

Backgrounder
Sport Canada: Senior Leaders Forum
Halifax N.S. – October 12, 2007

A. Introduction

At the Senior Leaders Forum on October 12, we have an important opportunity for stimulating dialogue and exchange of ideas with the sport community. The time is right for this kind of conversation. Canada's sport system is changing in exciting ways, including the collective implementation of the *Canadian Sport Policy*, the development of *Canadian Sport for Life*, and the introduction of Podium Canada. In recent years Sport Canada has been building its policy suite and developing its programs. In doing so, there are a number of elements which touch on more than one area – not just excellence or participation, hosting or SFAF – which are deserving of more attention.

These topics are: Trends for Canadian Sport; Becoming a Leading Sport Nation; Accountability: Linking Policy and Program; and Diversity and Inclusiveness. It is our intention to explore aspects of each of these topics, rather than to comprehensively discuss any one in particular.

Accordingly, this paper is intended to provide background information and provoke thinking on each of these topics. We believe that these discussions will enrich our understanding and will contribute to a variety of on-going exercises ranging from the development of the next Sport Canada strategic plan to the Women in Sport Policy review, and from the SFAF 4 to implementing a more strategic approach to hosting.

The discussion in this backgrounder and on October 12 will necessarily be focused on Sport Canada's role within the Canadian sport system. We would encourage you to also think about the issues presented as they relate to the area(s) of sport in which you are involved, be it in a local, provincial/territorial, national or international forum, and to share your perspectives with us.

Draft Agenda

8:30 *Introduction*

- *Overview*
- *Trends for Canadian Sport*

9:15 *Group discussions: Becoming a Leading Sport Nation*

10:15 *Break*

10:30 *Group discussions: Accountability or Diversity*

11:25 *Closing Remarks*

B. Trends for Canadian Sport

Sport Canada's planning context is ever evolving due to numerous external and internal environmental factors, the perceptions of Canadians and emerging trends. Further, the planning context is shaped by the broader Government of Canada priorities, current legislation, and the *Canadian Sport Policy*.

There are a number of factors influencing Sport Canada and the delivery of its programs and activities. In a recent planning exercise, Sport Canada noted the following trends and pressures affecting sport, as well as strengths and challenges as they relate to Sport Canada's environment.

Trends and Pressures Affecting Sport

- Canadians are growing more sedentary and obesity rates have been steadily climbing. The 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey indicated that there were an estimated 500,000 obese children. This statistic emphasizes the importance of improving sport participation and reducing physical inactivity as a means of proactive health care.
- Canadians are not participating in sport at the same levels as they have in the past. According to the Conference Board of Canada's 2005 report of the socio-economic benefits of sport, sport participation has dropped from 45% in 1992 to 34% in 1998 to 31% in 2005. Federal-Provincial/Territorial bilateral agreements have been created to help increase sport participation and development; a collaborative effort that is a result of greater attention to the concerns about declining participation rates.
- Canada's sport performance at the highest international level has improved in winter sports but declined in summer sports. Sport Canada has partnered with the Canadian Olympic Committee, Canadian Paralympic Committee, the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) to create Podium Canada in an effort to further improve Canada's Olympic and Paralympic performance for both the summer and winter sports.
- The Canadian sport system is highly dependent on the support of volunteers. Over two million Canadians are engaged in volunteer work as sport coaches, trainers, administrators or volunteers in other capacities. However, over the past decade there has been a decrease in volunteerism rates that could potentially have a significant impact on volunteerism in sport.
- In 2006, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation identified sport and recreation infrastructure as their first priority. Additionally, communities often look at event hosting opportunities as a means to leverage municipal, provincial and federal investments towards sport and recreation infrastructure. The Government of Canada has an infrastructure program that allows for sport related infrastructure projects, but the program does not have a specific sport budget.

- There is a growing public expectation that non-governmental organizations will be effectively managed and will be increasingly accountable for any government support received.

