

2010 and Beyond Panel: Perspectives from the Canada Games Council and the Coaching Association of Canada

Introduction

Given the short timelines provided to respond to the call for papers, this submission to the 2010 and Beyond Panel represents the preliminary views and experiences of the senior management of the Canada Games Council (CGC) and the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC). We wish to clearly signal to the Panel our belief that our organizations can and should be part of the solution to “chart a course for high performance sport in Canada that builds on our current success and sets a bold vision for the future.” At the same time, we acknowledge that details on how best to achieve the alignment that is critical to the success of this process requires additional work and, ultimately, the approval of our respective boards of directors. In this spirit, we present a number of ideas that show our commitment to this important dialogue and to finding the solution that is best for Canadian sport and its participants.

Relevance of Our Perspectives

The perspectives contained in this submission draw on our daily experiences as sport leaders whose organizations are the *only two* national organizations whose mandate agreements are approved by all Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport. This unique situation positions our organizations as primary sport development vehicles strategically situated at the ‘core’ of Canada’s sport system. CGC and CAC form that essential bridge between national and provincial/territorial sport, which is so important to the success and sustainability of high performance sport. It is a bridge that enables us to connect with and have an impact upon virtually every part of our sport system.

Our perspectives incorporate our concept of high performance sport, which we define as *‘the pathway from recruitment of young talent through, on average, ten years of development in an enhanced training and competition environment, leading to a career at the national and international level’*. This definition implies that high performance sport should include programs and activities for talent identification and recruitment, and a system of talent development extending over approximately 10 years for those identified athletes, ultimately leading to a professionally managed national team program. Without such a comprehensive approach, high performance sport in Canada will not achieve its potential. We strongly believe that integral to ensuring that Canada’s high performance system is sustainable and world class is the need to address the continuum of athlete development.

Further, the perspectives take note of our organizations’ relationships and linkages with many of the sport system’s partners, including federal and provincial/territorial governments, multi-sport organizations, national sport organizations, provincial/territorial sport organizations, and national and provincial/territorial coaching organizations.

Finally, an examination of our respective mandates clearly demonstrates the relevance of our organizations to high performance sport.

The Canada Games are charged with developing athletic excellence and increasing the number and quality of next generation national and international participants. The Canada Games provide a vital link through which sport development on the domestic level can flourish and are the catalyst for increased provincial/territorial sport activity. The Games also contribute immensely to nation building, community

development, citizen (volunteer) engagement, diversity, inclusion, culture, healthy living, youth, and many other areas that matter to Canadians.

CAC has the responsibility to lead coaching development across all sports and at all levels of the Canadian sport system. CAC is currently re-vamping the National Coaching Certification Program to bring it up-to-date with current education theory and practice, and to ensure that it is complementary to Long-Term Athlete Development. At the high performance end, CAC initiatives include the development of a new curriculum for the National Coaching Institutes, establishing standards for university coaching degrees, and forming partnerships with Own The Podium and national sport organizations on succession planning and professional development for national-level coaches.

To create a 'better way' for sport after 2010 and to ensure a sustainable and world-class high performance system, the perspectives of CGC and CAC are central to the discussion and dialogue of the Panel.

A Better Way: Principles on which the Canadian Sport System should be Based

The **high performance system is defined** as *'the pathway from recruitment of young talent through, on average, ten years of development in an enhanced training and competition environment, leading to a career at the national and international level'*. This definition implies that high performance sport should include programs and activities for talent identification and recruitment, and a system of talent development extending over approximately 10 years for those identified athletes, ultimately leading to a professionally managed national team program.

Using this definition for high performance sport, and based on our experience as sport leaders, we have developed key principles that need to be tested against the development of a "Better Way" for Canada's high performance sports system. The application of these principles will ensure a sustainable and successful high performance system, one where all jurisdictions can see themselves engaged. The principles encourage the development of the 'whole' versus the individual parts of our system.

Without them, a sustainable and the best world-class high performance system in Canada will not be achieved.

