

# 2019 Annual Report



**Canada West Ski Areas Association**

Connecting the Canada West Way

[CWSAA.org](http://CWSAA.org)



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## 2018-19 CWSAA Board of Directors



Missing from photo: Stewart Laver, Patric Maloney, Robert Kennedy

### **Board Chair**

Andre Quenneville  
Mt. Norquay

### **Associate Member Director**

Debbie Muirhead  
Inter-Mtn. Enterprises

### **Director at Large**

Stewart Laver  
Sunshine Village

### **Helicopter-Cat Skiing Division**

Patric Maloney  
Snowater Heli Skiing

### **ASM Division Chair**

Jason Paterson  
Marmot Basin

### **ASM Directors**

Shawn Balog, Snow Valley  
Kim Locke, Lake Louise  
Lawrence Blouin, Table Mountain

### **BC-Yukon Division Chair**

Andy Cohen  
Resorts of the Canadian Rockies

### **BC Directors**

Doug MacFarlane, Whistler Blackcomb  
Peter Nixon, Sun Peaks Resort  
Eddie Wood, Mt. Seymour

Past Chair: Steve Paccagnan

Ex-officio: Robert Kennedy

President: Christopher Nicolson





# Message from the Chair

## André Quenneville

In what has been my first term as Chair for the CWSAA, I've learned more about our members, and what matters most to everyone within our industry. From the legalization of cannabis and relentless cold weather to changing governments and the impact of elections, there are many issues and decisions made that affect our industry every day.

Our Association, with its 260+ members, is in place to be a supportive infrastructure; to help guide all members through these changes. The Board of Directors and the CWSAA team work hand in hand to provide direction, localized perspective, and insights to our CEO, and in turn, create and provide key reference tools, training material, resources and guidance for all our members.

As an association network, we also benefit greatly from our associate members. These businesses not only enhance our industry with their experience but are also incredibly active in supplying valuable and experienced perspectives on the topics that our Association needs to address, in order to provide collective responses and active support.

Our Association remains robust because it's very well represented within the industry; from small volunteer-run areas to the largest of resorts. This year, thanks to additional donations, more small community ski areas received financial assistance to join our annual Conference and be part of the conversations and networking that takes place throughout. With this, I urge all of you to support our silent auction, which remains the key fundraiser for this initiative.

I could not greet the Association in this message without recognizing the loss of our great leader, Jimmie Spencer. The CWSAA celebrated his life amongst family and friends at SilverStar this past March. His approach and contributions to the industry will not be forgotten. Our Association has already felt the significant impact of our new CEO, with record attendance at division meetings and conferences - due to well-selected and relevant meeting content, as well as an undeniable dedication to connecting with all members. It's safe to say, the entire CWSAA team is emphatically committed to our members' interests.

Sincerely,

André Quenneville

Board Chair, Canada West Ski Areas Association  
General Manager, Mount Norquay



# Message from the President

## Christopher Nicolson



“To Serve.” In the many discussions in the upstairs living room of Jimmie and Andy Spencer’s residence, Jimmie repeatedly emphasised ‘never forget, we are there to serve the ski areas – large and small.’ This advice continues to resonate beyond Jimmie’s passing last year, and guides CWSAA Board and staff decision making. It challenges the organisation to stay grounded and focused on the initiatives that are relevant to the members.

The Association’s objective is to identify and address the themes of collective interest. Insights are solicited from countless member interactions, as well as stakeholder surveys to tease out the primary needs of membership. Last June, this input was distilled by the Board into four new strategic directives which guides the Association and shapes all activity.

Over the past year, CWSAA has provided a unified industry voice to government and regulators on topics that impact our industry. Many are highlighted on the following pages. Expanded content at the Spring Conference and Division Meetings has been delivered including a new Mountain Bike Forum.

