

An abstract graphic featuring three concentric blue circles of varying sizes. The largest circle is in the top right, a medium one in the bottom right, and a small one in the center. Thin blue lines intersect the circles and extend across the page.

A Strategic Plan for the Chess Federation of Canada

A vision for the future of chess in Canada in the
next decade

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WHY DOES THE CFC EXIST? WHAT IS IT TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

We exist as a herald to the call to adventure of the ancient game of chess. Our mission is to reveal the intangible and tangible benefits of this path of trials that is the hero's journey to chess improvement for some and the road to chess mastery for others. It is not a journey for everyone but for the chosen ones it offers the promise of new experiences and capabilities in the company of a social and sociable community of fellow travellers.

MANDATE

According to our website, the Chess Federation of Canada (CFC), founded in 1872, is a registered non-profit organization with a mandate to promote and encourage the knowledge, study and play of the game of chess in Canada.

CFC's PRIMARY/CORE ACCOUNTABILITIES

The CFC is the governing body for chess in Canada.

Governance of rules for national competitions (eligibility, formats, time controls, etc) and general rules of the game within Canada.

Affiliated with and the primary Canadian liason with the World Chess Federation (FIDE)

Maintenance of a national rating system

Publication of a website and member forums and provision of other member services such as the email newsletter which can be used to keep members informed of the happenings in Canadian chess

Outreach to enhance the popularity of the game in Canada. At the moment we are not doing this as an organization.

Sanctioning and coordination of activities with provincial and regional bodies.

THE GOALS OF THE CHESS FEDERATION OF CANADA

To promote and showcase chess across Canada and to encourage the knowledge, study and play of chess at the recreational, amateur and elite levels for adults and children of all ages and genders

Raising visibility and top of mind awareness of chess in Canada and improving the image of chess in the media and among the general population.

Development, training and retention of young players of both genders as active members of the chess community

Development of volunteers, organizers, tournament directors and other partners and infrastructure which will allow players the opportunity to study, learn and play chess.

Emphasis on the long term and with full transparency of how funds are spent and assurance that members and participants receive value for money spent.

Focus on targeted fund-raising activities such as campaigns to raise the funds to send a men's and women's team to each Olympiad.

THE CURRENT SITUATION – CHESS IN CANADA

The CFC has become an organization of tournament players. If you don't play in tournaments, there is a perception that the CFC has nothing for you.

There are two distinct market segments for chess within Canada based on age. The first segment is adult players. The second is junior age players which is usually defined as chess players under the age of 21. Among the members of the CFC there are currently 376 life members, 932 adult members, 449 Junior members, 71 Honorary members and 27 Family memberships as of May 1st, 2012. There are approximately 1000 members of the FQE.

At the moment chess appears to be relatively stronger in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta with much lower participation in other parts of the country.

It may also be possible to segment chess participants on the basis of gender and also on the basis of chess strength. Currently Canadian chess as a whole does a poor job of interesting girls and women in chess and also keeping them interested into adulthood. We also seem to be losing our strongest players of both genders and all ages. The experience in Windsor suggests that at least for younger players there is no significant difference in chess interest between boys and girls.

The CFC encourages junior membership by offering a discount relative to the adult membership rate and also by offering a discount in rating fees for all junior events. Aside from participants in national championships, a CFC membership is not mandatory for participants in junior only events. There is a reduced rating fee for junior only events.

Fragmentation of federations and chess organizations means that we are not always pulling in the same direction. Up until the recent agreement with the FQE (which still needs to be endorsed by the CFC governors) there has been a lack of influence in Quebec which causes a disconnect between the relatively thriving Quebec chess scene and the rest of Canada.

The Chess and Math Association is a private non-profit company which organizes chess tournaments for children, sells chess books and equipment and also has programs of chess instruction, chess camps and outreach

services and also holds national championships based on grade vs. the CFC which tends to hold youth championships based on age. In either case, it is often the same children competing in both sets of competitions. The CMA has always indicated a willingness to act as a partner rather than a competitor to the CFC. On balance the relationship between CMA and the CFC is a positive one. Many CMA organizers are also CFC organizers.

The Chess and Math Association should not be considered a competitor but rather as an ally as they are doing some of the missionary work necessary to bring chess to a wider audience of participants. The real competition is the other activities that children and adults engage in which may prevent an adult or a child from participating in organized chess activities.

To succeed in our current environment, the CFC must become more member centred – winning members by delivering greater value. Before we can satisfy members, we must first understand they value, want, need and desire from us. We need to learn how to do less and accomplish more-by focusing on what matters most, the critical success factors.