External Strengths and Challenges

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing public recognition of the positive role sport and physical activity can play in Canadian society. • Increasing federal recognition of sport’s potential for advancing other Government of Canada priorities such as for health, official languages, volunteerism and underrepresented groups e.g. implementation of the Fitness Tax Credit and Sport Participation initiatives. • Existing success of the F-P/T mechanism in developing common vision and leveraged capacity for sport e.g. Canadian Sport Policy and the F-P/T Priorities for Collaborative Action. • Growing strength of F-P/T mechanism, resulting in capacity to address increasingly complex issues e.g. FPTSC work groups, bilateral agreements and ISRC Secretariat. • Growing harmonization and effective leadership among sport system members, contributing to the development of community-driven initiatives e.g. Podium Canada and Long Term Athlete Development initiatives. • Building interest in making conscious, lasting improvements to the Canadian sport system, driven by the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. • Increasing funding parties’ commitment to evidence-based decision making, resulting from new research and data collection processes.
Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing funding expectations from sport system stakeholders regarding the implementation of the Canadian Sport Policy. • Increasing complexity in sport event bidding and hosting requirements and processes, resulting in increased operating and infrastructure costs. • Increasing resource requirements for Canada-wide sport infrastructure. • Existing competition structures not fully aligned with principles of LTAD i.e. some athletes continue to be over-competing and under-training, compromising optimal performance. • Increasing complexities in delivering sport related programs, requiring effective collaboration with all sport system partners. • Increasing requirement to demonstrate sport community commitment to Official Languages. • Growing rates of physical inactivity, resulting in unmet sport participation goals. • Growing investment in sport from other countries, resulting in increased competition for Olympic, Paralympic and World Championship results.

Some questions to consider:

What are the major trends affecting your organization, sport, or service area? How do you see these evolving over the next few years?

In considering the information above, which trends, strengths or challenges do you see as being most important for your organization, sport or service area? For the Canadian sport system? For Sport Canada?

C. Becoming a Leading Sport Nation

The *Sport Canada Strategic Plan 2004-2008* references the vision of becoming a leading sport nation,¹ stating that “Canadian Heritage is striving to establish Canada as a leading sport nation, where all Canadians and their communities enjoy, value and celebrate the benefits of active participation and excellence in sport.” This vision and the strategic plan are clearly rooted in the *Canadian Sport Policy* adopted by all F-P/T governments.

The strategic plan outlines six components important for becoming a leading sport nation:

- Increased sport participation among children and youth, and other identified groups, in a manner consistent with the targets agreed upon by the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport.
- Improved performances by Canadian athletes at Olympic and Paralympic Games and senior world championships, consistent with the athlete performance and sport system targets agreed upon by the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport.
- Enhanced sport development and increased social, cultural and economic benefits through the support of hosting sport events throughout Canada.
- More comprehensive ethically-based sport-specific athlete/participant programming underpinned by the principles of long-term athlete development.
- Expanded and strengthened program and policy collaboration amongst F-P/T governments and the sport community.
- Increased evidence base for policies and programs.

Sport Canada has been actively pursuing each of these components. Through strengthened programs and specific initiatives, significant progress has been made on each of these fronts, including:

- Together with Provincial/Territorial Governments, Sport Canada has adopted the *2007-2012 F/P-T Priorities for Collaborative Action* in support of the *Canadian Sport Policy*.
- Sport Canada has adopted a common approach to supporting targeted excellence in partnership with the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee. Together with National Sport Organizations, we are vigorously pursuing performance goals related to the 2010 Olympics and Paralympics.
- Long Term Athlete Development principles are enumerated in the documents “Canadian Sport for Life” and “No Accidental Champions” and technical experts are working with each NSO to incorporate LTAD principles into athlete and sport development.
- Canada has been a strong leader in the area of anti-doping, both domestically and internationally.
- The Canada Games have been developed and maintained as a strong part of the Canadian sport system, with support from F-P/T governments, National Sport Organizations and the Canada Games Council.

