

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN THE CANADIAN SPORTS SYSTEM

VOLUME 1



OFFICE OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES



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VOLUME 1

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- athletes and coaches who participated in focus groups and interviews with the research team;
- staff of the national sport centres in Calgary, Winnipeg and Montreal, who organized meetings with athletes and coaches, and volunteered information on their own work;
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- academics and provincial government representatives who provided their perspective on our study; and
- the staff of Sport Canada, who provided valuable assistance in contacting organizations and conducting our survey, and information on their own programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 1999, the Commissioner of Official Languages undertook a study of English and French in the Canadian sport system, in response to allegations that French-speaking athletes could not develop to their full potential within existing programs.

We examined the linguistic and administrative resources this country invests in high performance sport and the results obtained from that investment. During the winter of 1999-2000, our investigators met more than one hundred people with responsibility for various elements of athlete development, coach education, athlete services, and government funding programs. We also conducted a survey of athletes who receive direct financial assistance from the federal government.

We found that the sport system has made progress on a number of linguistic issues during the last decade, but that English and French are far from having equal status in Canadian sport. Sport Canada articulates clear expectations of the organizations it funds, and some sport organizations, such as Speed Skating Canada and the Canadian Figure Skating Association, are models of bilingualism. The athletes themselves show a depth of respect and intercultural understanding that underlines the contribution sport can make to national unity. However, the proportion of French-speakers among high performance athletes is well below their presence in the population, and they are concentrated in a few sports.

We believe that Canada's national sport teams should be reflective of the whole population of this country, a philosophy which sport organizations endorse but have not been able to put into practice. More important, we believe that talented athletes should have the opportunity to compete on an equal basis,

without a linguistic handicap for either official language group.

Earlier studies and media reports tend to focus on the selection process for national teams as an impediment to Francophone athletes. We found that the selection process is, on the whole, fair and transparent, and athletes of both official languages are equally satisfied with it. French-speaking athletes encounter problems long before they are eligible to compete in the final selection for national teams: in the difficult transition from provincial elite athlete to national team member, which may be complicated by conflicts between provincial and national sport organizations; and in their dealings with national sport organizations, which often cannot provide services or communicate in French. National sport organizations (NSOs) are primarily responsible for coaching at all levels of their sport, and in too many cases both the organization and the coaches cannot communicate in French.

We cannot over-stress the importance of coaching that is adapted to the athletes' needs as a precondition for equal access to the sport system. We observed a system in which athletes must adapt to the linguistic shortcomings of the system and of their coaches. In order to succeed at the highest levels of most sports, Francophone athletes must normally master the English language as well as their sport. Aside from the obvious linguistic inequality, this reversal of priorities has the potential to deprive our national teams of talented athletes.

We also found that the sport system as a whole does not have adequate administrative structures to manage its programs in both official languages. Most national sport organizations lack clear and unequivocal

policies on official languages and do not have adequate administrative support to deliver programs in both official languages, including timely translation services. At two of the national sport centres we visited, services are provided to national teams in English only. The federal government has given sport organizations a mixed message, by simultaneously cutting their funding and withdrawing from involvement in their day-to-day administration, while requiring them to meet certain standards regarding official languages.

The government is now increasing its funding to sport organizations and has recently announced initiatives to improve coaching services to national teams. It should ensure that some coaches on each national team can communicate in both our national languages and that sport organizations that call themselves national can do so as well.

The recommendations in this report are addressed to Sport Canada, not because the federal government has the sole responsibility to ensure that the sport system can function in both languages, but because it alone is subject to the *Official Languages Act* and therefore under the authority of the Commissioner. The federal government, through Sport Canada, should take an energetic leadership role in making sport organizations more responsive to athletes of both official languages, but all the organizations involved will need to do their share in order to fully meet this objective. The recommendations in this report constitute a strategic plan for change, one that we will follow during the months and years ahead. Sport Canada has already achieved significant progress in official languages since the last report on this subject 10 years ago. We are confident that Sport Canada and its partners will meet the challenge of developing a sport system which fully reflects Canada's linguistic duality.

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1. INTRODUCTION

During hearings of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on the Study of Sport in Canada in 1998, members raised the issue of discrimination against French-speaking athletes, in terms both of services available to them in their first official language and their opportunities to be chosen to represent Canada as part of national sport teams. The committee's final report (December 1998) does not deal with this issue, but rather focuses on financing amateur sport.

After the committee's report was published, two members of Parliament wrote to the Commissioner and requested that this office examine the opportunities for athletes to develop to the highest levels of their sport in their preferred official language. One stated that Francophone athletes must overcome greater obstacles in pursuit of their athletic careers than Anglophones because of pervasive unilingualism within national sport organizations and the Canadian Olympic Association, among coaches and at national sport centres, as well as the lack of documentation in French. The second asked the Commissioner specifically to examine the situation at the national sport centres in Calgary and Winnipeg.

The sport associations that manage development programs for amateur athletes are non-government organizations and are not themselves subject to the *Official Languages Act*. However, the federal government provides funding to the associations under contribution agreements administered by Sport Canada, a branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage. Through these agreements the associations have made a commitment to provide services to athletes in both official languages.

The Commissioner's Office therefore agreed to undertake a special study of official languages in the Canadian sport system, with particular emphasis on federal involvement and responsibility, and began work in September 1999.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study set out to determine whether English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians have equal opportunities to reach the highest levels of amateur sport. We therefore examined the structure and history of sport organizations in Canada and, through interviews and a survey of athletes, reviewed whether the present sport system meets athletes' linguistic needs.

During the first phase of the study we reviewed documentation to determine the structure of sport associations in Canada, with particular emphasis on federal involvement in and financing of high performance sport. This review also aimed to clarify concerns expressed during hearings of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Sport.

To this end, we reviewed committee documents (transcripts and minutes of hearings, reports, briefs, and research documents), OCOL complaint files, OCOL's report on *National and International Events* (1989), Sport Canada documents (strategic plan and Main Estimates), media reports, the Treasury Board policy on grants and contributions, and a Treasury Board report on the administration of grant and contribution programs within the federal government.

During the second phase of the study, we interviewed members of Sport Canada's staff to determine the nature and extent of federal government involvement in sport and to review the administrative structure and controls, particularly those dealing with official languages. We also collected and examined documents including Sport Canada's organization chart, funding criteria, budget, and

the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework.

We met with members of the academic community who have conducted research on sport in Canada to examine factors which influence participation in sport generally. We discussed the harmonization of federal and provincial programs with a representative of the government of Quebec and met with representatives of Sports Québec, a voluntary organization representing 60 sport organizations in that province. Finally, we met with representatives of five multi-sport organizations (MSOs) and 10 national sport organizations (NSOs).

The third phase of the study consisted of surveying and interviewing athletes involved in high performance sport. We conducted a mail-out survey of athletes who receive direct financial support from the federal government to identify which elements of the sport system contribute most to the athlete's development and which elements, if any, are deficient from a linguistic point of view. Using the data on preferred official language in Sport Canada's data base, we divided the population into two samples: English-speaking and French-speaking athletes. Because of the relatively small size of the Francophone population surveyed, a sample which would give a high confidence level would have represented two-thirds of the population. We therefore sent questionnaires to all 222 athletes who identified French as their first official language. We identified a sample of Anglophone athletes, and mailed out questionnaires to approximately one English-speaking athlete in four (256 out of 1013).



2. METHODOLOGY

Our survey questionnaire probed the attitudes, values and experiences of these two groups, in terms of both sport in general and official languages in sport. We received a higher rate of response than expected from French-speaking athletes, and a lower rate than expected from Anglophones. The margin of error for results concerning English-speaking athletes is therefore higher than that for French-speakers. The survey results and a fuller description of the methodology appear in the second volume of this report.

The study team visited multi-sport centres in Calgary, Winnipeg and Montreal and met athletes in each centre to discuss their perception of official languages issues in their careers. Calgary and Winnipeg were chosen because they were mentioned in the correspondence which led to undertaking this study, and because the national sport centre in Calgary was the first to open and therefore has the greatest experience in serving athletes. The investigators visited Montreal in the expectation that any difficulties related to the use of French in sport would also manifest themselves there, and to verify whether services in English are available through the Montreal Multi-Sport Centre. During these visits, we met administrative staff and coaches at each centre, as well as athletes.

3. BACKGROUND

Sport Canada's stated mandate is to encourage development of athletes capable of achieving high standings in national or international competitions. High performance sport is the most visible result of a complex and far-reaching system that involves every level of government, from the federal to the municipal, and mobilizes the energy of some nine million Canadians.¹

During this study, we identified at least 100 interveners at the national level: Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Association, some 30 multi-sport organizations (MSOs), 60 national sport organizations (NSOs), and provincial and territorial governments. The federal government is a major actor but is far from controlling the sport system, which is a network of government and non-governmental bodies linked by bilateral and multi-party agreements as well as informal linkages. Volunteers contribute enormous resources to the high performance system, and among the most outstanding contributors are the athletes themselves.

3.1 Evolution of the Sport System

The structure of sport organizations in Canada and federal involvement with them, including support and guidance for official languages programming, have changed significantly during the last 30 years.

In the 1970s, in response to the report of the Task Force on Sport for Canadians tabled in the House of Commons in 1969, the government created a number of arm's-length sport agencies. These included the Coaching Association of Canada, whose mandate was to provide the coaching support necessary to develop elite athletes, and the National Sport and Recreation Centre, which provided administrative and

communication services to national sport organizations. Other agencies created in the 1970s aimed to encourage higher levels of physical activity and fitness among Canadians generally. Federal support to sport increased from \$6 million a year in 1971 to \$39 million in 1978.²

During the 1980s, the sport system and federal support continued to grow, with federal funding reaching a peak of \$66.7 million in 1987. This increased funding was in part tied to government objectives of establishing programming support for women and people with disabilities in sport, bilingualism, international relations, and fitness promotion. At the height of its activities, the Sport and Recreation Centre worked in close partnership with Sport Canada and acted as a full administrative support unit for NSOs, providing such services as printing, audio-visual services, graphic arts, and a human resources department responsible for staffing and benefits. The Centre also provided a full translation service to NSOs and occasionally organized on-site language training for NSO staff.

The private sector and voluntary organizations became more visible and active in sport programming during the 1980s, notably in the organization of the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary, which generated a substantial financial legacy for the Canadian Olympic Association and the Calgary Olympic Development Association. In 1988, the doping scandal at the Olympic Games in Seoul led to the creation of the Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athletic Performance (the Dubin Commission), which reported in 1990. The Dubin Report called

¹ Statistics Canada, *Sport Participation in Canada*, 1994, p. 5.

² Canada, House of Commons, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, Sub-Committee on the Study of Sport in Canada, *Sport in Canada: Everybody's Business* (The Mills Report), December 1998, p. 4.

3. BACKGROUND

for a rethinking of Canadians' values in sport and a redesigned sport system which would safeguard athletes' health and ensure fair competition.

In the 1990s, federal involvement underwent a major transformation and significant funding cuts. The sport system as a whole, in response to scandals about doping and abuse of athletes, went through a shift in values and orientation, from an overriding concern with competition results to a more "athlete-centred" system, which emphasizes ethics, fair play, and the intrinsic value of sport to its practitioners.

In 1992, a minister's task force on the sport system tabled the report *Sport: The Way Ahead*, which set out a new administrative and philosophical framework for sport organizations and their relationship with the federal government. The report proposed that the government should withdraw from involvement in the day-to-day operations of sport organizations and shift its reporting requirements from an emphasis on financial accounting to accountability for achieving the goals for which funds were granted.

In its response to the report, the government committed itself to working with its partners to develop a sport plan for Canada that would include the following elements: an athlete-centred sport system; equitable and accessible sport; development of volunteer and professional sport leaders; new partnerships and strategic alliances; the pursuit of high performance athletic excellence; values, ethics and fair play in sport; and a new economic model to diversify the funding base for sport. Sport Canada went on to develop a Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) based on these principles, including minimum expectations that sport organizations are expected to meet in the areas of athlete-centredness, women in sport, official


languages, athletes with disabilities, and harassment and abuse.

