

Linguistic Barriers to Access to High Performance Sport Study - 2005

TNS Canadian Facts Social Policy Research

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This study was funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage and represents the opinions of the authors. It does not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Canadian Heritage or the Government of Canada.

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Catalogue No.: CH24-12/2005E-PDF
ISBN: 0-662-42094-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page Number
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
A. SPORT CANADA AND THE CANADIAN SPORT SYSTEM	1
B. CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF THE ISSUE	2
C. DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT.....	3
D. METHODOLOGY	4
II ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE PARTICIPATION IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT	5
A. FACTORS AFFECTING LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION AT THE NATIONAL TEAM LEVEL.....	5
B. LOCATION OF CANADIAN SPORT CENTRES AND HEAD OFFICES OF NSOS	8
C. CARDED ATHLETES	9
D. CONCLUSIONS.....	10
III BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT	13
A. GENERAL FACTORS	13
B. LINGUISTIC FACTORS	13
C. IMPACTS OF LINGUISTIC BARRIERS ON ATHLETES	15
D. CONCLUSIONS.....	18
IV THE INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE.....	21
A. OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE.....	21
B. SPORT CANADA	23
C. NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS	24
D. PROVINCIAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS	29
E. CANADIAN SPORT CENTRES	30
F. NEED TO LEARN ENGLISH	32
G. PROGRESS MADE IN RECENT YEARS	33
H. CONCLUSIONS.....	34
V COACHING	37
VI RECOMMENDATIONS	41

APPENDIX

- Appendix A: Carded Athletes by Sport and Language Preference
- Appendix B: Bibliography

I INTRODUCTION

A. SPORT CANADA AND THE CANADIAN SPORT SYSTEM

Sport Canada is a branch of the International and Intergovernmental Affairs Sector within the Department of Canadian Heritage. The Department is dedicated to valuing and strengthening the Canadian experience. Sport Canada has six divisions: Sport Programs; Sport Policy; Major Games and Hosting; Strategic Planning and Accountability; Management Services; and Executive Services. The mission of Sport Canada is to enhance opportunities for Canadians to participate and excel in sport.

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

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. Through these agreements the associations have made a commitment to provide services to athletes in both official languages.

The Canadian Sport Centres (CSCs) work in partnership with Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Association, NSOs, provincial governments, and university administrations to coordinate delivery of personal and professional services to high performance athletes. Their objective is to produce athletes capable of winning Olympic medals, while ensuring that 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.

B. CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF THE ISSUE

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 of both services available to them in their first official language and their opportunities to be chosen to represent Canada as part of national sports teams.

After the Sub-Committee's report was published, two members of Parliament wrote to the Commissioner of Official Languages and requested that the Commissioner 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 Canadian Sport Centres, as well as the lack of documentation in French. The second asked the Commissioner specifically to examine the situation at the Canadian Sport Centres (CSCs) in Winnipeg and Calgary.

The key findings of the study conducted by the OCOL in 2000 include:

- English and French were far from having equal access in Canadian sport. The proportion of French-speakers among high performance athletes was found to be well below their presence in the population, and they were concentrated in a few sports.
- The selection process was found to be, on the whole, fair and transparent, and athletes of both official languages were equally satisfied with it. The study found that French-speaking athletes encountered problems long before they became eligible to compete in the final selection for national teams.
- The sport system as a whole was found to have inadequate administrative structures to manage its programs in both official languages. Most national sport organizations lacked clear and unequivocal policies on official languages and did not have adequate administrative support to deliver programs in both official languages, including timely translation services.
- There was a lack of French language skills among volunteer directors of NSOs and their professional staff. One of the results of this was that documents were frequently sent in English only.

In May 2003 Sport Canada published the new Canadian Sport Policy, which states that linguistic duality is an essential feature of the sports system and that all persons, regardless of language or culture, should be able to participate in this system. The Canadian Sport Policy is aimed at eliminating language barriers imposed on Francophone athletes by providing them with essential services in their own language, such as coaching. Sport Canada consulted with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in the course of formulating this policy.

C. DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

There is a strong tendency to view the issue of under-representation of Francophones or Anglophones in a Quebec versus Canada context. However, there are significant numbers of Anglophones in Quebec as well as a significant number of Francophones living outside of Quebec. The Anglophone official language minority community accounted for approximately 10.4 percent of the population of Quebec as of the 2001 Census. Similarly, Francophone minority community members (i.e., Francophones living outside of Quebec) accounted for 12.4 percent of the population in the Atlantic provinces, 5.3 percent in Ontario, 3.6 percent in the Prairies/Territories and 1.9 percent in the Western provinces and the Yukon. In many of these communities, there are strong historical and cultural ties to language, and many official language minority communities have their own schools, daycare centres and medical service providers, so members are able to function in their preferred official language and pass on the language to their children, albeit with varying degrees of success.

These language patterns in the Canadian population have shifted over time (e.g., increase in bilingualism, smaller proportion of unilingual French speakers, increased proportion of Canadians with neither English nor French as their first language), but they continue to have implications for the conduct and administration of Canadian sport policy.

The OCOL Follow-Up Report in 2003 states: “A starting point for our 1999 study was the under-representation of French-language carded athletes.” They note that:

- 18 percent of carded athletes stated that their preferred language was French in 1999, while
- 24.6 percent of all Canadians said French was their first official language (1996 Census)
- 18.5 percent of carded athletes stated a preference for French in 2004 while
- 24.1 percent of all Canadians said French was their first official language (2001 Census)

This under-representation of Francophone athletes was an early theme in the research that led to studies of official language use in sports.

D. METHODOLOGY

The general goal of this study is to verify the barriers identified in OCOL's previous studies as well as any newly emerging barriers. This study is also tasked with addressing whether some of the barriers previously identified have been eliminated. Based on the barriers identified, recommendations will be made to Sport Canada as well as other governments and/or sport associations and non-governmental organizations to encourage them to promote equal access to both linguistic groups at the high performance level.

The first element of this study was a literature review of existing academic research related to the issue of linguistic barriers. Other sources of data for this study include interviews with approximately 50 individuals representing Sport Canada, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, NSOs, Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs), academics, athletes and coaches and representatives from Canadian Sport Centres. These interviews were conducted over the course of a two-month period in March and May of 2005. In addition to the interviews, we have also incorporated data from the Status of Athletes Survey (SAS) conducted recently by EKOS Research Associates. In developing the survey questionnaire with EKOS, Sport Canada and Athletes CAN purposely included a number of issues and questions related to language. These have been incorporated into this report.

II ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE PARTICIPATION IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT

A. FACTORS AFFECTING LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION AT THE NATIONAL TEAM LEVEL

There was a clear recognition among those we interviewed that there are sports that are more strongly associated with one linguistic group or the other. For example, short track speed skating, judo, weightlifting and figure skating tend to be more strongly associated with Francophones, while curling, track and field and field hockey tend to be more strongly associated with Anglophones. The reasons why there is a stronger representation of one linguistic group or the other on national teams is, as some interviewees pointed out, suitable material for extensive academic research. However, some of the possible explanations most frequently cited by those we interviewed included:

- **Quality and enthusiasm of volunteers and coaches** in a particular region will result in a greater level of interest or enthusiasm in a sport within that region and/or linguistic group.
- **Role models/history of success.** Success of a member of one linguistic group will often serve as a role model for youth in the same linguistic group. For example, diving has become more popular in Quebec as a result of Alexandre Depatie's success at the recent summer Olympics. Similarly track and field has become more popular among Anglophones as a result of Donovan Bailey's successes. Such role models will spur youth to become interested in a particular sport and, in time, this will filter up to result in an increased proportion of representation on national teams from one linguistic group or the other.
- **Cultural and/or historical reasons.** Short track speed skating developed in Quebec partly as a result of the popularity of speed skating and a lack a sufficient number of speed skating ovals. Similarly, freestyle skiing was developed in the Quebec City area and the sport has continued to be most popular in Quebec. The level of enthusiasm or interest in the sport will result in more members of a linguistic group moving up to national level competition.
- **Location of infrastructure for a sport.** For example, alpine skiing is more popular in areas within proximity to hills, and kayaking is more popular in areas in proximity to rivers. This will result in a higher level of interest in regions with the appropriate infrastructure. Some interviewees, specifically Francophones, feel that there is an inequity in the infrastructure available in Western and Eastern Canada that penalizes Francophones or Quebecers. One example cited by some of those we interviewed was the lack of a covered speed skating oval in Quebec to mirror the covered speed skating oval in Calgary.

- **Systemic discrimination when choosing team members.** Some cited the research conducted by Marc Lavoie on the National Hockey League as an example of how systemic discrimination manifests itself and its impacts. Most who cited systemic discrimination feel that it is subtle and often difficult or impossible to quantify since there are so many factors that may impact the make-up of a national team. One interviewee noted that the process of de-selection starts before the athlete makes it to the national level if the athlete is a unilingual Francophone.

Two clear approaches have emerged as sociologists have attempted to explain their data consistently showing a lower representation of Francophones on Canadian national teams—**cultural** explanations and **structural** explanations. Gruneau and Albinson describe the cultural interpretation of national team data given by Boileau et al. (1976): They note that Quebec was largely a rural and ‘traditional’ society until the early 1960s. Intensely competitive urges and a need for achievement in sport were not a part of the dominant value system. At the same time, Boileau et al. argue that the lack of Francophone involvement in sports was also contingent upon a rejection of the personal values of Anglophones—many of which were thought to be reflected in the structure and organization of sport (1976, p.104).

In other words, sport was not important in Francophone culture in Quebec, and maintaining a Francophone culture in Quebec was associated with rejecting the type of competitive sports associated with Anglophones. Lavoie (1989) reviewed, and rejected, similar cultural explanations for the under-representation of Francophones in the NHL: the Francophone style of play (characterized as too much offense, too little aggression and work ethic); the belief that it was necessary to pay Francophone players more to induce them to leave Quebec; and the language problems associated with having a non-English speaking player on the team. Thus, according to Lavoie, Quebec culture and the (Anglophone) culture of the NHL clashed because of this stereotypical view of the ways in which Quebec culture was represented in hockey to the disadvantage of non-star Francophone players.