For the CFC, one critical success factor will be to throw off the negativity which often seems to surround us. We need to find the will to put aside petty differences and provide support or at least get out of the way of those who are successfully working to build up chess in Canada. We need to make the conscious choice of wanting more for this great game of ours and we need to be willing to do the things that are necessary to make that future of more a reality. We need to create better relationships with members, with provincial federations especially including and reintegrating Quebec into our community, with chess organizers and with the Chess and Math Association.

We can't change what has happened before but we can learn from the mistakes of the past and resolve to do things differently. Doing the same things over and over and expecting different results can only be described as a form of insanity (Einstein).

We need to consciously choose to pursue a better future by mapping out where we would like to be in ten years time and then looking at the steps we need to take in order to get to that future state. Of course things will never work out exactly as we have planned them and yet if we have a vision of where we want to go we can use that to guide us in pursuing actions which bring that desired future state into reality.

Our current reality has been that we have had to lower expectations and settle for a reduced role for chess and the CFC. We move from crisis to crisis, often triggered by external circumstances, but often based on our own foibles and mistakes. The current laissez faire approach to chess organization and promotion is not working. There is still a certain level of complacency in the CFC which needs to be shaken if we wish to improve the results that we can experience. For a period of time member service was non-existent and we simply drifted with the currents and the CFC paid a price in declining member numbers. We were very slow to face reality and for a time our very existence came into question as it became clear that the current membership could not support the cost structure that was in place and had worked when we were a much larger organization. We have arrested the decline but are still relatively stagnant with little or no growth in numbers.

VISION

10,000 tournament playing members in ten years. In order to accomplish this we must include more female members (closing the gender gap) and retain children who become members through adulthood and into their senior years and improve outreach to find new members.

A closer relationship with the FQE which is the Quebec federation d'échecs currently not affiliated with the CFC. We could not hope to move forward as a chess nation with 25% of Canada's population and one third of Canada's tournament chess players on the sidelines. The current proposed operating agreement between the CFC and FQE will take care of this issue for the time being (if ratified by the CFC governors).

Obtain sponsorships both corporate and government.

Cooperation with Chess and Math Association (CMA) in junior chess. The CMA is uniquely positioned to support the CFC in that they already have an infrastructure of programs of chess instruction and chess instructors in some key Canadian markets which is a requirement if we hope to increase the popularity of chess. They may be viewed as competitors in some CFC circles but in fact they share the same goal of popularizing chess and anyone who is not against our goals is to be encouraged.

Identify and help expand the number of local champions (organizers) to step forward for the game in all major population centers to run tournaments, found chess clubs (especially junior chess clubs) and chess teaching programs to help increase the popularity of chess.

Providing outstanding member service and improve communications with our members.

Increase visibility and enhance the image of chess and chess players.

KEY PRIORITIES DURING PLANNING PERIOD

1. Growth in numbers of tournament chessplayers and also to find ways to capture the interest of other interested groups (recreational and online players) and also stakeholders such as chess parents.
2. Development of a chess marketing mindset and developing an intentional focus on chess evangelism and education particularly in but not limited to the key demographic of children.
3. Secure corporate/government sponsorship
4. Adjust membership fees and options to optimal level so members/potential members see the value proposition.
5. Develop specific outreach programs to improve top of mind awareness rankings among the general population.
6. Support top players on world stage and ensure media coverage of chess events.
7. Regain charitable status or some equivalent.

TRACKING PROGRESS

In order to evaluate how well the CFC is achieving its goals we need to develop measures and metrics which allow us to track progress. You can't manage what you don't measure. Items that should be measured and tracked include:

- Quantity of junior and adult players, tracked by age group and city/region. This requires the CFC to have accurate date-of-birth data and address information. They don't, right now.
- Demographics of players. This will be a requirement for many corporate sponsors.
- Chess programs in schools and clubs and number of participants.
- Opportunities for juniors and elite players to participate and compete nationally and internationally.
- Quality of junior players by rating, FIDE title and performance in national and international competition.
- Member satisfaction surveys.

THE POTENTIAL FOR CHESS IN CANADA

How realistic is a goal of 10,000 CFC members in ten years? It is quite realistic and merely requires some active and strategic intervention by the volunteers already working to expand the popularity of chess. This membership level would reflect a participation rate only slightly higher than the one the USCF currently enjoys.

Currently there are millions of chess players in Canada who play recreationally, either in their homes, in parks, in chess clubs, schools or online. Most of them have no idea that the CFC even exists. Some of them would enjoy the chance to engage in the thrill of chess competition in a face to face situation with the opportunity for social interaction with their opponent rather than an impersonal online experience which some of them currently enjoy.

