



Achieving Excellence: **Valuing Canada's Participation in** **High Performance Sport**

REPORT

Presented to Sport Canada

Prepared by
Michael Bloom, Natalie Gagnon & Derek Hughes
The Conference Board of Canada

February 24, 2006

CONTACT

Dr. Michael R. Bloom
Executive Director, Strategic Projects and Initiatives,
and Education and Learning
The Conference Board of Canada
255 Smyth Road
Ottawa ON
K1H 8M7

Tel: (613) 526-3280, ext. 229
Fax: (613) 526-4857
Email: bloom@conferenceboard.ca

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Conference Board of Canada would like to thank the members of the High Performance Sport Advisory Group for their guidance and advice: Dennis Blinn, Andy Higgins, Dr. Bruce Kidd, Marie-Catherine Laframboise, Phil Schlote and Dan Smith.

This study was undertaken with financial support from Sport Canada. Responsibility for the content of the report lies solely with The Conference Board of Canada.

About The Conference Board of Canada

The Conference Board of Canada is the foremost independent, not-for-profit applied research organization in Canada. We help build leadership capacity for a better Canada by creating and sharing insights on economic trends, public policy issues and organizational performance. We forge relationships and deliver knowledge through our learning events, networks, research products and customized information services. Customers include a broad range of Canadian organizations from the public and private sectors. The Conference Board of Canada was formed in 1954, and is affiliated with The Conference Board, Inc. of New York, which serves some 3,000 companies in 67 nations. The Conference Board of Canada has an annual budget of \$30 million, with 200 staff located in Ottawa, and offices in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Toronto.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | i |
| Overview | 1 |
| Benefits of High Performance Sport..... | 5 |
| International Comparison—Communicating the Benefits..... | 16 |
| Conclusions | 30 |
| Future Directions..... | 32 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Achieving Excellence: Valuing Canada's Participation in High Performance Sport

Sport is part of Canada's social fabric. About half the Canadian population is involved with sport as participants, volunteers and/or attendees. This involvement crosses the various levels of sport from recreational, to competitive to high performance. However, we are experiencing a national decline in active sport participation and sport excellence.

Between 1992 and 2004, the proportion of adults aged 16 or older who actively participate in sport dropped from 45 per cent to 31 per cent.¹ Moreover, at the elite level, Canada's performance at the Summer Olympics went from 22 in Atlanta (1996), to 14 in Sydney (2000) to 12 in Athens (2004). Meanwhile, there is a widely held belief that sport yields important social (health, culture and national pride) and economic benefits.

This decline and perception of sports has prompted government and sports organizations to focus on sport. In 2002, the federal-provincial-territorial ministers responsible for sport issued the first *Canadian Sport Policy*. The policy's four overarching goals relate to enhancing participation, excellence, capacity and interaction. In addition, the Canadian Olympic Committee commissioned the *Own the Podium Report* (2004). This report highlights the need to increase the number of potential medalists and Canada's success rate.

Achieving the vision and goals identified in these reports will require more public resources. For instance, a funding increase of

\$21.1 million per year is recommended in the *Own the Podium* report.² However, government funding is increasingly under the microscope; governments must demonstrate the value of their investments. Stakeholders need to demonstrate and communicate the benefits of sport to policy-makers and the public.

Recently, studies have been undertaken to better demonstrate the benefits associated with sport. In 1999, Sport England published *The Value of Sport* which used the best scientific evidence available and practical examples to make a case for sport. In 2000, the Hong Kong Sports Development Board reviewed the economic benefits of sport. In 2005, The Conference Board of Canada published a report on the socio-economic benefits of sport participation in Canada.

However, these and other studies focus on sport in general, particularly at the recreational and competitive levels. This study reviews the literature for empirical evidence of the social and economic benefits associated with high performance sport. Without compelling empirical evidence, it will be difficult to demonstrate the value of high performance sport, and ultimately, to help inform government policy decisions and corporate investments.

¹ Michael Bloom, Michael Grant and Douglas Watt, *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, Briefing August 2005), p. 1.

² Cathy Priestener Allinger and Todd Allinger, *Own the Podium – 2010* (Toronto: Canadian Olympic Committee, September 10, 2004), p. 28.

Definition of High Performance Sport

For the purposes of this study, high performance sport refers to:

Sport engaged in by elite athletes who achieve, or who aspire to achieve, or who have been identified as having the potential to achieve, excellence in World Class competition. World Class competitions for high performance sport include the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, World Championships, Commonwealth Games, and Pan American Games, among others.

High performance sport excludes professional sport.

High performance sport is organized into The High Performance System comprised of those activities, programs, agencies, institutions and personnel that have as a primary objective the preparation and support of elite athletes.

This study examines the literature to determine if there is evidence that high performance sport affects social benefits such as national pride, branding, culture and health; as well as, economic benefits such as job creation, tourism and consumer spending. It highlights Canadian and international experience in communicating the benefits of high performance sport to help inform government policy decisions and corporate investments. Finally, it identifies limitations in the literature and suggests areas for additional research.

Lack of Evidence

Social Benefits

There is little empirical evidence to support the anecdotal claims that high performance sport leads to social benefits such as building national pride, enhancing cultural awareness and encouraging healthy behaviours. What evidence there is tends to rely on qualitative research such as opinion and public surveys. Although informative, this evidence is based on peoples' perceptions that are not yet supported by clear, quantified evidence of social gains.

Currently, the qualitative studies indicate that high performance sport may have positive social gains. For example, public opinion surveys link high performance sport to national pride in Canadians. In 2004, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) asked Canadians to vote on who they thought was the greatest Canadian. When the results were tallied, three sports figures entered the top 10, and no fewer than 20 figured in the top 100. Comparable surveys in other countries show different results. In the United States, England, France and Germany sports figures did not place as predominantly or not at all. Clearly, Canadians seem to place more emphasis on their sports figures to define national character than do people in other countries.

Health is another area where high performance sport may have a positive influence for Canadians. Currently, most empirical evidence focuses on sport in general, not high performance sport in particular. What evidence there is tends to be derived using qualitative rather than quantitative methodologies. According to a recent household survey, Canadians believe that increasing participation in sports can lead to better health.³

Gathering quantitative evidence on social gains like national pride and culture is challenging because of their intangible qualities. For instance, how can researchers measure an increase in national pride due to an investment in high performance sport? And how can they attach a quantitative value to pride and culture? This challenge may explain the lack of quantified evidence in the literature.