CWSAA and its partners have created and delivered many new tools for the industry. In conjunction with go2HR, new employee safety resources with specific ski content have been developed and distributed. In partnership with Technical Safety BC (TSBC), AEDARSA and Selkirk College, the new Passenger Ropeway (lift) training courses have been developed and are being

piloted. A human resource training manual (again thanks to go2HR’s collaboration), and digital assets to assist ski areas propel their skiing in schools programs have been created.

The above initiatives are indicative of collaboration that is both a hallmark and necessity for industry success. The labyrinth of members, Board, staff, partners, regulators and others are all essential pieces of our interrelated framework.

CWSAA would like to recognize our many partners, including our vehicle supplier, DRIVING FORCE. We extend a warm welcome to the new Optimist Snow Park in Saskatoon, and the revitalized ski areas of Tawatinaw Valley in Alberta and Mt. Timothy in BC. We also wish to thank our past and current conference hosts at Lake Louise, Sunshine Village, and Whistler Blackcomb and 2018 Fall Division Meeting hosts Canyon Resort and Sun Peaks Resort. Each are representative of the commitment and passion that all operators and suppliers bring to the industry each day.

Cheers,

Christopher

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C Nicolson".

Christopher Nicolson  
President and CEO  
Canada West Ski Areas Association





# Strategic Directives

*The following strategic directives originate from the membership and were refined by the Board of Directors. In addition to the core deliverables of communication and event planning, these directives guide CWSAA decisions for the coming three years.*

## SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT

Safety and Risk Management is considered a foundational part of the proactive efforts of CWSAA, which aims to promote best practices and education to continually improve staff and guest safety and minimize industry risk.

## SUSTAINABLE MARKET GROWTH

Growth in snowsport participation is essential to the viability of ski areas. CWSAA will enable opportunities for mountain and river valley ski areas to grow visits and realize sustainable profitability, including new snowsport market segments, product development, and spring, summer and fall product diversification.

## GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY

Government Advocacy will position and advance the interests of ski areas in Western Canada, particularly with respect to federal and provincial laws, regulations and policy.

## PEOPLE & TALENT DEVELOPMENT

CWSAA will assist the industry with attracting, retaining, and training passionate people to become future leaders of our industry – ski areas, associate members and wider partners alike.

# Western Canada Industry Performance

Statistics include BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Yukon.



**\$2.1 Billion Economy**  
2016-17 ski area & visitor expenditures.



**9.5 Million Skier Visits**  
2017-18 Western Canada visitation among 90 alpine ski areas.

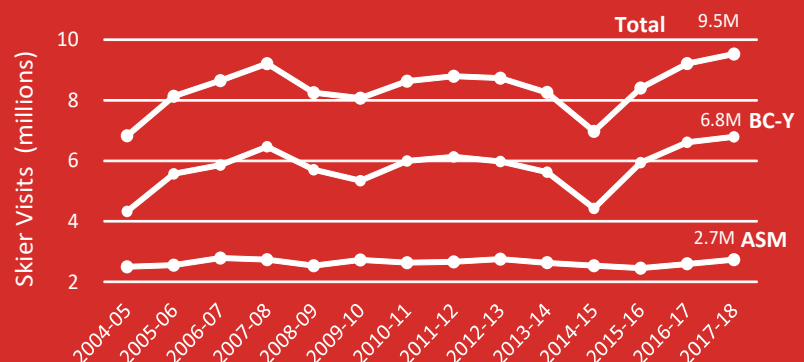


**28,600 Employees**  
\$876M earned wages by 19,000 full-time equivalent positions in 2016-17.



**\$294 million in taxes**  
2016-17 taxes paid include federal (54%), provincial (34%) and local government taxes (12%).

## HISTORICAL ALPINE SKIER VISITS



# Advocacy

CWSAA undertakes advocacy activities aimed at maintaining and establishing a favourable policy and regulatory environment for the ski industry. CWSAA works with individual members and the regions to identify existing challenges and potential threats related to policy and regulation. The following are significant initiatives this year.

