

SUMMARY REPORT

Canadian Sport Policy Renewal

Round Table on Sport and Persons with a Disability

Sport Canada

Toronto, Ontario – July 19 2011

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The views expressed herein are those raised by the participants at the meeting and do not necessarily reflect those of Sport Canada or the Government of Canada.

Introduction

Certain segments of the population face challenges related to their ability to participate in sport and, once involved, to their ability to successfully pursue the opportunities that exist within sport. In the process to renew the Canadian Sport Policy (CSP), Sport Canada hosted round tables to capture the policy issues specific to sport for women and girls, persons with a disability, Aboriginal Peoples, and Canada's increasing diverse ethno-cultural communities.

Sport Canada worked with leaders within each population to identify eight to 10 representatives for each round table with the requisite knowledge and experience to contribute to the discussion. It was explained to participants that, although they may have participated in other CSP consultations or completed the online survey, the purpose of the round table was to focus on the issues specific to their population that they believed needed to be considered in the development of the next iteration of the CSP. This report outlines the results of the round table on sport for persons with a disability hosted in Toronto on July 19, 2011. The participants are listed at the end of this report.

General Questions

Participants were provided with the following general questions designed to stimulate feedback on the renewal of the CSP:

1. Looking back on the 2002 CSP, were issues concerning persons with a disability adequately reflected? If not, how could the 2012 policy be enhanced to better reflect those issues?
2. What are the key policy issues that affect persons with a disability in sport and that the CSP needs to address? What should be included in the new policy that would help the sport community to achieve their objectives with respect to persons with a disability?
3. What would be the main element(s) of the CSP that would have the most impact on the participation of persons with a disability in sport?
4. What is needed in the CSP to maximize the impact of the Sport Canada Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability?
5. How can the concept of inclusiveness be more strongly articulated in the CSP and build on or link to existing documents such as the Sport Canada Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability?

Rather than answering the questions individually, the group entered into a discussion that addressed the questions, for the most part, in their entirety.

Participants noted that is nothing in the goals and objectives of the 2002 CSP that speaks specifically to sport for persons with a disability (PWAD). This reflects a concern that sport for PWAD is always an add-on or a “retrofit”. The new CSP needs to explicitly define what an equitable and inclusive sport system looks like and sport for PWAD need to be an integral element. The new CSP could better reflect sport for PWAD by explaining the differences amongst the groups that make up this community. There can’t be a cookie-cutter approach to sport delivery. The system should respond to individual needs since the sport experience is individual and unique. For example, PWAD athletes are recruited in different ways, support from family is more critical, and first contact can happen at any age. The PWAD community is not homogeneous, and nor are their issues and needs. The reality is that fairness does not always mean treating everyone the same.

It was pointed out that improving facility accessibility for PWAD benefits many others in the community from mothers with baby carriages to those delivering packages. However, it is important to note that accessibility is more than facility-related. Accessibility is not just installing a new ramp. It includes other considerations such as communication for the deaf and blind, properly trained staff and volunteers, providing a welcoming environment and specialized equipment. A swimmer may have physical access to the pool but what good is that if there are no properly trained coaches. PWAD specific needs include smaller coach-athlete ratios, more support staff, more accompanying persons for travel, and special equipment. For deaf sport, the issue is not finding coaches but either finding coaches who know sign language, or finding interpreters for those coaches (cost factor).

It was acknowledged that there is a cost to improve accessibility but that where resources are required they should be provided. When an organization is serving the public, this includes PWAD. These costs should be viewed as simply another cost of doing business, not unlike any other cost, and should not be an excuse to exclude or discriminate against PWAD. The participants felt strongly that any program, service or facility that receives public funding should be built for all citizens (including persons with disabilities). The reality is that sport for PWAD needs more resources than mainstream sport. References to capacity building in the policy need to address this. It should be normal or expected that sport for PWAD sport will be more expensive. PWAD sport should not have to compete with mainstream sport for facilities or resources since able-bodied sport will nearly always win out. The PWAD sport community knows what PWAD sport needs – the challenge is finding resources to do it.