Canada is a country of immigrants. The face of Canada is changing and these changes are favourable for the expansion of Canada's chess community and the membership ranks of the CFC. Immigrants from China and south eastern Asia (particularly India and Pakistan) seem very interested in having their children learn the game of chess. When you add these new groups to the existing population of European immigrants who have a long chess tradition there is an excellent potential for explosive growth in the number of Canadian chess players and CFC membership numbers.

GROWTH

Growth is an obvious objective of any plan that the CFC would undertake; however, growth will not happen all by itself. Growth has to be planned. We have to plant the seeds which will lead to that growth now. We need to come up with carefully considered answers to the obvious questions such as how much growth can we realistically pursue? When (what is our timeline)? In which geographical areas and which segments are we able to grow? Who will be responsible for completing the different tasks that will be required? These questions will need to be answered in order to realize our plan and its objectives.

In order to compete successfully in the market for the chess participants that we need to achieve our aggressive growth goals we need to develop a thorough understanding of the psychology of chess players and the drivers which encourage and discourage continued participation.

Instead of trying to decide what we have to do to achieve growth in chess player numbers in Canada, it might be better to look at what is preventing us from growing membership numbers right now.

As a key starting point we need to focus on developing a healthy CFC. Fortunately we have many examples of sports bodies and organized activities whose governing bodies are applying well thought out strategies to solve some of the same problems that we are experiencing. We have to be willing to apply the lessons that they have learned to our own unique challenges.

WHAT IS HOLDING US BACK?

Clearly we need to take a long look in the mirror and consider our own role in bringing this great game of chess to its current significantly diminished state in Canada. If we allow inertia to prevail then we can look at our recent past to determine where we are headed as an organization. That direction appears to be one of decline and greater insignificance.

The CFC decline has been arrested for now but it would not take very much to get back on that downward sloping treadmill which can only be described as a death spiral for the game of chess in Canada.

Some common objections that I hear about chess are:

Chess clubs and chess players are often unfriendly to visitors we don't feel welcome and we don't feel that we fit in.

The CFC is more interested in money than it is in me or my child.

THE PATH FORWARD

The first step is to look in the mirror and decide that we are not going to accept the status quo, the divisions and the pettiness that has been allowed to prevail over the Canadian chess scene up until now.

We need to start communicating about this great game of ours and let people know how much fun it can be to play and the benefits of the game. We need to all become marketers of the game and learn from the lessons of other great marketers. Thirty years ago soccer was almost insignificant in Canada. The people who worked to increase its stature to the present level went through a great deal of work both from an educational point of view and from an evangelical point of view to reach the penetration that the sport enjoys today in Canada.

We need to take a long term view and start doing the things which soccer organizers and promoters did in order to move up the hierarchy of sports until it now enjoys a share of mind that rivals and even surpasses, in some respects, hockey, our national game.

Some clues on the path forward can be found in the things that we are doing to popularize chess in Windsor. If we could apply the same approaches across Canada we would certainly double the size of our membership if not overnight certainly within a year or two. I will talk about what we are doing in Windsor, not because we have all the answers, but rather because we are getting some interesting results simply by systematically doing things which benefit chess and chess popularity, often in opposition to self-interest. A key thing that is happening in Windsor is a focus on chess education. If you offer free chess lessons it certainly has some negative effect on those offering paid chess lessons. However when the children you gave free lessons to go out and achieve good results you increase the interest in chess and widen the market for paid chess lessons.

The CFC, its governors, executive and organizers need to be willing to do what it takes to bring in new people into chess to obtain the growth that we need.

Our approach to different target groups needs to be tailored to appeal to those particular groups. One size fits all will not work to expand our reach. We need to change our methods and adapt to the needs of our target groups. We need to use multiple approaches.

Attracting new members is going to cost money. The cost is not an expense but rather an investment which should pay dividends well beyond the costs.

We need to show new members and prospective members, and their parents (if the new member is a junior), that we like them or even love them and appreciate them and value the fact that they have taken the time to come to our club, class, event or tournament instead of some competing activity or sport. We need to gain favourable attention and keep that attention.

We need to provide lessons and guidance to help people become better players. Nothing encourages participation like the feeling that the participant is gaining new capabilities and improving his or her play. People are willing to pay to be part of such an environment. We need to educate chess players on the need to be social and sociable especially when they are exposed to visitors and new members who should be put at ease and made comfortable if you want them to stay and join in our activities.

CORPORATE AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Everyone agrees on the need for more corporate and government sponsorship for chess. This does not necessarily require the direct expenditure of corporate or government money in every case. It might be as simple as providing a free or low cost venue in which a chess club or chess tournaments can be run.