Economic Benefits

There is more empirical evidence about the economics of sport and hosting major events. Sport, including high performance sport, is big business. It contributes to the Canadian

³ Michael Bloom et al., *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2005), p. 11.

economy through the various products and services associated with sport. For instance, it generates revenues from a wide range of businesses such as manufacturers of apparel and equipment, and operators of amateur sports clubs. This, in turn, helps generate and maintain employment in diverse industries such as manufacturing, retail, hospitality and tourism. Empirical studies demonstrate the positive economic impact of sport on the Canadian economy. A recent report by The Conference Board of Canada indicates that sport-related spending as a proportion of GDP is on the rise.⁴ However, these economic studies have not disaggregated high performance sport from the broader category of sport.

More explicit evidence for the economic importance of high performance sport relates to the hosting of high performance sporting events. Hosting regional, national and international high performance sport events is known to generate income for tourism, increase revenues from ticket sales, product sales of sports equipment and memorabilia and results in income from hospitality and other services provided during events. Other economic benefits from hosting events include job creation, infrastructure enhancements and growth in tourism beyond the term of the event. Economic studies of the Vancouver Games in 2010 estimate it will generate \$10 billion in economic activity and create over 200,000 person years of employment, most of it associated with infrastructure and services created to meet demand surrounding the Olympics and Paralympics. Hosting, although important, is only one dimension of a much larger high performance sport system.

⁴ Michael Bloom et al., *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2005), p. 36.

Conclusions

Over the years, reports have made claims about the social and economic benefits of sport and high performance sport. The review of the literature found limited empirical evidence, particularly quantitative evidence, to support the anecdotal claims that high performance sport offers a package of benefits that includes building national pride, enhancing cultural awareness, encouraging healthy behaviours and stimulating Canada's economic performance. Perhaps as a result, Canada's governments, as the principal funders of high performance sport, have felt that they lacked a firm justification and basis for heightened investment.

In order to build interest and encourage support for high performance sport, key messages based on robust research will need to be communicated systematically and effectively to government policy-makers and funders, corporate sponsors and the general public. A first step is to fill the research gaps on the impact of high performance sport in areas like economic development, tourism and health. Further research could shed light on the benefits of high performance sport and strengthen support from government, business and the public. As we look toward the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic games, compelling evidence that demonstrates "high performance sport yields benefits" may help generate the needed support to achieve the goal of being the top medal nation at these games.⁵

⁵ In January 2005, The Canadian Olympic Committee released *Own the Podium*, a challenge to all governments and citizens to renew Canada's commitment to its high performance system. Its stated ambition is for Canada to be the top medal nation at the Vancouver Games.

Overview

Empirical evidence about the impacts of high performance sport is remarkably thin. Yet there is a strong, widely held belief that high performance sport yields important economic and social benefits, including national pride, culture and health benefits. Perhaps because of the lack of compelling empirical evidence, there is also widespread uncertainty about the true value of high performance sport.

Sport today is many things to many people. To understand its potential impacts, it is helpful to consider sport on a continuum of effort, engagement and achievement, ranging from recreational sport through competitive sport and ultimately to high performance sport.

The entry level is recreational sport. This involves participation—largely at the community level—by people who are chiefly motivated by the simple joy of participating. Competitive sport engages people in a more focused and determined practice. It involves more dedication of time and effort. Here, playing is not enough; it is about playing well in response to challenges from other skilled players. The pinnacle is high performance sport. Participation requires more than dedication; high performance sport is a lifestyle. The motivation and focus here is on achieving excellence, usually in the face of topnotch competition. Very few athletes are able to engage in sport at this elite level.

Achieving Excellence examines the benefits of investing in high performance sport in Canada. This approach requires us to consider what benefits Canadians really care about. Many of the social benefits that we prize most are based on fundamental Canadian values, such as: social cohesion; equal opportunity and recognition for achievement; national pride in individual and team success by those who explicitly represent the country; cultural development; and good health.

This report explores how high performance sport affects national pride, branding, culture, tourism, job creation, consumer spending and health. It highlights Canadian and international experience in communicating the benefits of high performance sport to help inform government policy decisions and corporate investments. Finally, it identifies limitations in the literature, and suggests areas for additional research.

Above all, this review attempts to highlight evidence that high performance sport is in a league of its own. Although a subset of sport, it may offer a unique package of benefits that includes building national pride, enhancing Canada's "brand" image, stimulating Canada's economic performance, and even improving the health of Canadians.⁶

Definition of High Performance Sport

For the purposes of this study, high performance sport refers to:

Sport engaged in by elite athletes who achieve, or who aspire to achieve, or who have been identified as having the potential to achieve, excellence in world-class competition. World-class competitions for high performance sport include the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, World Championships, Commonwealth Games and Pan American Games, among others.

High performance sport excludes professional sport.

High performance sport is organized into The High Performance System, which is comprised of those activities, programs, agencies, institutions and personnel that have as a primary objective the preparation and support of elite athletes.

⁶ High performance sport is a subset of sport. For an analysis of Canadians' involvement in sport and its socio-economic impact on the nearly 13.7 million adult Canadians who take part as active participants, volunteers and/or attendees, see Michael Bloom et al., *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2005), p. 4.

Benefits

There is some evidence that high performance sport can stimulate national pride. Many Canadians rank our sports heroes among the greatest Canadians. For example, even leaving aside our greatest hockey heroes, a 2004 national poll ranked three Olympic competitors among the greatest Canadians.⁷ Other polls have shown successes in sport rank as some of Canada's greatest achievements. Meanwhile, the 2004 Olympics in Athens achieved the highest Canadian television viewing audience to date, with a peak audience of 1.1 million.⁸ Arguably, these and other success stories have helped to shape and strengthen our national pride and sense of cultural identity. On the other hand, there has been no explicit, large-scale empirical study of the impact on national pride.

There are indications that high performance sport can enhance Canada's image abroad—its branding in the eyes of the world. Hosting events and having elite athletes represent Canada abroad exposes individuals around the world to our culture and capacity for excellence as demonstrated in our competitive sporting performances. Other countries, such as East Germany and the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s, have used brand identification associated with successes in high performance sport to raise their profile and prestige in the world in order to accomplish broader national objectives.

