Umpires and Referees) plan, with the objective of increasing the number of provincial, national umpires and referees.

- Acceleration of the Coaching Certification plan.
- A new section “TTCAN Education” will start on our website early in 2021.
- Allocating the Junior and Senior Canadian championships and staging them in July 2021 or later, depending on the status of the pandemic and local health restrictions. Also stage the Canadian ParaTT Championships.
- Holding the Annual General Meeting in June 2021 in person or electronically and having the new collective Board elections (2-year term).
- Providing ITTF approved sport flooring to HP Training centres, as well as organizers of the new National Circuit and hosts of the Canadian Championships.
- Updating the cross-country “Development Landscape Snapshot” and rewarding the provincial/territorial associations accordingly.
- Engaging more actively in the North American TT Union activities.
- Hiring an Executive Director as soon as it is affordable.
- The 3 qualified Canadian athletes to compete at the Olympic Games in Tokyo in July (Mo Zhang, Eugene Wang and Jeremy Hazin).
- Competing in the North American qualification event for the Pan American Youth Games
- Qualifying and competing in the 2021 Pan American Youth Games in Cali, Colombia, in September.
- Participating in the ITTF 2021 World Table Tennis Championships in October.
- Starting the new National Circuit (5 tournaments plus a final) in September 2021.
- Starting the new Team 2028 recruiting and talent ID as soon as feasibly possible.
- Updating all TTCAN policies and creating the policies that do not exist.
- Maintaining the momentum for the Gender Equity and Equality activities with new initiatives.
- The Board will continue to meet frequently and when needed. All Board Minutes will be posted on TTCAN’s website.
- Maintaining strict and controlled financial policies to ensure the financial health of the association and preventing any possibility of a deficit.
- Providing individual help to our national team athletes to accelerate their development.

Hopefully the pandemic will subside, and we will be able to implement our traditional, new and remedial programs, and LEAP from 2020 (a leap year) to 2021 with gusto, enthusiasm and the will to recover the time we lost.

On behalf of our Board, I reiterate our good wishes to all our table tennis family in Canada for a very Happy New Year and hope we all stay in good health in order to accomplish all of our goals.

Adham Sharara – President
30 December 2020