## NATIONAL ADVOCACY INITIATIVES

**Workforce** - CWSAA, in collaboration with go2HR, Tourism Canada HR, and peer organizations, continues to press the federal government to increase the available number of employees. This was reinforced by CWSAA in a fall 2018 roundtable meeting with Federal Minister of Tourism Mélanie Joly. Severe labour shortages have been identified by the federal government in a recent report as a barrier to growth for the sector, which has created some optimism for movement by government.

**National Tourism Funding** - CWSAA, in alignment with the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) and other tourism bodies, supports increased marketing funding for Destination Canada and opportunities to drive shoulder visitation. The federal budget in March 2019 both identified tourism as an economic pillar for the economy and allocated new funding, which bodes well for winter tourism in the new strategy expected in late spring 2019.

CWSAA continue to monitor open files including Avalanche Explosives Storage Guidelines, National Parks and Species at Risk legislation.

## ALBERTA ADVOCACY INITIATIVES

**Alberta Energy Costs** - The push for seasonal load tariffs continues. A ski area working group is evaluating the ROI on a partnership to advocate for seasonal tariffs through the new Alberta Utilities Commission regulation process.

**Provincial Election** - A ski industry election brochure was distributed by CWSAA to ski areas to assist engagement in the coming provincial election. Industry statistics and messaging supports individual ski area requests and activity in local ridings.

**Tourism Policy** - CWSAA has communicated to government, in alignment with peer tourism organizations, the value and potential of tourism in the province. This is especially important during campaign development before an election.

**Marketing Investment** - CWSAA supports increased funding for Travel Alberta at each opportunity. Travel Alberta partners directly with ski destinations, and with all Alberta ski areas through the Go Ski Alberta campaign.

**Small Community Areas** - CWSAA has partnered with the Ministry of Tourism to develop a best practices business guide for small community ski areas. It is indicative of the Ministry's recognition of the financial and social contribution of ski areas to all regions of the province.

**OH&S Law** - In the last 12 months, significant new law has been introduced to the workplace. Overviews of the new laws were shared at the ASM Fall Division Meeting.



**Jason Paterson**

Alberta Saskatchewan  
Manitoba Division Chair  
VP Operations, Marmot Basin

## BRITISH COLUMBIA ADVOCACY INITIATIVES

**All-Seasons Resort Policy** - A team of CWSAA ski areas worked closely with the Mountain Resort Branch (MRB) to finalize the updated All-Seasons Resort Policy and provide certainty for land use agreements.

**Reviewable Projects** - A CWSAA working group and the MRB engaged with the Environmental Assessment (EA) Office in the very early stages of the EA review. CWSAA has since submitted its position recommending that EAs for existing resorts continue through the MRB due to the parallel process and their expertise in mountain resorts. A decision is expected summer 2019.

**Tree Anchors** - A CWSAA ski area working group identified best practices that can be utilized for tested trees to assist winch cats.

**Forest Health** - CWSAA is seeking to increase opportunities to protect ski area communities. Wildfire mitigation treatments in interface areas through Forest Enhancement Society funding has been championed, and other initiatives to protect infrastructure and support rural development are being explored.

**Tax Policy** - The consolidated property assessment formula continues to be viewed favourably by government and ski areas. It is going through its prescribed fifth year renewal this spring and is expected to be approved.

**Employee Safety** - Significant data analysis has been conducted with WorkSafeBC to identify injury rates and groupings. Prescriptive tools have been developed with go2HR to reduce incidents and costs of claims.

**Adventure Tourism Policy** - CWSAA and the coalition of 18 Adventure Tourism (AT) sectors has raised the profile of AT with government and achieved its incorporation into the Tourism Ministry's new strategic tourism framework. The needs of the AT sector have been identified in this framework and it supports efforts to improve tenure and business certainty for commercial operators.



**Andy Cohen**

BC-Yukon Division Chair  
General Manager  
Fernie Alpine Resort / RCR



# Safety & Risk

Fostering a safety culture for employees and a safe environment for guests with well managed risk controls is a lead priority for CWSAA and dominates CWSAA's activity.

