

SUBMISSION TO THE 2010 AND BEYOND PANEL

From: Phil Schlote

Introduction

Thank you for providing the opportunity to individuals to submit their views on the future of Canadian high performance sport.

The following is a brief personal background to allow you to context my responses to your proposed questions. I am currently an employee of the Government of Canada (Sport Canada) but am on an Executive Interchange with Own the Podium to act as a High Performance Advisor with a specialty in team sports. Although I am currently a part of OTP, these views are my own and are submitted in that regard, not as the representative view of OTP.

I believe it is important to provide a brief history of the evolution of Own the Podium of which you doubtless are aware but, nevertheless, will assist me in adding context to my opinions.

I have been involved in the development of the strategies surrounding both the creation and operation of Own the Podium since the year 2000, following Canada's disappointing performance at the Sydney Olympic Games. The first iteration of the direction to allow external technical experts to make recommendations on the distribution of specialized high performance funding support took place prior to the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games. The Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) in the person of Mark Lowry and Sport Canada collaborated on a final preparation initiative called Podium 2002 that was designed to provide modest funding support to sports with a high probability of podium success in Salt Lake City to allow them to enrich their final preparation. In this instance, the COC contracted external technical experts to assess the applications and make recommendations on the distribution of the available funding. The Government of Canada (Sport Canada) contributed \$1 million to the COC to support this initiative. This was the only time to date that the Government agreed to allow a third party agency to actually control the direct distribution of the funds.

With the announcement that Vancouver would host the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, the COC contracted Cathy Priestner to prepare a report on how Canada could win the Winter Olympic Games in 2010. This became known as the 'Own the Podium' (OTP) report and led to the development of a small OTP2010 secretariat, at arms length to the COC, charged with implementing the recommendations of the report. With Cathy's appointment to the Vancouver 2010 Organizing Committee (VANOC), an interesting dynamic developed where she convinced VANOC to propose a public – private funding partnership to finance the \$110 million Own the Podium plan. VANOC and the Federal Government both agreed to contribute \$55 million over 5 years with the goal of winning the most medals at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. The Government's commitment was tied to their being a similar program approach for the 2010 Winter Paralympic Games.

Concurrently, inside Sport Canada, efforts were ongoing to develop a similar program approach for Summer Olympic and Paralympic sport. This led to the development of the Canadian Sport Review Panel (CSRP) – a group of technical experts that included representation from the COC (Mark Lowry) and Sport Canada (Phil Schlote). The CSRP was responsible for assessing Summer Olympic and Paralympic sports in the build up to Athens 2004.

Because Sport Canada was reluctant to cede ‘ownership’ for Winter Sport to Own the Podium 2010, the CSRP was required to review and endorse the recommendations of the OTP2010 secretariat. It should be noted that the Federal Government (Sport Canada) committed funding to both OTP2010 and CSRP but the actual distribution of the funds remained an administrative function of Sport Canada, i.e., the funding was ‘virtual’ – OTP2010 and CSRP made recommendations that ultimately had to be endorsed by a group comprised of the funding partners (COC, Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC), Sport Canada and VANOC) and ultimately had to be approved by the Boards of Directors of the private organizations and by the Minister responsible for Sport Canada.

COC, in this time frame, contracted Roger Jackson to prepare a report on how to best prepare Summer Olympic sport that became known as the ‘Road to Excellence’ (RTE) report and ultimately led to the renaming of the CSRP to RTE with the hiring of Alex Baumann as its initial Director.

Ultimately, OTP2010 and RTE were grouped under the umbrella called Podium Canada and continued to operate until the most recent regrouping of both the winter and summer programs under the OTP rubric with distinct winter and summer streams. Throughout this timeframe, neither OTP2010 nor RTE were formally constituted organizations. They existed as programs of the COC but under the supervision of the committee of Funding Partners described above. OTP2010 and RTE did not administer a contributions program to the sports but rather continued to make their recommendations to Sport Canada, VANOC, COC and CPC which then ‘cut the actual cheques’ to be distributed to the various supported organizations.