Principle One: Governance: Independent and Autonomous

This principle addresses the need for clear roles and responsibilities where a single entity is responsible and accountable for transparent decision making within high performance sport.

Principle Two: Strong Leadership: Expertise and Authority

This principle takes aim at the current divided leadership model in order to enable the sport system to excel at the whole, not just the parts. Canada's high performance system must be expert-led and free of political interference, and must have the authority to allocate resources based on high performance objectives developed within an ethical framework.

Principle Three: Alignment: Collaboration and Partnerships

This principle addresses the importance of collaboration and partnerships to ensure alignment of sport from playground to podium under the Canadian Sport for Life umbrella. This includes vertical alignment from community clubs, to provincial/territorial sport teams, to national teams, as well as horizontal alignment of service providers such as Games organizations, coaching, and Canadian Sport Centres, to name a few.

Principle Four: Valuing All Sport: Balancing Inclusion and Excellence

This principle addresses the need to create a sport system that is inclusive and supports excellence at every step along the way. It emphasizes the importance of valuing everyone in the system and ensuring all jurisdictions can contribute. It ensures gender equity and provides opportunities for disadvantaged groups that are pursuing excellence. CGC and CAC work with both an excellence framework and a participation framework. Increasing participation and increasing excellence in every province and territory is part of the way to enhance the objectives of the Beyond 2010 Panel. The result of this key principle is a strengthened pan-Canadian sport system.

Principle Five: Sport as a Public Benefit

This principle addresses sport as a public asset that reaches from backyards and local playing fields to Canada Games competition and national and international championships, and ultimately has the potential to serve as a nation-wide unifying tool. It builds stronger citizens and communities and recognizes that high performance athlete role models can influence attitudes toward healthy living and physical activity, while also inspiring youth to dream and excel in sport or life in general. It influences the value that Canadians place on sport.

Principle Six: Streamlined Administration: Efficient and Effective

This principle addresses the importance of operating in a lean, efficient, and accountable manner, ensuring that resources are appropriately targeted at the delivery end and focused on athlete/coach performance needs.

Addressing the Panel's Questions

Question One: 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?

*At the center of any strategy is the athlete and coach, or a group of athletes with a team of coaches. This is the fundamental piece around which we have organized our strategies. In addressing this question, we have focussed on our collective experience and knowledge and identified what we believe to be the **key gaps** in the current sport system and which, therefore, are the key strategies that must be enhanced if high performance sport in Canada is to improve and be sustainable. These gaps should meet both the test of the principles and the definition of high performance sport cited earlier in our submission.*

Strategy One: Improvement of talent recruitment and talent development

The world's top sporting countries have systems that recruit and identify talent for their high performance sport programs. These countries generally make a connection from playground to podium

that allows them to build larger pools of trained athletes to select from and move to the next level of competition. Because Canada's sport's system does not have the vertical integration it needs, it prohibits us from building the larger pool of talent we want and need if we expect to sustain our high performance results in the future. Since it takes 10 years to develop an athlete, we need to establish the system that supports the athlete continuum. This strategy would examine the linkages between provincial/territorial and national programs, the creation of sport schools, and the development of talent identification programs. It would ensure consistent delivery of the Canadian Sport for Life model across all sports and support the integration of service delivery across all sports.

Strategy Two: Improvement of promotion and communication and media coverage of high performance sport

This strategy acknowledges that promotion, communication, and media coverage as they relate to "amateur" sport are virtually absent within the current sport system, with the notable exception of Quebec and several national sport organizations. What is called for is significant improvement of the status quo. To enhance high performance sport in Canada and the pool of athletes ready to go to the next level, the profile of sport across Canada must be enhanced. It demands strategies whereby Canadians can **see, read, and hear** about amateur sport more than ever before. Improvement here will also showcase all that sport can bring to Canadian society. It is only through increasing amateur sport's profile that sustainable corporate and public support throughout the athlete continuum can be achieved.