Structural explanations take into account the differences in power (political, economic, etc.) between Anglophones and Francophones and argue quite distinctly that Francophone under-representation was a result of discrimination in professional hockey and other (amateur) sports. Talented Francophone athletes were often not selected for national teams because of discrimination on the part of the Anglophone sports executives making the selections. Coulombe and Lavoie (1985) argue that Francophone players reached the NHL primarily in those positions where there were objective measures of performance—the statistics indicate clearly that one goalie is better than another and, almost with the same degree of clarity, that one forward is better than another. Assessing the play of defencemen is more subjective. Where a Francophone player was objectively the better player, he would be selected; more subjective assessments opened the door to stereotypes and discrimination. We note that similar analyses have not been made with regard to amateur sports in Canada.

The clash between cultural and structural explanations came to a head in an academic debate in the *Sociology of Sport Journal* in 1992. The debate was sparked by the publication of two articles by Phil White of McMaster University and Jim Curtis of the University of Waterloo (White & Curtis, 1990a; 1990b), which advocated a cultural explanation of Francophone / Anglophone differences in sport participation. The articles reviewed 1976 national survey data in Canada showing that Francophones had a lower rate of participation in competitive sports (and a higher rate of participation in recreational sports) than Anglophones. Both articles indicate that the data support a ‘values-differences’ interpretation—that there are differences in the orientation to achievement between Anglophones and Francophones (with Anglophones being more achievement oriented) which explain the differences in involvement in competitive sports. White and Curtis (1990b) also focus on the differences in school socialization for Francophones and Anglophones in Canada to account, in part, for the values differences (i.e., that before the Quiet Revolution it was not common for Francophone schools to be involved in interschool sports). Critical commentaries on the articles by researchers from the Université de Montréal (Laberge & Girardin, 1992; McAll, 1992) advocated a structural interpretation, pointing to a long history of structural inequality between Francophones and Anglophones in Quebec that was reflected in discrimination in many aspects of life including sport. Curtis and White (1992) replied by re-advocating their cultural explanation and providing additional data.

Academic debates such as these are often presented as an ‘either / or’ situation—you must accept either a cultural explanation or a structural explanation of the differences in sport participation and the under-representation of Francophones on national teams. However, explanations of social life are often far more complex and nuanced. There is clear evidence (summarized by White and Curtis (1990a, 1990b)) of cultural differences between Anglophones and Francophones in Canada; and there is clear evidence of a long history of structural inequality and discrimination. The question that remains, and is suggested by Laberge and Girardin (1992), is to what extent cultural differences are a result of structural inequality—of being subject to, and resisting, discrimination?

Few of those interviewed for this study related the popularity of particular sports among one linguistic group or another to issues of language or linguistic barriers to participation. Some noted that there is a bias against Francophones in team sports. As one interviewee noted, “One sees teams that are largely Anglophone, that train in Anglophone regions and have Anglophone coaches. This is particularly true for team sports. One needs to distinguish between team and individual sports. Team sports tend to have more Anglophones. Coaches tend to pick Anglophones for the team, to create a level of homogeneity in teams” (our translation). Based on the most recent list available to our study team, dated November 2004, the split between Anglophone and Francophone carded athletes in team sports was 90:10. The corresponding split for individual sports was 75:25. The number of team members, by language preference and sport, may be found in Appendix A of this study.

B. LOCATION OF CANADIAN SPORT CENTRES AND HEAD OFFICES OF NSOS

There has been much discussion in recent years about the location of Canadian Sport Centres and head offices of NSOs and the link to the representation of Anglophones and Francophones on national teams. Much of this debate evolved as a result of the decision of Synchrono Canada to relocate its head offices from Montreal to Toronto. Synchrono Canada, after five years, has recently relocated back to Montreal. At the time that Synchrono Canada made the decision to relocate to Toronto, the arguments focused on the impact on athletes with much of the team being Francophone. Synchronized swimming has historically been a Francophone-identified sport and both linguistic groups are currently well represented on the national team with 14 of 30 carded athletes on the team indicating French as their preferred language as of November 2004. The training centre for the national synchronized swim team was until recently located in Etobicoke, Ontario, and is currently located in Montreal, Quebec. With almost 50 percent of national team members being Francophones, the location of the training centre in Ontario for the past five years does not appear to have resulted in an under-representation of Francophones on the team. However it may be too soon to assess with certainty whether a five-year stay in Ontario is sufficient to have had an impact, or how the absence of Synchrono Canada from Quebec has impacted the development of the sport in Quebec.

Representatives from NSOs and CSCs and academics were asked whether, in their opinion, there was a link between the location of head offices of NSOs and Canadian Sport Centres and the representation of Anglophones and Francophones on national teams. The vast majority believes there is no link, particularly at the high performance level. Many of those we interviewed feel that high performance athletes are aware that they are likely to be required to relocate at some point in their career and so the location of NSOs, CSCs or training centres has no impact on the representation of athletes on the national team. A number of individuals expressed the opinion that the debate is largely motivated by politics and has little to do with the development of high performance athletes. Some of those we interviewed feel there is an impact on athletes with respect to the need for adjustment to another language and city, but that there is not necessarily a direct impact on the representation of one linguistic group or the other on the national team. Some of those we interviewed feel that the decision on where to locate a National Training Centre is based on coaching and facilities, and athletes want to go where they can get access to the best coaching and facilities. A number of those we interviewed noted that the impacts on athletes can certainly be negative if the appropriate services are not made available to athletes in both official languages.

Many NSO head offices are located in Ottawa. Those we interviewed believe that this has little impact on high performance athletes and may in fact have a positive impact on the representation of Francophones and bilingual individuals on the staff of NSOs because the National Capital Region has a high level of bilingualism among its population. According to the 2001 Census, the percentage of bilingual people in the

National Capital Region is 44 percent, much higher than the level of bilingualism for Canada as a whole of 17.7 percent.

C. CARDED ATHLETES

The Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) is a major source of financial support for Canadian amateur high performance athletes. The program contributes to improving Canadian performances at major international sporting events such as the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Pan Am Games, Paralympic Games and World Championships. To this end, the AAP identifies and financially supports athletes already in, or having the potential to be in, the top 16 in the world in their sport.

Normally, the NSO must be funded by Sport Canada through the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) or the Funding and Accountability Framework for Athletes with a Disability (FAFAD). The sport must have a sanctioned World Championship, World Cup or equivalent championship that is held at least biennially. The NSO must have a clearly articulated national team program with appropriate training and competitive opportunities (both domestic and international) for each of the proposed carded athletes. The NSO's national team program must also be based on year-round training principles that include significant daily training activities. The NSO must formally monitor and evaluate the training of athlete and competitive programs. The NSO must conduct a formal process for selecting athletes for national teams. Rules and procedures for selection must be published and made known to all concerned, along with procedures for appealing decisions.

AAP support is subject to the availability of the athlete to represent Canada in major international competitions, including World Championships, Olympic Games and Paralympic Games; participation in preparatory and annual training programs; and adherence to their Athlete/NSO Agreement. AAP financial support is usually limited to athletes in sports that are financially supported by Sport Canada as a result of the implementation of the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) or the Funding and Accountability Framework for Athletes with a Disability (FAFAD).

Athletes must meet the "carding" criteria as a member of a Canadian Team at international events or in a domestic event or events sanctioned by the NSO for such purposes. The Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) is aimed at enhancing the Canadian high performance sport system. The AAP assists international-calibre athletes with their training and competition needs, through the provision of a living and training allowance and, where applicable, tuition expenses.

The most recent data available from Sport Canada (November, 2004) indicates that of the 1,524 carded athletes, 225 or 18.5 percent have indicated French as their preferred language for communication with Sport Canada. According to Sport Canada data on the language preference of carded athletes, the proportion of Francophones has

remained relatively constant at 17 to 18 percent since 1990. The proportion of Francophones, as defined by first official language spoken, in Canada is 24.1 percent, based on the 2001 Census. Thus there is some indication that Francophone athletes may be under-represented in the proportion of carded athletes. According to Statistics Canada, the definition of Anglophone and Francophone can be based on mother tongue, the first official language spoken or the language used at home. Further, the 2001 Census showed that 22.0 percent of the Canadian population spoke French most often at home at the time of the Census, slightly lower than the 22.9 percent who reported French as their mother tongue. The proportion of the population that spoke English most often at home, 67.5 percent, was appreciably higher than the proportion whose mother tongue was English, 59.1 percent. Statistics Canada explains this as resulting from the attraction of English for members of other language groups.

As well, the cultural and racial profile of Canada is evolving as a result of immigration, with many immigrants coming to Canada who speak neither English nor French as their first language. As a result the demographics of the athlete population can be expected to evolve as well. To fairly assess the representation of Francophones and Anglophones among carded athletes, one would need data on the first official language spoken by athletes. In other words, the basis of comparison used to assess the representation of Francophone and Anglophone carded athletes (or high performance athletes) relative to the Canadian population must be the same. Otherwise a fair and accurate assessment of the linguistic representation of athletes cannot be made.

D. CONCLUSIONS

There is no clear evidence that the popularity of particular sports among one linguistic group or another is linked to issues of language or linguistic barriers to participation. There are, however, situations where some feel there is at least the possibility of discrimination against linguistic groups. This tends to occur in team sports during the selection process and tends to be linked to a desire for team homogeneity. The argument that national teams for team sports tend to have more Anglophones than Francophones is true; however, Anglophones make up three quarters of the Canadian population, so one would expect Anglophones to make up three quarters of national teams (for team sports). In fact, based on data on carded athletes from November 2004, Anglophones make up 90 percent of carded team members in team sports.

The impact of the location of NSOs, CSCs or training centres has been found to have little bearing on the representation of Anglophones or Francophones on national teams. Clearly some unilingual athletes would prefer to stay in their home environment. However, there is no evidence that the decision on where to locate a NSO, CSC or training centre impacts the representation of Anglophone or Francophones on a national team. For example, the impact of moving from Montreal to Etobicoke did not appear to impact the representation of Francophones on the national synchronized swim team in the

short term.

There is evidence to suggest that Francophones are under-represented among carded athletes. However, one must take into consideration the definition of Anglophone and Francophone in assessing the representation of linguistic groups among carded athletes. Currently, there is no precise means through which to fairly and accurately compare the representation of athletes, using preferred language, against the Canadian population as a whole.

III BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT

A. GENERAL FACTORS

According to those we interviewed, financial issues tend to present the most significant barrier faced by athletes competing at the high performance level. According to many of those we interviewed, it tends to be very expensive to train and compete at an advanced level. There is usually a requirement for a full-time commitment to training as well as travel to national and international competition.

The size of Canada and the difficulty and cost related to traveling to competitions poses a barrier to many athletes competing at the high performance level. This barrier is not unrelated to financing since the issue of geography relates to the cost of travel. According to some of those we interviewed, the geographic size of Canada often poses challenges to ensuring that athletes have sufficient time to train as a team. One person we interviewed feels that the geography poses a greater challenge in Atlantic Canada because there tend to be fewer opportunities for competition in the Atlantic provinces.

A number of those we interviewed noted cultural barriers. One person we interviewed compared the soccer traditions in Quebec versus the rest of Canada. The teaching and coaching of soccer in Quebec, according to this interviewee, is based on the Latin model whereas the model used in the rest of Canada is the British model. So when players from Quebec find themselves competing for spots on the national team, they are at a disadvantage because of their different playing style.

B. LINGUISTIC FACTORS

There was disagreement among those we interviewed as to whether linguistic barriers to participation at the high performance level existed in the Canadian sport system. The vast majority of those interviewed believe that no such barriers exist at the high performance level. However, many recognized that if barriers to participation exist they manifest themselves at lower levels of competition and not at the high performance level. Those athletes who have achieved the high performance level have overcome barriers, including financial, geographic, social, and linguistic. Those Francophones who reach the high performance level have overcome the linguistic barriers. Some of those we interviewed noted that those that succeed would likely succeed despite almost any barrier.

The 2000 OCOL report also noted this reality, pointing out that language alone cannot explain the relatively low presence of French-speaking athletes at the highest levels of Canadian sport.

Some of those we interviewed believe that there are linguistic barriers at the high performance level that manifest themselves during the team selection process. According to these interviewees, the discrimination is often difficult to prove because of the subjectivity of the process in some sports. However, if an Anglophone coach is selecting members for a largely Anglophone team, then, these interviewees argue, given two equal skill and talent levels, it will invariably be the Anglophones who are selected. So Francophones must generally be better than Anglophones in order to be selected for national teams. Others we interviewed disagreed that this type of discrimination occurred on a regular basis, noting that there are many intangible and unquantifiable factors that determine the suitability of an athlete for membership on a national team, including potential, drive, natural ability, age and so forth. In fact the 2000 OCOL report found no evidence of this type of discrimination in the Canadian sports system at the high performance level.

Another means through which some of those we interviewed believe that linguistic barriers manifest themselves is the need for Francophone athletes to move to regions or environments where French is not spoken. Performance, it is argued, is hindered because of a lack of ability to communicate and a sense of alienation. The solution proposed by some who make this argument is that Francophone athletes should be able to stay in Quebec, in a French environment, to train, and thus equivalent infrastructure should be available in Quebec. However, it must be noted that there is a significant Francophone population outside of Quebec. Locating French training centres or facilities exclusively in Quebec, i.e., implementing a parallel system for Francophone in Quebec, would penalize Francophones from outside of Quebec in the same way that some feel the current system penalizes Francophones from within Quebec—specifically that these athletes would be required to move to Quebec. One individual we interviewed counters this argument that moving is detrimental by noting that this is an issue that needs to be addressed by any high performance athlete, regardless of language—whether or not you, as an athlete, can stay in your home community and continue to develop. As well, there is a recognized tendency for English to dominate. This linguistic domination manifests itself by teammates communicating in English when the team has one Francophone member (or Francophone athletes are in the minority) as well as when Anglophones are in the minority. In other words, English tends to be the default language.

This issue of relocation is sport-specific, with some sports requiring more relocation than others. Pairs figure skating, for example, requires the bringing together of facilities, the two athletes and a coach. Unless both athletes are from the same community, one or both will be required to relocate, possibly to a different linguistic environment.

Those who feel strongly that language presents significant challenges for athletes, despite having made it to the high performance level, feel there should be more effort put into ensuring that unilingual athletes are able to progress to the high performance level. These interviewees argue that more of the coaches and other staff who come into contact with athletes must be bilingual and services must be available in both official languages at the provincial level of competition. Without this, Francophone athletes will always face greater challenges in progressing to the high performance level. In fact, even many of those who feel there are no barriers to participation at the high performance level agree that the services and supports provided to athletes should be available in both official languages.

Two individuals we interviewed noted that there are inequities in funding to athletes that favour those who reside in Quebec because the Quebec provincial government provides its athletes with greater financial support. Since the mid-1990s the Quebec provincial government has taken a keen interest in the development of athletes and has provided significantly more funding and tax incentives to high performance athletes. We note that ultimately this may serve to increase the proportion of athletes from Quebec, and thus the proportion of Francophones, at the national or high performance level. However, this cannot be viewed as a barrier for athletes from outside of Quebec nor is it an issue over which Sport Canada has direct responsibility, although there is scope for increased effort at lobbying other provinces and territories to increase support for athletes.

C. IMPACTS OF LINGUISTIC BARRIERS ON ATHLETES

The challenges of identifying and quantifying linguistic barriers lies in the fact that there are multiple factors that lead to higher participation of one group in a sport over other groups, be they linguistic, racial, cultural or gender groups. It is possible that the linguistic differences, according to one academic researcher we interviewed, have resulted in the difference in the level of participation in sport on the part of Francophones. However, as this researcher noted, “Since participation in sport is dependant on a myriad of factors, it is not possible to discern precisely the effects of linguistic barriers” (our translation). Another academic we met with noted that it is difficult to identify barriers for those who are already at the top, i.e., the high performance level. They have overcome barriers or did not experience any barriers significant enough to prevent them from excelling, while those who have been faced with the most significant barriers and have dropped out are not at the high performance level. As one bilingual individual who has worked extensively with both Francophone and Anglophone athletes noted, “At the high performance level, we are dealing with kids who cope no matter what.” Many of the academics we interviewed believe that more research is needed on this issue. One suggested that more insight was needed into when in an athlete’s career the linguistic barriers have the greatest impact and when athletes, particularly Francophones, should be provided with the necessary support to adapt to an Anglophone environment and learn English.

A number of those interviewed believe that, although confronted with linguistic barriers, many or most athletes will not complain. For example, one interviewee cited an example from the Paralympic Games in Sydney where all the athletes' contracts were in English only. The Quebec Association of Wheelchair Athletes advised their athletes not to sign the contracts until they were provided in French. However, according to the Quebec Association of Wheelchair Athletes, many athletes signed the English contracts out of fear of antagonizing their NSO or other organizations and thus having implications for their future athletic careers, such as not being carded.

There is evidence that some athletes are facing challenges, even at the high performance level, that may be impacting their athletic careers. For example, a bilingual Anglophone athlete training in Quebec notes that she is rarely invited to give speeches or presentations and that she will never be the 'face of her sport in Quebec' because she is not Francophone. This athlete went on to say that she is unsure whether this is direct discrimination or whether she is simply being overly sensitive to the situation. In fact this is likely the feeling of many athletes. These types of situations may be linked to discrimination or to other factors such as athlete personality, speaking ability and overall success in competition, among others. This illustrates the difficulty in pinpointing when linguistic barriers occur and how they manifest themselves. Sometimes even the athletes themselves do not appear certain that the difficulty is related to language or other factors. However, there are examples of situations where bilingualism has been a significant asset for athletes. Examples include Sidney Crosby who is well publicized in the Quebec media not only for being an outstanding hockey player, but also because he has made efforts to learn French while living and playing in Rimouski, Quebec. Another example is Marianne Limpert, who gained positive notoriety by stepping in to translate for the Quebec media during the announcement of the 1998 Commonwealth Games flag bearer when organizers had not prepared to respond to questions in French.

For athletes who are unilingual Francophone, the need to relocate outside Quebec can have significant impacts on academic careers and the ability to find employment and pursue academic studies. The issue is much less serious for Anglophone athletes because most regions in Canada have an English University, including Quebec with two large universities in Montreal (McGill, which is English, and Concordia University, which is officially bilingual) and Bishop's University in Lennoxville. As well, athletes relocating to New Brunswick, where the Atlantic Sport Centre is located, have access to bilingual universities. The inability to work and/or go to university while training most certainly has an impact on the financial status and long-term employment and career of athletes because of the resulting delay in completing university. In most cases, those we interviewed report that, in situations where athletes are faced with this challenge, they are able to learn English quickly enough and eventually are able to function fully in English, including employment and studies. In fact, when asked how they have dealt with linguistic issues, the majority of athletes who have been faced with linguistic challenges have responded by learning the other official language. Others, usually Anglophones training in Quebec, have chosen not to, but do not feel this has resulted in their careers being adversely impacted. However we note that due to the strong Anglophone history

and continued presence in Montreal, unilingual Anglophone athletes coming to Montreal to train do not face the same challenges as Francophones moving to regions or communities where French is not spoken.

Another way in which linguistic barriers manifest themselves is in coaching. Those we interviewed who noted this impact explained that both linguistic groups are impacted, but Anglophones tend to be more adversely impacted when coaching is in French only. These interviewees explain that, unlike unilingual Francophones who have often been exposed to English through the media, unilingual Anglophones may lack any comprehension of French and so lack even a vague understanding of what they are being told by coaching staff. However, we note that virtually every young Canadian has been exposed to some French in grade and/or high school. This issue tends to arise much more frequently in situations where there is a smaller team and only a single coach. The vast majority of NSO representatives we spoke to indicated that their organization strives to ensure that coaching staff include both English- and French-speakers to avoid a situation where none of the coaching staff is able to communicate with an athlete. The emphasis on ensuring French and English linguistic capacity in a national team coaching staff is relatively recent and a direct result of the OCOL studies and the resulting work on the part of Sport Canada and the NSOs. This is not to say that there are not situations where there is insufficient linguistic capacity among coaching staff; in fact, this study found evidence of such a situation. However, based on our discussions with NSOs, athletes and Sport Canada managers, it is fair to conclude that the situation has improved in recent years.