Significant work related to **Employee Safety** with regulators (eg: WorkSafeBC) has occurred this year on incident data analysis, and practical resource tool development with partners like go2HR. The new Safety Talk resources have been circulated to members and are available through the CWSAA and go2HR websites.

The **Best Practice Guide** for Tubing was prepared by a ski area panel and is now available to members. Numerous best practice guides are under development by committees and will be ready for circulation in the coming year.

New **Lift Safety Signage** has been approved for use. Created by Ontario, these posters will be available for free to ski areas starting this summer thanks to TSBC and AEDARSA support.

Understanding new regulations and facilitating workplace education on **Cannabis** was a significant effort at CWSAA meetings over the past year. By the time the first wave of regulation was enacted, the industry was prepared.

**Kim Jones** has been the enthusiastic chair for the **Risk & Safety Committee**. 2018-19 initiatives included division and conference planning, review of industry signage, employee safety initiatives, cannabis industry position, and fit for duty, among many others.



**Kim Jones**

CWSAA Safety & Risk Committee Chair  
VP & General Counsel, Winsport





# Sustainable Market Growth

Growth in **snowsport participation** is essential to the viability of ski areas. CWSAA has engaged in many initiatives to drive this objective. CWSAA is also facilitating the sharing of best practices for non-snowsport activities as ski areas expand beyond traditional seasonal operations and diversify their product offering.

CWSAA is engaged on **national initiatives** with the Canadian Ski Council (CSC). Focus has been placed on generating one million new snowsport participants, and actively promoting industry participation in national programs. These include: Grade 4&5 SnowPass, Never Ever Days, Canada's Largest Lesson, the new Go Skiing/Go Snowboarding initiative and the Canadian Ski Council research program.

The CSC **Research** Committee, a national committee in which CWSAA is an active participant, has released new analysis for the industry. The foundation of the research program is the National Consumer Satisfaction Survey which feeds into the National Skier Market Segmentation (SNOWid) and CSC Model for Growth. The new SNOWid Intenders study identifies barriers and the opportunities to overcome the obstacles of participation.

A **schools resource** section of the CWSAA website has been developed for ski areas including safety videos and materials for children, and videos and messaging for school officials on the benefits and importance of developing physical literacy and encouraging snowsports in schools. In partnership with EverActive Schools in Alberta, ski-related school teacher aids have been developed and were rolled out in the fall.

A new ski area **Mountain Bike Forum** was introduced in concert with the CWSAA BC-Yukon Fall Division Meeting. Conceived by Mike Manara and largely executed by ski areas, the forum was attended by more than 50 participants and will be hosted again in the fall of 2019.

**Industry marketing committees** executed the Go Ski Alberta and BC Ski Marketing Coop programs this year that leverage provincial dollars and work to increase visitation and snowsport participation.



Representatives from small ski areas in BC, pictured with Nancy Greene



# People & Talent Development



The responsibility for existing **leaders** to actively mentor and inspire the next generation to pick up the mantle of leadership, is a necessity for our industry and the theme of the 2019 Spring Conference.

**Passenger Ropeways Courses** (Lift 151, 152, 153) have been redeveloped in partnership with AEDARSA, TSBC and Selkirk College, and will be piloted at the 2019 Spring Conference.

18 community ski areas received scholarships from the **Small Areas Assistance Fund**, which fosters professional development and best practices across the industry.

The **Employee Retention Best Practices** manual was a significant new resource developed this year in partnership with go2HR. It provides practical implementable guidance to be preferred employers and increase employee retention.

A **New Worker Skills Development Program** for young ski industry employees has been initiated by WinSport through a grant and will be delivered and shared with all ski areas in the 2020-21 season.

Strong attendance at the annual ski area **HR Forum** at Sunshine Village this February provided specific ski-related HR training and final development of Spring Conference HR sessions.

**Alison Crick** of SilverStar champions and chairs the CWSAA **HR Committee** and has represented CWSAA on numerous federal labour files.