Such branding has the potential to increase tourism and promote Canadian products and services. For example, the exposure Roots received at the Nagano Olympics in 1998 propelled that company onto the international scene and significantly boosted its sales.

⁷ They were Sandra Schmirler (curling), Donovan Bailey (sprinting) and Kurt Browning (figure skating).

⁸ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Athens Olympics Draws Big TV Numbers." [online]. October 2004, [cited December 2005]. www.cbc.ca/cgi-bin/templates/sportsView.cgi?news/2004/10/12/Sports/athens_television.

However, these are only individual examples. We lack a systematic study that would provide clear empirical evidence connecting success in high performance sport with national "brands" and establishing the impact of brand on economic performance.

On the other hand, there is stronger empirical evidence about the economics of sport. Sport in general (including high performance sport) is big business. It contributes to the Canadian economy through the various products and services associated with sport. For instance, it generates revenues for a wide range of businesses, such as clothing and equipment manufacturers and amateur sports club operators. Businesses like these, in turn, help generate and maintain employment in diverse industries such as manufacturing, retail, hospitality and tourism.

To illustrate, Skate Canada receives revenues from membership fees, test fees, media rights, corporate sponsorships and competitive events, as well as from the federal government. It also employs approximately 50 full-time staff.⁹ Skate Canada is just one of more than 50 national single-sport organizations that contribute to the high performance sport system and the Canadian economy. There are also several multi-sport organizations, such as Commonwealth Games Canada, that provide similar benefits. Empirical studies of these economic benefits have demonstrated the net positive impact on the economy. However, the studies have not disaggregated high performance sport impacts from the broader set of sport impacts.

There is clearer and more explicit evidence of the economic importance of high performance sport as it relates to the *hosting* of high performance sporting events. Hosting regional, national and international high performance sport events is known to generate income from tourism, hospitality and other services provided during events, and increase revenues from ticket sales and

⁹ Skate Canada, "About Skate Canada." [online]. www.skatecanada.ca/en/about_skate_canada.

product sales of sports equipment and memorabilia. Other economic benefits from hosting events (for which there is some evidence) include: job creation; enhancements to infrastructure that generate long-term economic growth; and permanent growth in international tourism beyond the term of the event.

There is good survey evidence that having the opportunity to compete contributes to athletes' development as elite performers. To the extent that hosting high performance sports events increases opportunities for athletes to compete, hosting enhances the development process by allowing athletes to improve their physical and mental abilities and benchmark their own performances.

Cities that host major events often invest in supportive infrastructure, such as sport facilities, and indirect infrastructure, such as roads and highways, which can be used by the region—and by visitors to the region—long after the initial sporting event is over. Cities hosting major events, such as the Olympic Games, bring in major new revenue and gain jobs in the region that can have a long-lasting impact on the local economy. For example, the Vancouver Games of 2010 will generate an estimated \$10 billion in economic activity and create more than 200,000 person years of employment, due largely to the infrastructure and services required to meet the demands of hosting the Olympics and Paralympics. However, it is unclear whether this method of investment is the most cost-effective way to achieve urban and regional development gains.

Health is another area where high performance sport may have a positive influence for Canadians. Currently, however, most empirical evidence focuses on sport in general, not high performance sport in particular. What evidence there is tends to be derived using qualitative methods and opinion surveys rather than other types of quantitative methodologies. According to recent survey research, Canadians believe that increasing participation in sports can lead

to better health.¹⁰ Other reports cite how sports heroes and coaches act as role models who influence people, especially youth, to become more actively engaged in sport, with resulting health and social benefits.¹¹ Quantitative measurements of the extent and significance of the relationship between high performance sport role models and changes in health-related behaviours have not yet been made.

Challenges

The benefits of high performance sport need to be considered in the context of the challenges and limitations of current high performance sport activities and operations. Most amateur sports have only a limited number of high-profile events, such as world championships, from which they can generate significant revenues. Even fewer of these events take place in Canada. Unlike professional sports, major amateur sporting events are few and far between. Professional sports benefit from a constant revenue stream from ticket sales, TV rights and merchandising, and even public subsidies. For high performance sport, infrequent and sometimes sporadic event hosting in Canada leads to an inconsistent revenue stream. To overcome this, external funding becomes a vital part of the equation. In Canada, this funding comes from government and business. Gaining this funding every year is a huge challenge.

Another challenge is the need for our high performance athletes to succeed regularly in competition with the world's best in order to achieve the gains in national pride and branding that come from great success—as well as to stimulate the investment required to support achievement at the highest levels. To some extent, success is also crucial to health impacts: role models have their greatest

¹⁰ Michael Bloom et al., *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2005), p. 11.

¹¹ Sport England, *Sport Playing Its Part: The Contribution of Sport to Community Priorities and the Improvement Agenda* (London, England: Sport England, 2005).

effect when they are dominant in their sport. The spectacle of victory and sporting dominance may cause young people, in particular, to emulate role models. The lack of empirical evidence demonstrating the benefits of high performance sport makes it difficult for policy-makers to justify supporting high performance sport at a higher level. This evidence is necessary in order to build funding to the level Canada requires to achieve sporting eminence on the international stage. In the past, Canadian policy-makers have not funded to the level needed to achieve desired performance goals. The Sport Review Process in 2002 found that “despite a relatively weak performance in recent Olympic Games, Canadian athletes have over-achieved, based on the resources allocated to high performance sport, compared to top international competitors.”¹² As we look towards the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic games, policy-makers may want to re-evaluate funding levels in light of the correlation between funding and medal performance.¹³

Obtaining funding generally requires justification to be communicated to the funders—to answer such questions as why an area should be funded and how much funding should be allocated to it. Increasingly, government funding in every area is under the microscope; governments must demonstrate the value of their investments. Stakeholders in high performance sport need to demonstrate and communicate its benefits to policy-makers and the public. Making the funding argument to the Government of Canada requires compelling evidence that proves the claim that “high performance sport yields benefits.”

¹² Therese Brisson, *Successful Programs, Best Practices, and Future Challenges in Canadian High Performance Sport* (Ottawa: Canadian Olympic Committee, May 2003), p. 10.

