



Creating a Positive Environment for Physically Active Youth

Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Sector Key Messages 2016

What is the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Sector?

The sport, physical activity and recreation sector consists of organizations working in partnership to ensure that Canada is a leading sport nation with a physically active population from all backgrounds, nationalities and ethnicities that can access quality, accessible recreation opportunities within local facilities all of which are done ethically and within a values-based sport system. As a sector we are committed to providing all Canadians with the tools, support and resources needed to be physically active for life in whatever fashion and at whatever level they choose. Our sector is also a significant economic contributor: we employ over 260,000 Canadians, attract tourism dollars to the tune of \$5.2 billion per year, spur the development of new facilities and engage millions of volunteers.

Together, we have a common interest in the advancement of policies that can be captured by the phrase “from playground to podium”. These policies describe a cycle in which physical literacy skills, taught from a values base and learned at an early age through quality, accessible physical education and recreation contribute to the character development of our youth and the general health and wellbeing of Canadians. They also help create a larger pool of high performance athletes whom, in turn, inspire the next generation of Canadian youth to be physically active and achieve excellence.

The policy positions put forward in this document will reinforce the role of physical activity and sport in the health of Canadians and how renewed leadership and increased investment of health care dollars into health promotion and physical activity programs will ultimately reduce health care costs across both provincial and federal health care budgets. They will point out the need to support investment in new and upgraded and accessible infrastructure where Canadians can be active, participate in good sport and recognize the benefits of stronger communities and will outline the importance of values-based sport to Canada.

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers of sport approved the Canadian Sport Policy in 2012 as a roadmap that establishes direction and desired outcomes for sport in Canada through 2022. These same Ministers, in 2015, asked their officials to review Active Canada 20/20, a Physical Activity Strategy and Change Agenda with a view to developing a pan-Canadian physical activity framework. Similarly, Provincial and Territorial Ministers have endorsed A Framework for Recreation in Canada (2015), a guiding document for the sector, which is being implemented in communities across Canada. If we are to take steps to allow more children access to sport, physical activity and recreation we must act sooner than later.

Challenges do exist: our modern, 21st century society, in particular our youth, is highly sedentary which has serious implications for our health. Unethical behaviours in sport increasingly threaten to undermine the positive value of sport experiences. Sport and recreation facilities built in the 60s are crumbling and our diversifying population needs updated and new places to participate. Moreover, levels of physical activity and rates of sport participation are declining, a phenomenon which will result in adverse effects on the playground and the podium.

Policy Priorities

FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – LOWERING HEALTH CARE COSTS

Physical activity is key to a healthier, more prosperous Canada; while physical inactivity costs Canadian taxpayers \$6.8 billion per year or 3.7 percent of health care costs.¹

Canada has an increasingly sedentary and physically inactive population. Only 9% of children and youth get the recommended 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity (MVPA) and only 20% of adults get the recommended 150 minutes of MVPA per week.² In September 2016 a new study was released comparing the aerobic fitness levels of youth in 49 countries. Canadian youth were found to be in 19th place trailing countries such as Tanzania, Iceland, Estonia and Norway.³ ParticipACTION, in its 2016 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, gave Canadians a B in organized sport and physical activity participation, a D+ in active play and an F in sedentary behaviours. These are clearly not acceptable grades. Health care costs for chronic diseases associated with physical inactivity are skyrocketing, and steps need to be taken to combat these.

Research shows that even a moderate increase in Canadians movement over the next 25 years would dramatically reduce the incidence of debilitating chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease

and cancer. Premature mortality alone would be reduced by 2.4% by 2020, representing more than 6,600 lives saved.⁴

Much has been made recently over the decline in participation in sports. 17% fewer Canadians age 15+ participated regularly in sport in 2010 vs 1992. Participation rates peak at ages 10-13 then decline steadily with age.⁵

With the phasing out of the Children’s Fitness Tax Credit there is an opportunity for the Government of Canada to show new leadership and bring real change to physical activity in this country. The evidence has been gathered. We now need to formalize and implement a plan to make it happen in conjunction with the provinces and territories.

The Minister of Finance has stated he wishes to look long-term and into the future when he crafts this budget. Increased investment in preventative health care, specifically an increased investment in active, healthy living initiatives, does this.

Our Recommendation

That the federal government continue to work with the provinces and territories and the sector to establish a coordinated national physical activity framework that takes into account the work that has been done to develop Active Canada 20/20 and is aligned with the 2012 Canadian Sport Policy and the 2015 Framework for Recreation in Canada. This plan should establish measurable goals for the nation, identify actions based on evidence, build on current strengths, identify strategies to address gaps and provide focus and opportunity for coordinated action and evaluation.

That the federal government support the implementation of the national physical activity framework with dedicated and significant targeted funding. Implementation will be the key to the success of this framework and funding is the key to ensuring that it is executed effectively.

That the federal government establish a mechanism for coordinated action such as a government Task Force or other coordinating mechanism to align work across federal departments as well as align efforts between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

Investment: It is imperative that this new national physical activity framework also identify the level of investment required to achieve the desired outcomes. The engagement of health economists and physical activity experts to advise on these investments should be considered.