By 1994, discussions among some of the major partners in the sport system, notably Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Association and the Coaching Association of Canada, led to the creation of multi-sport development centres. These national sport centres (NSCs) provide centralized coordinated support services to elite athletes and coaches in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of high performance sport programming. The first NSC opened its doors in Calgary in 1994, followed by centres in Montreal and Winnipeg in 1997 and in Toronto, Vancouver and Atlantic Canada in 1998. Calgary was chosen to pilot the concept because many of the elements required were already in place, in particular some of the facilities built for the 1988 Olympic Games and a large number of high performance athletes.

In the mid-1990s, the overall federal program review led to significant cuts in funding: financial support to sport went from \$66.7 million in 1987 to \$51.1 million in 1997.³ Sport Canada introduced the SFAF, which involved, among other changes, reducing the number of NSOs funded from 58 to 38. Most of the organizations that still received federal contributions saw their funding cut by approximately 25 percent. This restraint was eased somewhat in early 1998, when the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced new funding for sport and a commitment to increase funding for high performance sport by \$10 million per year over the period 1998-99 to 2002-03.⁴

³ *Public Accounts of Canada 1997, Volume II, Part I, Details of Expenditures and Revenues, p. 3.20 and 3.21.*

⁴ Mills Report, *op.cit.*, p. 4.



During the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the sport portfolio within government was lodged at different times within the departments of Health and Welfare, Labour, Secretary of State, and an independent Ministry of Sport. Sport Canada is now a branch of the Canadian Identity Directorate of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

3.2 Official Languages in the Sport System

In 1985, the federal government established the Bilingualism Initiatives Program to assist NSOs in providing bilingual services and ensuring equitable access to their programs. The program provided funds to allow NSOs to translate documents, provide language training for administrators and coaches, and provide simultaneous interpretation at meetings. Canadian Heritage now administers a similar program – the Program for the Development of Official-Language Services – which provides funding and consultation services to any non-profit organization that wishes to improve its capability to offer its services in both official languages. The program offers a maximum of \$85,000 over a five-year period for specific activities geared to helping organizations function in both official languages, rather than for ongoing program support, and it is little-used by NSOs. No sport organizations applied for funds in 1999-2000, and only one has applied in 2000-2001.

As noted above, the federal government created several arm’s-length agencies during the 1970s, including the National Sport and Recreation Centre (later renamed the Canadian Sport and Fitness Administration Centre), housed in the James Naismith Centre in Gloucester, Ontario. It provided office space and some central services, including translation, to

sport organizations. In 1995, Sport Canada reviewed its support for the centre and concluded that it was no longer contributing significantly to the objectives of building the sport system, developing high performance sport, and promoting mass participation in sport. Sport Canada began to phase out its financial support to the centre beginning in 1995-96. The move away from funding sport administration was consistent with the arm’s-length relationship Sport Canada was developing with sport organizations. At the time of our study, in the fall of 1999, a number of NSOs were in the process of moving their head offices out of the centre to locations throughout the National Capital Region. By this time, individual NSOs had assumed complete responsibility for their own official languages programs, with varying degrees of success, as we shall see in later sections of this report.

As part of the review leading to *Sport: The Way Ahead*, the minister’s task force commissioned special studies, including one on *Equal Linguistic Access to Services in Sport*, which formed the basis for five of the report’s 117 recommendations. The study concluded that “many inequalities exist throughout the Canadian sports system in the provision of services in the official language of choice, and that the lack of linguistic equality in accessing services constitutes, in certain areas, systemic barriers to full participation in the sports community of both official language groups.”⁵ The study identified problems in three main areas: training camps and seminars, selection to national teams, and participation in the democratic activities of NSOs. The essential elements of the study’s recommendations were:

⁵ Federal-Provincial Advisory Committee on Equal Linguistic Access to Services in Sport, June 1990, p. 2.

3. BACKGROUND

1. The criteria for selection to a national team should be published simultaneously in both official languages. Appeal mechanisms for selection disputes should be available.
2. Members of both language groups should participate in the decision making of sport organizations.
3. Information necessary for athletes and members of the sport community to participate, compete and communicate (such as coaching materials, rules and regulations, and policies) should be available in both languages.⁶

The task force report endorses and expands these recommendations in two recommendations addressed to Fitness and Amateur Sport (as it was then called) and three addressed to national sport organizations. The task force called upon the federal government to continue to act as a catalyst with the sport community in terms of official languages and to co-operate with the provinces to develop joint programs to enhance the bilingual capability of national and provincial sport organizations.

The task force also recommended that national sport organizations:

- continue to provide in both official languages core administrative and communication services that will assist athletes and members of the sport community to participate, compete and communicate (e.g., coaching materials, rules and regulations, policies, etc.);
- make available, in both official languages concurrently, information necessary for

equitable participation in governance and decision making for members of both linguistic groups, according to their membership profiles; and

- publish and distribute national team selection criteria simultaneously in both official languages. Differences or disputes arising from athlete selection decisions that cannot be resolved through the sport organization's own appeal process should be subject to an arbitration mechanism.⁷

These recommendations provide an orientation for the official languages program in sport today. They were implemented through the inclusion of minimum expectations regarding official languages in the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework, which will be discussed more fully in later sections of this report.

In summary, early in this decade, the federal government simultaneously adopted a “hands-off” approach to the administration of sport organizations, including withdrawing funding from the Administration Centre, which had provided some common services; clarified its expectations on social policies, including official languages; and cut funding to sport organizations. This withdrawal from direct involvement in sport programs and reduction of assistance were consistent with federal government policies of devolution and downsizing discussed in OCOL's report on *Government Transformations*.⁸ Although Sport Canada requires sport organizations to meet certain official language requirements as a condition of funding, the combination of federal initiatives during the last decade has affected their ability to do so.

⁶ *Sport: The Way Ahead*, The Report of the Minister's Task Force on Federal Sport Policy, May 1992, pp. 145-146.

⁷ *Sport: The Way Ahead*, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

⁸ *Government Transformations: The Impact on Canada's Official Languages Program*, Commissioner of Official Languages, 1998.

4. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Anglophone and Francophone Participation in High Performance Sport

This study set out to determine whether English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians have equal opportunities to reach the highest levels of amateur sport. We began by examining the degree to which members of both official language groups now participate in sport at this level, relative to their presence in the general population.

According to the 1996 census, 24.6 percent of Canadians name French as their first official language, and 75.4 percent name English. If all other factors are equal, we would expect French-speakers to account for approximately 25 percent of high performance athletes in Canada.

Since the population of “high performance athletes” is not a single entity with one definition, we examined the linguistic make-up of various groups of high performance athletes to see whether they differed significantly from general population statistics.

4.1.1 CARDED ATHLETES

We conducted a mail-out survey of high performance athletes using the Sport Canada data base of carded athletes: those who receive financial support directly from the federal government. The criteria for carding, set jointly by Sport Canada and the National Sport Organization responsible for the sport, are based on performance. At the time of our study, to be eligible for an “A” card, an athlete must finish in the top four, six, or eight in an eligible sport at the Olympic / Paralympic Games or World Championships (depending on the number of entries per country) and finish in the top third of the field. For a “B” card, the athlete must finish in the top 8, 12 or 16 at these games and finish in the top half of the field. “A”, “B” and “C”

cards have since been amalgamated into a single “senior card” with a higher monthly allowance, but the performance criteria remain the same for the time being. Among other factors, the quality of international competition will determine the number of Canadians who hold senior cards.

The carding system in effect at the time of our study also had several categories of developmental cards, for athletes who demonstrate the potential to achieve A or B card levels. The criteria for developmental cards are negotiated between Sport Canada and the NSO and are normally based on results in designated competitions (domestic, international, or both). The number of athletes holding developmental cards thus depends on the quality of training programs and on competition results within Canada.

The table in Appendix 6.1 shows the first official language of carded athletes in various sports. The linguistic profile of individual sports varies widely: from fencing and judo, which have a majority of French speakers, to field hockey and curling, where all carded athletes are English speakers. Overall, 18 percent of carded athletes name French as their first official language and 82 percent name English. Francophone participation is low, but this should not be surprising: in 1992, Ekos Research Associates Inc. noted that 19 percent of developing athletes were French speakers.⁹

4.1.2 INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

The athletes who represent Canada at Olympic / Paralympic Games and World Championships are not necessarily carded; similarly, holding a card from Sport Canada

⁹ Ekos Research Associates Inc., *The Status of the High Performance Athlete in Canada*, Final Report, September 1992, p. 49.

does not guarantee an athlete a place on the Canadian team at an international event. We therefore looked at the linguistic composition of the Canadian delegations at various international events.

The study *Sport: The Way Ahead* shows participation of Francophones among officials and athletes on Canadian teams at international games in the late 1980s and early 1990s:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Calgary Winter Olympics 1988 | 27% |
| Seoul Summer Olympics 1982 | 23% |
| World Student Games, 1991 | 24% |
| Pan-American Games, 1991 | 21% ¹⁰ |

The study does not give figures for Anglophones or for team members whose first official language is unknown, nor does it distinguish between athletes, coaches and officials.

The Canadian Olympic Association provided statistics for Canadian athletes at the two most recent Olympic games: the 1996 Summer

| | Anglophone | Francophone | Unknown | Total |
|---------|------------|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| ATLANTA | 246 (80%) | 41 (13%) | 21 (7%) | 308 (100%) |
| NAGANO | 104 (70%) | 41 (28%) | 3 (2%) | 148 (100%) |

Olympics in Atlanta, and the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano. These statistics are based on information provided in athlete questionnaires and are assumed to refer to mother tongue.

¹⁰ *Sport: The Way Ahead*, op.cit., p. 145.

The Atlanta Olympics are summer games, and as the statistics in Appendix 6.1 indicate, French speakers tend to participate in greater numbers in winter sports. Also, some team sports such as rugby and field hockey are dominated by Anglophones, and the large number of players on these teams influences overall participation figures. Nevertheless, this level of Francophone participation is very low: overall, French speakers made up 18 percent of the Canadian athlete contingent at the last two Olympic games, well below their presence in the general population.

4.2 Factors Influencing Sport Participation

4.2.1 GENERAL FACTORS

As part of the most recent census, Statistics Canada prepared a special report on Sport Participation in Canada, which outlines a number of factors that influence the decision to participate in sport. Participation in sport is a cultural phenomenon; it arises from and expresses social values and is transmitted from

one generation to another by example and parental involvement. Age, gender, family income, and level of education all affect whether an individual will have the opportunity, ability or interest to participate in a sport. Generally, higher income and educational levels are associated with greater participation in sport. Men participate in sport more than women do. Parents' involvement also strongly influences whether their children will take up a sport. In sum, a young population will produce more athletes than an aging population, a rich country will produce more athletes than a poor one, and a well-educated population will be more active in sport than a less well-educated one.



In Canada, English-speaking and French-speaking populations do not differ significantly in any of the main factors influencing sport participation. The age profiles are virtually identical, and the gender breakdown is the same. Anglophones are slightly better educated and earn slightly more than Francophones, but these differences are not significant.¹¹

The Statistics Canada study provides data by province, not by first official language. Although we cannot equate “Quebecker” with “French speaker” patterns of sport participation in Quebec will affect Francophone participation overall. The study shows that, in Quebec, a slightly higher proportion of the population participates regularly in sport activities than in the Canadian population generally (48.7% compared with 45.1% for the Canadian population overall). However, significantly fewer Quebeckers participate in sport through a club or organization (33.2% compared with 45.9% in the Canadian population). The same pattern holds for those who participate in sport competitions or tournaments: among sport participants in Canada, 32.8 percent have participated in competitions, while only 21.7 percent of participants in Quebec have done so. Since clubs, organizations, and formal competitions are the access route to high performance status, low participation in these activities in Quebec will clearly affect the number of Francophones at the highest levels of the competitive stream.

During our study, we heard several theories to explain why Quebeckers participate in sport in large numbers as individuals but in much

lower numbers in formal competitive activities. Differing cultural values and differing histories of sport development in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada were frequently cited. Language issues were also mentioned, but rarely as a deciding factor.

4.2.2 LINGUISTIC FACTORS

We do not believe that language alone can explain the relatively low presence of French-speaking athletes at the highest levels of Canadian sport. However, we have identified several linguistic aspects of the sport system that must be improved. Removing linguistic barriers to sport participation would be a significant first step toward creating high performance athletic teams which accurately reflect the country that produced them.