¹³ K. Hogan and K. Norton, “The Price of Lympic Gold,” *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport* 3, 2 (June 2000), pp. 203-218.

Report Approach and Structure

This report is based on an extensive review of domestic and international literature. It draws on refereed and non-refereed research findings, and incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research. The majority of the literature is from non-refereed sources. Wherever possible, the report has differentiated high performance sport from sport in general and from professional sport. However, due to the limited information available on high performance sport, some of the examples presented in this report cite the impacts of professional sport or sport in general.

In addition, much of the research about the benefits, particularly the economic benefits, of high performance sport is based on the hosting of large international events. The literature tends to focus on the benefits of hosting large events because it is relatively easy to examine the impacts of an event that is located in place and time. In addition, the scale of investment in hosting has often prompted investors to finance economic studies to justify and explain their investment decisions.

The importance of hosting should not be overemphasized. Although hosting offers athletes the opportunity to compete, and competition is critical to athlete development, it is only one part of the high performance system. As well, hosting as an isolated strategy is not an automatic source of gain for the high performance sport system. For instance, if Canada were to host a major international event without providing other support to athletes and coaches—such as training centres, counselling services and the development of highly skilled, certified coaches—the gains to our sport system might well be minimal. Arguably, hosting must be carefully integrated into the broader strategy of developing and supporting our high performance sport system.

We present the literature review findings in two main sections: investing in high performance sport; and communicating the benefits of high performance sport.

Benefits of High Performance Sport

This section examines the quantitative and qualitative evidence of the benefits associated with high performance sport. The benefits considered include national pride, culture, branding, economic growth, health and international development. International comparisons are referenced where they shed light on the Canadian situation.

National Pride and Canadian Culture

The literature frequently references the importance of high performance sport to national pride and culture. However, the evidence is limited largely to studies of public perception, and is often anecdotal. Gathering quantitative evidence on national pride and culture is challenging because of their intangible qualities. For instance, how can researchers measure an increase in national pride due to an investment in high performance sport? And how can they attach a quantitative value to pride and culture? The review below analyzes the ideas presented in these studies and suggests areas for future study.

Heroes and the Canadian Identity

Public opinion surveys offer a glimpse into how sport links to the national identity. They reveal that sport has a special place in the hearts of Canadians. Many of the most famous sports figures in our country have dual fame as high performance sport participants and professional athletes. In 2004, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) asked Canadians to vote on who they thought was the greatest Canadian. When the results were tallied, three sports figures entered the top 10, and no fewer than 20 figured in the top 100. Many of these were hockey players. They, too, figure prominently in Canadians' perceptions of Canada's greatest moments.

The goal scored by Paul Henderson (number 58 on the list of the 100 Greatest Canadians) in the 1972 Summit Series of hockey ranked fifth ahead of such important moments such as the patriation of the Constitution and the adoption of the Canadian flag.¹⁴ While Mr. Henderson and the rest of the Canadian team made a living as professional athletes, their greatest fame came from this high performance sport moment when they were representing their country without pay.

Comparable exercises done in other countries show different results. In the United States, only nine of the top 100 Americans were sports icons, and none of them broke into the top 10. Lance Armstrong, seven-time Tour de France champion cyclist and cancer crusader, was the top-rated athlete, ranking twentieth.¹⁵ Similarly, of the top 100 Britons, only four sports figures were identified. Professional soccer superstar David Beckham was rated thirty-third.¹⁶ Neither France nor Germany have any sports icons listed in their top 10.¹⁷ Due to a unique cultural and historical background, Canadians seem to place more emphasis on their sports figures to define national character than do people in other countries.

¹⁴ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Confederation Tops History Poll." [online]. November 10, 2000, [cited December 2005]. <http://www.cbc.ca/story/canada/national/2000/09/17/history000917.html>.

¹⁵ Discovery Channel, "Greatest American." [online]. June 2005, [cited December 2005]. <http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/greatestamerican/greatestamerican.html>.

¹⁶ British Broadcasting Corporation "Sir Winston Churchill, The Greatest of them All." [online] November 2002, [cited December 2005]. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/greatbritons.shtml>.

¹⁷ France2, "Le Plus Grand Français de tous Les Temps," 2005; Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, "Unsere Besten," 2003.

While Canadians are passionate about professional hockey, many of our sports icons belong to other sports. Seven of the top 100 Canadians are non-hockey sports heroes; three of them were members of Canada's Olympic teams. Curler Sandra Schmirler (who won gold at Nagano in 1998), sprinter Donovan Bailey (who won double gold at Atlanta in 1996) and three-time Olympian figure skater Kurt Browning all made the list. In addition, many of the professional hockey stars who made the list also served Canada's Olympic hopes, including Mario Lemieux (38 on the list), who captained Team Canada to Olympic gold in hockey in 2002.¹⁸ Arguably, Canada's Olympic successes have formed a set of shared experiences that we as Canadians use to help define ourselves.

Canadians view the Olympic team in a very favourable light. When Canadians were asked about the impact of Olympic sports on Canadian youth, 92 per cent felt it had a positive impact and 44 per cent said the impact was very positive. The level of perceived benefit of Olympic sport to Canadians actually exceeds the perceived amount of positive impact derived from professional sports.¹⁹

Culture

The literature often mentions high performance sport as a means to enhance cultural awareness and inclusiveness.

Sport and culture is a theme, goal or ideal identified by governments, academia and private institutions. Sport Canada's mission is to "strengthen the unique contribution that sport makes to Canadian identity, culture

and society."²⁰ The *Olympic Charter* includes the principle of "blending sport with culture and education."²¹ These goals or ideals can lead to policies and programs that have the potential to increase cultural awareness.

The principles of the Olympic Games have led to initiatives such as international conferences and the Cultural Olympiad. In 2004, the International Olympic Committee organized a World Forum on Education, Culture and Sport. It brought together athletes, administrators, supporters, doctors and others from various countries to share their views on topics such as sport as a means to promote cultural diversity. The Cultural Olympiad is another initiative bridging sport and culture. This cultural program, which began in 2000, extends over the period between two successive Olympic Games, culminating in the Cultural Olympics. Areas of interest include the humanities, the fine arts and the protection of cultural heritage.

