

Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association

2010 and Beyond

One of the disadvantages of working in a smaller national sport organization is that this disadvantage can sometimes become an advantage. As we have much to do, and precious little time to do it, this means that we are often finalizing submission drafts at the 11th hour. In this case, we were able to review the draft submissions of a number of other constituencies and in doing so, can avoid repeating, in detail, a number of the recommendations made to the Panel within those submissions.

While our focus is wheelchair sport, the recommendations that follow are largely systemic and do not apply to wheelchair and/or Paralympic sports only.

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?

Audit

- Conduct a comprehensive review/evaluation of the impact of inclusion/integration on the delivery of programs and services to athletes with a disability and, ultimately, to the performance of these athletes at the international level. This audit should include information on the following:
 - does the governance structure of able-bodied NSOs link with provincial wheelchair (or disability) sport organizations?
 - does this linkage ensure seamless delivery of programs and services to athletes with a disability through LTAD?
 - is there a formal provision ensuring a voice and vote for athletes with a disability and their programs at the national level?

Coaching

- Provide a fast-track program for retiring athletes to achieve coaching certification that includes intensive coach seminars conducted by 'expert' coaches, educators and sport scientists.
- Better align CAC with CPC to support sports in completing coach education programs.
- Ensure that all sports implement Comp-Intro and Comp-Dev modules specific to Paralympic athletic training (at a minimum generic but preferably sport specific) so that able-bodied sport coaches are provided with knowledge of Paralympic sports and able to support an athlete with a disability in a mixed training environment.

IST

- Develop a network of IST support services at each CSC with staff hired and trained to work, specifically, with athletes with a disability.
- Knowledge retention/development – provide scholarships and research grants to post-secondary students to develop knowledge related to disability sports.
- Host a Paralympic Sport Leadership Conference dedicated to national and international delegates from coaching, sport science, management and leadership.

Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association

2010 and Beyond

National Paralympic Centre – ‘Bricks and Mortar’

- Identify one CSC as a National Paralympic Centre that acts a centralized venue for:
 - sport technology research related to Paralympic sports;
 - coach education;
 - training camps;
 - event hosting;
 - IST expertise;
 - research.

Lifestyle Support

- Athletes in Canada receive insufficient support in the areas of daily living and training, retirement and career transition. While there is recognition of the significance of these services as an aspect of the performance package, the programs that are offered by the COC/CPC/CSC are fragmented, underutilized and largely ineffective. Coordinate these services into one, partnering with Athletes CAN, pool the resources and have a single, targeted delivery mechanism.

Talent Identification

- **PARTNERSHIPS!** The new millennium brought with it the introduction of a new recruitment and retention program for wheelchair sports in Canada called Bridging the Gap – Getting Physically Active (BTG). Delivering four core sports (wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball, tennis and athletics), BTG was pioneered in BC and has now been successfully expanded throughout Canada. This expansion has happened because of strong partnerships between the CWSA and its provincial partners and national partners Tennis Canada and the Wheelchair Basketball Canada.

Tapping into many “piggy banks” has been required to support the program, including SPDP, Heritage, Trillium, Ronald McDonald, Provincial Governments, Gaming, Grants and Foundations, Fundraising etc;

We are recommending that one or two major initiatives, such as Bridging the Gap, that target national talent identification for all Paralympic sports receive the “seal of approval” from the CPC, Sport Canada and OTP. While flexibility is required in how the program(s) is delivered (particularly with different disability groups) the basic premise of the program works in the recruitment, retention and development of athletes with a disability through the rehab and community setting. Awareness components of the program touch the entire system, including education, from grass roots to post-secondary. It is effective **partnerships** that make this program work, with municipalities, facilities, community centres, schools and universities.

At its core, BTG relies on building relationships and persistent follow up. Athletes are often identified relatively early as having promise in a particular sport and, when they are ready (readiness is key), can move into development programs.

Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association

2010 and Beyond

- 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?**

“One Window”

- As has been articulated very well in both the Team Sport Coalition and Summer Sport Caucus submissions, we strongly support the amalgamation of existing agencies (Sport Canada, OTP and CAC) or development of a single, independent high performance agency that provides a “one window” approach to sport leadership in Canada. Ensure funding for high performance sport is directed through the Agency and linked to planning, achievement of established objectives and performance excellence. The Agency would look to best practices throughout the World that effectively coordinate leadership, administration, financial management and control, performance planning, ISTs, marketing and international event hosting.
- It is essential that the Agency have a Paralympic division that secures experts in Paralympic sport to advise and support Paralympic sports.