This system has from the beginning been a very unwieldy and administratively heavy approach for OTP2010 and RTE and provides significant complexity and confusion to the recipient organizations that are accountable to multiple funding partners.

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?

OTP has addressed most of the shortcomings of Canada’s HP system by providing support for Coaching Salaries and Professional Development, Training, Competition, Science and Medicine. There is a need to better link the Canadian domestic development system to the national teams program. To do this, NSOs need to concentrate on developing a plan for their sport in Canada that engages all

constituencies as opposed to the current norm of preparing a NSO Plan. This plan should be based on the principles of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD).

In this way, there will be better linkages between Club, School, PSO and NSO and eventually a 'seamless athlete development pathway'. There may be a need for some funding support for particular initiatives.

In doing this type of planning, the objective should be to upgrade the existing development system (Clubs and/or Schools) to meet LTAD standards and not simply to add new initiatives (that are mostly quite costly) like regional training centres that provide enrichment opportunities for select athletes to compensate for the existing, less than adequate system.

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?

I believe the current structure is appropriate, i.e., an 'independent' group of technical experts providing leadership for the targeting of special resources to support sports / athletes with the highest probability of success. What needs to happen is for this group to become properly constituted as a formal organization (corporation) that receives the actual funding from the various partners and distributes it directly to the recipient organizations. There is a precedent for the Government transferring funds to another agency for this purpose. In 2002, Minister Denis Coderre approved a \$1 million transfer to the COC for Podium 2002. The present budget is significantly larger than this but it requires only a Contribution Agreement and clear terms and conditions for expenditures to satisfy government compliance. Sport Canada's Terms and Conditions with the Treasury Board would also have to be changed to allow a contribution transfer of this magnitude.

The current system of distributing resources is unnecessarily complicated and administratively heavy for all of OTP, the Funding Partners and the recipient organizations.

In addition, it would be appropriate for all High Performance oriented resources to be included in the transfer to OTP. Currently, both Sport Canada and COC have other High Performance resources for which organizations must apply separately which again, unnecessarily complicates things, especially for recipient organizations but also results in some duplication of both support and effort.

I understand that there is also consideration for a 'super agency' outside of government that would assume virtually all of Sport Canada's duties. This strategy

is probably a good one, however, I am concerned that this would take considerable time to implement and so would recommend the foregoing incorporation of OTP as an interim solution.

I do not believe the current status of OTP, i.e., as a 'program of the COC' is a viable option moving forward, primarily because the COC seems to be becoming a more modest player in high performance, given their funding issues, and their mandate does not include support for Paralympic sport. In addition, they are subject to the 'political' direction of their membership which has the potential to remove the 'independent' decision making from OTP. This is one of the key principles that led to the formation of OTP2010 and CSRP (RTE). By example, under Mark Lowry's leadership, the COC became a catalyst and worked with government in the creation of Podium 2002, OTP2010, CSRP and ultimately OTP that was predicated on the pooling of resources (even if only virtual) under the direction of one body. With Mark's untimely passing, the COC lost its technical leader and began to revert to its normal modus operandi of acting unilaterally in the design and development of new program initiatives that operated outside of the bailiwick of OTP.

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.

First, it is imperative that the current collaborative environment between COC, CPC, Sport Canada and VANOC (will end post 2010) continue. The initial philosophy of 'pooling' resources and allowing an independent group of technical experts to allocate them remains as crucial today as it did when these initiatives started. There is no future in reverting to the former fragmentation that existed prior to 2002.

There is an issue with respect to Marketing and Fundraising capacity. Ideally, their will be public and private funding partners. There should be attempts to achieve as much balance as possible between the two sources. It does probably not make sense for another agency to go to the private marketplace to try to generate more private dollars. The COC is already well established in this milieu and should take the responsibility for revenue generation for OTP with specific targets / deliverables in terms of growth.

In terms of governance of a formally constituted OTP, a Board of Directors appointed by the major funding partners (likely to be only Federal Government and COC). Perhaps the number of appointees could be determined based on the relative financial contributions. The Board should probably not exceed 7 people and they

need not be experts in sport but rather should be relatively well known to Canadians and have expertise in business and accountability – both financial and program.