Although these and other initiatives are aimed at contributing to cultural awareness, there is no empirical evidence to indicate they are achieving their objectives.

Another link between sport and culture is greater human interaction. High performance sport, particularly at the international level, brings together thousands of athletes, coaches, volunteers and spectators from diverse backgrounds and cultures. For instance, there will be more than 2,500 athletes from 85 nations, as well as 25,500 volunteers, at the Torino 2006 Winter Olympics.²² This blending of

¹⁸ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "The Greatest Canadian." [online]. November 2004, [cited December 2005]. <http://www.cbc.ca/greatest/>.

¹⁹ Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Public Opinion Survey on Youth and Sport* (Ottawa: CCES, July 2002). <http://www.cces.ca/pdfs/CCES-RPT-2002Survey-E.pdf>.

²⁰ Department of Canadian Heritage, "Welcome to Sport Canada." [online]. [cited December 2005]. http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/index_e.cfm.

²¹ International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Charter* (Switzerland: IOC, September 2004), p.9.

²² Torino Organising Committee for the XX Olympic Winter Games. [online]. www.torino2006.org/ENG/OlympicGames/home/index.html.

people with a common interest in sport has the potential to build mutual respect and understanding among different cultures.

“...volunteerism is an important part of the Olympic Movement of today and the future. ...the cultural viewpoint is one of enhanced knowledge on solidarity and multiculturalism; that is, an appreciation and value for all cultures.”

Source: George Karlis, “Volunteerism and Multiculturalism: A Linkage for Future Olympics,” *The Sport Journal* [online]. (Summer 2003), [cited December 2005]. www.thesportjournal.org.

Although this claim is made in the literature, currently there appears to be limited empirical evidence to support it. The closest evidence comes from a recent report commissioned by the European Commission, which examined the role of sport in promoting multicultural understanding.²³ However, the report’s focus was on sport in general, rather than on high performance sport.

A third argument for investment in high performance sport is greater cultural inclusiveness. Canada, as a nation of immigrants, has endorsed the principles of “equal recognition” and “equal opportunities” for all Canadians. While the literature suggests that high performance sport can break down social barriers, in certain circumstances it can also reinforce gender, ethnic and class inequalities.²⁴ This may be true of high performance sport in Canada with respect to language, as francophones may not have the same access to high performance success as do anglophones.

²³ PMP Consultants and Loughborough University’s Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, *Studies on Education and Sport: Sport and Multiculturalism (Lot 3)* (Brussels: European Commission, August 2004).

²⁴ C. Sullivan, *The Growing Business of Sport and Leisure: Social Impact of Physical Leisure—An Update* (Wellington, New Zealand: Hillary Commission, 2000).

A recent federal government report found that French-speaking athletes encounter language barriers to making the Canadian national teams, because some sport organizations and their coaching staffs are not equipped to offer services in French. This might be one of the reasons why the proportion of francophone high performance athletes is below the francophone proportion in the Canadian population.²⁵

In order to support the principles of equal recognition and equal opportunities for all Canadians, there must be equality in access to sports from the playground to the podium. While some of Canada’s best athletes and coaches come from diverse backgrounds and visible minority groups—Donovan Bailey is one example—more effort is needed to ensure high performance sport opportunities are available to all Canadians.

Athletes as Ambassadors and Role Models

Canadian athletes are acting as ambassadors of “goodwill” and role models in the community and abroad. They are trying to encourage healthy behaviours—such as sport participation, physical activity and nutrition—and discourage unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking, drug and alcohol use. They promote positive behaviours, such as creating friendships. Athletes and sports organizations are also directing their resources to developing countries.

Donovan Bailey is an outstanding example of a high performance athlete contributing to sport participation. This five-time World and Olympic Champion created the Donovan Bailey Fund to support the “advancement and assistance of Canada’s most talented

²⁵ Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, *Official Languages in the Canadian Sports System, Vol. 1* (Ottawa: OCOL, 2000).

amateur athletes.”²⁶ The fund raises money in three ways: from corporate Canada; from private citizens; and from Donovan Bailey himself.

Tiger Woods is another example of the impact a single person can make on sports participation. Woods broke into the world golf scene in the mid-1990s, dominating the sport at a young age. This encouraged a whole new generation of Canadians to take up the sport. In just two years, between 1996 and 1998, youth golf participation in Canada jumped by 18 per cent.²⁷

Although Tiger Woods is an American professional athlete, there is the potential for comparable impact among Canadians when our sporting heroes achieve great prominence. However, clear proof of this impact will require empirical study. Currently, we only know what sports Canadians are active in; it isn't clear whether or not those Canadians would have been active in other sports regardless.

Athletes can also discourage unhealthy behaviours. Robyn Regehr, a star player with the Calgary Flames professional hockey franchise, is an official spokesperson of the Prevent Alcohol and Risk Related Trauma in Youth (P.A.R.T.Y) Program, whose aim is to educate teenagers about alcohol risk behaviours.²⁸ This program aims to reduce behaviours like drunk driving and unsafe sex.

In some other countries, sports personalities do even more to actively discourage unhealthy behaviours. For instance, in

²⁶ Donovan Bailey Fund. [online]. [cited December 2005].

http://donovanbailey.com/charities_dbailey.asp.

²⁷ Royal Canadian Golf Association, “1999 Golf Participation in Canada Quick Facts.” [online]. [cited December 2005].

www.rcga.org/english/Membership/research-1999-summary.asp.

²⁸ Calgary Flames, “Player and Team Initiatives.” [online]. [cited December 2005].

www.calgaryflames.com/community/pti.html.

