

A Better Way: Sport for Canada

Submission to the “2010 and Beyond” Panel

Sport Matters Group

September 17, 2009

Introduction

The Sport Matters Group has been active over the past number of weeks, providing a means by which sport leaders can share their good ideas, compare and contrast recommendations, develop collective submissions to the panel, and meet to discuss how the SMG itself can add value to the process. We appreciate the opportunity to share our thinking and to participate in developing a better way for sport in Canada.

This is traditional territory for Sport Matters, which is a mechanism developed by the sport community to share leadership and to promote innovation in sport and public policy.

Over the past number of years, we have built-out policy options and provided policy analysis that we believe will assist the panel in its deliberations, especially in the area of alternate service delivery. These latter policy papers (attached separately) complement this submission.

Appreciating that the panel will receive a significant number of technical recommendations for high performance sport, this brief paper will focus on key principles for any proposed changes. We encourage the panel to use them as criteria for assessing recommendations on the design, structure, governance, accountability, and leadership for sport in Canada.

Principles

1. Independent decision-making and leadership

Independence as it relates to taking decisions, determining benefits, managing risk, and providing strong leadership – free from political factors and conflicts of interest.

2. Comprehensive approach

The whole system is the subject of the panel, even with its mandate focused on high performance. Changes to the high performance system should take into account the whole system (as per the LTAD model) and the many ways (through NSOs, through many Games opportunities – i.e. Olympic, Paralympic, Commonwealth, Heritage – and, through training at Canadian Sport Centres etc) that athletes and coaches pursue excellence in high performance.

3. One window relationship

Rather than being supplier centered, a principle that ensures a one window relationship for service providers puts the athletes needs first, streamlines management processes, and provides significant efficiency gains.

4. Transparent and accountable

Transparency and accountability are two dominant principles of any public endeavour, including Canada's pursuit of sporting excellence through public policy and public investment in sport. Accountability should not only be considered as a check and balance (accountable to) but also as a means to achieve outcomes and results for Canadians (accountable for.)

5. Public interest as a public authority

The public interest test provides sport – one of Canada's most important public assets – with the means to change its mode of governance and leadership so that its lead institution can demonstrate the values of a public authority.

6. Evidence based, expert led, and values driven

This trio of principles has long been identified as the critical operating principles for high performance sport.

7. Integrated, seamless, and targeted delivery

With the athlete-coach unit at the centre of the system and LTAD at the foundation, it's critical that the rest of the system is integrated in support of the goals/needs of the athlete-coach, seamless in its preparations for performance, and targeted appropriately through priority setting. The seamless attribute of this principle also integrates provincial, territorial, and municipal/community partners, which are key components of the high performance system.

8. Sustainability

Any proposed strategies or system changes should be sustainable and oriented towards long-term progress while delivering on short-term objectives.

9. Clear national goals

These public goals create the conditions to mobilize the nation, the resources, and the accountability necessary for high performance success.

10. Responsiveness

New solutions for high performance should ensure a high degree of responsiveness, meaning timely, flexible decision-making and the capability to adapt to changing circumstances in real time.