There are indications, based on comments made by some of those we interviewed, including coaches, athletes and National Sport Centre staff, that linguistic barriers also occasionally manifest themselves in team dynamics. We heard of situations, such as the National Synchronized Swim team or members of the National Beach Volleyball team, where there was significant mutual support among Anglophone and Francophone team members who would encourage each other to learn the other language. We also heard of situations where athletes were ostracized by their teammates for being for not belonging to the majority linguistic group on the team. As one representative from a CSC explained, “I know of an athlete that competed on a national team and basically team members of one linguistic background would isolate the athlete from the other linguistic background.” We also found evidence of such discrimination within teams in comments provided by athletes. As one bilingual Anglophone training in Quebec commented, “My teammates make comments about athletes from Western Canada, and that they would prefer a Francophone on the team as opposed to an Anglophone. This is because this is a predominantly French sport—they would rather have one of their own on the team than an outsider.” We feel these comments point to a possible culture of intolerance within some national teams on the part of both Francophones and Anglophones, depending on which is the majority group.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The most significant barriers faced by athletes at the high performance level are reported to be financial and geographic. Few athletes are believed to face linguistic barriers at the high performance level to the point that they cut short their athletic career as a result of linguistic barriers or to the point that it has noticeably affected their performance or results. Based on the input of those we interviewed, financial barriers represent by far the greatest barrier to participation at all levels of competition. There are thus indications that financial barriers may have resulted in some athletes dropping out of competition.

There is only slight evidence of linguistic barriers at the high performance level. In fact, most agree that linguistic barriers or challenges, when they exist, present themselves before an athlete reaches the high performance level. Thus the impact of linguistic barriers will not manifest itself at the high performance level since those who are faced with them will either have overcome the barriers or dropped out of competition by the time they reach the high performance level. Those Francophones who succeed at the high performance level have generally learned to function in English by the time they reach the high performance level.

Some argue that linguistic barriers manifest themselves in the team selection process. However, this study found no overt evidence of such discrimination. In fact, previous studies conducted by the Commissioner of Official Languages also found no overt evidence of discrimination in the team selection process.

It is clear that moving from one linguistic environment to the other can present significant challenges for athletes. However, the majority of athletes and others who work directly with athletes feel that, as young people, athletes are generally keen to learn a second language. However, this is predominantly unidirectional—for Anglophones it is a choice, for Francophones it is a necessity. Most tend to recognize the advantage and the need to communicate in both official languages. What tends to make it more difficult for athletes is the lack of support and services in their official languages and the social support. Some of those interviewed argued that there is a need for a parallel national sport system in Quebec that would operate in French. However, if supports and services were available to athletes in both official languages, regardless of where they were training, there would be no reason to argue for such a parallel system. As well, a parallel system located in Quebec would discriminate against Francophone athletes from outside Quebec. Bilingual supports and services and social support would not eliminate the challenges faced by athletes moving to a different linguistic environment, but would serve to ease the transition.

There are challenges in quantifying the impact of linguistic barriers on high performance athletes. The factors that determine the success of an athlete are multiple and vary significantly from individual to individual. Sometimes athletes themselves are left to wonder whether it is a case of discrimination based on language or other factors.

However, Francophone athletes usually have learned English by the time they reach the high performance level.

In addition to the difficulty of quantifying the impact of linguistic barriers on high performance athletes, many also believe that athletes have a tendency not to raise the issue of linguistic barriers or to request services in their preferred official language. Although the sport system is focused on athletes, athletes often do not feel they have the power to make demands of or to criticize the sport system, particularly with respect to politically sensitive issues such as official languages. Some in the sport community suspect that athletes often fear antagonizing sport organizations, particularly their NSO, for fear that their actions may have a negative impact on their athletic career, particularly with respect to team selection and carding.

Coaching plays a key role in the life and career of athletes. The evidence of linguistic challenges is most evident in coaching, particularly on smaller national teams. Larger teams tend to have a larger coaching staff and, with Sport Canada's encouragement, have been hiring coaches so as to ensure an overall bilingual coaching staff.

This study found disturbing evidence of intolerance both on the part of coaches as well as within national teams, i.e., among athletes, towards members of the less dominant linguistic group. We do not believe that this is a new situation but rather one that has not been as obvious until recently. We hypothesize that national teams are, as a result of the efforts of Sport Canada and the NSOs, becoming more inclusive. As a result, national teams are less homogeneous, and the potential for linguistic, racial or other discrimination arises.

IV THE INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A. OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The *Official Languages Act* only directly applies to Sport Canada rather than the NSOs. However, the Sport Canada website includes the Treasury Board Policy on Official Languages, indicating that French and English have equal status in Canada and that the policy applies to NSOs receiving federal funds:

- federal institutions providing grants or contributions to voluntary non-governmental organizations for activities, projects or programs involving service to a public composed of members of both official language communities must take the necessary measures to ensure that the recipients of public funds respect the spirit and intent of the *Official Languages Act* when serving the public.

This commitment from Sport Canada was specified in the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF), introduced in 1995-96.

The Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (1995-96) introduced a series of five-year funding plans to support 38 of the approximately 60 Canadian NSOs. Funding was linked to government social and sport policy objectives, including “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 agreement between Sport Canada and the 38 NSOs stated: “The Recipient agrees... to take into account official languages considerations when providing services to the public or members.”

A series of steps were outlined for the NSOs and for the Canadian Sport Centres and Multi-Sport Organizations (e.g., the COA, CIS) that receive federal funding. The steps required that written materials (rules, policies, etc.), websites and services to athletes and the public be available in both official languages by March 1999. The minimum expectations of the NSOs were as follows:

- For 1996-97, these materials were to be available in both official languages:
 - constitution and by-laws
 - rules and regulations
 - athlete agreements
 - athlete carding criteria (re: the Athlete Assistance Program)
 - athlete selection criteria
 - appeals and hearings.
- 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 website
- 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

There were similar expectations for Canadian Sport Centres (CSCs) and for Multi-Sport Organizations hosting major games events.

Few of those receiving federal funds met the expectations by 1999 and, notwithstanding these policies, the extent to which funding was to be tied to meeting such minimum expectations is not clear. The Canadian Olympic Association announced that its operations in Sydney at the 2000 Olympics would be far more bilingual than in the past (Christie, 2000). Another report stated that "the federal government is threatening to cut off funding to national training centres [CSCs] for Olympic athletes unless the centres become fully bilingual by March 31, 2000" (Maki, 1999, p. A1). And yet, with regard to the NSOs, "Denis Coderre, the then Secretary of State for amateur sport, said he is not willing to threaten organizations with funding cuts, but would prefer to give them incentives and help them work out a plan to improve their bilingualism" (Clark, 2000, p. S2).

Sport Canada subsequently increased its efforts to address the issue of bilingualism in Canadian sport, and in November, 1999, the newly appointed Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, Denis Coderre, following a letter of complaint from Bloc Québécois MP, Caroline Saint-Hilaire, initiated the first study on the issue by the Commissioner of Official Languages (Maki, 1999; Globe & Mail, 1999; Official Languages in the Canadian Sports System, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages).

Annex A12 of the 2005-10 SFAF stipulates that organizations must have "... a policy on official languages and that it should include how the organization commits to promoting Canada's two official languages within its operations. This policy should extend to the delivery of services in both French and English to athletes within the sport system and to communications with the public."

The 2005 SAS conducted by EKOS Research Associates found some

dissatisfaction with respect to access to services in the athletes’ official language of choice. Of the 511 athletes who responded to the survey, nine percent (n=48) noted that some improvement was necessary in term of access to services in the official language of choice. We summarize the responses in Table IV-1 by mother tongue and language preference.

Exhibit IV-1 Services Requiring Improvements With Respect to Access in Official Languages, by Official Language

Service	Mother Tongue		Language Preference	
	English (n=23) %	French (n=25) %	English (n=23)	French (n=25)
Technical Information	4	49	4	51
Rehabilitation Services	26	19	29	16
Coaching Services	13	42	12	43
National Team Information	24	55	23	57
Medicine/Sport Science Services	33	34	36	32

Source: EKOS Research Associates, Status of Athletes Survey (SAS), 2005.

Note: n=number of athletes responding.

Respondents to the SAS were permitted to indicate more than one service requiring better access in the official language of choice. The survey results indicate that overall a higher proportion of Francophones listed more than one service requiring improvement. Interestingly, a higher proportion of Anglophones indicated dissatisfaction with access to rehabilitation services in English. One possibility is that some of those who work in rehabilitation speak neither French nor English, and so athletes are reacting to the lack of English or French language skills on the part of some service providers hired by CSCs.

B. SPORT CANADA

Sport Canada, as the primary federal body responsible for delivery of sport programs, plays an important role in the Canadian sport system. However, Sport Canada is only one of many partners in the sport system. Much of the activity and decision-making with respect to sport occurs at the provincial level.

In previous studies by the OCOL, it was noted that Sport Canada lacked sufficient bilingual capacity among senior managers and program officers. Based on comments by Sport Canada staff and representatives from the Commissioner of Official Languages, Sport Canada has made significant progress with respect to its internal linguistic capacity and is doing a significantly better job of leading by example.

Some of the most significant challenges the issue of bilingualism in high performance sport presents to Sport Canada concern its ability to convince the NSOs to meet their obligations and the provision of adequate support to the NSOs to meet these obligations. Sport Canada must work consistently with NSOs to ensure that the language issue is not ignored and that NSOs feel they have the financial support to meet their obligations. In its position as the national sport body, Sport Canada plays a pivotal role in sending the signal to NSOs, PSOs and other sport governing bodies that official languages play an important role in Canadian culture and identity and that athletes from both linguistic groups must have an equal chance of success at the high performance level. Sport Canada managers whom we interviewed recognize the challenges that the implementation of bilingualism presents for many national sport organizations in Canada and the need to actively provide the necessary support and guidance to organizations that require it.

Others we interviewed believe that Sport Canada cannot directly influence the behaviour of NSOs in such a way that it will have a direct impact on athletes. These interviewees argue that the elements that Sport Canada can monitor, such as the availability of documents in both official languages and the bilingualism of websites, have little direct impact on athletes with respect to the services and supports provided to athletes. In other words, Sport Canada is able to influence national sport organizations at the administrative level, but not beyond that– and yet Sport Canada is providing funds under SFAF which requires that NSOs go beyond the administrative level in meeting language requirements.

