



Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien



SPORT EXCELLENCE STRATEGY

Government of Canada

Achieving Podium Results at
Olympic and Paralympic Games

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Canada 

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INTRODUCTION

The *Sport Excellence Strategy* (the *Excellence Strategy*) describes the Federal Government's commitment to high performance sport in Canada. The *Excellence Strategy* is designed to address a segment of the sport system that is focused primarily on podium results at Olympic and Paralympic Games; results that are essential in defining Canada as a leading sport nation.

BACKGROUND

Sport is an integral part of Canadian society. Sport promotes citizens' participation and engagement, encouraging vibrant Canadian communities. As a tool for social cohesion, sport stimulates pride in Canadian achievements and promotes Canadian identity at home and abroad. Recent polls suggest that 89% of Canadians believe that having Canadian athletes performing well at international sport events gives them a stronger sense of pride in Canada (Decima, 2004).

By investing in Canada's high performance sport system and Olympic and Paralympic Games leading to Vancouver 2010 and beyond, the Government of Canada is promoting Canadian values of personal excellence, creativity, diversity, achievement, and leadership to the world.

Further, success at the highest levels of international competition can motivate a new generation of children and youth to participate in sport. This new generation can then profit from the many benefits that sport has to contribute, such as health, self-esteem, leadership skills, cooperation and teamwork, and goal setting. To date, Canada has yet to fully realize the potential of these benefits, in part, as a result of only now beginning to build the evidence-base of sport's full contribution to Canada's health, social, linguistic, economic, and cultural priorities.

CONTEXT

While the high performance element of sport is recognized as a driver to increase the participation of Canadians in sport, its primary contribution is to enhance individual excellence and the achievement of success, particularly as measured by podium results at Olympic and Paralympic Games. In recent years, Canadian Heritage has carried out national consultations and has had ongoing discussions with stakeholders to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Canadian sport system. Notwithstanding the progress made in such areas as increasing the number of carded athletes and augmenting the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) stipends; providing enhanced support for Canadian Sport Centre programs, services, and equipment; and allocating additional funding to support "la Relève" (the feeder system for high performance sport), there are still many gaps and weaknesses that require immediate attention.

From an organizational perspective, change is needed in our approach to high performance sport in order for Canadian athletes to be able to achieve consistent podium results at Olympic and Paralympic Games. There is a pressing need to strengthen key elements of high performance sport, such as access to world-class coaches and facilities, leading edge training and competition programs, and coordinated sport science and medicine services.

The Canadian Sport Policy, a collaborative initiative of the Government of Canada, the provincial and territorial governments, and the national sport community, and approved by all 14 governments in 2002, was an important first step in beginning to address the gaps in the Canadian sport system. The governments subsequently adopted a set of priorities for collaborative action to contribute to the achievement of the four policy objectives of Enhanced Excellence, Enhanced Participation, Enhanced Capacity, and Enhanced Interaction. Another key milestone was the approval by Parliament in 2003 of a new *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.

In terms of funding, to date, the financial resources committed towards high performance sport in Canada have been relatively limited and insufficient to support the services and programs necessary to enable Canadian athletes to consistently achieve podium results at Olympic and Paralympic Games and World Championships. This has often led to a focus on short-term international results. However, as a result of the recent federal budget announcement in February 2005, the Government of Canada has now committed to provide a stable, permanent funding base of \$140 million annually, the highest-ever level of financial support for sport in Canada. A significant portion of this funding will be allocated towards high performance sport.

This commitment to a long-term investment will provide much needed financial stability and sustainability for the Canadian high performance sport system. In addition, by pursuing a more strategic and targeted approach to the allocation of these funds, Canada will be better equipped to support comprehensive athlete, coach, and system development in the sports that demonstrate the greatest potential and commitment to achieve podium success.

Canadian Heritage's Athlete Assistance Program, Hosting Program and Sport Support Program will be used to facilitate the implementation of the *Excellence Strategy*. Each program separately, and in concert with each other, supports the Department's mission and strategic objectives, as well as the objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* and the Canadian Sport Policy. As a result, we now have in place the essential building blocks to support further action to meet the goals of the Policy.

DEFINING SPORT EXCELLENCE

Canadian Heritage is committed to making Canada a leading sport nation, where all Canadians and their communities enjoy and celebrate the benefits of active participation and excellence in sport. Sport Excellence, as a component of a leading sport nation, is defined as:

World class athletic achievement as a product of quality high performance development systems and programs.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Canadian Sport Policy has laid out the future direction for sport in Canada in the area of excellence through its stated goal:

By 2012, the pool of talented athletes has expanded and Canadian athletes and teams are systematically achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition through fair and ethical means.

To support this goal, the *Excellence Strategy* focuses on the following objectives and activities in the areas of collaborative leadership, sustainable funding, and sport system performance.