¹ Ian Janssen, Health care costs of physical inactivity in Canadian adults, Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism, 2012
² ParticipACTION. The Biggest Risk is Keeping Kids Indoors. The 2015 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Toronto: ParticipACTION; 2015
³ Justin Lang, Mark Tremblay, Luc Léger, Tin Olds, Grant R. Tomkinson, International variability in 20 m shuttle run performance in children and youth: who are the fittest from a 50-country comparison? September 2016
⁴ Fares Bounajm, Thy Dinh, Louis Thériault Moving Ahead: The Economic Impact of Reducing Physical Inactivity and Sedentary Behaviour. The Conference Board of Canada, October 2014
⁵ Community Foundations of Canada, True Sport Foundation, Vital Signs, Sport and Belonging 2015

FOR INFRASTRUCTURE - UPGRADED AND NEW SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION FACILITIES

If we are going to provide opportunities for more Canadians to participate in values-based sport, physical activity and recreation in order to help meet health and fitness goals, build character in our youth and help to offset the decline in sport participation we also need to ensure the necessary accessible infrastructure is in place in order to allow them to do so. Currently the existing infrastructure has deteriorated to the point where it is a barrier to many Canadians, especially youth, being able to take part in activities that will provide these opportunities.

This government has made a commitment to increased investment in social infrastructure however recreation needs to be a priority within this envelope.

The 2016 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card (CIRC) reinforces the acute need for investments in sport and recreation facilities in Canadian communities. It demonstrates that of all infrastructure categories examined in the Report, sport and recreation infrastructure faces the most immediate and critical need for repair and refurbishment.

We are asking the federal government to make a significant investment into a dedicated infrastructure fund specifically for sports and recreation facilities and which would be shared with provincial, territorial and municipal governments.

There is also a need for a national inventory of sport and recreation facilities. This would ensure governments at all three levels have a long-term and sustainable database with which to make strategic, evidence-based decisions concerning sport and recreation infrastructure investments.

These funds would also offer an opportunity to reinforce the promotion of values based sport and recreation opportunities.



Our Recommendation

That the federal government follow the recommendations of the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and the Canadian Recreational Facilities Council as follows:

- To create a dedicated sport and recreation infrastructure ‘repair’ fund that would include a reserved envelope for small communities
- To create a dedicated sport and recreation infrastructure ‘new build’ fund that would include a reserved envelope for urban communities with large ethnic populations. This fund would address the growing, aging and diversifying demographic in Canadian communities
- To provide \$1 million to create a national, comprehensive inventory of sport and recreation facilities in Canada

We call upon the federal government to commit a total of \$1.2 billion per annum for the next ten years to these two dedicated sport and recreation infrastructure funds. This request represents 10% of the total \$120 billion in infrastructure spending over the next 10 years – a small investment to help secure the health of its citizens and communities and the sustainability of the health care system.

FOR SPORT – INVESTING IN WHAT OUR ATHLETES NEED TO SUCCEED

While Canada has performed well in recent major sporting events such as Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games, other nations are taking podium success very seriously. With this increasing emphasis on winning medals however often comes the associated pressure to do so by any means. When resources are not sufficient to support our athlete’s development, the pressure to find short cuts, such as doping and other forms of cheating can mount. Today, Canada can best be described as holding its own in terms of medal count and placings at these Games.

Canada’s high performance sector, including the national and provincial/territorial partners, is continually evaluating what it needs to be able to prepare for and compete ethically and successfully at these Games. Recent years have seen a financial commitment to those athletes who are poised to make it to the podium at major Games. The needs are diverse, however, and in order to continue to reach podium success the following four strategic investments are required.

1. Financial support for our elite athletes: The Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) has provided monthly stipends for many years to those athletes ranked highest in the world in their Olympic or Paralympic sport. The amount of the stipend ranges from \$900 to \$1500 per month but has not changed since 2004. These athletes report an average annual income of \$25,616 with over \$11,000 of that coming from AAP while 20% of athletes report they have incurred loans averaging \$23,000.⁶ The recommendation is to increase the monthly stipend by 23.25% - the equivalent of the cost of living over the past 12 years. (using the Bank of Canada’s Inflation Calculator)

2. Access to Training Facilities: The seven (7) dedicated high performance centres known as the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network (COPSIN) located in seven (7) regions across the country provide critical training facilities and support services to our athletes. These centres are in urgent need of resources for continued operation and maintenance.

3. Access to Elite Level Coaching: Coaches, who focus on developing both great athletes and athletes of character, are at the heart of successful, quality high performance systems. A strategy to improve Canada’s high performance coaching has been developed but is in need of additional resources to implement. This strategy includes recruitment and retention of Canada’s best coaches, training and mentoring our current and future coaches and re-integrating top Olympic and Paralympic coaches into the sport system.

4. Team Sports: If Canada is to compete in team sports with the rest of the world additional support will be needed. Also, men’s baseball and women’s softball have been added to the Olympic program for Tokyo 2020 thereby increasing the need for additional resources.

Our Recommendation

That the federal government reinforce its support for high performance, values-based sport in Canada by sustaining current funding levels and consider the above strategic investments to able-bodied and para high performance sport.

Total Investment requested: \$16.22 million per year

