



Canadian Association
for the Advancement
of Women and Sport
and Physical Activity

Association canadienne
pour l'avancement
des femmes du sport et
de l'activité physique

CAAWS is pleased to make this submission to the 2010 and Beyond Panel. As a leader in Canadian sport and physical activity, CAAWS fosters quality experiences and equitable support for girls and women. It has a vision to see a sport and physical activity system where girls and women are actively engaged. CAAWS offers a number of services, programs and resources to a variety of clients, including sport and physical activity organizations, teachers, coaches, health professionals and recreation leaders. CAAWS works in close co-operation with government and non-government organizations on activities and initiatives that advocate for positive change for young girls and women in the sport and physical activity communities.

1. What strategies need to be implemented to improve the international performances of Canadian athletes, including ensuring the development of a stream of talented and well trained Paralympic athletes at the international level?

Women and Sport Policy

From a CAAWS perspective the recently released revised Women and Sport Policy *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* provides some valuable information. There is some renewed direction for the leadership and programs of Canadian Heritage (Sport Canada) in promoting and developing a strengthened sport system where women and girls are full, active and valued participants and leaders, experiencing quality sport and equitable support.

If the directions stated in this policy were adopted/implemented by other sport organizations involved in the high performance system it could greatly improve the international performances of Canadian athletes, especially the female athletes as well as the experiences of female coaches and other leaders.

The number of women trained as coaches and actively coaching – particularly in high performance contexts – remains persistently low. The limited information available regarding women in other roles, notably within the governance of sport organizations or as technical leaders and officials, indicates that the experiences and skills of women are not being optimized in these domains either. Also, the rate of participation of girls as athlete participants continues to be significantly lower than that of boys.

Other sectors of society have noted that increasing the engagement of women can lead to positive results. A recent studyⁱⁱⁱ of Fortune 500 companies found that those with the highest percentages of women on their boards outperformed those with the lowest percentages of women. Companies with at least three female directors outperformed the others. A similar European studyⁱⁱⁱⁱ reinforces these findings, noting that 30% appears to be the critical point at which the presence of women makes a positive difference. Interviews with companies with significant gender diversity showed that these organizations have measures in place to facilitate career flexibility and work-life balance, as well as leadership support such as access to mentors, networks, coaching and training.

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Sport community consultations have highlighted the potential to realize similar benefits for the Canadian sport system through increased engagement of women. Stakeholders consistently highlighted the need to “do things differently” to recruit, develop, and retain women in sport, including the potential to re-recruit women into similar or other sport roles after a hiatus, e.g. to raise a family.

This policy is founded on the belief that efforts to improve conditions for women and girls in sport will not only extend the benefits of sport to women and girls and facilitate their personal development, they will also improve sport experiences for all participants. It is therefore in the interests of all sport system stakeholders, including men, women and organizations, to work towards a strengthened sport system for women and girls.

The objective of the policy is to foster sport environments – from playground to podium – where women and girls, particularly as *athlete participants*, *coaches*, *technical leaders and officials*, and as *governance leaders* are provided with:

Quality sport experiences; and

Equitable support by sport organizations.

The implementation of the policy will therefore result in a continuously improving sport system where:

- Women and girls are actively engaged within Canadian sport as *athlete participants*, from playground to podium;
- Women are actively engaged within Canadian sport as *coaches*, *technical leaders and officials* and are also supported to progress within international organizations as *technical leaders and officials*;
- Women are actively engaged as *governance leaders* (both as key volunteers and senior administrative staff) of Canadian sport organizations and are also supported to progress within international sport organizations.

Addressing Homophobia in sport

Canada is a leader in promoting a sport environment that is safe and welcoming. Harassment, bullying, violence and homophobia make sport exclusive and unsafe, and undermine the powerful potential of sport.