England, professional soccer stars are directly involved in high-profile awareness campaigns to discourage racism,²⁹ smoking, truancy and even fire-alarm hoaxes.³⁰

Athletes also deliver important messages beyond health and sport participation. For instance, the Esteem Team is an organization that encourages high performance athletes to interact with Canadian youth between the ages of 10 and 18. Their aim is to “inspire young people to have the courage to achieve what they want to do in life.” Topics of discussion range from coping with triumph and failure to creating positive friendships. Members of the team include major Canadian sports figures such as Olympic medallists Steve Giles (canoeing) and Veronica Brenner (freestyle skiing).³¹

International Campaigns

Canadian high performance athletes and sports organizations are also involved in international development. For example, several are involved in the Right to Play program. This program was launched by Norwegian Olympic gold medallist Johann Koss. Right to Play helps build much-needed sport infrastructure, and facilitates sport participation, in challenged areas of Africa. It also emphasizes sport as a means of social integration. In Sierra Leone, Right to Play has helped heal the wounds of civil war. During the war, the children of Sierra Leone were frequently exploited as soldiers. Those children are now marginalized in peacetime, and lack the basic social skills to become integrated in their communities. Participation in team sports help to foster their social skills. The goal is to break the

²⁹ Liverpool Football Club, “Anti-Racism.” [online]. [cited December 2005].

www.liverpoolfc.tv/club/antiracism.htm.

³⁰ Margaret Cameron and Colin MacDougall, Australian Institute of Criminology, “Crime prevention through sport and Physical Activity,” *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, No.165 (2000).

³¹ Esteem Team: <http://www.esteemteam.com>.

cycles of poverty and violence through the gradual development of these social skills.³²

Canadian high performance stars such as Silken Laumann (rowing) and Daniel Igali (wrestling), among others, have committed considerable time—and their reputations—to the cause.

The Commonwealth Games Association of Canada sponsors the International Development through Sport program (IDS). Since 1993, the IDS has operated in African and Caribbean countries. Its goal is the use of sport to “develop individuals, strengthen communities and build nations.” One IDS initiative is the Canadian Sport Leadership Corps, which encourages high performance athletes to share their “experiences and expertise in developing countries.” Sports leaders are delivering important messages about HIV/AIDS awareness, child protection and nutrition concerns, among others.³³

Building on the Canadian example, organizations in other countries are using sport to aid disadvantaged people across the globe. UK Sport, the body responsible for developing the United Kingdom’s high performance program, has created the Worldwide Impact (WWI) program. One of the WWI program’s goals is to use sport as a vehicle for promoting human and social development. The WWI has also created the International Development Assistance Programme (IDAP), whose goals are:

1. education and youth development—including international awareness—and coach education;
2. the promotion of equity in and through sport;
3. HIV/AIDS education and awareness;

³² Swiss Foundation of World Affairs, *More Than Just a Game: The Role of Sports in International Relations* (Washington: Swiss Foundation of World Affairs, November 2004).

³³ Commonwealth Games Association of Canada: www.commonwealthgames.ca.

4. enhanced good governance, including conflict resolution;
5. international research, monitoring and evaluation; and
6. the creation of global partnerships for international development.³⁴

Athletes as role models, and programs that involve sports and athletes, are often perceived as having a positive effect on individuals and the broader community. The literature often cites this benefit, in particular, with regards to role models influencing youth to participate in sport and stay (or get) healthy. However, empirical evidence to support this link is limited.

“It was immediately evident that there is very little academic or industry-based evidence to support the anecdotally proposed causal link between role models and sports participation.”

Source: Warren Payne et al., *Sports Role Models and Their Impact on Participation in Physical Activity: A Literature Review* (Victoria, Australia: University of Ballarat, 2002), p. i.

Peace and Protest

One ideal of international sport competition is to put aside differences between people and encourage fair and peaceful competition. There is anecdotal reference about how high performance sport sometimes acts as a peace-building tool by encouraging people to overcome their hostilities and prejudices.³⁵

A well-known example of this in high performance sport is the so-called “ping-pong diplomacy” between the United States and China. In 1971, no American had been to China since the communist regime was

³⁴ UK Sport, “Worldwide Impact.” [online]. [cited December 2005]. www.uk sport.gov.uk/worldwideimpact.

³⁵ Swiss Foundation of World Affairs, *More Than Just a Game: The Role of Sports in International Relations* (Washington: Swiss Foundation of World Affairs, November 2004).

established in 1949. During that period, the United States and China had faced off in the Cold War; their armies had battled for three years during the Korean War. By the early 1970s, when the Americans were fighting in the Vietnam War, relations between the two countries remained tense. The Chinese sought to reduce tensions by opening a dialogue with the West. The Chinese government decided that having the Chinese table tennis team invite their American rivals to China for a friendly tournament was a low-risk first step. The success of the visit of the U.S. table tennis team helped warm relations between the two countries. Twelve months later, in what was considered a coup of diplomacy, President Nixon visited communist China. Relations between the two countries have slowly continued to warm over the past decades—all thanks to a game of ping-pong.

On other occasions, sport has been used as a means of voicing dissatisfaction. International sport can provide a venue for peaceful protest. Two examples of this are the Olympic boycotts in 1980 and 1984, and the Apartheid protests.

In 1979, the Soviet Army marched into Afghanistan. In response, U.S. President Carter stated that the Soviets had violated the principles of the Olympics. He asked the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to move the location of the 1980 Olympics from Moscow to another city. When the IOC refused, the U.S. Olympic team withdrew from the Olympics. In a show of support, some 60 other nations, including Canada, also boycotted the Moscow Olympics. In retaliation, the Soviets, along with many of their allies, boycotted the 1984 games in Los Angeles. (China, on the other hand, participated for the first time since 1932.) The boycotts gave two superpowers a way to voice their differences peacefully.

In another example, the continued oppression of the black majority in South Africa under Apartheid motivated exiled

non-white athletes and coaches to lobby foreign governments to ban South Africa from international competition. The resulting ban lasted from 1964 until 1992. The move made the world aware of the issue, giving hope and inspiration to the oppressed. It also embarrassed the South African government, and over time, contributed to the end of Apartheid.

Although these events in relation to sport are discussed in the literature, empirical studies have yet to support a causal link.

Economic Growth

There are numerous empirical studies that identify economic gains associated with hosting major sports events. These economic benefits include tourism, job creation, infrastructure development and foreign investment. There are also several studies that identify the economic benefits of sport in general.

Tourism and Job Creation

Raising Canada's international profile through hosting high performance sporting events may lead to increased interest in Canada as a vacation destination.