¹ Page 4. See http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/pubs/strat_plan/plan-04-08_e.pdf

- To increase sport participation, Sport Canada has entered into bilateral agreements with every province and territory and is also supporting numerous sport participation development projects with NSOs, MSOs and other stakeholders.
- Sport Canada policies and action plans are now in place on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport; and Sport for Persons with a Disability.

In addition, Canada is often viewed as an “early leader” in emerging fields and sports: witness our nation’s success in new Olympic sports and the lead role played by Canada in the fight against doping. From the time of its creation, the NCCP was a model for the coaching programs in numerous other countries. Canada has also been a leader in the development of sport for athletes with a disability and been proactive in improving sporting opportunities for girls and women – both domestically and around the world. Do these accomplishments mean that we can now consider Canada to be a leading sport nation? Are there any elements which are missing from the list above?

Interpretations of what it means to be a leading sport nation are varied. Some might suggest that Canadian society does not truly value sport and its benefits, in comparison to other countries such as Australia, which appears to have not only a strong culture supporting sport, but also enviable summer Olympic and Paralympic results. We might also observe that Canada is currently compliant with the WADA Code, but that innovations in the area of anti-doping are increasingly challenging to pursue due to increasing resource requirements for testing, monitoring and reporting. Moreover, while fully compliant with the WADA code, Canada only conducts half the tests of those of countries with international (WADA) best practices.

In contrast to the strong discussion of domestic leadership in the strategic plan, the document is silent on how being a leading sport nation might be affected by Canada’s international role. During recent consultations, it was expressed that Canada’s leadership regarding women in sport is increasingly resting on actions taken years ago. Similar arguments might be made for Canada’s leadership regarding sport for athletes with a disability.

Assuming that these caveats are important factors when considering Canada as a leading sport nation and that “we have more work to do” to achieve that status, we need to identify more precisely how to realize the goal. What would it “look like” for Canada to be a leading sport nation? Are there some areas which are more important than others? How should we prioritize our efforts? How will we know when we have arrived?

Some other questions to consider:

What are the parameters that should define Canada as a leading sport nation? How should we measure our progress?

Would you consider Canada to be a leading sport nation? Why or why not? Are we close or far from becoming a leading sport nation?

What should be the balance between Canadian results, participation rates, and thematic expertise (e.g. coaching education, anti-doping, women in sport)?

In what areas should Sport Canada exert leadership in pursuing the vision of a leading sport nation?

What should be the top 5 priorities going forward to become a leading sport nation?

What would it mean for your organization, sport or service area if Canada were a leading sport nation? How important or realistic is it for Canada to lead in your sport or service area?

D. Accountability: Linking Policy and Program

Accountability has long been an important theme for Sport Canada and the federal government's involvement in sport, influenced by important recommendations in *Sport: The Way Ahead* and the *Report of the Core Sport Commissioner*.² Accountability for federal activities is becoming an increasingly important aspect for the Government of Canada. The recent Accountability Act (2006) and the Blue Ribbon Panel on Grants and Contributions underscore the importance of due diligence, program efficiency, increased transparency and demonstration of results for Canadians. There are increasing obligations on the part of Sport Canada and funding recipients to be accountable for the use of public funds and to be able to demonstrate that contributions are being used appropriately and effectively, and are providing value for Canadians.

Accountability has several dimensions, including to ensure that programs are linked to policy priorities, encompassing an inherent obligation to the Canadian public to provide technically sound and ethical programming, and a responsibility to report on the use of public funds. There are typically three layers of accountability in this context: fulfilling program objectives; appropriate use of funds; and supporting related policy priorities. For the purposes of this discussion, the term accountability is used for general application, including but not restricted to the Accountability phase of the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework.

The mission of Sport Canada is "to enhance opportunities for Canadians to participate and excel in sport," with a particular focus on national activities. In order to fulfill this mission, Sport Canada has developed over time a number of policy documents which provide guidance and a framework for delivery. There are three programs used to support Sport Canada objectives: the Sport Support Program, the Hosting Program, and the Athlete Assistance Program. Of these, only the latter is a grant program, meaning that the emphasis is solely on the appropriate distribution of funds, and no further reporting is required (National Sport Organizations are responsible for monitoring and any accountability issues which may arise in the context of an athlete's continued eligibility).

