

# **Sport Matters Group Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance Pre-Budget Consultations August 2015**

## **Executive Summary**

Sport Matters Group (SMG) is a group of individuals and organizations who believe that a values-based, ethical sport experience, along with regular and accessible physical activity and facilities required to participate are integral to Canadian culture and the development of our people, communities and nation. We have gathered together representatives from a number of groups who work in this sector to discuss some “big picture” issues that pertain to the sector as a whole. The Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Paralympic Committee, Own the Podium, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and ParticipACTION have all collaborated to bring this submission and its recommendations to your attention. The submission is based on the key priority areas of interest of over 60 sport, physical activity and recreation organizations that SMG represents.

This submission will highlight the priorities and actions that support Canadians wanting to be active as well as those pursuing elite endeavours – with an overall goal of improving health, wellness and excellence.

It will outline the importance of sport to Canada. It will also reinforce the role of physical activity in the health of Canadians and how increased investment of health care dollars in health promotion and physical activity programs will ultimately reduce health care costs across both provincial and federal health care budgets. Lastly, it will point out the need to support investment in upgraded infrastructure where Canadians can be active, participate in sport and recognize the benefits of stronger communities.

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. (Canadian Sport Policy 2012). Additionally, a number of interested groups, including ParticipACTION have worked on the Active Canada 20/20 initiative, to coordinate an approach to health-enhancing physical activity initiatives. This initiative was acknowledged by federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation on February 13, 2015. The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association has similarly developed the Framework for Recreation in Canada which outlines a bold re-visioning of recreation’s capacity for achieving wellbeing. This framework was approved by the above provincial and territorial ministers in February 2015 as well.

This submission relates directly to two themes of this year's Pre-Budget Consultations, those being *productivity* and *infrastructure and communities*.

## **Sport**

It can be said that sport has changed our country, inspired us all and lifted us up. We are a country strengthened by men and women, boys and girls of sport. In 2015 the Year of Sport has served to highlight the powerful role that sport plays in enhancing the lives of Canadians of all ages. Communities across Canada have stepped up to host several high-profile national and international sport events, including the 2015 IIHF World Junior Hockey Championship, the Canada Winter Games, FIFA Women's World Cup and the Toronto 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games. These and other events have brought community volunteers together in common cause and contributed to our sense of national pride as we encourage our high-performance athletes at these celebrations of sport while instilling a lifelong love of sport and physical activity in our children and youth.

Since the staging of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver, high performance sport has enjoyed unprecedented levels of support from the federal government and private sector sources. This nation building experience from Vancouver 2010 and the "Own the Podium" approach confirms that striving for and achieving a significant 'stretch goal' is required to challenge our athletes, coaches and sporting community, and to gain the support from the Canadian public. However, if Canada is to maintain or increase its nation ranking with the rest of the world, additional strategic investments will need to be made in order to keep pace with other nations. We have shown that it can be done and have clearly demonstrated the impact of these results. The successful staging of the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games, where Canada achieved its best ever results and record medal success, is a testament to this approach.

### **Strategic investments:**

**Team Sports:** At the recent Pan American Games, Canada won medals in 13 of the 16 team sports on the program. The impact of this success has a tremendous catalytic effect on youth participation rates. However, if Canada is to compete with the rest of the world on a bigger Olympic and Paralympic stage, additional support will be required to continue to improve our team sport medal prospects. Investment: \$3 million per year

**Coaching and technical leadership:** In order for Canada to continue to improve our nation's ranking, we must elevate the quality and quantity of coaches deeper down the high

performance athlete development pathway. Increased support is required in order to develop and employ more full time coaches at critical stages of the high performance athlete pathway. Investment: \$5 million per year

### **Recruitment and identification of athletes with a disability:**

While Canada was an early pioneer in the Paralympic movement, this space is becoming more crowded as many other nations are investing more resources in recruiting and identifying athletes with a disability. Canada will need to invest in a more deliberate strategy to increase the pool of athletes with a disability. Investment: \$1 million per year

### **Research and innovation**

In a game of inches or milliseconds, research and innovation can often make the difference between being on the podium or not. While Canada has ramped up its sport science and innovation efforts, it remains tentative and unsustainable. Investment: \$1 million per year

With an eye on future podium success, the Government of Canada reinforced its determined leadership in helping advance a new culture of winning in Canada by boosting its financial support during this Year of Sport. Budget 2015 delivered new funding for the development of Canada's next generation of champions. Canada's pool of such athletes is declining and this is cause for concern. Beginning in 2016-17, the Government of Canada pledged to match up to \$20 million of private sector investment to support athletes who are five to-eight years away from potential Olympic or Paralympic success. This pledge is ever more critical to follow through on. Success at future Olympics, Paralympics, Commonwealth Games, Pan/Parapan American Games and World Championships depends on it. The key partners involved in high performance sport in Canada, including the Canadian Olympic Committee, Canadian Paralympic Committee, Coaching Association of Canada, Sport Canada and Own the Podium are ever more focused on creating winning conditions for Canada's athletes, coaches and national sport organizations. We know that sport can be a powerful force for positive change, can contribute to nation building and inspire us all to live better lives. **Sport Matters!**