The first barrier to Francophone participation in sport organizations is the fact that most of them function in English only. Of the 10 NSOs we met, only two provide simultaneous interpretation during their annual general meetings. Meetings of the boards of directors are usually held in English only, and it is common practice among sport organizations to circulate minutes of board meetings in English, with a French version to follow. This effectively means that any French speaker who wishes to participate in decision making in a sport organization must be bilingual, and at a fairly advanced level. Fewer than half of French-speaking Canadians have the language skills needed to participate in organizations at this level.¹²

¹¹ Statistics Canada, *Portrait of Official Languages in Canada* [CD-ROM], Census 1996, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1998 (Dimensions Series) 94F0010XCB.

¹² According to the 1996 census, 41% of Francophones in Canada are bilingual, compared with 9% of Anglophones. In Quebec, 34% of Francophones and 63% of Anglophones are bilingual. See Louise Marmen and Jean-Pierre Corbeil, *Languages in Canada: 1996 Census*, New Canadian Perspectives Series, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1999, p. 44.

Few NSOs have fully bilingual staff, and a minority have no bilingual staff members at all. Staff at the NSOs responsible for speed skating, figure skating, hockey, and synchronized swimming can respond to questions and write to members in both languages, but most NSOs have only a bilingual receptionist, if that.

The lack of French-language skills among volunteer directors of NSOs and their professional staff leads to a situation where documents are frequently sent to French-speaking members in English only. We collected examples, including an annual training plan and Olympic team selection criteria, which were sent to provincial sport organizations in Quebec in English, with incomplete French versions or none at all. NSO staff point to budget cuts and the loss of centralized administrative services and speak of “trade-offs” between functioning in both official languages and providing a high level of service to athletes. Representatives of provincial sport organizations in Quebec point out that service to Quebec athletes in English only is no service at all. In our view, an “athlete-centred” sport system is one that communicates with athletes in their preferred official language.


Finally, athletes and coaches, particularly those at the highest levels of their sport, must learn English to function, no matter where they train. We learned of one national team with a majority of French-speaking members, which trains in Montreal with a French-speaking coach and practices in English because one team member does not speak French. The inverse situation does not hold true: a unilingual French-speaking athlete training in an English environment is expected to learn English. The predominance of English, even in Montreal, has negative effects throughout the

sport system in Canada. If there is no place in the country that functions fully in French, the resources available to the language are reduced. Not only do French-speaking athletes not have an environment that fully meets their needs, there is no place where English-speaking athletes can learn French, and the system remains unilingual.

4.3 The Athlete’s View of the Sport System

“I just returned from training with a Belgian team for three months. Although nearly everybody spoke some English, most did not speak English confidently and preferred not to speak it unless necessary. Thus practices were conducted entirely in Flemish, and I had to figure out how to do drills by watching others or by sometimes asking for a translation. However, there is always that period of bewilderment and lack of confidence caused by not knowing exactly what is going on. Furthermore, it is difficult to perform at your best when you can’t capitalize on the advice the coach is giving to other players because it’s in a different language. There is always a feeling of isolation and also hesitation to perform when you can’t understand exactly what is going on; you are at a disadvantage. I worry that athletes in Canada who do not speak the same language as the coach or the majority of the team may feel this isolation and, therefore, not be able to perform at their best or enjoy their sporting experience to the fullest.” (*Comments from an Anglophone athlete, OCOL survey questionnaire*)

This athlete’s observations exemplify much of what is good and bad in the sport system. On the one hand, through her involvement in sport, she has had an opportunity to travel, learn another



language, and live in another culture, thereby gaining a better understanding of Canadian society and other Canadians. Many athletes added comments to our survey questionnaire that showed a depth of understanding and respect toward the other official language that was the most encouraging finding of this study. On the other hand, the problems this athlete describes – bewilderment, lack of confidence, the sense of isolation and hesitation to perform, the feeling that the sport experience is not all it could be – are very real for many French-speaking athletes.

4.3.1 SPORT MOTIVATION AND VALUES

Our survey explored athletes' experience, motivation and values in order to isolate factors related strictly to language. The two groups surveyed share many common values and experiences with regard to their sport experience. Both English-speaking and French-speaking athletes make significant concessions, such as postponing their studies, in order to pursue an athletic career; they take great pride and enjoyment in the practice of their sport. Both Anglophone and Francophone athletes agree that involvement in sport has enhanced their overall quality of life, although Anglophones are more positive on this subject than Francophones. Francophones were somewhat more likely than Anglophones to value the cultural enrichment gained by sport experience in a different language environment.

Athletes of both language groups agree on the elements of the sport system that contribute most to their success. Both consider the quality of the training program as most important and rank quality coaching advice (regardless of language) and financial support from Sport Canada second or third. French-speaking athletes accord more importance to financial support from Sport Canada and to the possibility of training at a site

near their home than do English speakers. Most athletes surveyed plan to continue their sport careers, and language is not a significant factor in deciding whether to withdraw from sport.

For the athletes, sport takes precedence over language. Fewer than 5% of each group disagreed with the proposition: "If, in order to become a high performance athlete, I had to train and communicate in another language than my preferred official language, I would decide to train and communicate in that language." Responses to this question were highly positive for both linguistic groups, indicating a high motivation to pursue a sport career. Replies to the question "Considering your personal circumstances from the language viewpoint, do you expect to continue competing?" were overwhelmingly positive: only one athlete said no. The possibility of using the athlete's preferred official language has little influence on this choice. When questioned whether this possibility would influence the decision to quit or continue in sport, all athletes indicated that it would have little bearing, although it was somewhat more important to English-speaking athletes than to French speakers.

English-speaking and French-speaking respondents indicate similar levels of satisfaction with sport-related elements of the system, such as their pace of development, the objectivity of the selection process for sport competitions, the enjoyment they get from sport, and the financial support from all sources within the system. We consider it highly significant and positive that the level of satisfaction with the selection process for sport competitions is the same (moderately satisfied) for both linguistic groups. Earlier studies and reports emphasized the need to make the selection process more transparent, in response to a perception that it discriminated against

Francophone athletes. The minister's task force report, *Sport: The Way Ahead*, addressed a recommendation to NSOs on this subject, and it is one of the minimum expectations of the SFAF. We reviewed several examples of NSO selection criteria which referred to objective criteria, included mechanisms to resolve disputes, and were in both official languages. Visible progress in this area is virtually a precondition for equitable Francophone participation in sport.

We asked whether sport training, particularly in regions where the athlete's preferred language was not generally spoken, had affected athletes' personal lives, including their family relationships or their studies. The responses are similar for both linguistic groups: generally, the athletes do not perceive that relocation for training purposes affects their family relationships, and those who postponed their studies indicate that they did so in order to pursue their training and not because of language.

4.3.2 LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE AND EXPECTATIONS

English-speaking and French-speaking athletes differ significantly in the linguistic aspect of their sport experience, in their expectations, and in their level of satisfaction. Although both groups state that they have had the opportunity to learn one or more foreign languages as a result of their involvement in sport, Francophones rate themselves as more bilingual in English and French. Francophones rate their knowledge of English as better than functional but less than perfect fluency; Anglophones rate their knowledge of French as less than needed to get by. Anglophone respondents express greater interest in learning French than Francophones do in learning English. This does not reflect a lack of interest in becoming bilingual: individuals who consider

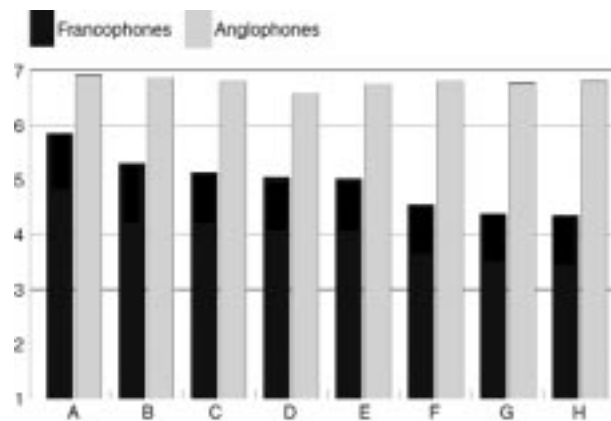
that they are already fluent in their second official language generally give negative answers to this question. Overall, athletes have very positive attitudes toward becoming bilingual in Canada's two official languages, and many included comments and suggestions to the effect that they would appreciate more language-training opportunities.

French-speaking athletes were more likely than English-speaking ones to agree with the statement: "I am willing to make significant language concessions in order to pursue my sport career." The high rate of positive responses to this question no doubt reflects the fact that Francophone athletes have in fact made language concessions in order to pursue a sport career. English-speaking athletes attach more importance to training in an environment where their language is ordinarily used and are more likely to state that the possibility of using or not using their language would influence their decision to remain in sport. We believe that these results reflect the group's generally lower level of bilingualism.

French-speaking athletes expressed less satisfaction with the language aspect of the sport system than English speakers. The differences between the two groups were particularly marked with respect to the language of coaching advice and the language aspect of their sport training environment. Among Anglophone respondents, 85 percent indicated they were satisfied or moderately satisfied with the language aspect of their sport training environment, whereas 29 percent of Francophones stated that they were dissatisfied, and just over 50 percent stated that they were satisfied. Anglophones are highly satisfied with the language of coaching advice provided (84%), while a quarter of Francophones are dissatisfied.



Differences between the two groups are even more marked with respect to their experience with various components of the sport system. Anglophones state that they receive the necessary support in their preferred official language from all sources most of the time. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “Never” and 7 means “Always,” responses from English-speakers range from 6.92 to 6.50, extremely high values. The highest value Francophones gave in response to this question was 6.3, for provincial sport organizations. Other components of the sport system received the following responses, all drifting toward the value of 4, or “Sometimes”:



- A Sport Canada (5.85)
- B the Canadian Olympic Association (5.3)
- C physiotherapists and chiropractors (5.14)
- D coaches (5.06)
- E doctors (5.03)
- F national sport organizations (4.55)
- G sport psychologists (4.39)
- H sport scientists (4.35).

The follow-up question — “Have you encountered communication problems, arising from the use of your preferred official language, which had adverse consequences on your career as a high performance athlete?” — provides an equally discouraging picture. Fifteen Anglophones identify such career-limiting incidents, whereas Francophone respondents mention 113 cases. Of the incidents mentioned by French-speaking respondents, 26 involve coaches, 23 concern NSOs, 14 sport psychologists, and 11 sport scientists. Four of the Anglophones who identify problems refer to the government of Quebec or to provincial sport organizations in that province. Another notes: “Very often, the coaching support provided to team, listed and carded athletes is an individual who speaks neither of Canada’s official languages well. German is often the first language of top level coaches brought to this country.” The situation described by a Francophone respondent is more dramatic: “Coaches, psychologists, the doctor and physiotherapist did not speak French when I started with the Canadian team and, for my part, I could not speak English. At the end of each day at camp, I was very very tired mentally because I was trying to understand what they were saying. This greatly affected my performance. I felt I was in a different world, not being able to communicate. P.S. Now I speak English ... so much easier....”(Our translation)

After identifying particular incidents that may have hindered their career development, athletes were asked a more general question, whether various components of the sport system were hampering their career development. Even more Francophone athletes than those who mentioned particular incidents agreed that certain components of the system are slowing their career development, and the

elements identified were the same: 36 mentioned coaches, 34 NSOs, 22 sport psychologists, and 17 sport scientists. Very few Anglophone respondents reported experiencing such difficulties.

We then probed for linguistic factors that might influence the decision to remain in high performance sport and found that the answers of Anglophone and Francophone athletes converged. Approximately one-third of each group identified factors that could greatly influence this decision, another third identified factors that might have a moderate influence, and a third indicated that none of the factors would have any influence. We conclude from this that some members of each group are sensitive to the language of the sport environment and that others are less so or not at all. We believe that NSOs and national teams should be aware that some individuals experience significant stress when training in an environment where their language is not generally spoken and that programs should be adapted to meet these athletes' needs. This individual sensitivity has less impact on English-speaking athletes, who can usually train in an English environment anywhere in North America. The athletes we met also emphasized that stress related to language is more acute for younger athletes, particularly those who are leaving their home environment for the first time.