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;
 - OTP is doing a relatively good job of working with sports to improve their technical leadership
 - The area that has not been fully addressed is the provision of administrative support services to permit the Coaches and High Performance Directors to focus on their most important tasks – technical leadership on and off the playing field
- b. The athlete's training environment; and
 - The weakness in Canada's system in most sports is in the 'daily training environment'
 - By and large, sports do a very good job at providing an excellent training environment while athletes are with the national team
 - It is when they are back in their club or school programs that the quality of their training can be called into question
 - several sports have recognized that the existing training environment is not ideal and have tried to enrich it by adding new 'structures' like regional training centres or elite leagues – this is, in most cases, quite costly and requires a fair amount of coordination so athletes can leave their club or school commitments to attend the enrichment sessions – I really believe that LTAD provides an opportunity for sports to revisit their existing athlete development pathway, to identify its strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to improve it – my own private hope is that most sports seek to work with their club or school base to improve their pathway via LTAD standards – this just seems more logical to me, although more complicated, than simply adding new structures to compensate for system weaknesses
 - This relates back to my comments under question 1 with respect to planning and strengthening of the 'athlete development pathway'
- c. Direct support to athletes.
 - The current Sport Canada AAP program is a universal athlete support program that does a good job according to its mandate
 - In an attempt to provide an egalitarian approach, however, it creates inequities
 - the most needy athletes are those who are full time with the greatest training commitments and often those who have completed post-secondary education and have begun to start families

- AAP provides them, in effect, less support than an athlete attending university who is essentially a part-time athlete – these student athletes get the same monthly stipend plus tuition support
- further inequities exist between younger development athletes – some of whom live at home with their parents yet receive the same stipend as those who may be away from home or who conceivably could be in the full time athlete group at a post-secondary age
- I'd suggest there is a need to revisit how the stipends are determined – perhaps a few more categories recognizing some of the situations described above
- there is also the question of whether athletes should get 'performance bonuses' via the AAP – the old AAP program provided support for 3 levels of athlete according to their level of performance – I don't see any reason why this couldn't be the case again?
- Finally the universality of the program may also be questioned – should athletes in non-Olympic or non-Paralympic sport receive identical stipends to those in Olympic / Paralympic events? I believe that support via AAP could start with a base and increase and add support increments depending on various factors that generally elicit an increasing commitment to training and competition

Base Amount	OG / PG Sport	Targeted Sport	Student	Full Time	Performance
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- there is also a need for support for developmental athletes but perhaps it should be focused on targeted sports that have the highest probability of podium performances
- In short, I support a program that provides some universality of access but also considers the other factors proposed above in the delivery of support

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?

Currently, there are various agencies that announce Performance targets including the COC, OTP and to a lesser degree, the Federal Government (Sport Canada). Logically, the creation of an agency that is dedicated to achieving high performance results at Olympic and Paralympic Games should be the one to set Canada's performance targets – these should be adopted by any other agencies that have a need to communicate in this manner.

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 sunseting after the 2010 Winter Games?

Because it is unlikely that the unique circumstances surrounding the development of the Own the Podium 2010 program are unlikely to exist in the near future, i.e., a home Games acting as a catalyst for corporate investment, clearly, the solution has to be a joint public / private partnership. As suggested above, the COC should be charged with some responsibility for raising a portion of the lost corporate funds, however, understanding that the ideal conditions of hosting an Olympic / Paralympic Games are no longer in place, an appeal should be made to the Federal (and Provincial and Municipal) governments to help to sustain the system development progress that has been attained.

Athlete development is a systematic process that doesn't fit well with 'federalism'. Just as there is a need for a plan for each sport in Canada that engages all the delivery partners (NSO, PSO, Club, School), there is a need for all levels of government to collaborate in a like manner to allow sport to evolve according to a systematic plan and not according to individual and varying funding priorities established by the government of the day.

Conclusion

Please, once again, accept my thanks for the opportunity to express my individual views.

I recognize that it is very complex issue and that some of my views are, perhaps, too simplistic, however, we should strive to keep things simple to avoid the penchant for adding to the administration in the hope of managing the complexity.