Most of those we interviewed, including representatives of the Commissioner of Official Languages, feel that Sport Canada has been doing a better job of ensuring access for athletes of both linguistic groups. Specifically, Sport Canada has, according to some of those we interviewed, made significant progress with respect to bilingualism at games and competitions. However, some have noted that Sport Canada has not done much with respect to consequences for organizations that do not meet the bilingualism requirements set out in the accountability agreements. Therefore the incentives to comply are limited to the goodwill or willingness of organizations to comply.

C. NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

1. Language of Operations

Previous studies conducted by the Commissioner of Official Languages found that most sport organizations are run by volunteers and function in English only. The Commissioner also found that there is a lack of French language skills among volunteer directors of NSOs and their professional staff. Most NSO staff we interviewed indicated that they have some bilingual staff and some indicated that there are members of their Boards of Directors who are bilingual. All NSO representatives we interviewed report

that their Board of Directors meetings are conducted in English only. However, one NSO, Alpine Canada, actively encourages individuals to express themselves in French if that is their preference. Another Francophone interviewee from a Quebec PSO argued that, in his opinion, it is all well and good to be encouraged to express oneself in French, but that it makes little sense if the vast majority of those present cannot understand what is being said in French.

Sport Canada provides funding to National Sport Organizations under five-year funding and accountability agreements, generally referred to as the Sport Funding Accountability Framework (SFAF), that set out the eligibility requirements, calculate the funding ranges and link funding to federal sport and social policy objectives. The contribution agreements signed by NSOs contain an official languages clause through which they agree to meet specific requirements related to bilingualism.

In the 2000 study, the OCOL noted that the minimum expectations set out in the contribution agreements would not ensure that French-speakers are integrated into the activities of NSOs. In fact, this continues to be the case—a number of those interviewed feel there are linguistic barriers to participation in high performance sport as a result of NSOs being largely run by Anglophones. These interviewees feel that most NSOs have not put the necessary structures in place to accommodate and fully integrate Francophones.

Minutes of official meetings of NSO Boards of Directors are, with few exceptions, sent out in English first, and a French version often, but not always, follows. As one NSO director explained, the minutes are first prepared in English and this is the version that is available first. The English minutes are sent before the French because it is felt that members of the Board of Directors, be they Anglophone or bilingual Francophone, prefer to have the minutes as soon after the meeting as possible, when they are best able to recall what transpired at the meeting in verifying the accuracy of the minutes. Most agree that this is not an ideal situation, but suggest that it makes the most sense from administrative and due diligence perspectives. However, yet again there is an ‘ethnic cost’ to Francophones that assumes bilingualism on their part.

With regard to document translation, in a study of language relations in Canadian Interuniversity Sport and Hockey Canada (Donnelly, et al., 2002), the real consequences of translation problems were evident. For example, there was a difference in the interpretation of the CIS (then CIAU) eligibility rule, which was not quite the same in English and French. Since the English version stands in case of a dispute, there was a possibility that Francophone athletes/teams could be disadvantaged. In other examples, Hockey Québec had numerous translation problems with Hockey Canada (then CHA) materials. For example:

- Delays in the receipt of translated documents were sometimes so long that when the French text arrived it was outdated; staff received translated invitations to events that had already occurred; one staff member said, “often, the French version of the administrative regulations was received months after they had been distributed in English. When the up-dated rule book is not in the hands of the coaches and referees by August or September it is too late. They already are in the arenas working with the kids; they have to know about the rule changes and the new rules...;” CHA programs that were supposed to be implemented immediately were also delayed;
- Translations carried out by the CHA have been full of errors, sometimes to the point of being unintelligible; all translated materials sent from the CHA had to be carefully proofread; thousands of books or documents had to be destroyed because of translation errors; and
- The potentially serious consequences of translation errors were evident when a document on concussion in English stated that, following a violent blow to the head, a player should be prevented from playing for the rest of the GAME; the French version provided by the CHA stated that a player should be prevented from playing for the rest of the PERIOD.

All of the above examples, and even some of the solutions proposed by Anglophones, involve extra time and work for Francophones (what Meisel & Lemieux (1972) refer to as the ‘ethnic cost’).

Overall, the representatives from NSOs we interviewed report that there has been some progress made with respect to increasing the level of bilingualism within their organizations; however, this varies across organizations. Most agree that they are not as bilingual as they could be. Internet sites, for example, are sometimes not translated or not well translated. The hiring of qualified bilingual staff continues to be a challenge for most NSOs. NSO representatives report that it is often difficult to hire and retain staff who are very well qualified and who are bilingual since bilingual individuals will tend to have more opportunity and so will be attracted to better paid positions elsewhere. There is agreement among those we interviewed that the ability of NSOs to respond to the requirements in Sport Canada’s SFAF is linked to the size, wealth and history of bilingualism of the NSO. Clearly, larger and wealthier NSOs have greater financial and human resources available relative to small NSOs that are often run by volunteers. NSOs with a stronger history of bilingualism, usually because of the popularity of the sport in Quebec, such as hockey, alpine skiing and figure skating, have tended to adapt with relative ease to Sport Canada’s SFAF requirements related to bilingualism.

The situation with respect to volunteers continues to be a challenge because it is often difficult for NSOs to recruit qualified volunteers, and adding the requirement that they must be bilingual would further decrease the pool of potential volunteers. However, as one Francophone interviewee from a NSO commented, “when it comes time to elect a president of a NSO, the individual must be bilingual, and this should be a requirement and should be the norm within NSOs.” So there is a sense that one cannot reasonably

require all volunteers to be bilingual; however, the volunteer President in NSOs should be required to be bilingual. Another individual we interviewed, also a Francophone, does not feel that all the directors need to be bilingual so long as there are key members of the Board of Directors who are bilingual. Another challenge with respect to representation on Boards of Directors is that there is a need to ensure representation of other equity groups such as women, Aboriginal people, persons with a disability and visible minorities. Given that any given Board of Directors has a limited number of members, it is a challenge for an organization to ensure that all possible groups are represented. However, this should not absolve any organization from making a reasonable attempt to include Francophones on its Board; in fact, the SFAF requires that attention be paid to athlete representation, gender, language and disability in choosing Board members.

The issue of simultaneous translation came up in a few of our interviews with representatives from NSOs. The cost of simultaneous translation is seen, by many NSOs, as prohibitive and not a good allocation of already scarce resources. It is felt that there is little need for it since most of the Francophones involved at the management level of NSOs are bilingual. However, one NSO representative noted that, in a situation where the NSO knows in advance that there will be individuals present who do not speak English, they provide simultaneous translation: “We have an upcoming function, a large meeting, to which we are inviting Francophone coaches who are not necessarily bilingual, and for this meeting we are planning to use simultaneous translation.”

2. Provision of Services to Athletes

Of the athletes interviewed, none expressed concerns or difficulties with their current relationship with their NSO related to language. Some of the athletes interviewed had experienced some difficulties, usually in the transition from higher levels of provincial competition to the national level, but none were currently experiencing any difficulties. In general athletes seem removed from or unconcerned with the issue of language. For example, when asked about the quality of services offered in the athlete’s official language of choice, one bilingual Anglophone athlete involved in a Francophone-identified sport, training in Quebec, commented, “I’m not sure. If the documents are in French, I just use them in French. I’ve never asked for them to be translated.” Another bilingual Anglophone athlete in a Francophone-dominated sport reported that he receives all documentation in English, his preferred language, whereas previously he had received most documentation from his NSO in French.

In general, the NSO representatives interviewed indicated that their organizations respond to the needs of athletes from both linguistic groups by hiring coaches who are able, as a group, to provide coaching to all athletes. We note, however, that not all athletes we interviewed agreed with this view, with one athlete noting that in one case a coach was unwilling to adapt to Francophone athletes on the team. NSO representatives interviewed indicated that their organization provides all official documentation to athletes in their preferred language and that administrative staff and management includes

individuals who are bilingual. We note that these tend to be large NSOs with significant Francophone presence on national teams. This does not agree with results of the SAS summarized in Exhibit III-1 where some Anglophone and Francophone athletes indicated that improvement with respect to access to national team information in both official languages was required.

We asked the representatives from NSOs we interviewed what they felt was the incentive for their organization to respond to the needs of both Anglophone and Francophone athletes. The reasons provided include the recognition that the organization is national in scope and so should reflect the duality of Canada; the high level of interest in the sport in both Anglophone and Francophone regions; the need to provide assistance to and develop athletes.

A number of those interviewed noted the difficulties faced by athletes, particularly young athletes, in moving from one linguistic environment to the other. There are few emotional supports available to athletes in this situation, and there is little recognition of the cultural differences that extend beyond simply language and not being able to communicate at a sufficient level. As well, research has shown that younger athletes tend to have less physical literacy and so are less able to adapt to a coaching environment where they are unable to understand the directions they are being given. Older athletes and those who have spent more time at the high performance level will have an easier time adapting to a different linguistic environment. Additionally, most have learned the 'default' language (English) by this point in their athletic career.

An analysis of websites was conducted to assess the level of bilingualism of sites for NSOs, MSOs and Canadian Sport Centres funded by Sport Canada. Following links from the Sport Canada website, and clicking on the links to NSOs, MSOs and the Canadian Sport Centres leads to a page containing the following announcement, "You are now leaving the Canadian Heritage Web Site. Please be advised that the legislation and policy governing Government of Canada Web Sites does not apply beyond this point." This is a significant announcement since the links are to sites for organizations receiving federal funding which have all agreed to abide by federal language policy through the SFAF.

Websites for 54 national sport organizations receiving Sport Canada funding were visited (home pages and spot checks of several other pages) in April 2005. The following are the results:

- One site, Karate, was down in April 2005 as well as in late May 2005 when the site was re-visited;
- 29 sites involved an introductory page giving the choice of English or French—these led to parallel home pages and other pages that were approximately equal in English and French;
- Two sites (Lacrosse and Sledge Hockey) have bilingual entry pages, but clicking on 'Français' leads to English home page, where there is a 'French' link to parallel pages;

- One site (Raquetball) uses both English and French in parallel on the same pages;
- Seven sites (Badminton, Field Hockey, Rowing, Squash, Volleyball, Water Skiing, and Wrestling) open on the English-language home page, but have links to parallel French-language pages;
- 11 sites have parallel English and French pages that are not equal in content (i.e., less French content):
 - Archery;
 - Broomball (site claims that French pages are being re-done);
 - Cycling (has English language ads on French pages);
 - Equestrian (opens on English page, has different home page in French with lower production values);
 - Football (French pages under construction);
 - Luge (blocks of English language on the French pages);
 - Parachuting (much less content in French);
 - Rugby (has English language ads on French pages);
 - Cross Country Skiing (some 'l'anglais seulment' links on French pages);
 - Triathlon (less French content);
 - Yachting (less French content);
- Three sites (5-pin and 10-pin Bowling and Disabled Skiing) have English-only sites, although the Disabled Ski site is not fully working.