The two language groups identified different linguistic factors that might influence their decision to remain in sport, but the differences were not statistically significant. The most important ones identified by French-speaking athletes are: access to sport psychology and psychological counselling generally, communications with the Canadian Olympic Association, and communications with Sport

Canada. English speakers identified access to medical services in their preferred language, communication with coaches, and access to training directives as potentially influencing their decision to remain in sport.

4.3.3 SUMMARY

The survey results point to two areas which do not now meet the needs and expectations of French-speaking athletes: services provided by national sport organizations, and coaching. For the most part, NSOs are responsible for hiring coaches, but the Coaching Association of Canada also has a role to play in developing a population of coaches who can communicate in both official languages. The survey results also suggest the importance of transition measures when athletes relocate to train in an environment where their language is not generally spoken.


A complete description of the survey methodology and a compilation of athletes' responses appear in Volume 2 of this report.

4.4 The Institutional Infrastructure

4.4.1 SPORT CANADA

Sport Canada is a branch of the Canadian Identity Directorate of the Department of Canadian Heritage. Its mission is “to support the achievement of high performance excellence and the development of the Canadian sport system to strengthen the unique contribution that sport makes to Canadian identity, culture and society.”¹³ The federal government adopted this strategic orientation for its sport policy in response to the minister's task force report, *Sport: The Way Ahead*, in 1992. As noted earlier in this report, the minister's task force consulted widely with

¹³ Sport Canada, *Contribution Guidelines*, 1999-2000, p. 1.



sport organizations and commissioned a report on official languages in the sport system, which provided an orientation for Sport Canada's present official languages program.

Sport Canada funds activities and organizations in three major categories: support to sport organizations (including national sport organizations, multi-sport / multi-service organizations, and national sport centres); support to individual athletes through the Athlete Assistance Program; and support to major games (including the Canada Games and support to host single-sport events). Most recipient organizations are voluntary non-profit societies that sign contribution agreements outlining their obligations, including linguistic requirements.

The Treasury Board Secretariat conducted an official languages audit of federal grant and contribution programs in 1999 to assess whether federal institutions are ensuring that organizations that receive funding can serve the public in both official languages. The audit found that Sport Canada's official languages program is better than most: "Sport Canada is the only institution [audited] that regularly informs applicant organizations of their official languages obligations...Only Sport Canada audits the official languages accountability agreement."¹⁴ Among other initiatives aimed at helping sport organizations to provide better services in both official languages, Sport Canada organized a one-day information session on this subject in the fall of 1998.

While acknowledging that Sport Canada's official languages program has appropriate objectives, established in consultation with sport organizations, and administrative controls

that meet accepted government standards, we attempted to determine whether this well-structured and well-run program actually meets the linguistic needs of Canadian athletes.

4.4.1.1 Funding to Sport Organizations

Sport Canada administers five funding programs for sport organizations:

- NSO Support;
- New Funding for Sport;
- Domestic Sport;
- MSO Support; and
- National Sport Centres.

The Domestic Sport Program, aimed at sports that exist predominantly or exclusively in Canada, began only in 1999. New Funding for Sport is essentially supplementary funding for the NSO Support Program. We therefore reviewed only the programs for national sport organizations, multi-sport / multi-service organizations, and national sport centres.

Funds for NSOs and sport organizations for athletes with disabilities are provided under five-year funding and accountability frameworks that set out eligibility requirements, calculate the funding ranges, and link funding to federal sport and social policy objectives. The Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) for NSOs was introduced in 1995-96, and the Funding and Accountability Framework for Athletes with Disabilities (FAFAD) was implemented in 1998-99. The main elements of these accountability frameworks apply to funding given to multi-sport organizations and to national sport centres.

The SFAF emphasizes high performance results. In determining an NSO's eligibility for funding, the organization's high performance

¹⁴ Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Number 27 – Audit on Official Languages – Grants and Contributions*, 1999, p. 5.

system, including standings at the Olympic Games and World Championships, accounts for 60 percent of the points accorded; sport development aspects such as membership and coaching development programs account for 30 percent; and management of the organization accounts for 10 percent. The organization's official languages program is included in management and is worth up to 3 percent of all points awarded. In deciding funding levels, these broad categories are maintained: high performance results are weighted at 60 percent of the organization's contribution budget, sport development at 30 percent, and management at 10 percent.

The contribution agreements which NSOs sign under the SFAF contain an official languages clause: "The Recipient agrees . . . to take into account official languages considerations when providing services to the public or members." This clause is related to policy goals and to a series of minimum expectations which spell out in detail which services the organization must offer in both languages and when. Funding for multi-sport / multi-service organizations (MSOs) is tied to contribution agreements with a general official languages clause, and the minimum expectations for MSOs are the same as those outlined in the SFAF for NSOs. The minimum expectations for 1996-97 include making the following materials and processes available in both official languages:

- constitution and by-laws;
- rules and regulations;
- athlete agreements;
- athlete carding criteria;
- athlete selection criteria; and
- appeals and hearings.

In addition, the NSO was required to develop a work plan to provide additional materials and processes in both official languages and collect statistics on the language preference of national team athletes, coaches and officials.

By March 1999, NSOs were to:

- have a policy on harassment and procedures in both official languages;
- be able to answer requests for information in the requester's language of choice;
- be able to draft correspondence in either language;
- provide athletes with survey questionnaires in their preferred official language;
- ensure that bilingual services are provided at their national championships and in international events, including invitations, registration, announcements, signs and media releases;
- have information in both official languages on the home page of the NSO's web site; and
- ensure bilingual services at the annual general meeting, including invitations, registration and on-site information to participants, and encourage participants to speak in their preferred official language.

The minimum expectations for national sport centres are similar, but the time frames are longer. By March 31, 2000, sport centres were to provide a number of documents and services in both official languages, including program information for athletes, coaches and sport organizations; media releases; NSO, athlete and coach agreements; harassment policy and procedures; and web sites.

The Treasury Board audit concludes that "Sport Canada's minimum expectations go



beyond the Treasury Board policy of grants and contributions.”¹⁵ Representatives of several provincial sport organizations in Quebec confirmed that the language aspect of services provided by NSOs has indeed improved since the SFAF came into effect.

We recognize the strengths of the SFAF, in particular the fact that the minimum expectations address needs identified by sport organizations themselves (such as the difficulty French-speaking members may have in participating at annual meetings of NSOs). However, we must point out that the minimum expectations are well-named; implementing all of them would not fully integrate French-speaking members into the activities of a national sport organization. For example, one of the minimum expectations for March 31, 1999, was to encourage participants at NSO annual general meetings to speak in the official language of their choice. Several people we interviewed informed us that the annual meetings of their NSO had no provision, such as simultaneous interpretation, to enable participants to participate in French. Encouragement to speak without ensuring that others can understand is not particularly practical.

Another expectation for March 1999 was: “The NSO Internet homepage contains information in both official languages.” In the fall of 1999, in response to public criticism of the level of French available on NSO web pages, we reviewed the web sites of 46 organizations that receive Sport Canada funding. Of the 46 sites, 30 contained texts in English only, one had texts in French only, and 15 were fully bilingual. At one of the bilingual sites, the French text contained so many

spelling and grammatical errors that it was virtually incomprehensible. Yet these organizations are complying with the minimum requirements: all of them had some French on the web page. The minimum expectation does not require that the same information be posted on the web site in both official languages simultaneously, nor does it mention the quality of the language. Electronic communications have become an important means of communicating with the public since 1995, when the minimum expectations were developed, but Sport Canada’s program has not been flexible enough to recognize this new reality and require fully bilingual communications through this medium.

The SFAF outlines objectives and minimum expectations in five areas of social policy: official languages, athlete-centredness, women in sport, harassment and abuse in sport, and athletes with a disability. The long-term objectives for developing an athlete-centred sport system and those for women in sport contain numerical goals. The system-wide goal for 2001 in terms of athlete-centredness is that “all key NSO committees, where program and policy decisions related to high performance sport are made, contain 20% athlete representation.”¹⁶ For women, the 2001 goals are to achieve a proportion of 40 percent women among volunteer administrators among the NSOs collectively and 25 percent women among coaches on the national team coaching staff.

We do not believe that it would be appropriate to set such explicit numerical goals for Francophone participation among sport

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45

¹⁶ Sport Canada, *Sport Funding and Accountability Framework, Minimum Expectations, Athlete Centredness*.

governing bodies. Sport has a strong cultural component, and it is quite possible that English-speaking and French-speaking athletes will continue to be attracted to different sports. However, the goals for women and athlete participation in decision making are clearly oriented to results rather than processes. The policy goal for official languages is “that the NSO’s official language practices comply with the Treasury Board / Sport Canada policy and meet the needs of its constituency.” Complying with Treasury Board policy and meeting the needs of the sport constituency are not necessarily the same thing.

We believe it would be appropriate to rethink the long-term goals of the official languages component of the SFAF in terms of results to be achieved rather than processes to be followed. In this respect, the goal for athletes with a disability could serve as a model: “The goal of Sport Canada in the area of Athletes with a Disability is to ensure athletes with a disability have access to programs and services comparable with athletes in mainstream sport.”¹⁷ NSOs should examine their own structures and functioning in order to identify and remove barriers to participation by French-speaking volunteers and athletes.

We also found that monitoring of contribution agreements was somewhat weak. Sport Canada staff work with NSOs to monitor implementation of the minimum expectations, but there are no serious consequences for organizations that fail to meet them. For example, although athlete selection criteria were to be available in both official languages by March 31, 1997, at least one NSO sent

selection criteria in English only to Quebec in February, 2000.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:

1. By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada review the official languages goals and minimum expectations of the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework, to require sport organizations to identify and correct barriers to Francophone participation; and that

2. By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada systematically monitor implementation of the official languages goals and minimum expectations in the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework.


The Commissioner also recommends that:

3. By April 1, 2001, the Treasury Board review its official languages audit methodology in order to ensure that the programs audited not only comply with established administrative controls, but also are effective in achieving program objectives.

4.4.1.2 Athlete Assistance Program

The Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) identifies and supports athletes already at or having the potential to be in the top 16 in the world in their sport. It is the only Sport Canada program to provide direct financial support to athletes. Sport Canada works closely with NSOs to develop selection criteria for the AAP and to identify qualified athletes. The criteria are based on performances at national and international competitions, and both the process of developing them and the process of selecting qualified athletes are well-documented and transparent. All the documentation pertaining to the program is available in both official languages. There is some subjectivity in the selection of athletes in team sports and in sports which are judged (such as figure skating and synchronized swimming), but these are inherent in the sport and do not necessarily discriminate against one linguistic group or the other. Our

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, *Minimum Expectations, Athletes with a Disability*.



survey of carded athletes found that both English-speaking and French-speaking athletes are equally satisfied with the objectivity of the selection process for sport competitions.

The AAP program requires NSOs to provide any athlete receiving assistance with a *National Team Handbook* in the athlete's preferred official language. The team handbook outlines carding criteria and procedures, criteria and procedures for selection to national team competitions and training camps, and discipline and appeals procedures.

In our survey of athletes, French-speaking respondents indicated that they experienced greater difficulty communicating with Sport Canada (presumably the AAP program) in their preferred official language than did English-speaking respondents. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means "Never" and 7 means "Always," English-speakers rated Sport Canada's ability to communicate with them in their preferred language at 6.92. Only one Anglophone athlete indicated that Sport Canada "sometimes" could not communicate in English. Responses from French-speaking athletes to this question ranged from "Never" to "Always" and averaged 5.85.

Four positions within Sport Canada are dedicated to this program: all of them require intermediate-level second language skills (Level B). At the time of our study, three positions were filled with English-speaking incumbents who met the language requirements, and the fourth position was vacant. AAP staff may be called upon to discuss program issues directly with athletes, including explaining the nature of their entitlements and the reasons for their selection or refusal. Discussions of this nature would normally require an advanced level (C) of

second-language skills. According to Public Service Commission standards, C is the minimum level of second language ability in speaking that should be identified for positions which require discussing or explaining policies, procedures, regulations, programs and services.