The new CSP should reinforce improved collaboration among sport organizations to make better use of existing expertise on sport for PWAD to educate the sport community. Once educated, coaches and other leaders are not as afraid of sport for PWAD. They begin to realize that the adjustment is not as much as they had feared. There is need for a national PWAD sport committee and clearing-house for information-sharing and support that builds on the work of the Active Living Alliance for Canadians

with a Disability. More research is needed on sport for PWAD to help inform decision-makers. The policy itself can be a tool to educate people about PWAD.

Partnerships are critical to sport for PWAD, both horizontally and vertically within the system. This includes interaction between able-bodied and disabled sport organizations which will bring benefits to both. It is also important to build bridges with other sectors, for example, working with recreation, health, rehabilitation and education at the community level and finding ways to work with others to provide information to the newly injured on opportunities in sport.

Participants believe that, generally speaking, sport is more important to PWAD than to able bodied persons because it can combat issues for PWAD, such as social isolation and lack of self-esteem, so the investment is warranted. It is also important to recognize the complexity of the population where PWAD can also be, for example, female or Aboriginal and so, when pursuing their interest in sport, face more than just the challenges associated with their disability.

The new policy needs stronger and inclusive language on sport for PWAD. It should speak to ensuring and not just increasing access and equity. The objective should not just be to be better than before but to be equitable and inclusive. Round table participants referred to a British Columbia report that defines an equitable sport system as one that acknowledges that there may be additional financial and human resources required for some participants to provide the same level of experience for everyone and that builds programs and funding mechanisms that include everyone from the start. It is not one system that meets the needs of the vast majority of participants with a parallel system for the rest. This report states that key to understanding equity and inclusiveness in sport is an understanding the range of opportunities and experiences that must exist for the system to be inclusive. These include experiences that are integrated in programs with able-bodied participants with no adaptations/modifications, with able-bodied participants with adaptations/modifications, and that are only offered to participants with a disability.¹

There needs to be recognition that PWAD often have no voice in sport organizations. When the sport community speaks about the importance of an athlete centred, technically driven, and administratively supported sport system, it needs to be clear that this also applies sport for PWAD. The language in all areas of the new CSP must be inclusive of PWAD, but the focus should be on *different* abilities rather than on disabilities. The new CSP needs to help make it okay to talk about disability and contribute to normalizing the involvement of PWAD in sport.

¹ Qualtrough, Carla, *Report on Sport for Participants with a Disability*, June 2010

E-Survey Questions

The remainder of the round table was spent answering certain questions from the E-survey that were identified as being particularly worthy of a response from the perspective of sport for PWAD and that were subsequently modified for that purpose.

1. What are the reasons for your interest in promoting the participation of persons with a disability in sport?

- Overall health and quality of life
- Self esteem, confidence
- Principles of equity and choice
- Inclusion
- Community engagement and growth
- Education and Awareness
- Setting goals and having opportunities to achieve them
- Greater participation allows for opportunities for high performance
- Importance of participation for overall health benefits, social inclusion, self esteem
- It's an under-served population - equity does not exist
- Social, physical and emotional benefits of sports contribute and support other aspects of life, e.g., employability
- Recognition of the benefits of physical activity
- Opportunity to build communities where everyone is valued

What are the most important challenges affecting efforts to promote and increase the participation of persons with a disability in sport?

- Lack of resources
- Lack of training for coaches
- Lack of education
- Limited interaction between sport organizations, school system
- Low priority of involvement for persons with disability in school physical educational programs.
- Lack of understanding of the barriers to participation and the resources to address them
- Organizational capacity, both human and financial
- Education and awareness
- Accessibility
- Lack of opportunities
- Misperceptions about disabilities
- Fear – afraid to include someone with a disability

2. How do you define a quality sport experience?

- Safe
- Fun
- Qualified instructors
- Accessible facilities and welcoming educated staff
- Inclusive
- Emotional, social needs are considered
- Sense of belonging, social inclusion
- Full continuum along the LTAD system
- Meeting individual needs
- Value “active for life”
- Equitable
- Choices for participation
- Individualized
- Positive
- Welcoming
- Contributes to personal growth
- Appropriately resourced - \$, leadership, equipment, staff, etc..
- Quality, qualified leadership
- Making sure first experiences are positive
- Opportunities are available throughout the LTAD pathway