Collaborative Leadership

Objective: Focus new and existing partnerships on achieving the goals of the Canadian Sport Policy

Activities:

- Implement the Canadian Sport Review Panel to analyze the high performance plans and objectives of sports and provide recommendations to the Government of Canada and other national funding partners for targeted investment in the Olympic and Paralympic sports with the greatest potential for podium performance in 2008/2010 and beyond
- Renew the F-P/T Canadian Sport Policy *Priorities for Collaborative Action*, including consultations with the sport community, for the period 2006 to 2009, to develop strategies supporting the implementation of the *Excellence Strategy*
- Work collaboratively with provincial and territorial governments, National/Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres to coordinate programming and resources among these partners
- Develop high performance athlete and sport system targets in collaboration with key stakeholders in Canadian sport

Sustainable Funding

Objective: Long-term sustainable funding is available to support high performance sport programming focused on achieving Canada's sport performance targets

- Activities:*
- Coordinate the funding decision-making processes between major sport funding partners to minimize duplication of effort and maximize the effective use of resources
 - Regularly monitor and assess the funding requirements of the Canadian sport system in order to meet established athlete and sport system performance targets
 - Identify new funding mechanisms and partners, particularly in the private sector, to ensure that identified sport system funding requirements are available
 - Implement multi-year funding to sport organizations to promote effective long-term planning and implementation
 - Continue to provide a base level of high performance funding to sports eligible under the International Scope of the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework III
 - Continue to provide direct financial support to Canada's most promising athletes through the Athlete Assistance Program

Sport System Performance

Objective: Achieve Canada's athlete performance and sport system targets through implementation of a systematic, long-term approach to athlete and coach development

- Activities:*
- Develop a generic Long-term Athlete Development (LTAD) model in collaboration with provincial/territorial partners
 - Assist National Sport Organizations in the development and implementation of sport specific LTAD models for able-bodied athletes and athletes with a disability
 - Increase coaching capacity within the Canadian sport system through strategic investments in additional coaching positions for targeted sports
 - Provide enhanced excellence funding for targeted sports identified through the Canadian Sport Review Panel process to enable them to achieve podium success at Olympic and Paralympic Games
 - Increase opportunities for athletes to compete in international competitions in Canada, consistent with the *Federal Policy for Hosting International Sport Events*
 - Support activities that promote athlete and coach talent identification

MEASURING SUCCESS

The Government of Canada is committed to being accountable for the use of public funds. Accordingly, it is important to measure and report on the achievement of objectives and the use of these funds.

Athlete performance and sport system targets will be developed in conjunction with key stakeholders in the Canadian sport system. Because of the nature of the *Excellence Strategy*, success will be based, first and foremost, on the achievement of athlete performance targets at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2010, 2012 and beyond. Athlete performance will also be measured by other international results, notably at World Championships in Olympic/Paralympic sports. Since improving athlete and sport system performance is a long-term endeavour, it is also important to monitor the progress being made toward achieving these athlete performance and sport system targets.

Progress on the *Excellence Strategy's* objectives in the areas of collaborative leadership, sustainable funding, and sport system performance will be monitored regularly and objectively through ongoing performance measurement and program evaluation activities. Athlete performance and sport system targets and indicators will augment those contained in the Umbrella Results-based Management and Accountability Framework for Canadian Heritage's three sport programs.

Essential to the collection of these data will be collaborative relationships with provincial and territorial governments, National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations, including Canadian Sport Centres. The development, collection and dissemination of this performance information will be carried out in a collaborative and transparent manner, permitting the Government of Canada, stakeholder organizations, elected officials and the public to track and evaluate the achievement of sport excellence in Canada.

APPENDIX

The Sport Excellence Strategy – Key Activity Descriptions

Athlete Assistance

There will be a continued focus on providing direct financial support to athletes via the Athlete Assistance Program to support the living, training and post-secondary tuition (where applicable) costs of Canada's leading international level athletes and those with the greatest potential to achieve that level of performance. The monthly stipend provided to each athlete (for both senior and development levels) enhances their ability to train and compete, thereby contributing to raising Canada's international sport ranking. In addition, providing support for post-secondary education assists athletes to prepare for life after sport. Ongoing evaluation of the Athlete Assistance Program, assessment initiatives such as the Status of the Athlete Survey, and monitoring of international performance results by Canadian athletes will be carried out to measure the impact of this funding.

Canadian Sport Review Panel

A Canadian Sport Review Panel, comprised of sport technical experts, will assess the quality and additional needs of the high performance programs of all funding partner clients, with a focus on Olympic/Paralympic sports. The Panel will provide recommendations to the Government of Canada and other national funding partners on the amount and priority areas for the allocation of funding required to support Olympic/Paralympic high performance programs. The Panel will identify the sports with the greatest potential to achieve podium success at Olympic and Paralympic Games. This will assist the Government of Canada and other funding partners in targeting excellence funding. The Panel will also add value to Canada's high performance system by making recommendations on other improvements required on both a sport-specific and system-wide level.

Targeted Support

Within available resources, excellence funding will be targeted to sports with the greatest demonstrated potential for achieving podium success at the winter and summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. Currently funded sports will continue to be eligible for base funding; however, targeted sports will receive additional high performance funding based on the recommendations of the Canadian Sport Review Panel and their long-term athlete development programming needs. National Sport Organizations will receive enhanced support towards their Olympic/Paralympic high performance programs (i.e. for senior national teams, La Relève teams and high performance training groups) in areas such as coaching, sport science and research, athlete assistance, and training and competition.