The Athlete Assistance Program recently received a budget increase of 60 percent, and Sport Canada has announced that it will revise and simplify carding criteria to consolidate the various levels into two: "senior" and "development" cards. It should take advantage of this program revision to improve the linguistic capability of program staff.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:

4. By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada review the language requirements of positions in the Athlete Assistance Program, with a view to improving the program's French-language capability, and take the necessary measures to ensure that incumbents meet the revised requirements.

4.4.1.3 Major Games

Sport Canada provides funding for major games held in Canada and represents the federal government on the games organizing committees. The Canada Games, which are held every two years in different parts of the country, are perhaps the most visible, and certainly the most frequent, of these. In 1989, the Commissioner's office conducted a language audit of national and international events, including games supported by what was then the Department of Fitness and Amateur Sport. OCOL addressed four recommendations to the department:

- to appoint a senior official to be responsible for all linguistic aspects of the event;

4. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- to ensure that any Canada Games committee hires an official languages co-ordinator;
- to ensure that all parties involved in the organization of the games are aware of their official languages responsibilities; and
- to require that the organizing committee recruit members of the official language minority community.

We found that these recommendations have been implemented. The Sport Canada publication *Federal Policy for Hosting International Sport Events* requires compliance with federal standards, including the *Official Languages Act*, as a condition for federal support. The policy requires applicants to spell out in detail how they intend to offer services in both official languages. When an organizing committee is created, a Sport Canada official participates, with responsibility for all federal policies, including gender equity, access for athletes with a disability, and official languages. The Canada Games Council Strategic Plan notes as one of its guiding principles that “bilingualism extends throughout all aspects of the Games and the Games movement.” The contract between the federal government, the Ontario government, the city of London, the Canada Games Council, and the organizing committee for the Canada Games in London, Ontario, in 2001 contains a detailed section on official languages, including a requirement to hire an official languages co-ordinator. Finally, both Sport Canada officials and representatives of the Franco-Manitoban community confirmed that the organizing committee did indeed recruit volunteers and staff from within that community for the Pan-American Games in Winnipeg in 1999.

We were informed, however, that the funds needed to provide adequate services in both official languages are not identified in the federal contribution to games organizing committees. In the case of the 1999 Pan-American Games, establishing a budget for the official languages secretariat required months of careful negotiation.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:

5. By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada ensure that its financial contribution to major games include adequate funds to ensure that the official languages requirements can be met.

4.4.1.4 Linguistic Capability of Sport Canada

At the time of our study, Sport Canada had 43 positions. Of these, two required a knowledge of English only, and the rest required a knowledge of both official languages. Among senior managers, all three positions required advanced speaking skills in the second language (language profile CBC), and all three incumbents met these requirements. All other positions require an intermediate level of skill in speaking the second language (language profile BBB).

Program officers work as consultants with organizations that receive funding, explaining government policies and the implications for organizations. Of the 13 staff in these positions, two speak English only, and 11 are bilingual at various levels. The five French-speaking officers all have advanced skills in English (level C or E), and the six English-speaking incumbents meet the intermediate level (B) required for their positions. We could find no apparent relation between the language skills of officers and the organizations to which they were assigned.



At the management level between officers and senior management, all five positions require an intermediate level of language skill (language profile BBB). Four incumbents had this level, and one did not meet the language requirements; all five were English speakers. None had advanced speaking skills in French. Managers at this level, among other functions, can be called upon to represent the federal government on inter-governmental sport bodies. In our view, both the language requirements of these positions and the level of French-language skills among the incumbents are inadequate to exercise the leadership role which the federal government should take in terms of official languages in these forums.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:

6. By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada review the language requirements of management positions, with a view to improving the French-language capability among managers, and take the necessary measures to ensure that incumbents meet the requirements of their positions; and that

7. By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada review the allocation of responsibilities among program officers, to ensure that client organizations can communicate with the branch in their preferred official language.

In summary, Sport Canada's funding programs are well-structured and generally well-administered, with appropriate objectives and short-term goals. The program has already helped sport organizations to improve their official languages performance and can be expected to accomplish even more by maintaining its present orientation. However, sport organizations should be encouraged to review the results of their efforts as well as the resources they are committing to becoming bilingual. As the representative of federal interests in this area, Sport Canada also needs

to improve its own linguistic capability in order to more effectively exercise its leadership role.

4.4.2 NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

National Sport Organizations (NSOs) are incorporated non-profit agencies, directed by volunteer boards elected by the membership, representing the interests of individual sports within Canada. NSOs maintain a relationship with their respective international federations and co-ordinate, promote and develop their sport in this country. They organize competitions within Canada, establish rules and regulations at the national level, provide coaching for teams under their jurisdiction, develop standards and certification programs for coaches and officials, develop technical development programs for their sport, and manage national teams. NSOs are also their sports' primary contact with the federal government.

There are approximately 60 NSOs representing various sports in Canada, but only 38 of them receive funding under the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework for the period 1995-2001. As noted earlier, the SFAF contains objectives and minimum expectations in the area of official languages, as a condition of federal funding. However, the ability of NSOs to deliver their programs in both official languages varies, depending on each sport's membership base, budget and history.

4.4.2.1 Official Languages Policies

We reviewed policy statements on official languages from nine organizations. Two had policies that we consider to be complete and appropriate. Synchron Canada's policy and procedures on bilingual services begin with the statement, "Synchron Canada is committed to providing bilingual services to our National Team", and then explain in detail who is

responsible for providing which services. The Canadian Amateur Wrestling Association's official languages objective is to "ensure equal opportunities for full participation by all CAWA members in the official language of their choice."

Policy statements from other NSOs contained phrases to the effect that the organization would "make every effort within the limits of its resources to provide services in both official languages" or "provide services and materials in both official languages to all members insofar as financial and human resources permit." In our view, statements which refer to financial considerations limit the potential application of the official languages policy and should be avoided.

One NSO declares English and French as its official languages and goes on to clarify: "For the purposes of interpretation of any by-law, resolution, minutes or any other written record passed, adopted or kept by the directors, members, employees, agents and committee members, the original language of the documents are to be written in English, with the proviso that all translations are available upon request." If English and French are the official languages of the organization, English cannot be more official than French.

We consider that a solid official languages program should begin with a declaration of policy, clearly stating that the organization recognizes both English and French as its languages of communication and services. The policy statement could mention the benefits that accrue to an organization that can communicate with the Canadian public in both its commonly used languages. The organizational and financial consequences of this policy will appear in the organization's programming and budget forecasts.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:


8. Sport Canada work with national sport organizations to ensure that they adopt appropriate policy statements on official languages by December 31, 2001.

4.4.2.2 Official Languages Programs

The situation of non-funded NSOs with regard to official languages programming is clear. We asked the president of one organization that receives no federal funds how his organization provided services to its members in French. He replied, "All our French members speak English."

Some NSOs that receive federal funding do little better in speaking to their members; however, all that receive contributions under the SFAF provide basic documents in both official languages, including their constitutions and by-laws and most documentation for athletes. The SFAF includes a work plan to enable each organization to improve its ability to function in both official languages, as well as annual goals and expectations. In addition, Sport Canada offered a training session on organizational bilingualism in 1998 for NSOs that receive contributions.

We met some organizations that now provide full service to their members and to athletes in both official languages. Speed Skating Canada (SSC) has fully bilingual staff and provides all documents in English and French. Members use both languages at its annual general meeting, although simultaneous interpretation is not used. These practices have arisen from a combination of circumstances: the organization is well-established, and a sizeable portion of its membership is French-speaking. SSC has therefore been able to develop coaches who speak both official languages and to field large



teams that include both English-speaking and French-speaking athletes. In order to serve its members and its teams adequately, the organization has developed an excellent bilingual capability, although it has not adopted a formal official languages policy. It simply could not function in only one language with its membership base.

Many other organizations that do not now have a strong membership base in both official language communities are caught in a self-reinforcing cycle: the low numbers of French-speaking members make it difficult and costly for the organization to provide services and documentation in French, and the lack of such services and documentation makes it difficult to attract French-speaking members. We suggest that the only way to break this cycle is to improve their services in both official languages and build up a membership to sustain these services. We did not learn of any national sport organization that has similar difficulty providing services and communicating in English, but the solution to such a dilemma would be the same.

The organizations we met all had basic documents for athletes available in English and French: team handbooks, athlete agreements, and rules and regulations of the sport. In many cases, representatives of the organizations pointed out that these documents are required to be bilingual under the SFAF. However, material for coaches is less consistently available in both official languages. This is particularly true for coaching manuals at the more advanced levels, where translation costs are high and the number of users can be very limited. One NSO director expressed unease at paying significant sums to translate a document which had been written by volunteers. We believe that the cost of translating a document should be considered part of the cost of its

production, on the same level as professional layout, editing and proofreading.

In our survey of athletes, NSOs received a rating of 4.55 out of 7 (7 means always, 4 means sometimes) with regard to their ability to provide services in French. NSO staff are the front line of service to athletes and coaches, and in many cases language skills are not a criterion for selection. We do not believe it is necessary for all employees of all NSOs to be bilingual, but we do consider that every NSO should have some bilingual capability among its staff and some arrangements to ensure that athletes and coaches can speak to knowledgeable staff in their own language. The lack of language skills among NSO staff causes a blind spot regarding language, which can lead to the kind of incidents that generated many unfavourable comments in our survey. For example, we learned of one selection camp at which the NSO had not arranged to have bilingual coaches: an athlete who had been selected to the national team was requested to translate for a coach to explain to another athlete that he had not been selected. Such a situation is clearly untenable for both athletes, and NSOs should make every effort to ensure that coaches can communicate such decisions directly.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:

9. Sport Canada require national sport organizations to review the linguistic capability of their staff, by April 1, 2002, with a view to ensuring that athletes and coaches can receive appropriate services in their preferred official language at all times.

We met representatives of organizations of all sizes and stages of organizational development, from the Canadian Figure Skating Association, which has 50 full-time staff including five translators, to the Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sport Association, which has one part-time co-

ordinator. All organizations agree on one point: they do not receive enough money from Sport Canada to pay the full cost of meeting their official languages commitments. Many NSO directors expressed considerable frustration at the gap between the federal government's expectations concerning official languages and the amount of money allocated to meet them. Most were aware that official languages administration counted for 3 percent of points in determining their funding eligibility and setting funding amounts; several stated that costs related to translation and interpretation were closer to 5 percent of their annual budget. As the director of one NSO put it, "You guys got us pregnant and then left town."

We were unable to verify actual costs associated with providing services in both official languages, since we did not conduct a financial audit of NSOs. In any case, we do not believe that the federal government alone should bear the cost of enabling national organizations to function in both languages: providing services to members in both English and French represents a benefit to the organization and should be considered a normal cost of doing business in Canada. However, since this is a contentious issue with sport organizations, the Commissioner recommends that:

10. By April 1, 2002, Sport Canada and NSOs jointly review organizations' expenditures related to official languages and establish realistic budgets for this activity.

4.4.2.3 Relationships between NSOs and Provincial Sport Organizations

The 1992 report *Sport: The Way Ahead* entitled its discussion of the interface between the provincial and national levels of sport "Dysfunctional Relationships Between NSOs and PSOs." We regret to mention that the same jurisdictional feuds between national and

provincial organizations reported in 1992 are still going on, to the detriment of athletes, coaches and sport in general. Language is sometimes an issue in these debates, but more typically they revolve around financing and authority to develop and manage programs. We were told that the developmental leap from provincial elite to national athlete is often made unnecessarily difficult by tensions between NSOs and PSOs. In the case of French-speaking athletes from Quebec, this tension compounds the difficulty of having to work and train, often for the first time, in their second language.

When national sport organizations and their provincial counterparts in Quebec fail to agree on the management of their sport, the result is often decreased French-speaking membership in the national organization and poorer services in French to those members who remain. As long as provincial sport organizations in Quebec and national sport organizations fail to harmonize their programs, French-speaking athletes in those sports will have great difficulty developing from the most junior to the highest levels of their sport. We cannot prove that jurisdictional disputes between PSOs and NSOs account for Quebecers' relatively low participation rate in formal competitions, with the inevitable repercussions on the numbers of Quebecers and Francophones eligible to hold federal cards, but we did learn of one sport where such disputes clearly have an impact on the number of registered, competitive athletes in that province.