Strategy Three: Improvement of working conditions and salary support for coaches to service the athletes from the talent identification and talent development levels up to national teams

This strategy addresses issues identified most recently in "The Report on the Status of Coaches in Canada" (CAC, 2009), which found that only 45% of the coaches of high performance athletes were full-time coaches, 53% are making less than \$20,000 per year from their primary coaching position, and the job of coaching Canada's high performance athletes is a secondary occupation for 45% of the coaches.

In short, there is an enormous gap between what must be in place and what is currently in place. It is essential that we have a dedicated core of full-time, qualified coaches to provide the guidance athletes need.

Strategy Four: Improved athlete/coach planning and monitoring of training and competition

This strategy addresses the need for a planning and monitoring process to improve the effectiveness of athlete/coach training and competition programs. Tied to this is the issue of accountability from the perspective of national sport organizations, provincial/territorial sport organizations, coaches, and athletes against pre-determined objectives. Also addressed is the issue of athletes who train on their own, injured athletes, and how to improve the impact of Integrated Support Teams. The leadership group responsible for high performance sport needs to be highly expert in sport science and practice to ensure optimal athlete preparation.

Strategy Five: Improvement in facility development and access

This strategy addresses the continual need to inventory, assess, and improve Canada's sport infrastructure capacity. It addresses a major current gap in the high performance system that relates to appropriate access to adequate facilities by athletes and coaches throughout the high performance

continuum. With limited resources, it requires strategic approaches in identifying where new infrastructure should be built.

Strategy Six: Improved training environments

This strategy recognizes that athletes and coaches need to work in an environment that supports excellence, with training partners, sport science and medicine support, recovery and regeneration facilities, and optimal training time at reasonable hours of the day. Also, the life balance needs of athletes, such as work, school, and social interaction, need to be part of this high performance environment. Although varying from sport to sport, this strategy requires that the conditions provided at the training centre, club, or national team training location are conducive to excellence.

Strategy Seven: Improved competition

This strategy addresses the major gap that exists throughout the athlete development continuum in providing the level of competition required to sustain high level performances. It ensures that the quantity and quality of competitive events are available throughout the athlete continuum in order to learn how to consistently compete and perform at high levels. It requires a strategic approach to the attendance at, or hosting of, Major Games events (domestic and international), and support to improve the availability of domestic competitions.

Questions Two and Three: 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?

These two questions are vital to improving the high performance system and we need to seize the opportunity now to ensure a better way for the future. In order to provide the leadership that is essential to improving the current high performance system and making it the world's best, changes are critical.

Improvements made in recent years represent a start towards respecting the principles outlined in this submission. However, a new structure is essential to progress further.

Currently, the high performance system remains fragmented and fails to align the elements of high performance sport. This fragmentation means a lack of clear leadership, clarity around roles and responsibilities, common directions, the authority to make difficult decisions, and efficiency.

The linkage between national teams to the development system is weak. The responsibility and authority for decision making remains unclear. The resultant constraints demonstrate the tremendous need for improvement in each of these areas.

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.

Our collective experience and perspective suggests that for Canada to create the world's best system in providing leadership and governance to high performance sport, an outside High Performance Sport

Agency is required to complement the crucial development and policy work being done by Sport Canada. This Agency should have the following qualities:

- Respects agreed-upon principles
- Has the authority to make decisions and is accountable for their results
- Works according to clearly-defined roles and responsibilities
- Adopts our definition of high performance sport
- Is research driven
- Is expert led
- Encourages all jurisdictions to participate and engage
- Is fully aligned and integrated from playground to podium
- Is transparent and ethically sound
- Focuses on the whole versus the parts
- Adopts benchmarks against international standards
- Is committed to world-class results

The high performance agency model will require us to look internally to our own organizations and be eager to make changes to better sport in Canada. We believe that a High Performance Sport Agency with a high performance focus to ensure sustainable world-class high performance results is not an end unto itself; rather, it is a tangible first step in creating a culture that encourages healthier and physically active Canadians.