In contrast, the two contribution programs have a suite of reporting or accountability requirements outlined in the Contribution Guidelines, Contribution Agreement, the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (including the National Standards) and/or the Multi-Party Agreement. For example, National Sport Organizations funding as part of the Sport Support Program report on strategic and program priorities, budgets and financial controls, National Standards, Long-Term Athlete Development, coaching, participation development and podium performances (where applicable).

Over time, Sport Canada and contribution recipients have had a variety of types of relationships, characterized by varying degrees of direction, autonomy and negotiation.

² Minister's Task Force on Federal Sport Policy (1992). *Sport: The Way Ahead*. Fitness and Amateur Sport: Ottawa.

J.C. Best (1994). *The Report of the Core Sport Commissioner*. Ottawa.

Some organizations and/or activities have received funding for many years, while others are new to the process. There is also a range of accountability requirements for and within the Sport Support and Hosting Programs. Despite on-going efforts to even out accountability expectations for all contribution recipients, there continues to be a range of expectations between accountability areas, and from program to program.

A significant challenge in managing accountability in the context of the national sport system is that several accountability aspects are highly dependent on the actions of provincial/territorial organizations and/or international federations. For example, in the case of National Sport Organizations with boards of directors representing provincial/territorial members, the organization is limited in its efforts to recruit women or other groups to the board as composition is based on the nominations of the members. Similarly, team selection and consequential national team programs are limited by the international competitive programs offered, either at world championships or major games.

Concerns have been raised to Sport Canada about accountability, particularly as relates to two aspects. First, accountability requirements tend to apply equally to all organizations, regardless of human or financial capacity in the same category of funding (e.g. Hockey Canada and Badminton Canada, or the 2006 Skate Canada International and the 2006 Peter Bakonyi Fencing World Cup) are expected to provide the same level of accountability. Second, sport community members have often called Sport Canada's approach to accountability confusing and frustrating, where it is perceived that not all organizations or projects are subject to the same level of scrutiny and that funding recipients are given a variety of messages ranging from "try harder next time" to warnings of funding suspension, depending on the topic.

The pressures to strengthen a range of accountability requirements come from a variety of sources, including the Blue Ribbon Panel.³ These extend from central agencies for the release of funds to input from public commissions (such as the Commissioner of Official Languages); from international commitments to multilateral instruments (e.g. United Nations conventions, WADA Code, the Brighton Declaration) to sport community constituents including those who advocate for the strengthening of certain accountability dimensions.

The result has been an amalgam of rules, guidelines and suggestions directing the accountability of federal funding for sport in Canada. Each of these tends to have multiple (and different) reporting layers, such as with sport organizations reporting to Sport Canada, which in turn reports to the department, which reports to a central agency. This can also create a domino effect of requirements. In other cases the lines can become blurred.

³ Typically interventions concentrate on a specific aspect of accountability, with some focusing on program outcomes and others on spending practices or ancillary benefits.

For example, National Sport Organizations provide accountability reporting to Sport Canada on excellence programming; those receiving targeted excellence funding are also accountable to Podium Canada, which receives – and reports – on funding to Sport Canada, the COC and the CPC. Another example is the situation around anti-doping: CCES is a signatory to the WADA code, Canada is a signatory to the UNESCO Convention, yet the WADA code outlines responsibilities for governments, and the primary source of CCES funding for meeting the obligations of the WADA code is the Government of Canada. These situations raise the question of how accountability that extends beyond the contribution agreement should be handled.

In this environment it can be challenging to determine the best accountability approaches. We may consider some elements to be absolutely necessary, while others are important but not critical. This is where debates enter about what should be considered a part of “doing business” and what should be funded separately, about the relative importance of accountability aspects, and whether incentives and/or punitive consequences should be used.