The present Secretary of State for Sport has begun a process of alternative dispute resolution among interveners in the sport system. We suggest that he invite NSOs and provincial sport organizations which are now at loggerheads to participate in this process.



4.4.3 MULTI-SPORT / MULTI-SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to national sport organizations representing the interests of individual sports, the Canadian sport system includes a number of multi-sport / multi-service organizations (MSOs) which have specialized expertise and mandates. As part of this study, we met with representatives of the Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport, Athletes CAN, the Coaching Association of Canada, the National Coaching Institute, the Canadian Centre for Sport and Law, the Canadian Olympic Association, the Olympic Oval in Calgary, the Canadian Sport and Fitness Administration Centre, and three national sport centres. These organizations represent athletes' interests on a broad range of issues, develop coaching programs, direct multi-service centres, provide dispute resolution and educational services, and manage Canada's representation at Olympic games.

We did not meet an MSO responsible for assisting sport organizations to deliver their services in both official languages, because none exists. At the height of its activities, the Canadian Sport and Fitness Administration Centre did organize translation services and language training for NSO staff located in the centre, but no other organization has taken over this function now that the centre's administration is closing down. Virtually every organization that we met, MSOs as well as NSOs, suggested that their greatest need in terms of official languages was access to timely, good quality translation services. We believe that centralizing certain administrative functions related to official languages (notably translation) could result in economies of scale and more efficient service to sport organizations.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:

11. By April 1, 2002, Sport Canada study the feasibility of providing centralized linguistic services such as translation to sport organizations, either through government programs or through a non-governmental organization which could assume this mandate.

The MSOs we met have varying levels of linguistic skill among their staff and varying degrees of ability to deal with their clients in both official languages. Generally, the smaller the organization and the further its offices from Ottawa, the poorer the service in French. The exception is the Calgary Olympic Oval, which has a good capability to provide services in both official languages. This study is not primarily concerned with evaluating individual organizations, however, but focuses on the evolution of certain key services and their impact on the development of athletes in both official languages.

4.4.3.1 Coaching

The athletes we surveyed identified the quality of the training program as the most important element in their sport development and quality coaching advice as a key component of this program. French-speaking athletes also identified coaches as a frequent source of linguistic difficulties, to the point of hampering their careers. "At international competitions (World Cup, World Championship), no trainer or coach could speak French. My performance deteriorated considerably because I barely understood what they were saying when they coached me.... At international tournaments, of the eight trainers and coach, no one spoke French, and yet 75% of the national athletes came from Quebec." (Our translation)

The coach-athlete relationship is the cornerstone of the sport system; through coaching, athletes develop the physical and

mental skills that will take them to the international podium, or to their personal best. Coaches and athletes work together for hours each day, several days a week, for months and years. Not surprisingly, the personal relationship can become intense. The intensity can be heightened when coach and athlete must work across a language barrier. As one athlete described his situation, “Often, at training camps with the national team, I do not understand English, so I understand none of the instructions or corrections. The trainers are angry because I make them waste time.” (Our translation) Another commented, “I had problems with coaches because I did not understand much English and found it difficult to follow the instructions. As a result, I held the team back and my performance was affected. Since I was beginning with the national team, I was not one of the best, so I did not play much in the important games. So, it is easy to lose motivation and concentration listening to the coach when his instructions do not have very much to do with me. Unfortunately, the coaches realized this and did not appreciate it.”(Our translation)

Ideally, athletes would work with coaches who speak their language perfectly and understand their culture. In Canada, coaches and athletes work within linguistically and culturally diverse teams; they must learn to deal with others who speak their language less than perfectly and may not completely understand their culture. In terms of official languages, the challenge in coaching is twofold: to ensure that members of both official language groups have access to jobs so that the linguistic composition of coaching teams resembles that of the groups of athletes they work with, and to ensure that all coaches have the resources and support needed to coach linguistically and culturally diverse groups.

4.4.3.1.a Coach Education

During the past decades coaching has developed from a largely unpaid voluntary pastime to a profession with certification requirements and a code of conduct. The profession has evolved from a leadership model based on personal experience and charisma to a knowledge-based model based on objectively assessed competence. National sport organizations are primarily responsible for developing training programs for coaches and for hiring coaches for national teams. The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) and the National Coaching Institutes (NCI) also have an important role, especially in developing senior coaches for high performance athletes. Sport Canada and the Canadian Olympic Association fund programs for coach education.

The CAC co-ordinates the National Coaching Certification Program (3M NCCP – 3M is the program’s corporate sponsor). This program recognizes five levels of coaching: levels one to three, which are required to work with sport teams and athletes at the municipal, school or provincial levels; and levels four and five, which are required to work with high performance athletes competing in international forums. Level five certification is the equivalent of a graduate degree in coaching, and in some instances it is taught in conjunction with university programs in kinesiology. Sport coaching is the largest volunteer program in Canada; the CAC estimates that there are 750,000 coaches in its data base, most of them at levels one to three.

The 3M NCCP program at levels one to three consists of three elements: theory, technical and practical. The theory component covers the essential principles of coaching (such as planning, sport safety, skill analysis and development, and leadership) with increasing



hours of study required for each level. Theory is taught using coach manuals and workbooks. The technical component focuses on coaching a particular sport (such as skills, rules of play, equipment, and training methods) using material provided by NSOs. The practical component is designed to provide coaches with feedback on their effectiveness when coaching. Practical requirements are more informal for levels one and two, but candidates for level three are assessed by trained evaluators using pass/fail criteria set by the NSO.

The manuals and workbooks for the theory component of levels one to three are available in both official languages. However, the technical manuals required to coach particular sports may or may not be available in French, or may not be up-to-date in one or both languages. The CAC reviewed the availability of technical material in English and French in the fall of 1999 and found that French-language material is increasingly hard to find at more advanced levels. The CAC study reviews 29 sports. Three of these have no technical manuals in either language for level one, but 25 of the remaining 26 have level one technical manuals in both official languages and one has a technical manual in English only. At level three, eight have technical manuals in English only and 14 have technical manuals in English and French. Given the cultural component of sport, we do not take issue with the fact that cricket does not have a level three technical manual in French. However, the lack of a French-language training manual for a major sport like athletics (track and field) will obviously affect the ability of Francophone coaches to advance within this sport. It is worth noting that athletics has a very low proportion of French-speaking carded athletes (7 out of 62, or 11%), suggesting a sport caught in the self-reinforcing cycle of low Francophone

membership and poor services in French described earlier in this report.

For levels four and five of the 3M NCCP, candidates complete an applied study program of 12 tasks (for level four) and 20 tasks (for level five). Of the 20 tasks, 12 are generic, such as nutrition, environmental factors, and psychological preparation for coaches and athletes. These tasks are developed and presented by the CAC and are available in both official languages. The eight sport-specific tasks deal with subjects such as biomechanical analysis of advanced skills and practical coaching at training camps. The availability of these tasks in French varies according to the sport. Fencing and hockey offer all tasks in both official languages, although hockey has nothing in either language for one task. Figure skating offers seven tasks in both English and French and one in English only. Boxing, canoeing, swimming, racquetball, and softball offer eight tasks in English and none in French.

The challenge of offering this material in two official languages is complicated by the volume of material to be covered and the small number of potential candidates. In racquetball, for example, there is one position in Canada for a qualified level five coach. There is little incentive for anyone of either language to invest the considerable time and energy required to qualify at that level when career possibilities are so limited. Larger and better-financed sports, such as hockey and figure skating, offer better career possibilities and therefore attract more candidates of both official languages.

Level four and five coaching certification is also delivered through the National Coaching Institutes at the national sport centres in Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Atlantic Canada. The NCI in

Montreal delivers programs in French, although it has allowed some candidates to submit written work in English. The six other centres offer programs in English, but we were told of one case where a Francophone candidate in Calgary was able to submit written work and make presentations in French. At the time of our study, there were 60 high performance coaching candidates in all seven centres.

The federal government's primary interest in coaching is at the high performance end of the spectrum, where level four and five coaches work with national teams. The number of candidates for levels four and five depends on the numbers who have achieved levels one to three. We were informed that there are relatively few Francophone coaches in Canada, particularly at the higher levels. We were unable to verify this, since there is no central registry and coaches come and go at the NSOs that employ them. However, it seems highly likely that French-speaking coach candidates will have difficulty moving up through a system in which basic training materials are not available in their language.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:

12. Sport Canada work with national sport organizations to identify the first official language of national team coaches by April 1, 2001 and, if necessary, take steps to ensure that coaches from both official language groups have access to positions at this level; and that

13. Sport Canada work with the Coaching Association of Canada and national sport organizations to ensure that technical manuals for coach education are made available in both official languages within the year following publication of this report.

4.4.3.1.b Intercultural Education

We received many comments during interviews and from respondents to our athlete survey about how well coaches are now dealing with linguistically and culturally diverse groups of athletes. In spite of the fact that the trend in coach development is toward knowledge-based and competency-based professionalism, in this one area of intercultural sensitivity, individual coaches have been left very much to their own resources. Some are doing well. During this study we met several coaches who clearly enjoy and benefit from diversity within their teams; they made several practical suggestions to improve their own and other coaches' ability to manage differences.

In other cases, "it has been difficult for Francophone players who don't speak English very well — coaches are often too impatient to slow down and make sure they understand or they use sarcasm which is not understood." Another athlete commented, "The relationship with trainers and teammates is difficult, but little by little I am improving my English. But the efforts are all mine; no trainer has a grounding in French." (Our translation)

When asked what could be done to improve the situation, athletes suggested: "Tolerance and patience of coaches toward athletes who speak the other official language" and "Sensitivity of coaches, educate them on how to adapt to athletes not speaking their language." We agree with the general trend of these comments: that coaches should make an effort to adapt to athletes whose first language is different from their own, rather than requiring that athletes do all the adapting.

Linguistic and cultural differences and how they are resolved affect all athletes. A Francophone athlete commented, "Often it is not language that is the problem, it's culture.



On the team, it's our behaviour that is different and that creates a barrier, not communications.”(Our translation) An English-speaking athlete noted, “Through my experiences in sport I have noticed a barrier that exists between French and English-speaking athletes. This barrier stems greatly from language differences and it definitely hinders the development of close relationships among athletes from the two language groups. We need to try to break down this barrier and create truly Canadian teams.”

We also heard from many athletes who have been called on to act as interpreters between their coaches and teammates, including in situations where any other interpreter would have been a better choice. An Anglophone athlete commented, “Because of my background in French immersion I have never had any problems with language, however I have found myself in the role of translator.” A Francophone athlete noted, “I had to travel with a team where only one girl did not speak French and where the coach made no effort to try to find out if she understood. I always had to be the translator and, despite my willingness, I do not think I was hired for that reason. I deplore that coach's attitude.” (Our translation)

The most frequent suggestion we heard for overcoming communication problems between coaches and athletes was language training for coaches. Many survey respondents and interviewees also proposed that the coaching group for any national team should have at least one member, preferably the head coach, who can speak both official languages. Coaches also suggested that a bilingual lexicon of sport terms would be a practical aid for them in communicating with athletes. Finally, several respondents recommend some kind of training

in cultural sensitivity for coaches, possibly as an element of the 3M NCCP. We consider all these suggestions valid and useful.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:

14. Beginning immediately, Sport Canada work with national sport organizations to ensure that some members of the coaching group responsible for any national team have a knowledge of both official languages; and that

15. Beginning immediately, Sport Canada work with national sport organizations and the Coaching Association of Canada to develop pedagogical material and coaching aids to assist coaches working with linguistically mixed teams.

4.4.3.2 National Sport Centres

Since 1994, national sport centres (NSCs) have opened in Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Atlantic Canada to provide centralized coordinated support services for elite athletes and coaches and to improve delivery of high performance sport programming. The Commonwealth Centre for Sport Development (CCSD) in Victoria, a legacy of the 1990 Commonwealth Games, has a similar mandate. The centres work in partnership with Sport Canada, the COA, NSOs, provincial governments, and university administrations to co-ordinate delivery of personal and professional services to high performance athletes. Their objective is to produce athletes capable of winning Olympic medals, while ensuring that the athletes develop skills and experience to adapt to life after their sport careers. Centres bid to provide services to national teams, and different sports work at different facilities. Among other sports, speed skating is centralized at Calgary for part of the year, Volleyball Canada has located both men's and women's national teams in Winnipeg, and the national synchronized swimming team

trains in Toronto. Most NSC services for athletes are provided on contract, rather than by NSC staff themselves.