3. What values do you think should define sport, as practiced on the field of play, in Canada?

- Fair-play
- Equal opportunities
- Respect
- Leadership → lead through action
- Excellence across all sectors/levels

6.0 Sport Canada and many provincial governments have significantly increased their involvement and investment in high performance sport in recent years. In this context, is there a need for governments to better define the respective roles and responsibilities of the federal and provincial/ territorial governments with regard to high performance sport? Why, or why not?

- There is a role for both the federal and P/T governments; however, their roles need to be more defined and some roles will overlap
- Address gaps in the system
- Need for better alignment between the governments
- Yes, especially at the provincial level
- Federal government has an overarching role

- Improve link between P/T and clubs/grassroots
- Organisations are required to get out of their roles to address gaps. Risk that gaps could get bigger if roles are too rigid → transition

6.1 What areas need special attention?

- Look at innovation for funding partnerships between NSOs and PSOs
- How to connect and have clear mandate with disability-specific sport groups
- Inadequacies with funding
- Lack of available facilities – accessible, times available
- Alignment and governance and accountability
- Addressing gaps along the continuum of LTAD and who is best positioned to address the gaps
- Complexity of PWAD → different community mechanism
- Accountability
- Funding
- Targeted versus non-targeted sports

7.1 What is the current impact of CS4L implementation (as it affects PWAD)?

- Varies from organization to organization
- In some cases programs have been developed to implement LTAD, in other cases there has been a lag in the development

7.2 What do you think will be the future impact of CS4L implementation?

- If the appropriate resources are allocated to completing the implementation, LTAD can be a driving force for change and useful as a gap analysis
- Consideration should be given to creating a disability specific LTAD, e.g., for the Blind, that could be overlapped with sport specific LTAD as different disabilities acquire physical literacy differently and at different stages of development
- Need objective measures

7.3 What are the current barriers to successful implementation of the CS4L model?

- Ensuring that constituents/players adhere to it
- Lack of capacity in active start/first contact piece
- Links with rehab, health care and school sectors

8. Following is a list of program and service areas that have been identified to assess Canada's sport development and high performance delivery systems.

1. Identify the top 5 priorities for the sport development delivery system
2. Identify the top 3 areas (in order of priority) in which programming is currently

sufficient and/or appropriate?

- Identify the top 3 areas (in order of priority) in which programming is currently insufficient and/or inappropriate?

Sport Development Delivery System			
Areas	Top 5	Top 3 sufficient*	Top 3 insufficient
Coaches/instructor	3	1	3
Officials		2	
Facilities/Equipment			
School sport system	4		3
Parasport development	2		2
Training/Employment			
International events			
Equity policies	3		
Org capacity	1	3	1
Research			

* 6 of 9 respondents did not indicate any areas as being sufficient

In discussing the collective results of the participants' responses to this question, the school sport system was raised as an important element in sport for PWAD. It was mentioned that there needs to be a focus on providing the necessary human resources within the school system and that the CSP should highlight:

- The right to physical education for PWAD
- After school programs could be enhanced through greater involvement of the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability in the school sport system
- Schools can play an important role in distributing promotional materials , making sure it gets into the right hands
- There is a need to establish improved in-roads with support specialists, e.g., therapists
- The importance of exploring different ways of partnering with schools and to sharing the best practices and efforts of organisations already in schools
- Advocacy to Ministries of Education

HP Delivery System			
Areas	Top 5	Top 3 sufficient*	Top 3 insufficient
Coaches/teacher/leaders	1		
Training/comp.	4		
Sport science		1	
Talent ID/Recruitment	2		1
Integrated athlete/dvpt pathways	5		3
Organizational Capacity	3		2
Direct athlete support			
Research/Innovation.			
Facilities/equipment		2	
Hosting international events			

* 50% of the respondents did not indicate any areas as being sufficient

10. Please list the most important resources that sport organizations need to fully achieve their potential in delivering sport programs and services for persons with a disability.