A community room at Sobeys a popular grocery chain and its store in the Tecumseh mall in Windsor provides a venue to hold advanced chess classes and small chess tournaments. That advanced class gained visibility due to newspaper and subsequent radio publicity received when we had four kids from the class go to WYCC in Brazil last year. Sobeys gets some benefit from the occasional publicity that results from media stories about the children in those chess classes and also the parents and chess coaches who tend to shop at Sobeys as a result of the classes being held in their store.

The Windsor Public Library now offers free rooms to non-profit community groups. We used Sobeys and library facilities as training centers for the children playing in the Windsor Chess Challenge, the OYCC, CYCC and WYCC last year. We are using rooms provided by Sobeys and the local libraries to run a children's chess class and a children's chess club. We are also using Sobeys as well as Library facilities to prepare our kids for this year's CYCC where about 10% of the pre-registered players are from Windsor despite the fact that Windsor comprises less than one percent of the Canadian population as a whole and the fact that the tournament is located in BC and thus involves expensive air travel and hotel stays.

We use the sets and clocks provided by the Ontario government through the Trillium fund (obtained when the Canadian Youth Chess Challenge was held in Windsor in 2010), at the Windsor Chess Challenge and the Windsor Chess Challenge Playoffs and various children's tournaments around Windsor and Essex County. It is a gift which keeps on giving. We use chess clocks provided by that same Trillium grant in at least two of the chess classes that we organize around town.

Kitchener chess benefits greatly from the active support and playing venue of Kitchener City Hall that they are provided by the city's sponsorship and encouragement of chess as well as the funding of a chess coordinator for the city.

ELITE CHESS IN CANADA

At the elite level, chess tends to be a part time occupation with a few players who can make a modest living by offering chess instruction. As long as chess is confined to the margins it will be difficult to do anything to change this reality in Canada. We seem to have a trend whereby players become grandmasters or international masters, devote some time to chess and then shortly thereafter move on to other pursuits. If we can grow chess at the grassroots then it will be possible to gradually make it more attractive for top players in Canada to pursue chess as a profession.

In order to do this we need to grow our numbers so that we can have the money required for support programs which will address the needs of elite players and at the same time continue to address the needs of class players who are the backbone of our organization.

THE LIFE CYCLE AND CHESS

One view is that it is a life cycle problem which is working against a wider acceptance of chess and thus the CFC. Year after year we tend to lose somewhere between one quarter and one third of our members who choose not to renew their CFC membership. Many eventually return, sometimes after very long absences, but many do not and are lost to that growing community of former chess players.

Recreational players are less committed than tournament players and thus tend to be put off by the cost of a CFC membership. One way around this reluctance would be to target this group with a new type of membership which we might call a recreational membership. The fee for a recreational membership might be \$5.00 and would include a subscription to the email magazine (if we choose to continue it). Perhaps we could institute recreational sections in tournaments where the prizes were CFC memberships. In the past we did something similar in Windsor and eventually got many of the players to take part in regular tournaments.

In order to more fully understand chess participation it would be helpful to look at what has been discovered and discussed in studies of participation in sports and activities which bear at least some similarities to chess. Studies of sports, music and other activities are well established research areas both by social and sport psychologists and sports marketers. There is no reason why we shouldn't profit from this body of knowledge.

In reality, participants in chess tend to drop in and out of competitive play usually as the result of the other interests and activities which are going on in their lives. School, career and family obligations and other more pressing concerns often determine how much time someone has available to devote to chess.

CHESS RATINGS

There has been some suggestion that ratings and the fear of losing rating points tend to depress tournament participation and thus potential membership in the chess federation. This is a common refrain among local Windsor adults who were once CFC members and who have since lapsed. These are players who spend hundreds, if not thousands, of hours a year playing blitz chess online or in the local club.

Players often take their ratings too seriously and can become quite distressed when their rating drops below their self perceived chess strength (which may or may not be realistic) or even when there is no significant improvement in rating despite putting heroic efforts into chess study. Chess coaching and mentoring can get young players beyond this preoccupation but it is present even among the youngest children playing organized chess.

In Windsor we have a group of young players who regularly play among themselves and receive coaching through classes and individual sessions and have shown significant improvement in their play. This improvement is not well reflected in their ratings as they tend to play each other and all have been improving at a surprising pace but the net effect for those playing only in Windsor is that the same pool of players has been trading rating points back and forth. Significant gains in rating only come when one of the players leaves the local pool and competes outside of the local community. We have numerous examples of players who achieve performance ratings of five or six hundred points above their current ratings. Often these come at the expense of other adults but sometimes the victims are other children.

