

To the Minister's panel on post-2010 high performance sport in Canada known as the

2010 and Beyond Panel

A personal response from Ian Curry, MA

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Consultation Questions

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?*

A few of the questions we should be asking ourselves are these:

What is it about Canadian performances internationally that we are not satisfied with? I would argue that the vast majority of Canadian athletes are already performing at their best, very close to and sometimes beyond their lifetime best at international competitions. Sometimes a performance isn't good enough to win on that day, but for the most part, Canadian athletes are doing very well.

Therefore, the issue must be that Canadian athlete performances are not at the level we expect – but what is our expectation? If we expect Canadian athletes to perform well enough to compare favourably with similar nations in terms of population, economy, participation, or by any other useful demographic or performance measure, then we should use this approach to the measurement of progress in Canadian athlete performances. Also, sport performances are recorded at a moment in time; this timeframe may or may not coincide with the event and the developmental tangent of the performer(s). For us to use the accumulation Olympic/Paralympic medals as THE criteria in my opinion is rather simplistic. Shouldn't we look a bit deeper into what we expect from Canadian high performance sport?

What about the other achievements that Canadian athletes have demonstrated over many years of contribution and leadership in domestic and international sport? I would argue that in this area Canadian's are comparatively successful and making we are making this difference constantly.

Have we considered the value of Canadian sport as a part of the human development experience or as a teaching tool for sharing and communicating our common values? What are these values and are we working toward making these a useful part of the sport experience? I would argue that we have a lot of work to do on this aspect of sport and that the value of this work is so significant

that we are probably not yet able to realize the importance of it in the world of sport and athlete development.

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?*

The design and structure of Canadian sport is by its very nature, both a strength and a weakness for high performance sport. Firstly, the structure has evolved over many years and has been 'tweaked' a few times with the influence and contributions of Government since Canada hosted the Montreal Olympics. The Canadian sport system is therefore what we have all made it to be – 'warts and all'.

However, if we are serious about comparative international performances of Canadians and want the domestic sport system to be efficient and deliver continuous improvement so that Canadians can dominate at world level competitions, then in my opinion our Governments must get out of the way. The design, structure and governance of sport would need to be changed to be both internally and externally accountable to the participants themselves AND all Canadians. This could be achieved by a rethinking of the support and leadership required to deliver on such an objective and with a long hard look at the role of Government in sport in Canada.

My personal view is that Governments (at all levels) should not be as involved in Canadian sport as they are today. If this type governance change can be contemplated, then in my opinion there could be a great deal of progress made in the development of Canadian sport as a more significant contributor to society and as a consequence high performance sport.

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.*

To address this question responsibly will require a good process and significant time to be considered collectively. The question should not be addressed in isolation or without the open and collaborative contributions of citizens that choose to play a part in the leadership of the sport system itself. Essentially, I see this issue as a question of leadership and how this leadership should be expressed within sport to guide us toward developing something new that would in the best interest of all Canadians.

With some time and the necessary resources available, the Canadian sport system could be transformed into a structure that will meet the expectations of Canadians.

So let's get on with it!

4. *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.*

I choose not to respond to this question as sport programming and service delivery it is not the primary motivation for my response to the panel.

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?*

This question is best left to the sport institutions responsible for selecting and supporting these teams.

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 sunsetting after the 2010 Winter Games?*

The resources required to support high performance sport are always going to be limited and probably less than the amount desired by those responsible for delivering high performance sport programming and support. However, a performance measure could be developed that would allow for 'success' to be rewarded and thus lead to progress over time that would move comparative performances forward on any scale. All record performances are based on learning and with an open attitude to learning and sharing among coaches, athletes and others, more Canadian record performance would follow.

NB. Sent via email to **Victor Lachance** at: vgl@rogers.com

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