Once the decision is made to support and/or fund an area, accountability considerations become important. What are the results to be achieved? What is required, what is desired, what is preferred? What is an acceptable level of achievement? The interplay of accountability measures is also an essential consideration. Some elements in combination may create an unacceptable situation, while others may be undesirable but tolerable.

Some other questions to consider:

From your point of view, what are the most important aspects of accountability? Where should Sport Canada be focusing attention?

Are incentives or penalties more effective in managing accountability? Why?
Which accountability aspects do you think should be connected directly to funding?
Why? Which accountability should absolutely not be connected directly to funding?

Is it better to continue a topic-by-topic approach to accountability reporting or is it important to consolidate these measures as much as possible? What would be the desired effect?

What are the most important accountability measures for your organization? Why?
Which do you struggle with the most?

What other efforts (e.g. with provinces and territories, or internationally) should Sport Canada lead to influence the ability of national organizations to improve accountability in key areas such as performance development or to promote the participation of designated groups?

E. Diversity and Inclusiveness

Diversity is becoming an increasingly “hot topic”, not only with respect to sport, but also in Canadian society and world-wide. Given that the number of diversity considerations in Canadian society are multiplying, the need for Sport Canada to clarify its intentions and expectations towards diversity is becoming ever more important.

Sport Canada often addresses the topic of diversity – either directly or indirectly – in its policies and programs, however there is not necessarily a common approach to diversity issues. Certain groups are identified as being “under-represented” within the Canadian sport system, and funding recipients are therefore encouraged to work to reduce barriers and/or offer services for these groups. There are varying interpretations as to whether this means more participants, or changes in participant demographics. To date the groups identified include women, persons with a disability, Aboriginal Peoples and minority official language communities (NSOs have the flexibility to identify other groups to include for implementation of the National Standards). There is on-going discussion as to whether visible minorities or new Canadians should be included as a group, along with socio-economically disadvantaged families or individuals.

Over time, Sport Canada has moved from an equality-based approach to an access and equity philosophy, and the groups that are addressed by diversity provisions has expanded and changed. Both the *Canadian Sport Policy* and the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* refer to facilitating the participation of under-represented groups in the Canadian sport system. The *Canadian Sport Policy* furthermore speaks to the goal of increasing equity and access for under-represented groups. This rationale has been used in the recent diversity policies for Aboriginal Peoples and persons with a disability.⁴ As has been noted during a number of consultations on different topics, there does not appear to be a logical approach towards the priority accorded to any one diversity group, and these priorities are perceived to change over time.

Diversity can be conceptualized in a variety of ways. Cunningham & Fink (2006)⁵ use Thomas’ definition, where diversity is “any mixture of items characterized by differences and similarities.” In contrast, the European Union defines diversity as “a set of conscious practices which acknowledge and tolerate difference”⁶ (where difference is presumably defined similar to diversity above). These definitions describe different aspects of the same phenomenon – in one case the condition and in the second an ideal response – however, in both cases, there are no set parameters for groups to be included in diversity considerations.

⁴ It is interesting to note that while these policies have built on the ‘equity for under-represented groups’ approach, these have philosophically stressed development through sport concepts for these populations. Action plans associated with these policies however have tended to reinforce current activities and strategies (i.e. what we already do, thus excluding potential new approaches such as development through sport activities).

⁵ Cunningham, George and Fink, Janet S. (2006) “Diversity Issues in Sport and Leisure.” *Journal of Sport Management*, vol.4 #20. Human Kinetics; Champaign, U.S.A..

⁶ [http://www.stop-discrimination.info/6423.0.html?&no_cache=1&mc_glossary\[categories\]=13](http://www.stop-discrimination.info/6423.0.html?&no_cache=1&mc_glossary[categories]=13)

Diversity is often examined through the relationship of a minority group (or groups) to a majority or dominant group,⁷ typically expressed with respect to either equality or equity. While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, equality involves direct comparison to a mainstream or dominant group (i.e. women should be equal to men). In contrast, equity does not require direct comparison, and is based on principles of justice, impartiality and fairness,⁸ for an identified group (i.e. women should be treated equitably within the sport system).