One way to combat this would be to institute a rating floor below which a players rating could not drop. This was done in the USCF as a way to combat sandbagging and also as a way to counteract this trend of people dropping out of chess for fear of losing rating points. Another way to combat this trend would be to put more emphasis on life titles and title norms which the USCF has also done and which the CFC has just started to do. It has also been suggested by Paul Beckwith on Chesstalk that we might emulate bridge which has a system of master points which accumulate over time and are never lost.

APPENDIX ONE: CHESS IN WINDSOR

WINDSOR CHESS CHALLENGE

Every year in Windsor, Ontario, a city with a metropolitan population of 319,246 or less than 1% of the Canadian population in 2011 there is a scholastic tournament held in the dead of winter which routinely breaks records for the largest Canadian chess event. Organized by John Coleman with the help of an army of volunteers over two days in February the tournament saw 1400 children compete in 2012 in divisions which mirror the primary school grades one through eight. Girls and boys compete together against each other. This number was intentionally limited this year to keep the tournament as a two day event.

For individual children the Chess Challenge is a one day event. The tournament uses a continuous pairing system which is the invention of John Coleman (the tournament organizer). Children manage to play eight games over the course of a day in groups of approximately twenty children or less. In past years parent or teacher volunteers and members of the local chess community have done the pairings for each section by hand. More recently the pairings have been done by high school volunteers. In Ontario, secondary students are required to volunteer for a certain number of hours in order to be able to graduate from high school. The tournament provides an opportunity for secondary students to obtain volunteer hours and frees up the chess community members to work as arbiters who then can respond with the correct answer when one of the children raises their hand to ask whether the position on the board is checkmate or not.

Winners of gold and silver medals in each group are invited back for a playoff on a Saturday where the children play three games at an active time control using chess clocks. About two hundred kids play in the playoff with a morning and afternoon shift. Children who finish with 2 out of 3 possible points or better in the playoffs are invited to participate in the Ontario Youth Chess Championship. This year 52 Windsor children registered and ultimately 48 players made the trip to Kitchener for the OYCC. We probably could have doubled that number if more players realized that they could play in Kitchener regardless of their result in the Windsor playoffs.

Another twelve or fourteen kids from the Chatham Chess Challenge organized by John Coleman also made the trek to the OYCC. There is no

playoff for the Chatham event and high school students also compete in the Chatham tournament which featured about 200 competitors this year.

If this event could be duplicated proportionally across Canada you would see a series of chess tournaments with 150,000 children across Canada participating. Those type numbers would attract sponsorship and media attention.

As of the writing of this plan, one tenth of the children playing in the 2012 CYCC in the Vancouver area will be from Windsor.

CHILDREN'S CHESS IN WINDSOR

In Windsor there is a great deal of chess played in children's chess clubs or classes. We have a Friday night class at Sobeys in the Tecumseh mall where many of the strongest players (strong being relative as many of the children have ratings in the CFC 1000 to 1250 range). When they compete outside of the normal Windsor pool of ratings it is not unusual for some of the players to experience significant rating gains on a fairly regular basis. The Sobeys class received a significant amount of publicity in the local newspaper (the Windsor Star) and also on a local radio station when four of the children from the Friday class represented Canada at the WYCC in Brazil in 2011. Much was made of the fact that four of the forty children going to Brazil on Team Canada were from one class in Windsor.

The Sobeys class starts with a lecture which may include study of some games or endgames or tactical problems taken from real games. After the lecture the kids play a game under tournament conditions (touch move, with clocks and scoresheets). After the game, their game is analyzed by a stronger player who offers suggestions for improvement for both players.

The success of the Sobeys class resulted in demand for chess lessons and the setup of a chess program with the Chinese Association of Greater Windsor (CAGW). A few of the students have moved on from the beginner and later intermediate classes there to join the Sobeys Friday program. There was also a program at the Chinese Cultural Institute of Greater Windsor (CCIGW) which was smaller but also offered chess instruction.

In addition, a program was set up at the Riverside Library which has the longest running adult chess club in Windsor. On a different night a children's

chess club was set up. Several of the same people who ran the Friday night club at Sobeys were involved with the Wednesday night Riverside Library program which had a peak attendance of about twenty children with some overlap with the children from the other classes. The Wednesday club was less formal with no chess lectures as the Sobeys club or the CAGW club had but there were usually three adults (John Coleman, Herb Alice and Vladimir Drkulec on hand to offer suggestions and play with the kids especially when there was an odd number of participants.

The libraries began offering free facilities recently for nonprofit groups and we used this to offer supplementary training for children going to the 2012 CYCC in British Columbia. Three of the training sessions were at libraries and two were at Sobeys in the Tecumseh mall.