This provides a strong indication that some NSOs continue to provide information to athletes and the general public in only one language, usually English, or provide inadequate information in French.

D. PROVINCIAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Although PSOs are not subject to bilingualism requirements, they nevertheless play an important role in the development of athletes and the transition from the provincial or territorial level. Based on interviews conducted with athletes and representatives from provincial sport organizations, it is clear that there are linguistic issues at the provincial level. A number of athletes indicated that they had experienced difficulties related to language in moving from one province to another. As one athlete explained, “Although I could speak some high school French, the other athletes made fun of me, and I felt like an outsider. When I spoke French, they made fun of me. The coach would only speak to me in French. The experience was so bad that I quit the sport for a year or two.” Another athlete commented, “The most difficult was the first year in Quebec. I received all the information from the Quebec federation in French. I had no idea what they were trying to tell me. They have since corrected this type of problem.” In the case of other athletes, the experience tended to be much less dramatic and ultimately, all athletes feel satisfied with their progress and pleased to have had the opportunity to become bilingual.

E. CANADIAN SPORT CENTRES

1. Language of Operations

Previous studies conducted by the Commissioner of Official Languages found that most sport organizations function in English only. The Commissioner also found that there is a lack of French language skills among volunteer directors of NSOs and their professional staff. With the exception of the Montreal Centre, which functions in French, and the Atlantic Centre, which functions for the most part in both official languages, the remaining Canadian Sport Centres function largely in English.

The Boards of Directors of the Western Canadian Sport Centres rarely include Francophone members; however, all of those interviewed indicated that their Centre's Board of Directors has some members who are bilingual, but not necessarily Francophone. This is largely due to the fact that the Boards are predominantly volunteer and that there is a very small pool of Francophones in the West who are qualified to be members of the Board of Directors of a Canadian Sport Centre. All Boards of Directors at the CSCs, with the exception of Montreal, function in English, with the minutes being produced in English only. The CSC in Montreal functions largely in French.

Similar to NSOs, some of the CSC representatives interviewed indicated that their CSC faced challenges in hiring qualified bilingual staff; this is particularly true in Western Canada. Some indicated that they have hired bilingual staff specifically to respond to the requirements for bilingualism. Others, such as staff at the Canadian Sport Centre in Manitoba, are taking French courses to improve the level of bilingualism at the Centre. Some of those interviewed expressed interest in further language training.

2. Provision of Services to Athletes

All CSC representatives interviewed indicated that they are, if requested, able to provide services to athletes in both official languages. All Western sport centres indicated that there was little, or no, demand for services in French. The Western CSCs report that athletes who come to their centres do so voluntarily and are well aware that they are moving to an Anglophone environment. Many of those interviewed argue that athletes, at least in part, choose to relocate to an Anglophone environment in order to learn English. One interviewee argued that if the system were changed such that athletes were required to relocate to centres in Western Canada then it would make sense to ensure that there were bilingual service providers readily available. However, as noted, this is not currently the case.

Some CSCs report having made great efforts to ensure that they have bilingual service providers available should an athlete require service in French. However, CSC staff interviewed indicated that it is a challenge keeping bilingual service providers on the roster of service providers because they very rarely see athletes from the CSC as there is

so little demand for bilingual services. One CSC manager commented that in 11 years he has not had a single athlete request any service in French. However, there have been athletes at the centre who were Francophone and who understood little or no English. Representatives from the Ontario Centre reported that, of the approximately 800 athletes they served at the Centre last year, only four identified themselves as Francophone on their intake form. One must question why athletes are not availing themselves of services in their preferred language if those services are available to them. The SAS (2005) found a slight discrepancy between the number of carded athletes who indicated French as the preferred language and whose mother tongue was French. Of the 511 athletes who completed the survey, 20 percent indicated French as their mother tongue. Using another definition of Francophone, preferred official language, 19 percent indicated French. This may be an indication of assimilation, the quality of the information available in French or a desire to immerse themselves in English, as argued by some CSC staff.

Some CSC staff hypothesize that athletes are determined to learn English and so prefer to completely immerse themselves in English. Other possibilities are that athletes are not aware these services are available to them or they are afraid or too intimidated to let it be known that they would prefer a particular service in French. We note that some CSC staff interviewed noted that athletes refused services in French even when these services were offered to them. This is not inconsistent with the view of some academics and representatives from PSOs from Quebec who feel that Francophone athletes are not inclined to speak up for their rights out of fear of being branded a troublemaker. In the words of one academic, “They (Francophone athletes) will not demand their rights. They will continue to function in English only because they do not want to become black sheep, they want to be part of the national team.”

Representatives from Western CSCs interviewed indicated that they have bilingual staff on hand to assist athletes should they require assistance in the form of translation. Bilingual staff members are also available to accompany athletes for visits to doctors, physiotherapists and other service providers should they need an interpreter. There are, however, issues of confidentiality and doctor/patient privilege that may arise in such situations.

There was frustration expressed by some CSC staff at the emphasis on bilingualism with respect to their accountability to Sport Canada. These interviewees feel that the CSCs’ main focus or purpose is to produce athletic excellence and so they should be evaluated based on their ability to do that rather than Sport Canada focusing on issues related to bilingualism. This is not to say that any of these individuals would deny Francophone athletes access to services in French should they request them; these interviewees simply feel that the accountability requirements are misdirected. This sentiment was also echoed by some NSOs. Many questioned the value of using scarce financial resources on ensuring the availability of bilingual services and documentation that are only very rarely requested or used, thus implying a lack of full buy-in or commitment to bilingualism.

All CSCs indicated that they translate all documentation that is sent to Sport Canada and key documents that are made available to athletes. None of the Centres, with the exception of the Atlantic Centre, indicated that they translate all documents that are used externally. According to one representative from a CSC we interviewed, the Centres have been coordinating the translation of documents that are common to all Centres, but there are relatively few such documents. The general perspective is summarized by one of the CSC representatives we interviewed: “We translate our newsletter, but we don’t send it out. We translate all our official communication, but we don’t send much out officially. If we’re dealing with sport organizations, we sent it out to them in English only because they function in English. We don’t expect Montreal to translate their newsletter. The reality is that they (Montreal) are adapting to their reality and we are adapting to ours.” Thus the CSCs tend to take a very pragmatic approach to translating and providing documentation in both official languages. However, this approach does little to respond to the needs of both linguistic groups, nor does it further the inclusion of French and Francophones in the national sport system at the high performance level.

The websites of the eight Canadian Sport Centres were assessed, and it was found that:

- Atlantic Canada, Manitoba, Montreal, and Saskatchewan are bilingual;
- Calgary has bilingual content (less French than English content);
- Ontario is English only (site claims that French pages are “coming soon”); and
- Vancouver and Victoria Centres sites are now linked under ‘Pacific Sport’ and have no French content.

Six Multisport Organizations (MSOs) sites were also visited (COC, CPC, Canada Games, Canada Deaf Sports Association, Special Olympics Canada, Commonwealth Games Canada), and all were found to have bilingual websites.

F. NEED TO LEARN ENGLISH

There are clear indications from our interviews with athletes, coaches, academics and representatives from NSOs and CSCs that Francophone athletes and coaches have little choice but to learn English in order to progress and function at the high performance level. So the conclusion of the 2000 OCOL report continues to hold true. As noted by the Commissioner, “...In a system that boasts that it is centred around athletes, Francophone athletes should not have to overcome the double challenge of mastering English in addition to their sport in order to succeed at a high level” (*Globe & Mail*, June 15, p. S2). The institution structures of the Canadian sport system in general and the high performance system in particular function almost exclusively in English. Despite this, there has been some progress made with respect to the sport system becoming more bilingual and more aware of the issue and need for adapting the system to include both linguistic groups. Although the issue is largely a matter of Francophones being required

to adapt and learn English, this study also found a few examples of situations where Anglophones have been required to adapt and learn French. This is true for sports that tend to be dominated by Francophones which have national teams based in Quebec, such as figure skating, short track speed skating and judo.

Some have noted that for individual sports a unilingual Francophone may be able to compete at the high performance level without learning English. This is because the individual athlete may have his/her own coach or training plan and thus can train without having to communicate with team members. This is not to say that an athlete in such a situation would not find it challenging to compete at the high performance level without being able to communicate in English, but it is possible. As one Francophone athlete from Quebec competing in a strongly Anglophone-identified sport commented, "...it would be extremely hard to get coached in French by a national team coach since none of them are fluent in French." Notably this athlete responded to the linguistic challenge by learning English, which he feels helped him at the international level of competition. Another Francophone athlete noted that "...if a player from Quebec is fully French, he will be somewhat at a disadvantage to communicate with coaches, physiotherapists or other staff who are almost fully Anglophone."

The vast majority of athletes interviewed have a keen interest in being able to communicate in both official languages. Our interviews with athletes, coaches, academics and NSO and CSC representatives indicate that this interest tends to be greater among Francophones who generally recognize the need to learn English not just to be able to function at the high performance level within Canada but also internationally. Some of those we interviewed noted that it was not necessarily negative that Francophones were learning English but rather that Anglophones did not appear to feel the same necessity or inclination to learn French.

G. PROGRESS MADE IN RECENT YEARS

Overall, those we interviewed are split between those who believe the situation with respect to linguistic barriers faced by athletes at the high performance level has improved in the previous three to five years and those who feel the situation has worsened. Those who feel the situation has improved note that there is an increased level of awareness on the part of all partners in the Canadian sport system of the potential linguistic challenges at the high performance level. Those who feel the situation has not improved cite examples of documents being sent only in English by NSOs. All agree that there is more work to be done on the issue.

