

News Release

Federal Budget Supports High Performance Athletes Through Increased Athlete Assistance Funding

Ottawa, Ontario (March 22, 2017)

Finance Minister Bill Morneau released his second federal budget, *Building a Strong Middle Class*, and the sport and recreation sector was the beneficiary by way of support for Canada's high performance athletes as well as for sport programming for Indigenous Peoples and sport and recreation infrastructure.

The most visible aspect of the budget as it pertains to the sport, physical activity and recreation sector is \$25 million additional money over the next 5 years (and ongoing thereafter) to the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP). Though no specific details as to how the money will be allocated were included in the budget the increase is seen as a positive step for our high performance athletes. The cost of this increase to Canadians is \$5 million per year and it is planned to continue at that level after the first 5 years.

The last increase in the monthly stipends provided to those athletes who qualify for this funding was in 2004. The Sport Matters Group in collaboration with athlete commissions from the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Committees as well as AthletesCan made this a top priority through a submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and the Minister of Finance where an increase of 24% (\$6.72 million per year) was suggested. Athletes who receive AAP funding report an annual average annual income of just over \$25,000 with an average of almost \$12,000 of that coming from the AAP program. 20% of athletes report incurring some debt as a result of their athletic career.

"The young men and women who continue to dedicate their life to be able to represent Canada at international sporting competitions are deserving of this," said Sport Matters Group Senior Leader Bob Elliott. "We applaud Minister Qualtrough's support and the government's willingness to take their support of our athletes to the next level. We are looking forward to continuing to work with the government to find ways to give our athletes every opportunity to succeed."

Reaction from high performance athlete representatives is enthusiastic.

"Predictable and sustainable funding is key to an athletes ability to be able to plan their long term development to become World and Olympic medalists. The increase announced by the federal government today is truly welcomed and helpful after 13 years of no adjustments. It will greatly assist athletes to be able to focus on being completely prepared for their training and competitions as they represent Canada and promote our country around the world," commented Jeff Christie, Chair of the Canadian Olympic Committee Athlete Commission and a luge Olympian in 2006 and 2010.

"This increased investment has exciting potential to help retain athletes in the sport system for a longer period of time while also helping new athletes by providing resources to train at a world-class level sooner and longer –which will ultimately enhance Canada's performance at the Paralympic Games,"

added Chelsey Gotell, Chair of the Canadian Paralympic Committee Athlete Council, member of the International Paralympic Committee Athlete Commission, and a Paralympian swimmer in 2000, 2004 and 2008.

“As the umbrella group for all national team athletes, AthletesCan is extremely happy to see this funding included in the federal budget,” said Tom Hall, Interim Executive Director of AthletesCan and a canoe/kayak Olympian in 2008.

The Budget also committed to \$18.9 million over the next 5 years and an additional \$5.5 million every four years thereafter to support Indigenous youth and sport. It will increase support for culturally relevant sport programming at the community level and is also intended to strengthen Indigenous leadership and ensure the national sport system is more inclusive of Indigenous Peoples through training and collaboration with National Sport Organizations. It will also establish stable, ongoing funding for the North American Indigenous Games.

Sport and recreation infrastructure was also provided a budget boost through an additional \$1.8 billion to the Social Infrastructure coffers over the coming 10 years. It is planned that \$1.3 billion of that will be distributed through bilateral agreements. This is in addition to funds previously committed in the 2016 Budget and the 2016 Economic Update.

The Trans-Canada Trail will also receive funding of \$30 million over the next 5 years to complete, enhance and maintain the Trail.

For more detailed information on the Budget [click here](#). (*Budget.gc.ca*)

About Sport Matters Group

The Sport Matters Group (SMG) is a voluntary group of leaders from the sport, physical activity and recreation sector who have come together to talk about the important contribution that sport makes to society and to collaborate in advancing sport, physical activity, recreation and public policy. The SMG community includes some 85 National, Provincial, and Multisport Organizations, as well as physical activity, recreation and sport tourism organizations.

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