In theory, the six NSCs form a network that delivers services in English and French across Canada. The network follows the model of the federal government, which provides services in both official languages according to two principles: where numbers warrant, or where the nature of the office requires it. In practice, as with the government, there are some gaps in the system. Although the centres are intended to be a network, we noted that they do not share material, even though the western centres could usefully borrow material in French from Montreal. In terms of direct service delivery, the concept of “where numbers warrant” or “significant demand” is difficult to apply to situations where small groups of people, such as a national team, work together while travelling to various training and competition sites. Some services provided through NSCs, however, clearly fall within the concept of “nature of the office,” which sets a higher standard of bilingual service when the health, safety or security of members of the public is at stake.

As we noted in the preceding section, the most intensive and important service to athletes — coaching — falls under the responsibility of NSOs in co-operation with the Coaching Association of Canada. NSCs provide services to athletes and coaches in the areas of sport science, medicine, and counselling.

Medical services emerged as an issue of great importance in our discussions with athletes and in our survey. Athletes suffer a high rate of physical stress and injuries, which can be potentially career-threatening. A Francophone athlete training in Calgary noted, “After an injury, I met with an English-speaking doctor and he explained my diagnosis in English. I had

a very poor understanding of what was involved and of the seriousness of the injury.” (Our translation) Both English-speaking and French-speaking athletes expressed anxiety about dealing with medical personnel, including physiotherapists and chiropractors, with whom they could not communicate well.

The NSC in Calgary can provide some assistance to athletes in French, mainly through Francophone staff at the Olympic Oval and Francophone coaches in speed skating, who will accompany athletes who need linguistic assistance. The NSC in Winnipeg has only one bilingual staff member and no resources, such as the Olympic Oval staff, readily available to compensate for this lack. However, the NSC in Winnipeg is exploring resources within the community to find French-speaking medical service providers. At the time of our visits, neither centre had a medical practitioner who could speak French on its list of service providers.

The NSCs are also responsible for the services of sport psychologists, who help athletes with mental preparation for high-level competition. In our survey, Francophone athletes rated sport psychologists as a key service in their development, and one which was as likely as not to be unavailable in their language. Psychological counselling has an important language component, and even if it cannot be considered essential to the health or safety of the athletes, the language used can potentially determine whether it will be effective. If NSCs and NSOs consider this an essential service, they should find ways to make it available in the athlete’s language of choice.

The French-speaking athletes we met acknowledge that Calgary and Winnipeg are English-speaking cities, and they know before they go to train there that they will need to



learn English. For the most part, they welcome this opportunity. However, they did express the need for the centre or their sport to organize a better orientation for unilingual French-speaking athletes during their transition to this environment. They particularly emphasized the importance of this for younger athletes, who may be leaving home for the first time. One athlete described the experience: “When I moved to Calgary to reach a higher level as an athlete, I spoke no English at all. I found the adaptation very difficult because I also had to be away from my family and friends. Practically no French was spoken in Calgary. Since then the language conditions have improved a lot here, but I think it is essential for athletes to have access to services in their preferred language if they want it. I have no regrets about my decision because I reached a higher level in my sport and I am fully bilingual, which makes my life easier as an athlete and as a person. But it was difficult for two years.” (Our translation) Another athlete estimated the adaptation time as four months, but both agreed that athletes coming into a linguistically different environment for the first time may need help adapting.

The NSC in Calgary has hired a bilingual person to work in the athlete resource centre and is working with the Francophone community of Calgary to inform athletes about local resources. Within the community, education in French is available to the end of high school, and the French-language school is reasonably accessible from the training facilities at the University of Calgary. However, the school has no arrangements to accommodate the schedules of athletes, who travel frequently. Since there is a “sport school,” which is also a French-immersion high school, within walking distance of the NSCC, French-speaking athletes of high-school age

tend to register there. Post-secondary education in French is unavailable in Calgary.

In Winnipeg, education in French is available at all levels, through to post-secondary education at Collège St-Boniface. We reviewed the bid package the NSCW submitted to Volleyball Canada to host the national teams. The package refers at length to Winnipeg’s French-language community and to the range of services available in French in the city. At the time of our visit, neither Team Volleyball nor the NSCW had yet taken steps to make these services, such as medical care and psychological counselling, available in French.

The Commissioner therefore recommends that:

16. Sport Canada ensure that all national sport centres provide essential medical services in both official languages by April 1, 2001, and organize appropriate orientation services for French-speaking athletes who are moving to a predominantly English-speaking environment for the first time.

In Montreal, the centre itself is able to provide all services in both official languages, except for some advanced coaching seminars offered through the National Coaching Institute, which are available in French only. The centre has service providers in all areas, including counselling and medicine, who can speak both official languages. English-language secondary and post-secondary education is available through the Montreal English school system and McGill and Concordia universities. The main challenge for the sport community in Montreal, as elsewhere, is to provide a suitable sport environment in French.

Coaches, athletes and NSC staff in Montreal pointed to difficulties obtaining documentation and services from NSOs in French and to the difficulty of instituting practices in French when both athletes and coaches are more familiar with

English sport terms. The recommendations addressed to NSOs and the Coaching Association of Canada in earlier sections of this report are intended to address these issues.

4.4.3.3 The Canadian Olympic Association

The Canadian Olympic Association (COA) is a non-profit non-governmental organization, mandated by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to further the Olympic movement in Canada. After Sport Canada, the COA is the second-largest contributor of financial assistance to athletes, coaches and sport federations in Canada. Among other activities, the COA is solely responsible for taking the Canadian teams to the Olympic and Pan-American Games. In co-ordination with NSOs, the COA selects the Olympic and Pan-American teams that represent Canada and provides a variety of support services, including transportation, clothing, food, accommodation, and administrative and medical support.

The athletes who responded to our survey stated that they were highly satisfied with the COA's ability to provide services in English and moderately satisfied with its services in French. Only Sport Canada rated better at providing services in the athletes' preferred official language.

In 1994, the COA adopted an official language policy, which is now incorporated in its Code of Conduct. The policy recognizes English and French as the organization's official languages and specifies that all services will be provided in the language of the client's choice and that internal documents, including minutes of the Board of Directors and the annual general meeting, will be in both languages. After its experience at the Nagano Olympics, the COA is now revising its policy to clarify the use of both official languages in public relations activities.

The COA's policy statement on discrimination and harassment also specifies that language and political opinions are prohibited grounds for discrimination.

We reviewed a number of COA documents, including its agreements with NSOs concerning team selection and the athlete agreement which all athletes sign when they become members of an Olympic team. The NSO agreement is available in both official languages and includes provision for appeals and arbitration of any disputes arising from the selection process. The Athlete Agreement is available in English and French and includes the following clause:

20.00 Language of Agreement

20.01 The athlete has requested that this Agreement and all related documents be drawn up in the English language with which request the COA agrees. (*This Section applies only to Francophone athletes who specifically request an Agreement in the English language.*)

The clause clearly offers the athlete a choice of language, but its wording, and the fact that it is necessary at all, provide an eloquent commentary on the place of English and French in the Canadian sport system. We suggest that the COA should join with other sport bodies to change the inequities in the system that led to it, rather than codifying it in a legal agreement.

As a funding body, the COA is well-placed to encourage more equitable use of both official languages within sport governing bodies. The COA funds more than 50 NSOs, including many that do not receive money from Sport Canada under the SFAF. We could find no evidence that the COA places any conditions regarding official languages on its contributions to sport organizations. At its recent millennial conference, the COA signed an agreement with



Sport Canada to support and promote the use of both official languages in amateur sport in Canada. The recommendations directed to Sport Canada earlier in this report could serve to guide the COA in its funding programs as well.

As the manager of Canada's Olympic teams, the COA is directly responsible for medical services, which athletes have identified as important to receive in their preferred official language. We were informed that the medical team at the Pan-American Games in 1999 consisted of 36 people, of whom almost a third were bilingual, and that a bilingual person was on duty at all times. The Quebec Council on Sport Medicine (Conseil de médecine du sport du Québec) raised concerns about the medical team's linguistic abilities; it has offered to work with the COA to ensure that bilingual doctors really do speak both languages and to recruit French-speaking medical staff. We consider this to be a constructive move toward ensuring that essential support services are provided in athletes' preferred official language.

4.4.3.4 The Pan-American Games

The Pan-American Games in Winnipeg in July 1999 illustrate how official languages can be integrated into sport activities to the benefit of all participants and spectators. The Games were conducted in three languages — English, French and Spanish — to the apparent satisfaction of athletes, coaches, sport organizers, media and fans. Services for athletes were available in the athlete's preferred language, signage was trilingual, announcements at sport events were in Spanish, French and English, and documents from media releases to competition schedules were produced in all three languages.

The Games were a linguistic success because the organizers planned ahead for linguistic services and committed enough money and

human resources to ensure that they could be delivered. The advance planning to set up an official languages secretariat took nearly two years, and its budget was finally found in the Games' contingency fund. Our recommendation to Sport Canada to ensure that adequate budgets are allocated to the linguistic aspect of major games should ensure that funds will be easier to locate in future. We believe that official languages needs of major games in Canada are quite easy to foresee. Ultimately, the budget for official languages for the Games was \$375,000 over a two-and-a-half-year period, out of a total federal contribution of \$60 million, just over half of one percent.

At its height, the official languages secretariat for the Pan-American Games had 18 staff, including nine translators and revisers. It also recruited local volunteers who could speak both official languages. The secretariat aimed to provide all written material in English and French and to ensure that announcers at all events could speak both languages. It also handled linguistic complaints and settled them within 24 hours. As a permanent legacy of its efforts, the official languages secretariat produced an English-French lexicon of sport terms for the 41 Pan-American sports, which should be distributed to coaches and athletes.

The official languages activities of the Pan-American Games built on experience at previous Pan-American, Olympic and Canada Games, and their success shows the extent to which the sport system is self-monitoring and self-correcting. We strongly suggest that sport bodies study the example of these games, to ensure that equally careful planning and investment of adequate resources will lead to a sport system in which athletes and coaches of both official languages will be able to achieve their goals.

5. CONCLUSION

Sport offers an unparalleled opportunity for Canadians of both official languages and all cultures to work together toward common goals and to understand one another. During this study we noted many positive aspects of the sport experience, including instances where official languages were fully integrated into sport events.

The sport system has made progress in official languages in the last 10 years, but still has some way to go before English and French have equal status within it. The most obvious symptom of the inequality of the two official languages within the sport system is the fact that, although one Canadian in four speaks French, only one high performance athlete in five is French-speaking. In order to succeed at the highest levels of sport, Francophone athletes are virtually required to master the English language as well as their sport.

Previous studies identified the selection process for national teams as a major impediment to the career progression of Francophone athletes. This study found that the selection process is now more transparent and fairer than it was 10 years ago and includes better mechanisms to handle appeals and resolve disputes. The problems faced by Francophone athletes occur earlier in their career development: in the difficult transition from provincial elite athlete to national team member, often complicated by conflicts between provincial and national sport

organizations; in the lack of French-language capability among many national sport organizations; and in the lack of French-language coaching on national teams. National sport organizations are primarily responsible for coaching services at all levels of their sport, and in too many cases both the organization and the coaches cannot communicate in French.

The sport system as a whole does not have an adequate administrative infrastructure to manage its programs in both official languages. Most national sport organizations lack clear and unequivocal policies on official languages and do not have adequate support to deliver programs in both official languages, including timely translation services. The federal government has given sport organizations a mixed message, by simultaneously cutting their funding and requiring them to meet certain standards regarding official languages. If bilingualism in sport is really a government priority, it should follow through by investing the money and expertise needed to ensure that organizations can meet the basic requirements of managing sport development in a bilingual country.