Some have noted that younger Canadians have a different perspective on language than their parents. The level of bilingualism among youth in general is much higher than among older generations. In fact one of the goals of the federal government is to achieve a national level of bilingualism of 50 percent by 2013.

Some academics we interviewed believe that it is impossible to fairly and objectively assess whether the Canadian sport system is doing a better job of eliminating the linguistic barriers at the high performance level because of the lack of appropriate / relevant data or statistics.

H. CONCLUSIONS

Based on our assessment of the bilingualism standards of websites, we conclude that significant advances have been made towards bilingualism. However, where it is not complete, it is always French content that is lacking or missing. There is thus room for improvement with respect to websites of Canadian sport organizations. In fact this is a focus of Sport Canada, which intends to work more actively with sport organizations on improving the bilingualism of websites.

Despite the efforts of Sport Canada and many national sport organizations, the Canadian sport system continues to function almost exclusively in English. Despite the significant progress that has been made, there continues to be a large segment of the sport community that sees little reason for or purpose in increasing the linguistic inclusiveness of the sport system. Like much of social policy, the changes in peoples' thinking about a particular issue evolve over time. Sport Canada has indicated that it is committed to working on an ongoing basis with sport organizations to ensure that these changes occur.

Sport Canada has an important role to play in setting an example and influencing change. Sport Canada is able to use its leveraging power to effect change; however, it is hesitant to use the full impact of this leveraging power since cutting funding to national sport organizations would cause the most harm to the athletes themselves.

With respect to CSCs, Sport Canada appears to have made limited progress. There continues, with some individual exceptions, to be a general lack of buy-in to ensuring all services and supports are available to athletes in both official languages. The most frequent argument heard was that there was simply little or no demand for services in French at the CSCs beyond the Atlantic and Montreal centres. It is impossible to refute this claim; however, as national organizations that have made a commitment through the SFAF they signed with Sport Canada, they have an obligation to ensure the services are readily available. The lack of demand for French services and supports on the part of Francophone athletes is difficult to explain. It is likely a combination of factors, including a lack of awareness of the existence of the services, lack of availability of the services and supports, lack of quality of the services and supports, a desire to learn English on the part of athletes, and a sense of intimidation or shyness about requesting services in French. One must wonder about those who do not make it to the high performance level and whether success for Francophones is less a question of talent and more of resilience or the ability to learn a second language. The SAS found clear evidence of dissatisfaction with services and supports provided to athletes by the CSCs, a finding that merits further investigation. The lower level of satisfaction of Francophone athletes implies that the

lack of satisfaction is not unrelated to language.

This study found evidence that Francophone athletes and coaches must learn English to function and progress at the high performance level. The same is true, to a much lesser extent, for Anglophone athletes who compete in Francophone-dominated sports that train in Quebec, such as judo and weightlifting. At the level of high performance sport, the need to be able to function in English extends beyond Canada into the international environment according to many of those we interviewed. Most international sport organizations function in English, and international competitions use English as the default language—announcements are most often made in the language of the host country and in English. In fact, despite the initial challenges, most Francophone athletes we spoke with are pleased that they have had the opportunity to learn English. Anglophone athletes tend to be less inclined to learn French, largely because it is not as necessary and the benefits are not as clear in the short term. This mirrors the reality for the Canadian population as a whole where, based on the 2001 Census, the proportion of Francophones (44 percent) who are bilingual tends to be much higher than the proportion of Anglophones (9 percent) who are bilingual.

V COACHING

A number of those we interviewed commented that it was a challenge to find qualified coaches who spoke both official languages. Some noted that many coaches at the national level speak neither English nor French fluently, yet athletes are very keen to work with them because they are recognized internationally as being outstanding coaches. There was disagreement on whether it is realistic to require coaches to be able to speak both English and French, with most of those we interviewed not seeing it as a workable solution. However, there is support for the provision of voluntary language training for coaching staff, although few feel this would completely respond to the needs of athletes. The relationships among coaches and athletes are very complex and emotional, dealing with issues related to victory, defeat, cuts from teams and so forth. It is very challenging for coaches to be fully able to communicate in both official languages to a sufficient degree to deal with such a complex relationship. The subtleties of language and communication and their potential impact on athletes were expressed in a written submission by one athlete who commented, "...I understood the coaches and instructions, but would lose the subtleties of the situations and felt apart somewhat."

In general, those we interviewed, including representatives from NSOs, athletes, coaches and Canadian Sport Centre staff, report that for the most part coaches adapt well to Francophone and Anglophone athletes. Many NSOs have made progress in ensuring sufficient linguistic capacity in both official languages among national team coaches. However, most coaching continues to be conducted in English. Larger teams tend to have more than one coach present at all times, so they are better able to ensure that coaching staff are able to assist national team members in both French and English. Athletes, coaches and national sport centre staff interviewed report that, in situations where an athlete is unable to understand or has difficulty understanding the language in which coaching is being conducted (most often but not always English), the coach will work with the athlete individually to assist the athlete in understanding what they are being asked to do. Most of those interviewed, although recognizing that this is not an ideal situation, feel that it works relatively well. In situations where problems have been identified, the difficulties most often arise out of a lack of cultural understanding or sensitivity as opposed to linguistic barriers per se.

Many suggested that at the national level having coaching capacity on national teams in both languages would sufficiently respond to the needs of both Anglophone and Francophone athletes. So having at least one coach who spoke English and at least one who spoke French would respond to the needs of athletes. The importance of having coaching in one's official language of choice is illustrated by the story of one athlete who was unable to communicate with the coach sent by the team to a competition because of a language barrier—the athlete does not speak French and the coach does not speak English. This athlete feels that the lack of coaching at that particular competition had a significant impact on his results. The team was only able to send one coach to accompany

athletes to the competition for budgetary reasons.

A related issue is that of culture. There have been well-publicized incidents in the past that some of those we interviewed feel were more related to culture than insensitivity or bias against one linguistic group. Many feel that coaches should be required to undergo some training in cultural awareness in order to acquire an understanding of the cultural differences between Anglophones and Francophones and to be better able to respond to the needs of athletes. As one individual noted, the linguistic issues are sometimes less important if the athlete feels there is respect on the part of the coach. This was strongly echoed by some of the athletes interviewed. Others we interviewed noted that cultural diversity is an important issue that extends far beyond Anglophones and Francophones, including the increasing size of Canada's immigrant population.

The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) receives funding from Sport Canada to develop education materials for coaches. The CAC then provides funding to NSOs to develop coaching materials specific to their sport. The CAC policy is that any new material is released simultaneously in both official languages. The CAC feels this ensures that sport federations have incorporated both official languages into their coaching materials. The Department of Canadian Heritage has provided additional funds to assist sport federations in the translation of their coaching materials. However, one person we interviewed from a NSO felt that there are significant challenges to translating the coaching materials. According to this NSO representative, the CAC has recently decided to implement competency-based training for coaches. This has resulted in a need to develop and translate a significant amount of new training material. Training manuals are being developed by staff and volunteers who are paid an honorarium of \$2,000, and the translation will cost approximately \$12,000 for each manual. This interviewee feels that the translation costs are out of proportion to the honorarium paid to the volunteers for the development of the training manuals.

According to the CAC the translation of coaching materials is a necessary but not sufficient condition for ensuring participation of both linguistic groups in high performance sport. With respect to the coaching certification program, a coach must be certified at level three to be a coach at the Canada Games and level four to be a coach at the Olympics. So if the CAC did not give both linguistic groups equal opportunity to become certified, then the coaching system would be restricting, if not preventing, coaches from one or the other linguistic group from coaching at the high performance level. This would in turn mean that high performance athletes would not have access to coaches from both linguistic groups. According to the representative from the CAC we interviewed, the CAC sees it as their obligation to ensure equivalent materials are available in both official languages. However, it is important to note that the Atlantic Canadian Sport Centre, despite having one of the best levels of bilingualism among the Canadian Sport Centres, does not offer level four coaching certification in French. According to the representative from this Canadian Sport Centre, the demand for the courses in French is very limited and most, including Francophones, prefer to take the courses in English. The Atlantic Canadian Sport Centre works in collaboration with other

centres, particularly the Montreal Centre, to provide courses in French when there is sufficient demand.

Linguistic barriers impact coaches as well as athletes. According to some individuals we interviewed, coaches must, out of necessity, learn English in order to obtain a coaching position with a NSO. The result is a larger proportion of Francophone coaches who are bilingual, a situation mirrored in the population of athletes and the Canadian population as a whole. This again points to an ‘ethnic cost’ for Francophones in high performance sport in Canada. Coaches also noted the challenges of working and trying to communicate in one’s second language. As one bilingual Francophone coach explained, “Sometimes, my thoughts are not as well communicated in English, it’s much more difficult” (our translation).

VI RECOMMENDATIONS

Sport Canada – Short Term Recommendations (one to three years)

1. This study found that staff members at NSOs and CSCs are generally open to learning both official languages, and so should be encouraged to do so to the extent possible. Sport Canada should assist and strongly encourage NSOs and CSCs to implement voluntary language training for management staff, particularly senior staff and those who come into direct contact with athletes.
2. Sport Canada has made significant progress with respect to increasing its internal linguistic capacity. By all reports, Sport Canada currently has an adequate level of bilingual capacity among its staff. There should be a continued and consistent effort on the part of Sport Canada to lead by example. If a Sport Canada staff member interfaces with client groups, then s/he must be bilingual. One cannot expect NSOs, CSCs and other partners in the Canadian sport system to meet their obligations if it is felt that Sport Canada is itself unable to meet these obligations.
3. Coaching is seen by athletes as the most important service or element of their development. Sport Canada should improve the monitoring of coaching capacity with respect to language. Sport Canada should strongly encourage larger NSOs and NSOs that require more than one coach per team or athlete to have bilingual coaching capacity. We caution Sport Canada against being overly prescriptive with respect to requiring NSOs to have bilingual coaching capacity due to the highly specialized nature of coaching expertise. In other words, an overly prescriptive approach may result in the most qualified and desirable coaches not being hired, to the detriment of athletes.
4. Sport Canada has generally made progress with respect to improving the level of bilingualism and delivery of bilingual services and supports to athletes on the part of NSOs. However, CSCs and NSOs continue to lack a sufficient level of bilingualism, and there are strong signs that the quality of services and supports provided may be lacking in some cases. The CSCs are a key contact point for high performance athletes. There continue to be signs that not all CSCs are able or willing to fully respond to the needs of athletes. Sport Canada must undertake to work with the CSCs to increase their level of bilingualism as well as their commitment to bilingualism. We note that attention must be paid to the **quality** of services provided in both official languages. This study found strong evidence that

the quality of services provided to athletes was not always seen as sufficient by the athletes themselves. The quality of services available to athletes must be equivalent in both official languages.