Support will also be provided towards “performance enhancement teams” to ensure a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to the delivery of sport science, medical and research services, essential to achieve top international performance.

Long Term Athlete Development

The Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model will identify the specific stages of athlete development from first entry in sport through to the high performance level. It will address the appropriate stages for introduction and refinement of basic and technical skills, as well as physical, mental and tactical skills. The LTAD model describes the pathway to sport excellence, including the program support that must be in place to allow for the development of the athlete. This support includes the coaching, training and competition programs required at each stage. Funding will facilitate the creation of a generic national LTAD model that will identify systemic changes required in Canada and will aid in the development of sport-specific models by National Sport Organizations, using the generic model as a template. The development of a generic Long-Term Athlete Development model for athletes with a disability and sport-specific adaptations will also be supported.

Coaching

It is essential that athletes have access to qualified coaches throughout the athlete development pathway. The new Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) approach to the National Coaching Certification Program will help to ensure that all coaches, paid and volunteer, are better able to facilitate the development and preparation of athletes, consistent with the principles of long-term athlete development.

At the high performance level of sport, it is particularly important that athletes have access to full-time remunerated, professional coaches. To date, Canada has not been able to attract and retain sufficiently high numbers of highly qualified professional coaches to support our high performance athletes. This has been due to inadequate financial support and, often, unsatisfactory employment conditions. Through the recommendations of the Canadian Sport Review Panel, additional funding will be allocated to targeted sports for the employment of additional international caliber coaches to work with national team and development stream athletes. Efforts will also be made to ensure that these coaches are given the necessary level of authority for decision-making regarding training and competition programs.

Athlete Performance and Sport System Targets

In an effort to better align the activities of all sport system stakeholders, a set of indicators and national targets will be developed for athlete performance and the sport system. Athlete performance at the Olympic and Paralympic Games will serve as the primary performance measure by which Canadian sport will be evaluated and investments will be focused accordingly. These targets will provide a framework for

assessment and will be applicable to both the national and provincial/territorial levels of sport. There will be ongoing monitoring of athlete performance at international events and of other sport system indicators.

Sport system indicators will include those identified in the generic LTAD model plus additional shortcomings identified by the Canadian Sport Review Panel. These will provide potential areas for federal-provincial/territorial collaboration.

Hosting

The approval of the *Strategic Framework for Hosting International Sport Events in Canada* by F-P/T Ministers will allow for strategic investment in international sport events held in Canada. The creation of an International Sport Event Coordination Group (ISECG) will allow a coordinated federal-provincial/territorial approach to bidding for and hosting international sport events in Canada. A revised *Federal Policy for Hosting International Sport Events* will reflect the federal government's interest in hosting by supporting international major multi-sport games every ten years, large Tier II international single sport events every two years, small Tier I international single sport events each year, as well as international strategic focus events that are consistent with federal priorities and the objectives of the Canadian Sport Policy.

Hosting international sport events provides essential opportunities for Canadian athletes to gain valuable international competition experience, a critical factor in achieving podium success at Olympic and Paralympic Games. Hosting also contributes to enhanced athlete excellence for Canadian athletes and provides many other benefits, including sport development, social, community and economic impacts. Furthermore, hosting contributes to the development of sport programming and infrastructure legacies.

Collaborative Leadership

The effectiveness of the *Excellence Strategy*, on a national level, will be enhanced through more coordination in programming and allocation of resources among major stakeholders, notably the Government of Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Paralympic Committee, the Vancouver 2010 Organizing Committee and provincial and territorial governments.

Similarly, the Government of Canada will pursue increased alignment with respect to goals and priorities with National Sport Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres.

National Sport Organizations (NSOs)

The *Excellence Strategy* recognizes the ongoing primary leadership responsibility of NSOs in the area of high performance programming. NSOs are responsible and accountable for the implementation of plans and programs for the identification and development of high performance athletes as well as

for their performance at the international level. They also have responsibility for designing the most effective and efficient domestic and international programs for their sport, with a view to maximizing performance results. NSOs work closely with other contributors to the high performance sport system, including Canadian Sport Centres.

Canadian Sport Centres (CSCs)

The Canadian Sport Centres network is currently comprised of eight Centres located in various regions across the country. Centres are key partners in the coordinated delivery of essential support services for high performance athletes and coaches. These include sport science, medicine, and research services as well as other athlete services to identified national training groups and national teams. In certain cases, Centres also assist in negotiating priority access to the required training facilities for these training groups. A basic level of athlete services is also made available currently to all carded athletes at each Centre location.

The role of the Canadian Sport Centres has evolved significantly since the first such multi-sport centre was implemented in Calgary in 1994, as have the needs of Canadian high performance athletes and coaches. In recent years, the Centres themselves and others within the national sport community have expressed an interest in reviewing the existing model and considering alternative approaches to Centres. One such option would be the creation of a small number of facility-based Sport Institutes in key locations. Sport Canada is committed to working with the Canadian Sport Centres and other funding partners to develop a plan for the future model and role of Centres within the Canadian high performance system.