

2023-24 OCUP Bid Process and Decision Rationale

10 August 2023

XCSO completed a Strategic Planning Process in June 2023. Our 2023-2028 Strategic Plan will be rolled out to the membership in September 2023.

It includes solid targets around increasing the number of clubs represented on Team Ontario, increasing the number of sites capable of hosting OCUPS, as well as supporting development athletes across the province. These targets were used to guide our work in preparing the draft calendar.

We received 3 bids to host OCUPS, and all for the January 20/21 weekend: North Bay Nordic, Walden and Lakefield College School. LSNA (Thunder Bay) is hosting the Ontario Winter Games and declined to bid for an OCUP. Soo Finnish is the host of Youth Championships.

The objectives that we set for OCUP site selection include the following:

1. Schedule 2 OCUPs starts per district. We have not entirely met this objective. LSSD only has OCUP starts for the U16 and Y2 U14 categories as OWG host.
2. Ensure that at least 2 OCUP sites can offer PN Categories. This objective has been met.
3. Choose Ontario sites over Quebec sites where possible. This objective is met with some compromise (as described below).
4. Ensure that each Nationals' race format is offered at least once over the series. This objective will be met. We have the capacity to host each race format across the chosen sites.

Challenges particular to this calendar and rationale behind the decisions:

1. **WJT / OCUP#2 conflict:** WJTs are East at MSA and are scheduled on a weekend that is usually a 3-day OCUP weekend, and no site is willing to host on the December 28 and 29 dates proposed in the bid package:

This is a prime race weekend, and many of our clubs will not go to Trials. Although we will lose our "top" performing athletes to WJT, offering an OCUP on this weekend allows every athlete who wishes to race the opportunity to do so. XCSO will be proactive in helping clubs that have a split team on this weekend, either by facilitating support for or supporting orphan athletes at Trials and/or by matching orphan athletes at OCUP#2 with teams that can support them.

2. **Easterns is at Bishop's** which means that we do not want to select the QCUP at Trials for OCUP#2. This would put 50% of our OCUP starts in Quebec.
3. **OCUP#5 immediately after OFSAA and in conflict with OUAs:** OUAs, OFSAA and OWG are all taking up valuable OCUP weekend space, and each event is for a select and exclusive group of athletes. If we choose not to offer OCUP#5, then there is no OCUP in February for many Ontario athletes:

We asked Lakefield College School, the host of OFSAA, to consider hosting OCUP#5 immediately after OFSAA. They are not in a position to offer a race on the February 24/25 weekend. This has to do with the fact that classes are in session that weekend, not capacity to do so.

We asked Lakehead University to consider offering an OCUP for the U18/U20 categories in conjunction with OUAs. For a variety of reasons this is not ideal. Teams will have just been to

Thunder Bay for OWG and will not want to return. OUAs historically has been unwilling to detract from its main event, and we don't foresee that this would be any different. So, if this had worked, it would only be serving a small group of Thunder Bay U18/U20 athletes.

We then approached Walden to host OCUP#5. They recognize the conflicts, and are comfortable with the reduced number of athletes that will attend as a result. They are keen to support the athletes that would not have the opportunity to race at OWG, OUAs or OFSAA.

Additional considerations:

1. Team Ontario selection criteria will take into consideration the conflict for 2006 athletes at Youth Olympic Trials in Canmore with OCUP#1, and at WJT for OCUP#2.
2. Team Ontario criteria will be set early, and clearly, so that teams can make their race travel decisions.

Final comment:

What we value most is that every athlete who wants to race has the opportunity to do so regularly, and at well run events, with a variety of competition and formats, and that host sites that wish to host an OCUP have the opportunity to do so.

It is important to remember that there will always be conflicts, and it is difficult to meet the needs of all of our athletes, clubs and coaches at any one event. This is a calendar that best supports our stated objectives by providing opportunities for all Ontario athletes for fast, fair and fun racing.