



AN INTRODUCTION TO SASKATOON YOUTH SOCCER INC. (SYSI)

1. THE ORGANIZATION TODAY

The Mission of SYSI is to organize and further develop soccer from recreation to the elite level by providing access to quality programs and facilities for all interested youth in Saskatoon. Its objectives are:

- a) to foster and support the development of youth and mini soccer within the City of Saskatoon;
- b) to govern the playing of organized soccer at the youth and mini age level in Saskatoon;
- c) to foster the development of qualified soccer coaches to serve the sport;
- d) to work together with the other youth and mini-soccer districts in the province and in concert with the objectives of the Saskatchewan Soccer Association as those apply.

SYSI is a Member-District of the Saskatchewan Soccer Association (CSA). The territory over which it has jurisdiction is the City of Saskatoon and an area within a radius of 20 kilometers of the city boundaries, excluding those areas that are included by the boundaries of Valley District Soccer Association.

SYSI's consists of the following categories of Members:

- a) Zone Association Members, as may be approved by the Board;
- b) Community Association Members, as may be approved by the Board;
- c) Associate Members, or organizations that are involved in the sport of soccer, as may be approved by the Board;
- d) Honorary Life Members, or individuals who have rendered meritorious service to the SYSI, as may be approved by the Board.

SYSI has a budget of over \$1 million, based mainly on revenues from membership fees. It also receives a youth sport subsidy grant from the City of Saskatoon as well as funding through the Saskatchewan Soccer Association. SYSI is the beneficiary of a number of sponsorships and grants.

SYSI provides indoor and outdoor soccer leagues for both boys and girls in under-6 through under-18 age groups. The U6, U8, U10 age levels are considered Mini-Soccer and individual players register with their Community Association. The Community Associations form teams and register them with SYSI. The mini-soccer leagues are programmed to be non-competitive and emphasize fun. The U11 – U18 age group is considered youth soccer. At this level, players register within their Zone of residence with the exception of U18 players who register directly with the SYSI Office for team formation.

SYSI also organizes and runs the SISCO indoor and FOS outdoor tournaments for youth and mini players, and offers select programs and provides funding for mini-soccer.

Board of Directors

SYSI is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of 8-10 members, including three Officers. The Officers are: President, Vice-President and Treasurer.

The Board is elected at the Association's Annual General Meeting. Nominations for Director are received by the Board's Nominations Committee.

The role and responsibilities of the Board are set out in SYSI's *By-laws*.

SYSI's *By-laws* permit the Board to establish any standing or special committees that it deems necessary to carry out its work; such committees shall report to the Board. One of the first tasks of the new governing Board shall be to establish its standing committees.

Staff and Volunteers

SYSI's Head Office is located in the SaskTel Sports Centre, 150 Nelson Road in Saskatoon. The organization currently has a staff of four, including an Executive Director. The staff is responsible for the day-to-day operations and for communicating with the membership on program-related issues. Of critical importance to the organization is its volunteers, who work at both the Board and program level to enhance the delivery of its programs.

2. HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION

SYSI started as an informal collection of clubs that joined together to become a registered non-profit corporation in 1984. In 1996 the organization became more structured with the formation of five permanent clubs/associations, each with responsibility for a geographical area or zone established under the By-laws of SYSI. These member clubs are Saskatoon United Soccer Club, Hollandia International Soccer Club, Aurora Soccer Club, Lakewood Soccer Association, and Eastside Youth Soccer Association.

The new organizational structure gave the Saskatoon youth soccer community the stability it needed to participate in the construction of the first dedicated soccer facility in Saskatchewan, the Kinsmen/Henk Ruys Soccer Centre. More recently it played a key role in the creation of the SaskTel Sports Centre, a facility that accommodates all under-11 through under-18 indoor season games. Under-10 games previously played in high school gymnasiums are now played in the Kinsmen Henk Ruys Soccer Centre. The SaskTel Sports Centre features a full-size, indoor artificial turf pitch with two smaller indoor pitches, and also includes two lighted, outdoor artificial turf pitches.