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the federal government sustain current funding levels and consider the above additional strategic investments to high performance sport. Total investment for these recommendations: \$10 million per year**

## **Physical Activity**

Physical activity is key to a healthier, more prosperous Canada. Unfortunately, Canadians of all ages are not moving their bodies enough to get the benefits of regular physical activity, which include reduced risk of diseases like type 2 diabetes and some cancers, better scores in reading and math, better fitness, more fun, healthy body weight, self-confidence, new skills and better mental health.<sup>i</sup>

Physical inactivity costs Canadian taxpayers approximately \$6.8 billion a year, or 3.7 percent of health care costs. The Canadian Institute of Actuaries (2013) warns that by the year 2037, assuming a 3.5% annual increase, provincial operating budgets will spend 69% on health care, up from 44% in 2013. More Canadians becoming more active is part of the solution to this.

If we were able to get a mere 10 per cent of Canadian adults to sit less and move more starting in 2015, we would reduce Canada's health-care costs by \$2.6 billion and inject \$7.5 billion into the Canadian economy by the year 2040.<sup>ii</sup> Plus, we would reduce chronic disease and save 6,600 lives by 2020 alone. 85% of Canadians agree that governments should devote a greater percentage of the health-care budget to preventive measures.<sup>iii</sup>

It is estimated that the federal government spends \$9 billion on direct operational costs related to health care (excluding transfers to the provinces and territories). It is also estimated that 2% of that amount is spent on health promotion and physical activity related initiatives.

An increased investment of 1% (\$90 million) of the total federal health-care budget is required to support active healthy living and physical activity promotion initiatives to reflect the realities of cost savings to come as a result of a more physically active population. We need increased investment across the broader sector, including multi-year financial commitments providing sustained funding to organizations and programs providing physical activity leadership.

With increased investment, federal, provincial/territorial governments and the physical activity sector in Canada could work proactively to implement a comprehensive **national physical activity plan** similar in nature and scope to the 2012 Canadian Sport Policy. The plan would establish measurable goals for the nation, identify actions based on evidence, focus on key priority actions, build on current strengths, identify strategies to address gaps and provide focus and opportunity for coordinated action and evaluation. As is outlined in *Active Canada 20/20: A Physical Activity Strategy & Change Agenda for Canada*, the complex challenge of increasing physical activity for all Canadians defies single-solution approaches—partnerships and collaboration are needed to get more Canadians moving.

## **Recommendation # 2**

**That the federal government increase its allocation to spending on health promotion and physical activity initiatives from 2% to 3% representing a \$90 million increase. These funds can be directed to the Public Health Agency of Canada in order to support the development of a coordinated national physical activity plan while continuing to encourage health-enhancing physical activity initiatives through qualified national, provincial and local organizations.**

<sup>1</sup> Active Healthy Kids Canada. 2013 Report Card on Physical Activity and Youth. Are We Driving Our Kids to Unhealthy Habits? Colley, R.C., Garriguet, D., Janssen, I., Craig, C.L., Clarke, J., & Tremblay, M.S. (2011). Physical activity of Canadian Adults: Accelerometer data from the 2007 to 2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey. Statistics Canada, Health Reports, 22 (1), Catalogue no. 82-003-XPE

<sup>1</sup> Fares Bounajm, Thy Dinh, Louis Theriault *Moving Ahead: The Economic Impact of Reducing Physical Inactivity and Sedentary Behaviour*. The Conference Board of Canada, October 24, 2014

<sup>1</sup> Public Health Leadership Council. (2013) Make No Little Plans: Ontario's Public Health Sector Strategic Plan. Retrieved from [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/make\\_no\\_little\\_plans/docs/make\\_no\\_little\\_plans.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/make_no_little_plans/docs/make_no_little_plans.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> PHE Canada. Get active: perspectives of Canadians on the importance of physical education, health education and physical activity. Ottawa: PHE Canada; 2013. URL: [bit.ly/1gDBXB6](http://bit.ly/1gDBXB6).

## **Infrastructure**

High quality, accessible recreation opportunities are essential to healthy individuals and communities. All Canadians deserve equitable access to leisure experiences and yet many citizens are inhibited from achieving the health and social benefits derived from recreation pursuits due to:

1. the physical deterioration of existing sport and recreation infrastructure in communities across Canada, and
2. the increased but unfulfilled need for new sport and recreation infrastructure to meet a growing, aging and diversifying population.

If we are going to provide opportunities for Canadians to participate in sport, physical activity and recreation we also need to ensure the necessary 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 being able to take part in activities that will provide sport opportunities, health and social benefits. There is now an estimated \$17 billion investment requirement for sport, physical activity and recreation infrastructure that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

### **Recommendation #3**

**That the federal government follow the recommendation of the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and Canadian Recreation Facilities Council submission that the 2016 Federal budget include a commitment of \$925 million per year for 3 years to partner with provinces/territories and municipalities to invest in an infrastructure program that is dedicated specifically for recreation and sport projects.**