Organizational assets, resources, and processes represent an organization’s capacity (Hall et al., 2003), and the strategic development of these critical areas is referred to as capacity building. In the non-profit sport context, capacity building research is scarce (Millar & Doherty, 2020), though scholars have identified processes associated with effective capacity building (Millar & Doherty, 2016). For example, according to Millar and Doherty (2016) effective capacity building initiatives feature internal forces and external stimuli, a needs assessment, an internal assessment of organizational readiness for capacity building, and then, implementation. Extant capacity building literature predominantly examines community sport organizations (e.g., Chalip, Green, Taks, & Misener, 2017; Macrae, 2017; Millar & Doherty, 2018; 2020), though Casey, Payne, and Eime (2009) did explore Regional Sport Assemblies efforts to improve sport participation, opportunities for physical activity, and related health outcomes with specific populations. This current study extends the capacity building literature by focusing on an initiative that is ongoing at one provincial sport organization (PSO) in Canada. Specifically, researchers and practitioners from the focal PSO are working collaboratively to enhance the PSO's ability to achieve its mission through an improved understanding and appreciation of its coaches.

To better understand the experiences and expectations of the PSO coaches, this study adopted a mixed-method QUAL-QUANT (Creswell & Clark, 2007) case study methodology. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with expert coaches (n=10) who were identified by the PSO as having the experience and credibility to speak about issues facing coaches from across the long-term athlete development spectrum. In one-on-one telephone interviews that lasted approximately 45 minutes each, the expert coaches were asked to reflect on their professional development and the role of the PSO in that development. The interview transcripts were then coded and analyzed independently by the study’s two lead authors following Saldaña (2015). Second, findings from the analysis of the interview transcripts led to the development of a coaches capacity survey. The coaches survey was used to verify themes that emerged during the semi-structured interviews (e.g., the coaches interests in mentoring programs and frustrations with the current testing and competition structures) and to gather actionable information that could inform further capacity building at the PSO. The survey included 25 items. Survey data was analyzed using descriptive and univariate statistics. The survey was completed by 363 coaches who rated broad support for new mentoring initiatives (M = 4.87, SD = 1.66), and rated limited effectiveness of competition structures (M = 3.55, SD = 1.69) and testing standards (M = 4.08, SD = 1.69). Participants also rated capacity challenges regarding access to infrastructure, volunteers, board education and training, and athlete retention. Some variation between coaches from rural areas and more densely populated regions was also observed.

This presentation will review the major findings from the qualitative interviews and share the findings from the coaches survey with a particular focus on differences between coaches from rural and more densely populated areas. This research also contributes to the capacity building literature by focusing on the capacity building process at the provincial level in Canada.