3. THE NEW GOVERNING BOARD

At a Special General Meeting held on 25 March 2008, the SYSI membership approved a new set of By-laws, which puts in place the basic elements of a new organizational structure, making a clear division between the internal staff operations, on the one hand, and the Board, on the other. The reason for this change is to enable the staff and program volunteers to provide more effective leadership in delivering SSA programs, and the Board to better carry out the governing responsibilities required of the organization today.

In the modern world, a non-profit organization of the SYSI's size and budget has governance responsibilities that require the Board's full attention. These functions include strategic planning, Board recruitment and evaluation, financial oversight of the organization, selection and evaluation of the Executive Director, and internal Board functions such as Board recruitment and Board evaluation. The Board can best perform these functions when the SYSI staff are dealing with the day-to-day operations of the organization, including all program-related issues.

As a governing Board, the SYSI Board shall have contact with program-related issues only in the following ways. First of all, it shall approve the annual budget, prepared by the Executive Director, that funds the delivery of programs. And secondly, at its regular meetings when it receives the Report of the Executive Director, it shall assess whether the goals and values of programs are aligned with SYSI's *Strategic Plan 2007-12*. Its tasks shall not include discussing problems or issues arising out of the operation of programs.

The advantages of this system are many, the most important being that the Board spends its time dealing with the matters for which it is legally accountable — essentially providing direction and oversight for the Association. The Board needs to be able to demonstrate to its membership, and to its auditors, essentially that it is in control of the organization.

4. EXPECTATIONS OF THE DIRECTOR

SYSI's adoption of a governing Board has transformed the role and responsibilities of its Directors. In the old system, Directors spent most of their time at Board meetings discussing detailed program-related issues and problems. The new system focuses the Board on planning, financial oversight, evaluation, and ensuring that the organization has the resources to be able to carry out its Mission and plans.

Operating within this governance framework, each Director is expected to:

- attend Board meetings regularly and participate fully in Board deliberations;
- act at all times in recognition of the principle that the Board's role is to govern and the management's role is operational;
- be actively involved in Board committees
- demonstrate high ethical standards and integrity in his/her conduct as a Director

A complete description of the role and responsibilities of the Board and its Directors shall be set out in SYSI's *Governance Policies*, a copy of which shall be given to all Directors of the organization.

Director Meeting Commitment

The new Board of Directors shall establish the frequency of its meetings; likely it will meet at least six times during the year. Standing Committees will meet as often as is required by the level of their activity.

Director Liability

The question is often asked whether Directors of non-profit corporations are personally liable for acts or omissions in connection with their Board activities. The following excerpt from an article by Jane Burke-Robertson LL.B., entitled "Saskatchewan Directors and Offers Relieved from

Liability — Will Canada Corporations Act Reform Provide Similar Protection?” provides a brief summary of the updated Saskatchewan law regarding Director liability:

Saskatchewan’s Non-Profit Corporations Act, 1995, was amended in June 2003 to provide some welcome relief to non-profit directors and officers in that province. The amendments are based on a 2001 report released by the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan, which carried out extensive consultation with voluntary groups in the province. In a nutshell, directors and officers of non-profit corporations in Saskatchewan are not personally liable (to third parties or to the corporation itself) in any civil action for acts or omissions in connection with their responsibilities to the corporation they serve, provided they acted in good faith. The general immunity does not extend to fraud or profit-taking at the expense of the corporation. Directors remain liable for certain statutory liabilities.

5. CONCLUSION

SYSI is an organization that has a distinguished history and a bright future. It has embarked upon a new phase of its life with its change to a governance model of leadership in 2008. We have good reason to believe that the organization will be as successful in operating within its new framework as it was in taking a leadership role in building two excellent soccer facilities in the Saskatoon District.

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