Question Four: How can service delivery of high performance programming to athletes be improved? Service delivery programming includes components such as (a) coaching and technical leadership (b) the athlete's training environment and (c) direct support to athletes.

a) Coaching and Technical Leadership:

Building on the comments made in Question 1, simply put, we need to increase the quantity and quality of coaching jobs that service high performance athletes throughout the development system. This requires a thorough review to determine what enhancements national and provincial/territorial coaching structures require and how to create coaching jobs at the Canadian Sport Institutes. These latter positions will create both enhanced training for developmental athletes and the development of coaches who, by working in a world-class environment, will acquire the experience to be candidates for future national team positions. In terms of Technical Leadership, sports that are pursuing high performance sport excellence need to vest authority for leadership of the program in a professional High Performance Director.

For Games environments like the Canada Games, this means constant review of our standards for coaching and technical leadership to ensure they match the level of athlete at the Games.

b) Athlete's Training Environment:

Please review question 1.

Games organizations need to ensure that the standards of service delivery in all Games operational areas, including sport and non-sport venues, field-of-play and non-field of play areas, match the level of athlete at the Games.

c) Direct support to athletes:

Athlete assistance is crucial to ensuring that athletes have the time to train at a world-class level. Our suggestions for improvement relate to financial efficiency (and therefore also address an element of question 6). The current system is a prime example of the lack of alignment, not only between national and provincial/territorial programs, but also between government and corporate programs. The preferred funding activity of corporations is to provide direct support to athletes; for example, VISA, Rona, Petro-Canada, and Bell, so these programs end up duplicating the federal government's Athlete Assistance Program. An interesting example is the contrast with Germany, the program on which Canada based its AAP. However, the majority of the funds for the German program come from corporate and fund-raising activities. Housing AAP within a government structure makes it almost impossible to develop efficiencies.

The system of direct support to athletes needs to be able to go deeper within the 10-year athlete continuum and wider to affect the changes we call for. Some provinces and territories have created new programming, such as Quest for Gold in Ontario, which has been positively received and is reaching deeper into the system. These programs now need appropriate planning and monitoring to ensure they are targeting the right athletes and results are being met. Games organizations, like CGC, and similar to how VANOC was able to do it for 2010 OTP, can be uniquely positioned to help leverage additional direct athlete support through marketing, sponsorship, and legacy efforts without compromising the delivery of the Games themselves. Better coordination of the many current direct athlete support programs in Canada would yield better results.

Although we believe Questions 5 and 6 are critical to the discussion, we have not responded in detail because we believe they require further dialogue with appropriate experts in the respective fields.

Question Five: How should performance targets be set for the 2014 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games and the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond?

Targets should be set by the technical experts who would be employed by the High Performance Sport Agency in consultation with the partner organizations.

Setting performance targets and allocating the funding that supports sports achieving the targets requires better alignment with the targets and funding according to what Canadians value. This could mean funding highly valued sports that might not yet be achieving the established performance targets, or looking at slightly different targets for certain sports such as Individual sports versus team sports.

If we want Canadians to value high performance sport more, we need to better align our support to sports Canadians value.

Question Six: 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 sunseting after the 2010 Games?

The High Performance Sport Agency needs to leverage the government resources it receives, as discussed in the AAP example above. It also needs to work closely with groups like the Canadian Olympic Committee, national sport organizations, CGC, the CAC and others to coordinate and leverage the involvement and contribution of the corporate sector to Canada's high performance success. Better alignment, collaboration, and partnerships amongst some of the key sport properties will build the

profile of sport, increase its reach and impact, and ultimately attract corporate interest in supporting sport over the long term.

The Canada Games public financial framework is currently under review by our Federal-Provincial/Territorial government partners. It is essential that a solid financial framework to deliver the Canada Games to the standards required, based on the level of athlete at the Games, be formalized for 2013 and beyond.

Conclusion

This submission presents a number of principles we believe should form the basis of Canada's future high performance sport system and plan. Most important are the need to better align the system so athletes have a clear pathway to progress through the stages of development, and the need to define high performance sport to include the development process in order that Canada's athletes have the opportunities they need to become world-class.

The Canada Games and coaching play an integral part in this future plan.

Respectively submitted,

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