The most interesting effect from my observation is that schools which feature many children from one of the classes or clubs have a tendency to produce even more relatively strong chessplayers among the children. This significantly leverages our efforts in that we find that chessplayers are being indirectly created from the critical mass of kids who are increasingly studying chess and being exposed to chess instruction. They play with their friends and schoolmates and this leads to even more chessplayers and more of a turnout at the weekend tournaments being organized to prepare for events like the Windsor Chess Challenge.

GIRL'S CHESS IN WINDSOR

As noted elsewhere, there is little gender gap among the players in the children's chess clubs and classes. Girls make up about half of the players in the Sobeys "elite" class.

APPENDIX TWO: BUILDING CHESS COMMUNITIES

To decide on an appropriate program for the chess community it will be useful to look at what other sports and games are doing to compete for participants and sponsorship and donor money.

SOCCER CANADA'S APPROACH

Soccer Canada has targeted promotions where they allow communities to apply to host an Active Start Soccer Fest program where the community receives funding from Soccer Canada and its sponsors to put on events for children under eleven years of age. Groups are eligible to apply for such fests three times a year. They seem to have programs for children as young as four.

I recently drove my nephew to his practice at a local indoor soccer field in Windsor. One of my nephew's teammates was a boy who is taking chess lessons as part of a class and also individually. We were early and so waited and watched while some coaches brought in for the day drilled players in a number of soccer skills. After that team was finished it was the turn of our kids who did the exact same set of drills. After they finished, there was yet another class of ten or twelve kids who repeated the same class. The indoor soccer field was situated in a local park complex with many soccer fields, most of which seemed to be in use either for practices or games with one group waiting to go on as soon as another group finished their practice.

Soccer is very popular locally and part of the reason has to be the attention to instruction which sees thousands of children go through systematic programs to upgrade their skills and help them understand how to play the game as an individual and as part of a team.

TENNIS CANADA'S APPROACH

The ***building tennis communities*** model is a community development approach based on three key elements: identifying a community champion, developing collaborative partnerships, and delivering quality sport programming.

To do the same thing in chess we could find an individual or group of individuals in a community or area that we wish to develop as a chess

center. This might be an active group of tournament players, governors, tournament directors or other chess organizers.

In tennis you may need some significant investment in infrastructure such as tennis courts or perhaps a building (if you want to play in the winter) and land and equipment. In chess you can start with a room or even a table in the library.

The International Tennis Federation currently recognizes a Senior player as someone who has reached 35 years of age. Competitions exist in Canada specifically for Senior players from 35 to 85 years of age, in five year increments. This is a model that we might well consider adopting in Canadian chess though referring to a 35 year old as a senior seems a bit odd. Canadian Soccer refers to players over 18 as seniors.

HOCKEY CANADA'S APPROACH

Challenge/ Learn/ Improve HOCKEY CANADA SKILLS CAMPS COMING TO AN ARENA NEAR YOU!

"Hockey Canada Skills Development Camps are a one-day or two-day event open to boys and girls playing in the Atom or Peewee division (9-12 years of age). Annually, Hockey Canada holds more than 100 camps from coast to coast, in partnership with Hockey Canada branches and minor hockey associations. Check out a camp in your area!"

"Hockey Canada's Skills Development Camps were developed to provide players with an opportunity to enhance their fundamental skills in a positive, learning environment. The primary focus of these camps is centered on on-ice fundamental skills, with time scheduled for life skill enhancement in areas such as respect, fitness and teamwork."

Imagine if there were 100 chess skills camps across the country every year. What kind of an impact might that have on chess participation in the CFC? Children and parents are hungry for such programs.

The experience of Hockey Canada, Golf Canada and Soccer Canada need to be developed and how those programs could be adapted to chess still need to be explored and expanded upon.

APPENDIX THREE: THOUGHTS ON ADULT AND JUNIOR CHESS

ADULT CHESS

Serious thought should be given to developing programs for adults which can parallel the programs that we have for children. As noted in the sections where we look at what other sports are doing, soccer and tennis have senior soccer and senior tennis which begins at a relatively young age and offers a bridge for junior sports participants to continue to be involved in the game.

JUNIOR CHESS

The fact that there will be fewer children overall in Canada might be seen as an opportunity for upgrading chess education everywhere. The crucial element in Canada's ability to perform in the chess arena is the education of children, and that therefore the chess teacher is a truly important part of the chess establishment. We need to appeal to parents and their children in order to gain the required share of mind and time required to gain some proficiency in chess.

One other thing: a lot is said about the perceived academic benefits of chess. There are also considerable social benefits as well. We should be promoting the social as well as the academic benefits when trying to sell chess to parents and teachers. And, perhaps more than that, we should be promoting chess as a fantastic game for older children and adults, but one at which younger children can, in certain circumstances, excel. – Richard James

Richard James goes on to point out that it is better to teach a few children to play chess well than to teach many children to play chess badly. My own feeling is that it is even better to teach many children to play chess well.