5. Although Sport Canada has made progress with respect to assisting and encouraging NSOs to become more bilingual, there remains work to be done with respect to some NSOs. Sport Canada should continue its efforts with all NSOs; however, efforts should be more focused on NSOs that have been less successful or more reticent about increasing their level of bilingualism. These efforts should focus primarily on providing the NSOs with the necessary tools to increase bilingualism within the organization and, secondly, on any necessary sanctions where merited.
6. Websites represent a first line of contact or interface between the public and athletes and NSOs. Websites are often a key source of information for both the general public and athletes (for example, newsletters are frequently published on NSO websites). This study found that many NSO websites were not fully bilingual. Sport Canada should work with NSOs on a consistent basis to ensure that websites are fully bilingual and that all information is available in both official languages.

Sport Canada – Long-term Recommendations (three to five years)

7. There is currently a lack of data on the linguistic preferences and abilities of coaches and athletes. Sport Canada, the Commissioner of Official Languages and Statistics Canada should work together on a common definition of Francophone and Anglophone for the purposes of collecting consistent and comparable data. This would allow for fair and accurate tracking with respect to the linguistic representation of athletes and coaches.
8. Sport Canada should implement a social marketing program directed at athletes. This program should inform athletes that services are available in both official languages and encourage athletes to request services in their preferred language. This social marketing program should also inform athletes about the importance of official languages in sport and respect for official languages. This social marketing program should be directed at athletes at all levels, including provincial. As well, the program should work with PSOs, particularly in Quebec, to ensure that athletes moving from the provincial levels of competition to the national level are aware of their rights with respect to the provision of services in their preferred official language. We note that, before implementing such a social marketing program, Sport Canada must ensure that all the necessary services are readily available in both official languages, particularly at the Canadian Sport Centres, i.e., that Sport Canada has fully and successfully

implemented the above recommendation number 4. We note that the Athlete Dispute Resolution Mechanism (ADR) is a key part of the new *Sport Act* (Bill C12 – *An Act to Promote Physical Activity and Sport*). The potential for a formal complaint about language rights is clear in Bill C12, and Sport Canada, NSOs and CSCs need to respond to this possibility, given some of the findings of this study.

9. Athletes, both Francophones and Anglophones, face difficulties in moving from one region of Canada to another. The transition is often much more difficult if the move requires the athlete to live in another language and culture. Although it should not be seen as a solution or substitute for providing athletes with services in both official languages, mentoring or partnering athletes with an athlete who has undergone a similar transition would make the transition emotionally less difficult for athletes. This mentoring could be done with the assistance of the CSC staff responsible for athlete intake.
10. Sport Canada should form strategic alliances with organizations within official language minority communities across Canada. These organizations could provide assistance in integrating athletes socially as well as providing other support services. These strategic alliances would also assist NSOs and CSCs with developing a base of minority official language volunteers for events and boards of directors. Such an alliance would assist in further integrating Anglophones and Francophones into the sport system across Canada. We note that Canadian Heritage currently has a number of funding programs that work with official language minority communities, so Sport Canada could, in the immediate term, seek advice and guidance from these programs on how to approach official language minority communities.

Sport Canada in Collaboration with Sport Governing Bodies

11. Sport Canada, in collaboration with its partners in the sport system, should assess the impacts of linguistic barriers on athletes at the provincial level, particularly the elite provincial level. This study should seek to assess whether linguistic barriers exist, when they manifest themselves, how they impact athletes and what can be done to mitigate these impacts. It must, however, be recognized that Sport Canada has no jurisdiction over the provincial or territorial sport systems, so any efforts made at the provincial or territorial level require the full cooperation of the provinces and territories. Sport Canada should assess the potential for increasing the level of bilingualism in the Canadian sport system, including the provincial and territorial level, through the partnership agreements built into the Canadian Sport Policy.

12. Sport Canada, in partnership with provincial sport governing bodies and provincial sport organizations, should undertake a social marketing program to encourage increased bilingualism at the provincial/territorial level of competition. Such a social marketing approach would serve to increase awareness of the issue, particularly among junior elite level coaches and athletes.
13. Sport Canada should work with the Coaching Association of Canada and NSOs to develop a linguistic profile of coaching capacity within Canada. This profile should be updated periodically (once every three years) to monitor progress with respect to the bilingual capacity of the coaching population in Canada. The focus of this recommendation should be level three and level four coaches; however, the possibility of including level two coaches should be assessed by the CAC and Sport Canada. This linguistic profile of coaches in Canada should be used to strongly encourage NSOs to ensure coaching capacity in both official languages. This study found that some NSOs argue that there are only a limited number of qualified bilingual coaches in Canada. Data on the linguistic capacity of coaches would serve to refute or support that argument.

Other Issues and Recommendations

14. Although not the focus of this study, this study found evidence that financial barriers were found to be by far the most significant barriers faced by the highest proportion of athletes at all levels of competition. If the mission of Sport Canada is to enhance opportunities for Canadians to participate and excel in sport, then greater attention must be paid to the financial aspects of sport. Sport Canada should work with its partners to assess the impacts of financial barriers on athletes at all levels of competition.

APPENDIX A:

Carded Athletes by Sport and Language Preference

The data presented in the table below represent the split between athletes who indicated they prefer to receive information from Sport Canada in English and those who indicated that they prefer to receive communication from Sport Canada in French. These data represent a snap shot as at November 2004. As noted in the report, there is not necessarily a direct correlation between these data and the first official language spoken by athletes. These data represent a baseline since, at the time of writing this report, Sport Canada was not yet collecting historical data on the linguistic preferences of carded athletes.

Linguistic Preference of Carded Athletes, by Sport – November 2004

Sport	Team/Ind *	Percentage		Percentage		Total
		English	English (%)	French	French (%)	
Alpine skiing	Ind	14	161	9	39	23
Alpine skiing - Paralympic	Ind	12	100	0	0	12
Athletics -Paralympic	Ind	26	68	12	32	38
Badminton	Ind	10	91	1	9	11
Baseball - Men	Team	4	80	1	20	5
Basketball - Men	Team	33	100	0	0	33
Basketball - Paralympic - Men	Team	11	92	1	8	12
Basketball -Paralympic - Women	Team	10	83	2	17	12
Basketball - Women	Team	31	91	3	9	34
Biathlon	Ind	7	70	3	30	10
Bobsleigh -Men	Team	17	100	0	0	17
Bobsleigh -Women	Team	6	100	0	0	6
Boxing - Men	Ind	6	50	6	50	12
Boxing - Women	Ind	1	50	1	50	2
Canoeing	Ind	30	83	6	17	36
Cross Country Ski	Ind	14	93	1	7	15
Cross Country Ski - Paralympic	Ind	3	100	0	0	3
Curling - Men	Team	12	100	0	0	12
Curling - Paralympic	Team	4	100	0	0	4
Curling - Women	Team	8	67	4	33	12
Cycling	Ind	22	65	12	35	34
Cycling -Paralympic	Ind	5	63	3	38	8
Diving	Ind	5	38	8	62	13
Equestrian	Ind	19	100	0	0	19
Equestrian - Paralympic	Ind	4	100	0	0	4
Fencing	Ind	13	48	14	52	27
Field Hockey - Men	Team	32	100	0	0	32
Field Hockey - Women	Team	25	100	0	0	25
Figure Skating	Ind	14	56	11	44	25
Freestyle Ski	Ind	23	74	8	26	31
Goalball - Men -Paralympic	Team	4	67	2	33	6
Goalball - Women -Paralympic	Team	4	80	1	20	5
Gymnastics - Men	Ind	11	92	1	8	12
Gymnastics - Trampoline	Ind	7	88	1	13	8
Gymnastics - Women	Ind	13	100	0	0	13

Linguistic Barriers to Access to High Performance Sport

Sport	Team/Ind *	English	Percentage English (%)	French	Percentage French (%)	Total
Hockey - Women	Team	45	87	7	13	52
Judo	Ind	10	50	10	50	20
Judo - Paralympic	Ind	2	100	0	0	2
Luge	Ind	8	100	0	0	8
Rhythmic Gymnastics	Ind	3	100	0	0	3
Rugby - Men	Team	22	100	0	0	22
Rugby - Paralympic	Team	8	67	4	33	12
Shooting	Ind	1	100	0	0	1
Shooting -Paralympic	Ind	6	100	0	0	6
Skeleton	Ind	6	100	0	0	6
Snowboard	Ind	11	79	3	21	14
Soccer - Men	Team	31	100	0	0	31
Soccer - Women	Team	34	87	5	13	39
Softball - Women	Team	20	95	1	5	21
Speed Skating	Ind	34	64	19	36	53
Squash	Ind	11	92	1	8	12
Swimming	Ind	54	87	8	13	62
Swimming - Paralympic	Ind	13	93	1	7	14
Synchro Swim	Ind	16	53	14	47	30
Table - Tennis	Ind	11	73	4	27	15
Taekwondo	Ind	9	64	5	36	14
Tennis	Ind	6	60	4	40	10
Tennis - Paralympic	Ind	7	70	3	30	10
Triathlon	Ind	8	100	0	0	8
Volleyball - Beach	Team	10	67	5	33	15
Volleyball - Men	Team	31	89	4	11	35
Volleyball - Women	Team	29	83	6	17	35
Water Ski	Ind	8	100	0	0	8
Weightlifting - Men	Ind	1	50	1	50	2
Weightlifting - Women	Ind	3	50	3	50	6
White Water Canoe	Ind	6	100	0	0	6
Wrestling - Men	Ind	23	96	1	4	24
Wrestling - Women	Ind	11	100	0	0	11
Yachting	Team	27	84	5	16	32
Yachting - Paralympic	Team	8	100	0	0	8
		993		225		1218
Total proportion			82		18	

APPENDIX B:
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