**Alison Crick**  
CWSAA HR Committee Chair  
Human Resources Director  
SilverStar Mountain Resort

## SROAM

This spring, CWSAA welcomes to our industry 15 graduates from the **Selkirk College** Ski Resort Operations and Management program - pictured right!

Another 15 students are finishing up their first year, and planning their work placements for next season.



# Core Deliverables

The strategic directives shape the direction for CWSAA, but more than half of CWSAA's energy is put toward the core deliverables. These include CWSAA conferences and events, communications, and resource development and are often the very mediums by which the strategic directives are distributed. Most recent examples include safety resources, employer best practices, cannabis education, and the new Mountain Bike Forum. Industry relevance is paramount and initiatives are anticipated or derived from industry needs. Thanks to many industry partners, all events are executed at cost to maximize industry involvement and avoid increasing membership fees.

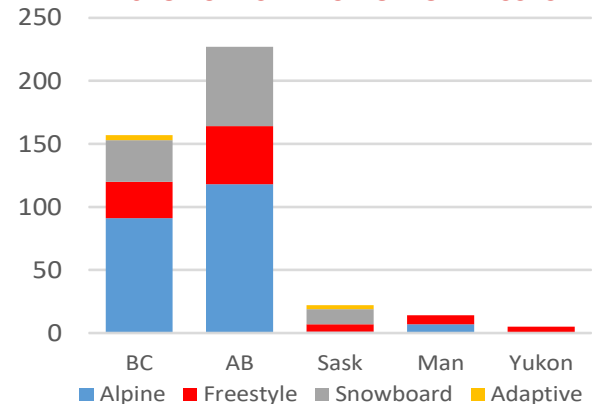
## Competitor Pass

This pass enables promising young ski and snowboard athletes and coaches access to Western Canada's ski and snowboard resorts for the purpose of training and competition. Many athletes compete with the dream of one day representing Canada in Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In 2018-19, 346 athletes and 79 coaches participated in the program, for a total of 425 passes.

*Special thanks to CWSAA Director **Stewart Laver** for coordinating this program.*

2018-19 DISTRIBUTION OF PASSES



**Stewart Laver**

CWSAA Director & Competitor Pass Coordinator

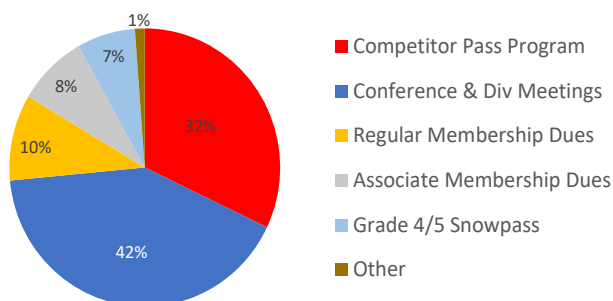
Director of Snow Sports  
Sunshine Village Resort

## Financial Overview

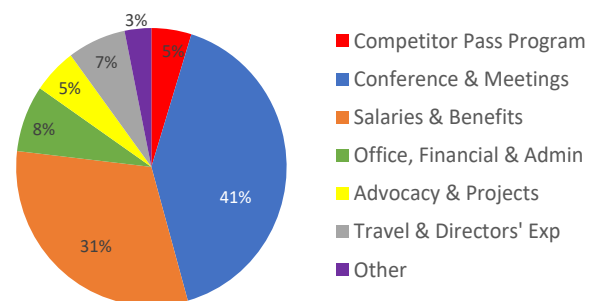
CWSAA is in a positive financial position. Oversight includes monthly financial review by the Board Treasurer, financial statement review by all Directors at Board meetings, and annual review by an external accounting firm.

For detailed Financial Statements please see the CWSAA Members Only website or contact the office.

## Revenues



## Expenses





#### **Canada West Ski Areas Association**

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778.484.5535

[www.cwsaa.org](http://www.cwsaa.org)

## **In Memory of Jimmie Spencer 1926 - 2018**

**CWSAA's President  
& CEO: 1979 - 2011**