The ability to compete in tournaments like OYCC and CYCC and to go on to represent Canada are a significant marketing opportunity to draw new children into chess. The present system is not working, in part, because it is at least in part aimed at extracting more money out of the parents, children and organizers. Champions of the current system do not seem to be supporting it by organizing YCC tournaments. The end result is that British

Columbia's neighboring province of Alberta will have fewer participants in the 2012 CYCC than Windsor will have by a factor of almost three. Continuing with the current system could lead to a collapse of the whole age based YCC system which would be a pity because it is an excellent marketing tool allowing organizers to identify children interested in improving and excelling at chess.

REDESIGNING OPEN TOURNAMENTS

One of Canada's top young grandmasters suggests that the best thing that we can do for young players is to hold more open tournaments where they can experience playing against stronger players to maximize the opportunity for improvement.

If an organizer wants a weekend tournament why not make it a rapid or even better a 1 hour per player and again 7 rounds. Who cares if it's classic chess or not if in both cases these weekend tournaments aren't rated fide, this is not perfect but it's a nice and inexpensive start. This kind of tournaments should be great for both "professionals" and beginners who really want to learn. It's really sad seeing kids playing this nonsense under 2000 or 1600 tournaments, they learn nothing at all and if things keep going like this they never will. As I mentioned before class prizes are very important but only if it's a one big open with all levels. For players like me only the first two rounds would be "easy games" the remaining 5 or 7 would be like playing the typical 2000 and up section tournament. – Grandmaster Anton Kovalyov on Chesstalk.

Recently Richard James has written that children's chess clubs and not school based programs are the key to promoting chess. Windsor's experience is that he is on to something here but there is a role for schools as well. We have found that through word of mouth many children from the same schools find their way to organized chess and you develop a critical mass of chess interest in a school and suddenly chess players develop independently of the efforts of local organizers and instructors. The level of chess understanding of all of the kids rises in response to the presence of a significantly large group of children with an interest in chess.

One thing that is really missing in Windsor and presumably in the rest of Canada is the presence of a strong high school chess league which we had in

Windsor when we were growing up in the 1970s. Many strong players of expert and master strength developed from the players that came up out of that league.

ENCOURAGING PROMISING JUNIORS

In my own experience, initially we tried to use the Windsor Chess Challenge as a way to find promising players, channel them into the “elite” class and help them to improve. The problem with this approach is that choosing children to channel into advanced classes based on results in one single event is only a little better than drawing names out of a hat. Luck is a big factor in the results in such a tournament and could conspire to bury many promising players.

My own belief is that most organizers are not smart enough or prescient enough to pick out who the most promising chess players will be at an early age. A better system is to look for those that are interested and offer many options for tournaments and instruction both formal and informal and also paid and free. Let the kids sort themselves out by interest as that is the best predictor of continued interest.

My own feeling is that finding players with love for the game of chess is probably the key to fostering growth in chess. Ideally those children will be blessed with supportive parents who are willing to drive the children to tournaments, chess classes and chess clubs.

APPENDIX FOUR: SWOT ANALYSIS FOR THE CFC

[Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats]

Strengths

The CFC is the acknowledged national chess federation for Canada.

The CFC is the gateway to FIDE which is the acknowledged international chess federation. The CFC is also the gateway to FIDE sanctioned events such as the Olympiad, World Championships and World Youth Chess Championships and also to the opportunity to gain a FIDE rating and FIDE titles.

We have a rating system which participants respect and recognize and which allows members to track their progress.

We have a series of National chess events which are well regarded by participants. (Canadian Closed, Canadian Open, Canadian Junior, Canadian Youth Chess Championship, Canadian Women's Chess Championship).

We have many willing volunteers who are passionate about the game.

Chess is a game which is absorbing, interesting and provides many academic benefits, mental health benefits, boosts self-confidence and even offers a number of life lessons which can be used in many other areas.

Chess is a game that can be learned by a child and then played throughout the players lifetime well into retirement and after.

Chess is inexpensive when compared to many other competing activities such as hockey.

Weaknesses

Lack of open communication leading to distrust and disconnect between the Federation and present and potential members.

Perception in parts of the country that the CFC is run for the benefit of players in a particular region and decisions will be biased to benefit Ontario given that more than half the national members and governors reside in Ontario.

An overly complicated governance structure with confusing aims and yearly changing of the guard ensuring that continuity in programs and goals is difficult to achieve.

Lack of funding to achieve long term vision.

Loss of charitable status makes fundraising slightly more difficult.

