



## **Project Excel Action Plan to Accelerate and Elevate the Performance of Canada's High-Performance Athletes**

**Calgary, AB. (January 24, 2024)** — Alpine Canada and its provincial partners are pleased to announce the launch of Project Excel. The program, developed in collaboration with technical experts from across Canada in the disciplines of alpine and ski cross, is designed and primarily focused on accelerating and elevating Canada's U21 talent pool and supporting coaches working with these athletes with tools, resources, and development opportunities. The ultimate objective is developing more athletes who can achieve podiums at the Junior World Ski Championships and are ready to compete with the worlds best at the World Cup, World Championships and Olympic Winter Games.

"I am very excited about the potential impact Project Excel will have on Canada's high-performance system" said Jeff Thompson, Vice President Domestic Sport Programs & Events, Alpine Canada. "We have come together as a country and developed concrete steps that we are confident can be implemented to support athletes who are close, but not quite at the level to join the Canadian National Ski Team."

The Project Excel Working Group (members listed below) is made up of some of Canada's top technical sport leaders, who have come together with a single mission and worked very hard to produce excellent initiatives that should have impacts as early as this ski season.

Provincial input was key to the Project Excel Working Group and reflects the importance of Alpine Canada and Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations (PTSOs) working together to maximize available funding. Patrick Biggs, Executive Director, Alpine Ontario, offered "Provinces, typically, don't have a hand in the development of our top athletes past the provincial level, so this is a big change for us to work so collaboratively with Alpine Canada in the creation of programs for this level of athlete."

The Working Group solicited input from Canada's top provincial coaches who emphasized the importance of developing a strategy and being true to it. "We have produced recommendations that we can all commit to and follow. We can't change our strategy after one or two years as this undermines confidence in our entire development system" states Josh Bengé, Athletic Director, Alberta Alpine Ski Association.

This unprecedented collaboration between ACA and the PTSOs has resulted in a set of high-performance priorities, plans and projects that are informed by evidence-based Podium Pathways and Gold Medal Profiles to ensure athletes get the right: 1) coaching & technical leadership; 2) daily on snow and off snow training environment in best with best training group cohorts; 3) appropriate competitive experiences at the right time; and 4) performance science support.

"Canadians need access to high quality Canadian events that are well attended with opportunities where anyone who is skiing well, has the opportunity to score. We can calendar better, execute higher on event quality and make it worthwhile for the best to attend. "Build it and they will come" Next step would be a FIS National series," said Johnny Crichton, Vice President, British Columbia Alpine.



There is a strong awareness that action needs to take place as soon as possible “We are moving fast to implement these initiatives as the next group of potential World Cup skiers are looking for guidance and need our support” states Eric Prefontaine, Head Coach, Mont Tremblant Ski Club (former High-Performance Director, Ski Quebec Alpin).

Some of the immediate action steps include:

1. Strive to become the fittest ski nation, align nationally around protocol to measure fitness, and establish target performance markers for every age group.
2. Reviewing the format of our races at the U14 and U16 age groups in an effort to better utilize competition to develop our ski racers. Piloting of a new format to begin in the 2023/24 season with results to be analyzed.
3. Provide purposefully planned FIS events at a time of year and a location that allows Canadians to access our best domestic talent and create meaningful opportunities to assist our best up and coming athletes to lower their FIS profiles.
4. Creating a sustainable business model that would support our best athletes, who are on the podium pathway but outside of National Team criteria, by bringing them together in a full-time program.

To learn more about Project Excel's 2023/24 Action Plan please refer to website ([link](#)).

### **Project Excel Working Group**

Dave Ellis, High-Performance Director, Ski Cross, Alpine Canada

\*Eric Prefontaine, High-Performance Director, Ski Quebec Alpin

Francis Royal, CAST Lead Coach Women's SL, Alpine Canada

Jean-François (JF) Rapatel, High-Performance Director, Alpine Canada

Jeff Thompson, Vice President, Domestic Sport Programs & Events, Alpine Canada

Jenni Stielow, Excel Performance Pathway Manager & Performance Data Analyst, Alpine Canada

Johnny Crichton, Vice President, British Columbia Alpine

Josh Bengel, Athletic Director, Alberta Alpine Ski Association

Patrick Biggs, Executive Director, Alpine Ontario

(\*Eric has departed the Working Group to become Head Coach, Mont Tremblant Ski Club. Martin Durocher, High-Performance Director, Ski Quebec Alpin, has replaced Eric on the Working Group)

### **About Alpine Canada**

Alpine Canada is the governing body for alpine, para-alpine, and ski cross racing in Canada, as well as for Canadian ski coaches, providing education, certification, insurance, and compliance with the coaching code of conduct. With the support of valued corporate partners and donors, along with the Government of Canada, Own the Podium, the Canadian Olympic Committee, and the Coaching Association of Canada, Alpine Canada develops Olympic, Paralympic, World Championship, and World Cup athletes to stimulate visibility, inspiration, and growth in the ski community.

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