

RSO Presidents Annual Report, 2020 AGM

As every other pundit has written it's been an interesting year.

If you don't know me I've been involved with rally for a little over 40 years, a bit in competition in navigational and performance rally but mostly as an organizer. I was appointed as President of RSO in March 2020 in a series of events that saw the president at that time move into the role of Ontario representative on the CARS board. My plan is to stand for election as president at the RSO virtual AGM on March 20, 2021.

At the time I was appointed some wag suggested I was made captain of a ship in dry-dock. We had hopes to salvage something from the 2020 performance and rallysprint season but as restrictions on competition came, went and came again it wasn't to be. Navigational rally did the best it could and got enough events to make a championship, one of the events running from my office in Ingersoll. Several of the clubs still managed to put on Rallycrosses and the odd non-championship navigational rally. Everybody just did the best they could.

It's unfortunate the OPRC couldn't run. The RSO board had arranged (prior to my arrival) for a \$10k sponsorship package to promote performance rally but that couldn't be awarded. The sponsors, Ontario Motor Sales, Clarington Hyundai and Enercare Home Services/Martin Air Heating have generously extended their offer to 2021 so here's hoping that we get an OPRC season this year.

Plans for Rallysprint this year are in place. A committee representing several clubs in place and already has had several meetings. The entry list is full with 15 cars and there are a few on the waitlist. The three event season will start in August. We can thank Darryl and Paul for the efforts to get the series going initially and their continuing involvement. I think the success of the series shows the need for events at the lowest possible cost, both in terms of money and time commitment.

For the performance rallies in 2020 the RSO board voted to waive most of the levies, dropping the organizers cost by about \$200 a car. That ended up being a hollow gesture as we didn't get any Ontario based OPRC events running anyway. The board will be looking at how we can reduce event costs for 2021 and hopefully some of the savings can be reflected in lower entry fees. Performance rally isn't cheap at the best of times but we'll do what we can to keep the costs down.

There is some work being done to see if we can get some kind of Provincial rally car registration similar to what they have in B.C. and Alberta. Dave Cotie is heading up that committee but as you can imagine the government has bigger fish to fry at this time. Also, getting insurance companies onside is a challenge; in B.C. they have government run car insurance.

We've missed three of the eight ORRC navigational rallies so far this year due to the current restrictions. While we've been able to have events with a minimum of contact between the competitors and organizers the issue is people traveling between restricted zones within the province. There have been some ad hoc virtual rallies that have generated a following.

Organizers have been creative in several significant ways with no-contact route cards and online registration. However we're probably going to need most of the province in yellow or green before we can resume the ORRC series.

While we hope things will ease up in the coming months we've had that carrot dangled at us before. We'll just have to be ready to go when we are allowed to run. It's especially hard for organizers of performance events since it takes months of planning and permissions to get the rally ready to run, and these days just getting road permits is problematic with the MNFR and local councils not meeting in person.

On the upside, I have to say that the executive team and the extended board have been incredible to work with. Kelly, as secretary, is amazing. Alan has done a great job as VP Performance and we're going to miss him when he steps down at the AGM. We are looking for someone to fill that role.

This was Louis's first year as VP Navigational and he worked hard to keep the championship going. Darin who stepped down from the position in March is still helping out with the website and other technical issues.

Dave, our treasurer since 2017 and VP Navigational before that keeps us on track. Warren has a big job reporting to RSO on CARS activities and issuing event permits under CARS jurisdiction. He attends the CARS board meetings and the associated duties also take up a lot of time.

Our extended board includes Chris Krepski who heads up the scrutineering team, RossWood who is involved with most aspects of the sport and Eric Vanderwal who created and updates the RSO Instagram account which has gained quite a bit of traction. There are so many others who have helped get us through the year I can't name them all but I do appreciate your efforts and input.

In the year before Covid we were suffering from low entries in performance rally and we need to work on getting more people running this year. The generous awards package I mentioned earlier will help but we still need to encourage existing competitors to come out and mentor new people joining the sport. Rallies are also social events and we need to engage, encourage and support new people in the sport. If you see someone new, go up and introduce yourself and make them feel welcome. That will get more new people into the sport and keep them here than any other single thing we can do.

Here's hoping for a better 2021.

Martin Loveridge

President, RallySport Ontario.