- Funding to support organizations' mission
- Ensuring strategic planning and measuring what they do
- Understanding and awareness of expertise that already exist – tap into current expertise versus re-inventing the wheel
- Equitable funding – additional funds to meet unique needs
- First contact sensitization
- Central information clearing house

11. Do sports organizations for persons with a disability have the human resource capacity (with regard to governance, professional development, recruitment of staff, retention, etc.) to meet the demands of the next decade? What are the main human resource management issues for sport organizations for persons with a disability with respect to staff and volunteers?

- NO!
- Lack of knowledge by funders of the additional requirements due to the nature of the business
- Not funded for expertise
- Governance – finding balance between understanding disability, sport and understanding governance/business.

- Disability sport organisations are multifaceted – provide programs and be an advocate.
- As long as the funding continues or grows
- Developing leadership from top to bottom (LTAD), nationally, provincially,
- Alignment of staffing structures from NSO → PSO

12. What are the benefits to sport for persons with a disability of improving linkages between national sport organizations and their provincial/territorial counterparts?

- Increase recruitment, development pathway
- Winning more medals
- Seamless athlete pathways
- Grassroots opportunities thru to podium
- Athletes stay connected to their P/T disability sport organisation in a different way than their NSO
- Link to communities – avoid duplication of services

12.1 What are the challenges to improving these linkages?

- Alignment of roles, visions between NSO/PSO (each doing different things)
- Accountability
- Having clear responsibilities
- Education and awareness
- Pathway is not always a straight line – move between disability sport organisations and able bodied or generic sport organisations
- Inconsistency of capacity across P/T organisations

13. What are the benefits to sport of improving linkages between P/T sport organizations and (i) municipal-level sport clubs, (ii) schools and (iii) recreation departments/organizations?

- Recruitment from grassroots up
- Coach training
- Inclusiveness of programs
- Increased opportunities
- Community building
- Access to facilities
- Increased participation rates
- Provide local clubs, schools and recreation organizations with expertise and knowledge
- Reach at community level is broader – change attitudes at a broader level

13.1 What are the challenges to improving these linkages?

- Different levels of government – different priorities
- Priorities are very broad service versus serving a small percentage of population
- Competing priorities – everyone wants into schools
- Experiences vary from province to province – first sport experience in ON is likely very different than in PEI
- Same as 12.1

Conclusion

There is a sense that attention to the needs and challenges of PWAD is diminishing. Sport for PWAD needs to be viewed as an integral component of the sport system and not something that is an add-on or a special service. Programs and resources continue to be insufficient to ensure equitable participation by PWAD. The necessary investments for PWAD to participate and excel should be considered part of the costs of providing opportunities for all Canadians to participate in sport. Efficiencies can be achieved through greater collaboration and partnerships within the sport system, both vertically and horizontally, and with other sectors, e.g., health, that also will benefit able-bodied sport. Accessibility for PWAD is more than just facility-related. Greater awareness and education will improve the sport system's perception of sport for PWAD and their ability to support it. The new CSP can play an important role in supporting and advancing these objectives and normalizing sport for PWAD as an integral component of the Canadian sport system.

Round Table Participants

Sport Canada would like to thank the following people who took time from their busy schedules to bring their significant passion, experience and knowledge to this round table:

- Jane Arkell, Executive Director, Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability
- Sharon Bollenbach, Vice President Sport, Special Olympics Canada
- Janet Collins, Coach, Special Olympics Canada
- Pat Craigmile, Sports Manager, City of Mississauga (retired)
- Michele Gardiner, Director, Sports and Logistics, Défi sportif
- Gail Hamamoto, Canadian Paralympic Committee Board member, Director of Sport Development, BC Wheelchair Sports Association
- Craig McCord, National Paralympic coach, Swimming Canada
- Carla Qualtrough, Past President, Canadian Paralympic Committee, former Paralympic athlete
- Kim Rizzi, Director General, Canadian Deaf Sports Association