6. APPENDIXES

6.1 Population of Carded Athletes, by First Official Language

| DISCIPLINE | ANGLOPHONES | | FRANCOPHONES | | TOTAL |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------|
| | Number | Percentage of Total | Number | Percentage of Total | Number |
| Alpine Skiing | 13 | 65.0 | 7 | 35.0 | 20 |
| Alpine Skiing- Paralympic | 7 | 87.5 | 1 | 12.5 | 8 |
| Archery-Paralympic | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| Athletics | 55 | 88.7 | 7 | 11.3 | 62 |
| Athletics - Paralympic | 27 | 62.8 | 16 | 37.2 | 43 |
| Badminton | 6 | 66.7 | 3 | 33.3 | 9 |
| Baseball-Men | 18 | 90.0 | 2 | 10.0 | 20 |
| Basketball-Men | 28 | 96.6 | 1 | 3.4 | 29 |
| Basketball-Paralympic-Men | 12 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 12 |
| Basketball-Paralympic Women | 10 | 83.3 | 2 | 16.7 | 12 |
| Basketball-Women | 14 | 87.5 | 2 | 12.5 | 16 |
| Biathlon | 8 | 80.0 | 2 | 20.0 | 10 |
| Blind Sports-Paralympic | 4 | 66.7 | 2 | 33.3 | 6 |
| Bobsleigh | 5 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 |
| Boxing | 12 | 85.7 | 2 | 14.3 | 14 |
| Canoeing | 31 | 83.8 | 6 | 16.2 | 37 |
| Cross Country Ski | 11 | 84.6 | 2 | 15.4 | 13 |
| Curling-Men | 8 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 8 |
| Curling-Women | 8 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 8 |
| Cycling | 24 | 85.7 | 4 | 14.3 | 28 |
| Diving | 9 | 64.3 | 5 | 35.7 | 14 |
| Equestrian | 17 | 94.4 | 1 | 5.6 | 18 |
| Fencing | 8 | 47.1 | 9 | 52.9 | 17 |
| Field Hockey-Men | 34 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 34 |

6. APPENDICES

| DISCIPLINE | ANGLOPHONES | | FRANCOPHONES | | TOTAL |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------|
| | Number | Percentage of Total | Number | Percentage of Total | Number |
| Field Hockey-Women | 22 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 22 |
| Figure Skating | 12 | 54.5 | 10 | 45.5 | 22 |
| Freestyle Ski | 19 | 61.3 | 12 | 38.7 | 31 |
| Gymnastics-Men | 7 | 77.8 | 2 | 22.2 | 9 |
| Gymnastics-Trampoline | 6 | 75.0 | 2 | 25.0 | 8 |
| Gymnastics-Women | 7 | 70.0 | 3 | 30.0 | 10 |
| Hockey-Men | 16 | 94.1 | 1 | 5.9 | 17 |
| Hockey-Women | 36 | 78.3 | 10 | 21.7 | 46 |
| Judo | 6 | 40.0 | 9 | 60.0 | 15 |
| Judo-Paralympic | 2 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 |
| Luge | 6 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 6 |
| Racquetball | 7 | 77.8 | 2 | 22.2 | 9 |
| Rowing | 72 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 72 |
| Rugby-Men | 23 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 23 |
| Rugby-Paralympic-Men | 7 | 77.8 | 2 | 22.2 | 9 |
| Shooting | 3 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 |
| Shooting-Paralympic | 4 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 |
| Soccer-Men | 29 | 93.5 | 2 | 6.5 | 31 |
| Soccer-Women | 23 | 85.2 | 4 | 14.8 | 27 |
| Softball-Women | 29 | 93.5 | 2 | 6.5 | 31 |
| Speed Skating | 29 | 54.7 | 24 | 45.3 | 53 |
| Squash | 6 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 6 |
| Swimming | 51 | 92.7 | 4 | 7.3 | 55 |
| Swimming-Paralympic | 16 | 88.9 | 2 | 11.1 | 18 |

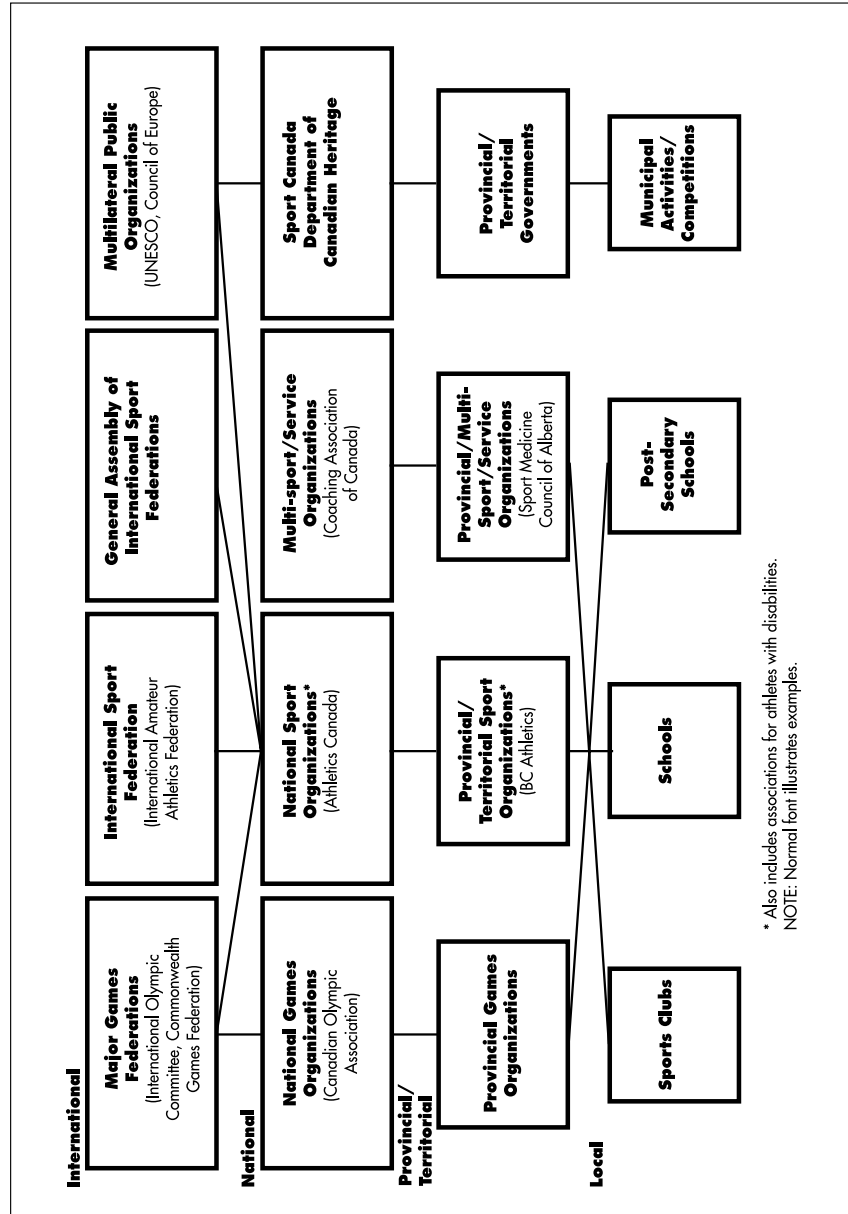


| DISCIPLINE | ANGLOPHONES | | FRANCOPHONES | | TOTAL |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage of Total | Number | Percentage of Total | Number |
| Synchro Swim | 18 | 64.3 | 10 | 35.7 | 28 |
| Table Tennis | 6 | 60.0 | 4 | 40.0 | 10 |
| Taekwondo | 9 | 69.2 | 4 | 30.8 | 13 |
| Tennis | 4 | 44.4 | 5 | 55.6 | 9 |
| Tennis-Paralympic | 7 | 87.5 | 1 | 12.5 | 8 |
| Triathlon | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| Volleyball-Beach | 11 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 11 |
| Volleyball-Men | 24 | 82.8 | 5 | 17.2 | 29 |
| Volleyball-Paralympic-Men | 9 | 90.0 | 1 | 10.0 | 10 |
| Volleyball-Women | 17 | 65.4 | 9 | 34.6 | 26 |
| Water Polo-Men | 15 | 88.2 | 2 | 11.8 | 17 |
| Water Polo-Women | 12 | 57.1 | 9 | 42.9 | 21 |
| Water Ski | 6 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 6 |
| Weightlifting | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 100.0 | 1 |
| Wrestling-Men | 23 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 23 |
| Wrestling-Women | 5 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 |
| Yachting | 34 | 85.0 | 6 | 15.0 | 40 |
| Yachting-Paralympic | 4 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 1013 | 82.0 | 222 | 18.0 | 1235 |
| Diciplines represented | 65 | 98.5 | 46 | 69.7 | 66 |

Source : Sport Canada, November-December 1999

6.2 Organization of Sport in Canada

Amateur Sport Community





6.3 Acronyms

| | |
|-------|--|
| AAP: | Athlete Assistance Program |
| CAC: | Coaching Association of Canada |
| CAWA: | Canadian Amateur Wrestling Association |
| CCSD: | Commonwealth Centre for Sport Development |
| COA: | Canadian Olympic Association |
| MSO: | Multi-sport / Multi-service Organization |
| NCI: | National Coaching Institute |
| NCCP: | National Coaching Certification Program |
| NSO: | National Sport Organization |
| NSC: | National Sport Centre |
| | NSCC: National Sport Centre, Calgary |
| | NSCW: National Sport Centre, Winnipeg |
| | NSCM: National Sport Centre, Montreal |
| OCOL: | Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages |
| PSO: | Provincial Sport Organization |
| SFAF: | Sport Funding and Accountability Framework |
| SSC: | Speed Skating Canada |
| TBS: | Treasury Board Secretariat |

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8. LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

1. *By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada review the official languages goals and minimum expectations of the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework, to require sport organizations to identify and correct barriers to Francophone participation.*
2. *By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada systematically monitor implementation of the official languages goals and minimum expectations in the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework.*
3. *By April 1, 2001, the Treasury Board review its official languages audit methodology in order to ensure that the programs audited not only comply with established administrative controls, but also are effective in achieving program objectives.*
4. *By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada review the language requirements of positions in the Athlete Assistance Program, with a view to improving the program's French-language capability, and take the necessary measures to ensure that incumbents meet the revised requirements.*
5. *By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada ensure that its financial contribution to major games include adequate funds to ensure that the official languages requirements can be met.*
6. *By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada review the language requirements of management positions, with a view to improving the French-language capability among managers, and take the necessary measures to ensure that incumbents meet the requirements of their positions.*
7. *By April 1, 2001, Sport Canada review the allocation of responsibilities among program officers, to ensure that client organizations can communicate with the branch in their preferred official language.*
8. *Sport Canada work with national sport organizations to ensure that they adopt appropriate policy statements on official languages by December 31, 2001.*
9. *Sport Canada require national sport organizations to review the linguistic capability of their staff by April 1, 2002, with a view to ensuring that athletes and coaches can receive appropriate services in their preferred official language at all times.*
10. *By April 1, 2002, Sport Canada and national sport organizations jointly review organizations' expenditures related to official languages and establish realistic budgets for this activity.*

- 11. By April 1, 2002, Sport Canada study the feasibility of providing centralized linguistic services such as translation to sport organizations, either through government programs or through a non-governmental organization which could assume this mandate.*
- 12. Sport Canada work with national sport organizations to identify the first official language of national team coaches by April 1, 2001, and if necessary, take steps to ensure that coaches from both official language groups have access to positions at this level.*
- 13. Sport Canada work with the Coaching Association of Canada and national sport organizations to ensure that technical manuals for coach education are made available in both official languages within the year following publication of this report.*
- 14. Beginning immediately, Sport Canada work with national sport organizations to ensure that some members of the coaching group responsible for any national team have a knowledge of both official languages.*
- 15. Beginning immediately, Sport Canada work with national sport organizations and the Coaching Association of Canada to develop pedagogical material and coaching aids to assist coaches working with linguistically mixed teams.*
- 16. Sport Canada ensure that all national sport centres provide essential medical services in both official languages by April 1, 2001, and organize appropriate orientation services for French-speaking athletes who are moving to a predominantly English-speaking environment for the first time.*