The mindset of being threshold guardians which interferes with the more growth oriented mindset of becoming mentors and guides charged with facilitating and assisting players on their chess odyssey.

A good old boys network discourages female participation in chess. There is no apparent reason for the gender gap that exists in participation rates but this pattern seems to be pervasive around the world.

There seems to be little awareness among the CFC governors and leadership of the extensive literature and research available with direct application to the goals of expanding chess participation and fostering chess excellence among the population at large. We need to know what other sports and activities are doing to successfully expand their numbers and do some of the same things.

The current contract with the firm providing the services of the Executive Director may limit flexibility by preventing implementation of desirable marketing initiatives such as discounted memberships or new classes of members. This will have to be negotiated to avoid strangulation of growth efforts before they can start.

Opportunities

Regain charitable tax status or functional equivalent to secure deductibility of donations for donors in order to enhance funding.

The new agreement with the FQE offers for the first time in decades the chance for the two federations to work closely together for the mutual benefit of chess across both Quebec and Canada as a whole.

Cooperation with Chess and Math Association in the area of junior chess for the mutual benefit of chess organizations and players. Improve coordination and cooperation with junior chess programs to “convert” active juniors to lifetime CFC members.

Cooperation with the World Chess Federation (FIDE) to learn of best practices from around the world which might be applicable to the Canadian chess experience.

Pursue corporate and government sponsorship to enhance funding.

Eliminating the gender gap in chess would almost double participation rates in Canada. Windsor has no significant gender gap in youth chess. A careful study of what we are doing differently from everyone else might offer a course of action for the rest of the Canadian chess community to close the gap.

Pursue chess in the schools both as a core subject and also as an extra-curricular activity. The latter may be more important in the long run than the former.

We can really amp up the educational component of the CFC’s mission and become a more effective destination for those seeking to improve their chess.

Ongoing and regular participation of adults in chess programs and competitions at any level is an indicator of the health of our game, and as such is an important part of the Chess Federation of Canada’s mission. Our mandate for seniors is to promote chess as a lifestyle choice which preserves cognitive function and encourage participation from the recreational level to international competition.

Do more community outreach (linking in with causes for children and seniors) to enhance chess's image and bring more participants into the game.

Find a way to engage recreational players with a much less expensive membership option. It can also be used as way to integrate the parents of chess playing children into the fold. A free membership for each parent or step-parent of a chess playing child would be appropriate or a nominal charge of five dollars would be appropriate for this type of membership. A parents representative or perhaps even three or four parents representatives on the board of governors would go a long way towards giving a voice to these very important components of chess evangelism. Parental and recreational memberships would be an excellent source of volunteers to help with the proposed and planned expansion of chess in Canada.

Enhance efforts to link into the cultural shifts in demographics (immigration patterns from Asia and Eastern Europe where chess is already very popular and provides fertile ground for growth in membership). In Windsor there are at least two Chinese cultural groups providing chess lessons as part of their core offerings.

Get media coverage in print, radio and television. Such coverage makes it significantly easier to recruit new members.

Use social media, our new website and internet resources to help us achieve our mandate. This might include making arrangements with a chess server or arranging a deal with a company that already provides such services in order to provide an online venue for CFC rated and sponsored chess activities. FIDE has informed the CFC of a company that sets up such servers at no upfront cost to federations. The CFC executive are looking into the feasibility of this option.

We can use the experience of other games and sports (tennis, hockey, soccer) to build chess in a similar manner.

Threats

Gradual decline in adult membership and loss of juniors once they graduate from junior events. In recent years the decline has been slowed. The CFC was poorly run at times and this contributed greatly to declines in membership as members and organizers left in disgust. Low membership numbers threaten the financial viability of the CFC and also reduce the possibility of the development of elite players and the opportunities for tournament play.

Online play lessens the relevance of chess federations such as the CFC as it provides an easily accessible though pale substitute for the tournament experience.

There are many competing games and sports which vie with chess for consumer attention. Among children hockey, soccer, swimming, tennis, golf, scouting, martial arts, music lessons, video games are the most notable competitors for the time that could be devoted to chess. The physical sports tend to be a slight competitor but can be seen as complementary to chess by providing a physical fitness and health component missing in chess. Among adults online poker is a key competitor for attention though many of those who are attracted to this tend to be online chess players and not tournament players.

Negativity that pervades social media such as certain threads on ChessTalk and even the CFC discussion forums creates an impression that chess is a game for neurotic losers and underachievers – not a desirable demographic for sponsors or the media.

There is also an undercurrent of envy which encourages attacks on anyone who is seen to be succeeding as an organizer, entrepreneur or even a player in the chess arena. If someone succeeds, it does not diminish the rest of the community.

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