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*Fostering a Sport Participation Legacy: The Importance of a Sport Facility*

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Major sport event legacies have evolved from the general benefits from the games into sustainable long-term structures and are a major part of sport event bidding process (Leopkey & Parent, 2012). As a result, legacy planning has become central to the practice of bidding for major sport events and is often used as a tool to help justify spending public monies by host governments (VanWynsberghe, 2015; Girginov & Hills, 2008). However, scholars have revealed issues with legacy planning as urban planning processes can be disrupted, costs are often underestimated, taxpayers may be left financially responsible, and events may fail to deliver outlined benefits (Hautbois et al., 2012; Stewart & Rayner, 2016; Muller, 2017).

Sport participation legacies are a common claim in many major sport event bids and are characterized by a post-event increase in sport participation (Girginov & Hills, 2008; Reis et al., 2017). Researchers utilizing demonstration effect (Weed et al., 2015) and event leveraging (Chalip, et al., 2017) perspectives have produced limited evidence to support this notion. Some scholars have found more evidence of a regional effect than national (Potwarka & Leatherdale, 2016) and have started to identify potential conditions that support post-event sport participation. These conditions may include new facilities (Potwarka et al., 2020) and sport club capacity (Lovett et al., 2020).

Scholars have also pointed to the planning process as a critical component that contributes to the financial viability and utilization of facilities after events are over (e.g., Alm et al., 2016; Davis, 2019; Drummond & Cronje, 2019). However, despite the importance of sport facilities to events (Liao & Pitts, 2006), research has found that after the event, many newly constructed or refurbished facilities go underutilized, sit empty, and can become financial burdens (Alm et al., 2016; Davis, 2019; Molloy & Chetty, 2015). As such, Alm et al. (2016) called for scholars to better understand post-event utilization of sport facilities.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the sport participation legacy associated with a sport facility constructed for a major sport event in Canada. The study was conducted through an instrumental case study design and used a purposeful sampling technique to gather insight from knowledgeable stakeholders involved in the management and ownership of a facility built for the event. Documents were also analyzed, and it was evident that facility utilization had steadily increased each year after the event took place. Five themes were identified from the data that illustrate how a sport participation legacy may have been fostered: (1) the facility location met stakeholder needs; (2) the facility design met programming needs; (3) formalized pre-event agreements; (4) post-event coordination; and (5) the programs and services met the needs of diverse community groups. The study demonstrates that practitioners feel the location, design, and program offerings at a sport facility, along with management, are important factors that contribute to how a sport facility constructed for a major sport event can foster sport participation.