Concerns have been expressed during recent consultations regarding the use of the term “under-represented” as it implies that the degree of representation is more important than the lack of access or presence of discrimination which has led to that situation, and that once adequate representation has been achieved there is no longer an issue. Furthermore, some have argued that identified groups are in fact over-represented in some sectors and therefore should not be subject to proactive measures.

The groups which have been identified and selected for diversity considerations by Sport Canada appear to have benefited from a strong ‘voice’ within the sport community and/or government. While given Canada’s social history it is unsurprising that women were identified as a key population in the 1980s and that persons with a disability and Aboriginal Peoples came into focus during the 1990s, it is not necessarily clear how a group becomes a priority for diversity considerations. Pragmatically, this may be why some organizations are moving towards a “managing diversity approach” where the behaviours which promote diversity are encouraged, rather than an exclusively group-by-group approach.

Other benefits to an overall diversity approach are raised in *Sport and Multiculturalism: a Dialogue*⁹. This study reported that the prevalent sport community view was that the provision of programs open to all was sufficient to accommodate ethnic and racial diversity in the sport system. However, in practice, it appears that these measures are inadequate to foster participation and engagement. Furthermore, the authors noted that identity appears to be dynamic – in other words, identity changes over time and overlaps with other identities (origin, nationality, race, gender, disability, profession, etc.). These elements together suggest that the focus to date on creating opportunity for specific groups may not be addressing the needs of potential participants.

During recent consultations on women in sport, participants stressed the need to further investigate diversity, and rejected the idea of comparison to a dominant norm, but rather expressed a strong desire to be appreciated for the skills and value brought to the sport system, not (necessarily) as a woman, Aboriginal person, person with a disability, etc. Interestingly, the draft *2007 Federal Disability Report* indicates a similar change in thinking with respect to Canadians with a disability, moving away from integration (defined in this case as with the norm, and de facto emphasizing change on the part of

⁷ Often assumed to be upper-middle class white males.

⁸ American Heritage Dictionary On-line; the Concise Oxford English Dictionary.

⁹ Donnelly, Peter & Nakamura, Yuka. (2006) *Sport and Multiculturalism: A Dialogue*. The study was supported by PCH.

persons with a disability) to inclusion, where society must also change in order to improve accessibility.

The philosophical basis for promoting diversity may also affect strategies chosen and receptivity to initiatives. For example, one is a rights-based approach, which is positioned in the context of legal obligations (e.g. under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms). Another is from an ethical or moral standard where sport is understood as a human right. An utilitarian approach suggests that diversity is important in order to access a great pool of talent, experience and perspectives. Diversity may also be considered to be an integral part of sport for development and peace, a concept which is gaining traction internationally, where sport is used as a framework for individual development, strengthening social capital, and learning respect for rules and other players, coaches and officials.

Some additional questions to consider:

How should Sport Canada be interested in diversity? Is it about a group being under-represented, or should it be about every Canadian's right to experience and benefit from sport? What would this mean?

- What is the value of diversity? Having an overall diversity approach?
- When should specific groups be identified, and how?
- Is a continued focus on equity appropriate? How could this be strengthened?
- Is a continued focus on access appropriate? Is offering an opportunity sufficient?
- Is a continued focus on under-representation appropriate? What is the representation of a group being compared to? How does a group get identified as being under-represented? When does a group stop being under-represented? Does that mean that there is no longer any interest? How else might we determine whether a group has full access to sport?

What should be the objectives of Sport Canada's approach to diversity?

- More participants? Changing demographics? Changed culture of sport? Fewer complaints?
- More opportunities for participants in all areas of sport? Changes to the ways organizations do business?

Should *all* organizations be required to advance *all* diversity areas? Should some organizations be targeted for certain areas? How many areas are "reasonable" to pursue at any one time? How should areas be prioritized?

Should the expectations be the same for each organization? Should organizations be able to focus on "relevant" groups? How should this be determined?

What rewards should there be for demonstrable action or progress? Consequences for lack of demonstrable action or progress?