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September 17, 2009

2010 and Beyond Panel
Dr. David Zussman, Chair
Panel Secretariat
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Dear 2010 and Beyond Panel Members,

Thank you for consulting with the sporting community to solicit feedback on high performance sport in Canada. Sport is one of the most powerful activities that unite a community and a country. High performance sport celebrates the excellence of achievement and determination, and as a result has the power to elevate and strengthen everyone who participates either as an athlete, coach, practitioner, administrator, volunteer or spectator. The core message of this submission is centered around the concept that

“Sport enhances education and education improves high performance sport”.

As Canada’s national Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC), we are the educational link that identifies key resources and connects them with coaches and sport organizations. Our information specialists respond to queries from coaches, administrators and practitioners all across the country. We are fortunate to review thousands of qualified sport articles every month. As the core of this information hub, we have noticed numerous strengths and weaknesses in the system. In particular, as it relates to high performance sport, there is a need to manage the information flow to and between coaches, administrators and practitioners.

**Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame recognizes the “builders” of the sport system.
But does the system?**

If we want to succeed at the highest level, we need to be culling information and finding ways to share the information with those who will find it most relevant. We need to leverage the networking and communication tools that exist today. Geographically Canada is large, but technology allows the athlete in Victoria to speak with the coach in Halifax. Having a more centralized information network that works together with education and coaching systems across the country is essential. To achieve this we must also consider the administration infrastructure to deliver and coordinate the lessons.

If we want to have the best athletes and coaches, we need to ensure the infrastructure that supports them is also the best. We invest in training our athletes. We provide resources, coaching, medical and technical support. We set their goals and expectations high. As they achieve success we continue to train, coach and support. We need to do the same for the coaches and administrators of the system. The system should encourage excellence for all participants. The system should provide a means for administrators to improve their skills.

Over and over we hear that the success of any company is derived from its employees. The administrators of sport associations, practitioners, coaches and volunteers are the backbone of the Canadian sport system. People who work in sport, people who make their career in sport are an incredibly skilled and passionate group. The system should be looking at ways to retain and encourage these professionals to stay and excel within the system. High performers should be recognized and encouraged to advance. The system should provide educational opportunities for professional development, learning new skills and career advancement.

To answer the questions set out by the Panel as they apply to improving the international performance of our athletes and to build the capacity within the sport system:


1. A high performance athlete is the product of the system. If the system, including the coaches and sport organizations, is of the highest quality and continues to strive for excellence, if it expects excellence from itself and each of its components, the product created will demonstrate the commitment to excellence instilled throughout the system. More focus needs to be placed on coach and administrator education and expectations. If achieving excellence is the goal, then certainly excellence should be a value for all coaches and builders and not just the athlete.
2. Changes to the design, structure, accountability and governance that encourage and reward professional development would net positive results within the high performance environment. All too often, no one has time or resources to continue learning. However, if you create an environment that recognizes initiative and encourages educational advancement, both the employees and the high performance product will benefit. If you can recruit and retain the best people and they continue to learn and renew their passion, the knowledge will be transferred to the athletes.
3. Education and professional development should be a recognized component of the Canadian sport system. Programming to the high performance athlete will be improved if the people developing those programs have the opportunity to advance their knowledge and capacity. A critical element is the integration of content and learning into the work process. In order to effectively transfer data into knowledge we need to ensure that information is relevant and understandable to the user. It will be important to standardize some of the processes and to maximize resources as well as to work together with partners across the country to deliver the best programs.

SIRC is pleased to be working together with other sport and education stakeholders as we share ideas on how to build capacity within the sport system. The importance of creating a sustainable amateur sport system that can regenerate and renew itself is critical as we plan for 2010 and beyond. While sport is about competition, we must appreciate the value of 'competitive intelligence' acquired through education and experience.

To quote Bob Bowman, the coach of Michael Phelps, stresses "never stop learning".

SIRC would be pleased to answer any questions the Panel may have regarding this submission. We look forward to working together with other experts and early leaders who wish to build the human resource capacity of the 'builders', coaches and leaders within the Canadian sport system.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Gassewitz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Debra Gassewitz
President & CEO
SIRC