Part of CAAWS' mandate is to promote participation in sport by girls and women. Homophobia in sport is often an obstacle to participation, presenting barriers and challenges to individuals, both homosexual and heterosexual. In particular, many girls and women shy away from sport out of fear they will be perceived as lesbians. Homophobia affects coaches, athletes and other leaders as it can get in the way of the focus required for successful performance. The need to hide your identity or deal with harassment can use up valuable energy that is better used for performance.

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Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Canadian Sport For Life (CS4L)

The Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) system needs to be sure to address the differences that are needed to keep girls and women actively engaged in sport. LTAD should be linked to the education systems of the provinces and territories. Physical education in schools should be linked to the LTAD and delivered by qualified coaches and physical educators who can teach proper technique and develop athletic skills in girls and boys.

2. Would changes to the design, structure, accountability, governance and/or leadership of high performance sport in Canada help to deliver on these strategies and build on the positive momentum in high performance sport that has been created over the past several years?

Yes, changes to the design, structure, accountability, governance and leadership of high performance sport in Canada need to be made. We need strong independent leadership that has a vision for high performance sport in Canada that avoids overlap and duplication and that works in collaboration. We need a system that includes and engages all participants.

Recently we have seen that if we give female athletes the opportunities and support they need to train and compete our female athletes bring home the medals. At the 2006 Turin Winter Olympics women won 2/3 of Canada's medals. As well we need to continue to actively engage our female coaches, technical officials and paid and volunteer leaders. When we bring a diverse support system for athletes we give them opportunities to learn from different perspectives.

3. If so, what approaches to governance and leadership should be considered in order to improve the high-performance system? In responding to this question, please consider what sort of relationship should exist between the major funding partners of high performance sport in Canada.

The following principles would be entrenched within the design, structure, accountability, governance and leadership of the high performance system, 2010 and beyond:

- Gender equity would see that all women are actively engaged in the high performance system in whatever capacity they choose.
- Sport would run like a business.
- Independent decision-making, strategic leadership and governance would forge a common vision for high performance sport.
- A "one window" approach to sport in Canada would be supported by strategic partnerships which would link the system to common sectors (i.e.: health, justice, education, sport) and at all governmental levels (municipal, provincial/territorial, federal) as well as the distribution of funding and the needs for reporting.
- The system would be accountable to all stakeholders with regular ongoing communication.
- Administration of funding would be responsive and timely.
- The ability to identify and correct mandate overlap, systemic duplication and allocate funding support accordingly would enable the sport system to operate outside political barriers such as: elections, the House not sitting, or signature delays in the Minister's office.
 - Sharing of best practices at all levels of high performance sport would be a common practice (ex: sport science, games preparation, environmental assessment and preparation, post-games debriefing, talent identification, etc.).

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- Transparency would be entrenched within the system by staffing with those that have a proven track record of developing high performance athletes, coaches and programs, rather than using principals that currently represent stakeholder organizations.

4. How can service delivery of high performance programming to athletes be improved? Service delivery programming includes components such as:

Service delivery programming includes components such as:

a. Coaching and technical leadership

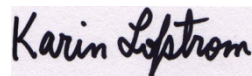
High performance sport needs to be able to recruit and retain women coaches and technical leaders. Programs that mentor and development women coaches (CAC Women and Coaching program, CCAA Women's Apprentice Coaching Program) and technical officials along with women and leadership development opportunities (CAAWS women and leadership program including Women on Boards resources) need to be continued.

b. The athlete's training environment; and

Athletes need to be training in a sport environment that is safe and welcoming so addressing issues of homophobia in sport would improve the environment for athletes, coaches and other team members.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the 2010 and Beyond panel. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information

Sincerely,



Karin Lofstrom

Executive Director

ⁱ Joy, L., N.M. Carter, H.M. Wagner and S. Narayanan (2007). *The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards*. Catalyst Inc.

ⁱⁱ Desvaux, G., S. Devillard-Hoellinger and P. Baumgarten (2007). *Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver*. Paris: McKinsey and Company.