Inclusion/Integration

- Inclusion/integration at the national level has worked reasonably well in some sports and not well at all in others. High performance athletes are high performance athletes, whether able-bodied or athletes with a disability. However, the supports that are required may be different and must not be dismissed. In addition, the linkage from “grass roots” (which is most often a rehab centre in our case) to high performance is dramatically different for wheelchair sports.

Able-bodied PSOs do not have the time, resources, expertise, desire or passion required to recruit and develop athletes with a disability from the rehab centre to the national level. Ensuring that the disability sport organizations at the provincial level have adequate resources to deliver wheelchair sport programming to a variety of sports *and* fostering strong partnerships between the disability based and able-bodied PSOs will strengthen the system and provide the best opportunity for athletes to achieve success, at whatever level they choose.

- 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.**

- In the short term, the COC/CPC, Sport Canada, OTP and CAC need to establish a framework that clearly identifies responsibilities and jurisdiction. In the longer term, the Agency would have clearly defined responsibilities and jurisdiction, in collaboration with the COC/CPC and other major games stakeholders.

Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association

2010 and Beyond

- COC/CPC, while maintaining their autonomy, need to be better connected in order to provide seamless service delivery leading up to the Olympic/Paralympic Games. There are redundancies leading up to the Games that are particularly distracting for able-bodied NSOs that are delivering both Olympic and Paralympic programming. Keep the bureaucracy simple, single-layered and expert-driven!

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

Coaching and Technical Leadership

- Ensure that all targeted sports have sufficient resources to hire High Performance Directors (HPD) with strong skills in the area of **planning**. Emphasis should be placed on effective planning skills and resources made available for training, such as specific sessions from technical advisors that are experts in planning. Partner up and host collective sessions in effective planning.
- Use the experts at the Agency to contribute to the hiring process of high performance personnel, including HPDs and Head Coaches.

Athlete Training Environment

- More and better facilities! Build purpose-built training and research facilities, e.g. Pacific Institute of Sport Excellence that are fully accessible, including proper width of all doors, accessible toilets and showers, etc;
- Particularly in wheelchair sport, we seem always to be relying on facility “leftovers,” due to facility manager’s fears of damage to gym floors. Floors can be fixed, if necessary, and communities and venues that receive public dollars to build and maintain their facilities must be strongly encouraged to make these facilities available to wheelchair sports.

Direct Support to Athletes

- Scholarships that keep Canadian athletes in Canada, retaining not only their athletic ability within our system, but their post graduate expertise as well. We cannot continue to lose our best and brightest to North America’s “land down under” that offers significant athletic scholarships.
- In the case of athletes with a disability, many will lose badly needed disability benefits when they become carded athletes. Working with Health Canada to ensure that an athlete can compete for Canada without fear of losing these benefits is essential.

Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association

2010 and Beyond

5. How should performance targets be set for the 2014 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games and the 2016 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, and beyond?

- Team sport targets and individual sport targets should be established independent of one another and should be divided into performance outcomes and performance goals, supported by comprehensive quadrennial and annual planning and evaluation. Separate process from product!
- Developing performance systems that support optimal performance outcomes (medals) must be encouraged. Achieving stated performance outcomes should allow sports to be rewarded with top-up funding that could be shared with athletes and staff as 'bonuses.'
- Developing performance systems may not always result in a medal but may be excellent in building for future medals.

6. What strategies should be undertaken to develop future HP resources, including the replacement of the \$11M/year from VANOC and \$5M from Sport Canada that are sun-setting after the 2010 Winter Games?

- In the case of Paralympic sports, the sum of the parts is greater than the whole. Targeting specific corporations in support of Paralympic sport is the mandate of the CPC. However, many sponsors see supporting the CPC as a means of supporting wheelchair rugby or wheelchair tennis. Indirectly it does, of course. However, it has little direct impact on high performance programming. Working with the CPC as a collective of sports with marketable opportunities could increase available resources to both the CPC and the sports they represent. This would also help alleviate confusion in the marketplace, thereby further increasing the resources available.

Whether it's cohabiting in a common building at the national or provincial level, meeting and sharing ideas with groups like Sport Matters and the Summer Sport Caucus or working effectively within our individual sport communities, at the end of the day, so much of what we do now, and hope to do in the future, relies on **partnerships and collaboration!**

Respectfully submitted,

Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association