Many studies have measured the impact on tourism and job creation from hosting specific events. One study found that the 2004 Canadian National Men's Curling Championship, the Brier, held in Saskatoon, yielded \$23 million in economic activity, supporting more than 200 jobs.³⁶ The 2000 Olympics in Sydney Australia are estimated to have generated AUS\$6 billion in tourism spending as well as nearly 3,000 jobs in the hotel industry alone.³⁷ Meanwhile, it is

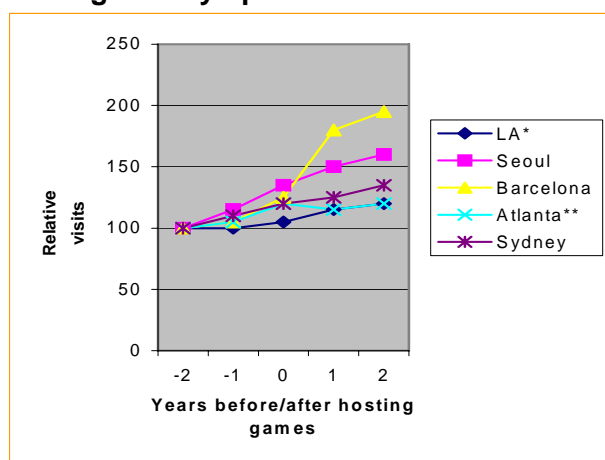
³⁶ Paradigm Consulting, *Economic Impact Assessment—2004 Nokia Brier, Saskatoon, SK* (Ottawa: Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance, 2004).

³⁷ PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Business and Economic Benefits of the Sydney 2000 Olympics: A Collation of Evidence, 2001* (Sydney, Australia: New South

claimed that the Vancouver Games will create more than 200,000 job years of work.³⁸

As Chart 1 shows, the tourism boost to a host city may last beyond the year of the event; visitor numbers tend to remain higher for some years afterwards.³⁹ Five previous Olympic host cities have experienced increases in tourist numbers for several years after their games.

Chart 1
Relative Visits in the Years Around Hosting the Olympics



*LA is based on LAX international throughput.

**Atlanta is based on all of Georgia, thus it may underestimate the benefit to Atlanta.

Hosting games that provide less exposure than the Olympic Games may not create increases on the same scale, but research shows that there is still a positive impact. For example, in Quebec, Sherbrooke's hosting of the 2003 World Youth Athletic Championships brought an estimated 1,600

Wales Department of State and Regional Development, April 2002).

³⁸ Government of British Columbia, *The Economic Impact of the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games* (Victoria: Ministry of State for Community Charter and 2010 Olympic Bid, Government of British Columbia, January 2002).

³⁹ Jones Lang Lasalle Hotels, *Focus on the Impact of the Olympics on Real Estate Markets* (Jones Lang Lasalle, June 2005).

participants and another 1,600 foreign spectators to the city, injecting almost a million dollars into the local economy.⁴⁰ The overall economic contribution of these smaller events held across the country each year is unknown, as there is no aggregate analysis.

For both international events and more modest regional events, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the economy benefits from increased tourism and job creation, even if only temporarily.

However, it is unclear from the research how many of the new jobs are long-term or only temporary. Further, if the jobs being created are low-skill, low-pay, entry-level jobs in sectors such as tourism, the aggregated economic impact might be considerable without leading to a highly skilled workforce that would underpin sustainable economic performance in the long term.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure spending needed for elite-level sport, such as sport facilities, is one economic benefit attributable to hosting major events. For instance, considerable spending on roads, highways and accommodations is sometimes necessary. Such investments are often a factor in economic growth.

For the 2002 Winter Olympics, about US\$600 million (a conservative estimate) was spent on direct infrastructure improvements to Salt Lake City from 1996–2002.⁴¹ Spending on improvements such as lodging facilities, ski resorts, and

⁴⁰ Paradigm Consulting, *2003 World Youth Athletics Championships—Economic Impact Assessment* (Ottawa: Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance, July 2004) .

⁴¹ Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, *2002 Olympic Winter Games: Economic, Demographic and Fiscal Impacts* (Salt Lake City: State of Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, November 2000).

transportation systems trickled down through the Utah economy, creating substantial growth. This major infrastructure development helped grow Utah's GDP. As Table 1 below shows, for several years after Salt Lake City was awarded the Olympics in 1995, Utah's GDP grew much faster than that of the rest of the United States.⁴²

Table 1
Impact on GDP (in millions of nominal dollars)

| Total GDP | United States | % Change | Utah | % Change |
|-----------|---------------|----------|-------|----------|
| 1994 | 6868000 | | 42000 | |
| 1995 | 7231800 | 5% | 46000 | 10% |
| 1996 | 7629500 | 5% | 51200 | 11% |
| 1997 | 8237994 | 8% | 56590 | 11% |
| 1998 | 8679657 | 5% | 60294 | 7% |
| 1999 | 9201137 | 6% | 64143 | 6% |
| 2000 | 9749104 | 6% | 67889 | 6% |
| 2001 | 10058156 | 3% | 70490 | 4% |
| 2002 | 10412244 | 4% | 73646 | 4% |
| 2003 | 10923849 | 5% | 76674 | 4% |
| 2004 | 11665595 | 7% | 82611 | 8% |

The 2000 Olympics and Paralympics in Sydney, Australia is another case of economic gain through infrastructure development. It is estimated that infrastructure developments alone generated AUS\$6 billion.⁴³

An added benefit of infrastructure development for high performance sporting events is that this infrastructure is available to the community when the event is over. Further, the sporting venues, and the transportation and communications infrastructure associated with them, can provide an environment conducive to more investment in regional development.

⁴² U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Survey of Current Business* (Washington: U.S. BEA).

⁴³ PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Business and Economic Benefits of the Sydney 2000 Olympics: A Collation of Evidence, 2001* (Sydney, Australia: New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development, April 2002).

However, this may not be the most cost-effective way to invest in capacity-building for economic growth and gain.

Broadcasting Revenues

High performance sport can yield major broadcasting revenues. For example, the CBC has purchased the broadcast rights to the 2006 and 2008 Olympic Games—for US\$73 million. Recently, CTV outbid the CBC for the 2010 and 2012 Olympics by offering more than twice as much: US\$153 million.⁴⁴ Clearly, Canadian networks believe that Canadians' interest in high performance sport offers them the ability to make profits, even with these large upfront expenses.

