



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Detailing Board Meeting held June 9, 2025

Greetings/Bienvenue!

At our June 9 Board meeting, I was pleased to welcome returning Directors and extend a warm introduction to our newly elected members—Stephanie Leblond, Nick Sutcliffe, and Mac Cone. Their diverse backgrounds—in sport, governance, and business—will strengthen our collective leadership. I also expressed my appreciation for the opportunity to continue serving as President and welcomed Audrey-Julie (AJ) Dallaire into the role of Vice President. With confirmation from EC legal counsel and no additional nominations by the May 30 deadline, both appointments were confirmed by acclamation.

The meeting focused on laying a strong foundation for the new term, including onboarding, committee appointments, and a timely conversation on the state of sport in Canada. I referenced a recent letter I sent to The Honourable Adam van Koevorden, aligning with a national NSO campaign calling for renewed focus on funding, sport culture, and Canadian identity. We also confirmed committee and Category/Voting Member Board liaison roles. A key conversation centered on leadership succession planning at both the Board and CEO levels. While a formal CEO succession plan is not yet in place, foundational work is underway and I spoke to my vision for Board, specifically President succession planning. We also began planning for a proposed in-person meeting in September and a dedicated session in August focused on Safe Sport.

The Board welcomed Dr. Ann Pegoraro (Lang Chair in Sport Management, International Institute for Sport Business & Leadership, Department of Management at the Gordon S. Lang School of Business & Economics at the University of Guelph) who delivered a compelling presentation exploring the changing landscape of sport in Canada. Her research illustrated the link between economic uncertainty and declining sport participation, and the erosion of public trust in traditional funding models. She drew attention to missed opportunities and stressed the risks to athlete mental health, youth participation, and long-term sustainability.

Dr. Pegoraro challenged NSOs to become agents—not objects—of change and encouraged us to explore new models for financing (community bonds, private-public partnerships), storytelling, and values-based innovation. The discussion prompted several ideas, which will be developed in more detail over the coming months.

Meg Krueger presented a strategic close-out of EC's 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, our first four-year cycle aligned with the Imagine 2030 vision. The Leadership Team evaluated performance against both the current and previous (2018–2022) plans, identifying successes, gaps, and lessons learned. While proud of the progress made amid pandemic recovery, economic shifts, and sector-wide change, the team is now focused on developing a new key performance framework to launch over the summer.



Meg also presented the latest Quarterly Risk Report, citing an increase in identified risks. Factors included Safe Sport, onboarding of new Directors, financial uncertainty due to delayed federal funding, and the growing prevalence of unsanctioned circuits that do not adhere to national coach licensing or welfare standards. She emphasized that upcoming meetings will be key to addressing this gap in the Canadian competition pathway.

As part of EC's governance responsibilities, Meg presented two documents for Board approval, developed by working groups under the Active Equine Health and Welfare Committee.

First, the revised Horse Welfare Code of Conduct—which now includes recognition of horses as sentient beings and clearer definitions of physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and the complaints process. The Board unanimously approved the revised Code, which is now considered a Safe Sport policy and referenced during Independent Third Party (ITP) reviews.

Second, the Board approved the newly established Definition of Horse Overuse in Competition, developed with USEF alignment and intended to guide future policy and enforcement. Both votes were carried unanimously, and Meg confirmed operational next steps are already in motion.

We then returned to the paused discussion on the National Awards Decision Tree, created to guide decision-making in sensitive situations involving Safe Sport concerns. The tool outlines next steps in the event of public scrutiny, complaints, or policy reviews, ensuring a transparent and principled response process. The Board approved the use of the Decision Tree. I want to thank Meg, the Leadership Team, and the working groups for their thoughtful leadership in moving these important policies forward.

A highlight of the meeting was the presentation by Dr. Emily Gilbert and Olympian Mike Winter (Eventing) on the concept of Social License in equestrian sport. Emily, Chair of the Canadian Eventing High Performance Advisory Group, and Mike, a 3-time Olympian and athlete representative, emphasized that the equestrian community must acknowledge and respond to how broader society perceives our sport. Presenting results from the UK's largest horse welfare survey, they shared that 54% of the public worry horses are treated as tools rather than sentient beings; 69% believe more safety and welfare measures are needed; and 78% expect not just the absence of harm, but the presence of positive welfare experiences for horses. Mike spoke to the need for clearer communication around daily care, training equipment, injury management, and the human-horse relationship. They challenged the community to better demonstrate the social, environmental, and economic value of horse sport—citing examples such as therapeutic riding, rural land stewardship, and employment generation.

Emily and Mike urged us to recognize and shift from insular thinking to engaging with multiple public “lenses”—including those who have no personal connection to horses. They stressed the importance of social media messaging, transparency, and proactive education. The cost of inaction, they warned, includes reputational damage, loss of public trust, sponsor withdrawal, and potential Olympic exclusion. Their presentation concluded with a roadmap for regaining and strengthening social license—through accountability, standardization, and public-facing welfare practices. Board members expressed deep appreciation for their leadership, especially as their insights aligned closely with our current work on Safe Sport and welfare policy. We were reminded that earning and maintaining public trust is not a one-time effort but an ongoing responsibility—and one that we must all embrace, together.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Robertson, President

On behalf of Equestrian Canada and its Board of Directors, this concludes the President's Report of the Board Meeting held June 9, 2025.

Fostering a love of horses and sport, for life.