

## 2017 OPRC Competition Report

With the 2017 competition season in the books, I look back on what was a year of some great successes even though we had a slight decline in participation over 2016. This year represented the second year of the ECRC and again Ontario events saw Quebec entries seeking the championship points.

This year we had 37 down from 38 teams compete in the various rounds of the championship 9 down from 12 compete in 3 or more rounds. The overall number of teams competing is relatively stable however the frequency in which they are competing is decreasing. The Growth of the sport in Ontario has struggled this year perhaps in part due to the fact that as a result of the reduced competitor dollars coming in we could no longer support the CDNrally video program. The Growth committee itself has struggled over the past two years to come up with growth initiatives to help bring new competitors to the sport and retain the ones we have. We are all hopeful that the efforts to build the feeder events will create the base we need to rebuild the competitor base we once had in the region. Both the Rally Sprint events and the continued success of the Rally Cross series and individual Rally Cross events have helped with the exposure of our sport to many more enthusiasts than ever before. MLRC has a successful rally cross series, KWRC has built substantial momentum with their Rally cross events, PMSC, MCO and MLRC with their Rally Sprint events all incrementally contribute to the overall health of our sport. In 2017 we had a new club develop in the Ottawa region the Ottawa Sports Car Club and we hope for good things to come from this club as it has a strong rally contingent of members.

One of the challenges that we will always face is exposure. Over 5 years ago RSO entered into an agreement with CDNrally for the production of the OPRC program through YouTube video coverage and narration. This year as I mentioned we no longer have this tool at our disposal to market and promote the series. This loss was somewhat personal to me as I was and continue to be a big supporter of what the program brought to our sport and want to thank CDNrally for the excellent platform for promotion they supplied to the OPRC. In the later part of 2016 we saw what may be the evolution of the promotion platform with the introduction of CDNrally Radio as it debuted at the Rally of the Tall Pines. Further effort was put into this year's version of the program which included live video feed broadcasting. The efforts of the team which included CDNrally, TV2GO, the OPRC commentary crew of James Drake, Kelly Mathew, Jeremy Norris, and Donal Crook was a huge success and I sincerely hope that this caliber of event coverage can be repeated again in 2018. Vehicle tracking through EZtrack continues to be a great success and has become an invaluable tool for organizers and with CDNrally we are just scratching the surface of the promotional possibilities of this platform. With some enhancements coming for the future we will see even more capabilities from the EZtrack system. These efforts don't happen without their own challenges the main one being the sponsorship drive to pay for the production and support of the programs themselves. This is an area which the growth committee will be working hard on for 2018.

Having rallied across the country and more recently off our continent I can without any question say that MCO, KWRC and MLRC put on three of the best events bar none, run on some of the most technically challenging roads in any championship. Year after year these clubs and their individual

members seek creative ways to improve their events and continue to get competitors to return. These events make the OPRC what it is and in many ways are the unsung heroes of our sport. A huge thank you goes out to Vince Landreville for Lanark Highlands Forest Rally, Martin Loverage for the re-vitalized Rally of the Voyageurs, and Derek Vincent for the Black Bear Rally, Patrick Rainville for Rally Perce Neige and Ian Wright for the Lincoln Electric Rally of the Tall Pines two amazing double billed events OPRC/CRC, and their entire organizing committees.

As I mention every year the RSO BOD works diligently to ensure that the promotional channels remain open and provide the necessary support to ensure that results are achieved. Knowing that we need to continue to seek new and exciting ways to bring our sport to the forefront the following are some areas where we will put our energies into for 2018.

Key areas of opportunity:

- Auto shows and club car events
- Continue to encourage and support participation in Rally Cross and Rally Sprint events within the region.
- Enhance and nurture growth initiatives
- Continue to seek corporate partners
- Continue to work with our promotional partner CDNrally to enhance the promotional opportunities for the sport in our region
- Continue to develop and promote the OPRC.ca website.
- Continue to broaden our reach for competitors.

Congratulations to Simon Vincent for a repeat performance by capturing the overall driver championship for the second year in a row. As I said last year Simon has proven that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. With great lineage his success will be measured in championships and has shown that like his father he can play in the major leagues with a lot less hardware at his disposal. The overall Leaderboard for the OPRC championship had some familiar names in the top five with Nicolas Laverdiere, Matthew Ballinger, Andre Leblanc, and rounded off with Lorens Witt all among the winners. The 2017 championship was hotly contested and a sincere thank you goes out to all of the teams that made it so.

2018 rings in a new year of competition and will continue to present us with similar challenges to the last few years but I am confident that with the ground work that has taken place and continues to happen our sport will persevere and we will see increased participation numbers in the near future.

It has been my pleasure to serve our sport in this capacity for the past 7 years. I look forward to 2018 and beyond, I firmly believe that we provide unbeatable quality and value in our events.

Bring on 2018!

Warren Haywood, Vice President Rallysport Ontario .perf.