Foreign Investment

Some countries have capitalized on hosting major events to attract foreign investment. For example, Australia sought out foreign investment before and during the Sydney Olympics. Investment 2000 was a program designed to attract foreign investment using the excitement of the Olympic Games as a backdrop. As early as 1998, network offices were opened around the globe under the brand name "Australia Open for Business." Through information dissemination, media coverage, and formal business propositions, Australia actively pursued leads in 20 countries. Under the program, 349 business leaders representing 269 companies visited Australia. When surveyed, 90 per cent of the business leaders said they would likely invest in Australia because of the program. The program is credited with having created more than 1,000 Australian jobs.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Sports, "CTV Wins 2010 and 2012 Olympic Broadcast Rights." [online]. February 7 2005, [cited December 2005]. <http://www.cbc.ca/story/sports/national/2005/02/07/Sports/ctv050207.html>.

⁴⁵ PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Business and Economic Benefits of the Sydney 2000 Olympics: A Collation of Evidence, 2001* (Sydney, Australia: New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development, April 2002).

Sports (in General)

As mentioned previously, there are several studies on the economic benefits derived from investing in sport. These studies show the amount of household spending on sports-related goods and services and employment in the sports sector. This research also indicates that sport-related spending as a proportion of GDP is on the rise.⁴⁶

Although these studies highlight the positive economic benefits from investing in sport, there are no studies focusing exclusively on high performance sport. Professional sport offers the next-best opportunity for comparisons. Take the case of the recent loss of the 2004–2005 NHL hockey season: in total, the Canadian economy suffered by an estimated \$20 million for each month of the lockout.⁴⁷ Many industries, such as the hospitality sector, saw noticeable declines in revenue.⁴⁸

Hosting and High Performance Sport

The literature mainly focuses on the economic benefits from hosting major sporting events. However, some aspects of the link between hosting and investing in high performance sport are still unclear. What is the causality? Does investing in high performance sport lead to more hosting opportunities? Does hosting more events lead to better athletes? Does hosting more events lead to greater public interest—and, in turn, to greater support for high performance sport?

⁴⁶ Michael Bloom et al., *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2005), p. 36.

⁴⁷ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, “The NHL Lockout—By the Numbers.” [online]. February 16, 2005, [cited December 2005].
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/nhl/>.

⁴⁸ Associated Press, “NHL Lockout Hurts Retail Stores, Other Businesses.” [online], January 27, 2005 [cited December 2005].
<http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/wire?section=nhl&id=1977071>.

Answers to these and related questions will require further research. For example, there are several criteria, beyond sporting success, for hosting events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Two basic criteria are—a city must have the capacity and capability to support such a large endeavour.

The relationship between sporting success and hosting is clearer for international championships for specific sports. Take the case of soccer, where Canada’s national team has enjoyed limited success in qualifying for the World Cup. Since 1930, the team has qualified only once for this event (1986). Meanwhile, Canada has never hosted the World Cup of Soccer. Compare the soccer situation with junior hockey. Canada’s junior hockey team has been very successful at the World Championships. In 2005, the International Ice Hockey Federation accepted Canada’s proposal to host the World Juniors every third year for three rotations—2006, 2009 and 2012.⁴⁹ These cases suggest sporting success and hosting are correlated; but without further research, this evidence is anecdotal.

There is a case to be made that hosting sports events is invaluable in improving athlete development. According to the Canadian Sports Centres, outstanding competition is critical to elite athlete development.⁵⁰ As well, in a study that surveyed more than 2,100 U.S. Olympic athletes, respondents indicated that competition was important to their development.⁵¹ Competition is also a means

⁴⁹ Terry Jones, “Canada Host with the Most for World Juniors.” [online]. May 15, 2005, [cited December 2005].
www.slam.canoe.ca/Slam/Hockey/Junior/2005/05/15/1040704.html.

⁵⁰ Canadian Sport Centres, *Canadian Sport for Life* (Vancouver: Canadian Sport Centres, 2005).

⁵¹ Tim Gibbons et al., *Reflections on Success: U.S. Olympians Describe the Success Factors and Obstacles that Most Influenced their Olympic*

to benchmark success nationally and internationally. Although athletes could compete abroad, hosting events in Canada alleviates some of the financial burden associated with travelling to other countries, such as airfare, meals and accommodations.

Breaking New Ground: Opportunities for Research

The literature review shows that empirical studies are needed to support a wide range of anecdotal claims about the socio-economic benefits of high performance sport.

Branding

Athletes as ambassadors may offer a unique way to advertise Canada to the rest of the world, portraying it as a successful, self-confident nation whose people are competitive, trustworthy and tolerant. Through its athletes and their successes at international competitions, the marketing of “brand Canada” could create benefits relating to tourism and immigration.

Sport can also raise awareness at the institutional level. For example, interest in attending certain colleges has been significantly boosted by success on the sports field. In the mid-1980s, Boston College had a successful football program headed by a young star quarterback named Doug Flutie. After Mr. Flutie led the Boston College Eagles to victory in the 1984 Cotton Bowl, and was awarded the prestigious Heisman Trophy, the college benefited from a significant rise in admittance applications. The “Flutie Effect” became a justification for increased sports funding on campuses across the United States.⁵²

Development (Colorado: U.S. Olympic Committee, June 2003), pp. 27–28.

⁵² Michael J. Lovaglia and Jeffrey W. Lucas, “High-Visibility Athletic Programs and the Prestige of Public Universities,” *The Sporting Journal* 8,1 (Winter 2005).

There seems to be enough similarity here to make the analogy that a successful high performance sports program at the country level could play a role in increasing international awareness of a nation. However, the evidence available for this connection is limited and mainly anecdotal.⁵³

Participation in Sports

Several studies have tried to link the role of high performance sport to recreational sport participation levels and health conditions in various countries’ populations.

Overall, there is limited evidence to support a positive relationship between high performance sports programs and increased recreational sport participation in the general population.⁵⁴ Another study found that sports role models have little measured impact on children’s reasons to participate in sport.⁵⁵

However, the evidence is inconclusive. Further research might look at participation rates in a particular sport (based on data from sporting clubs) in relation to successful performance by an athlete or team in order to focus the evidence. For example, did the Canadian women’s hockey team’s Olympic gold medal performance in Salt Lake City lead more Canadian girls to play recreational hockey?

Another area of study might be the degree to which participation rates are changing relative to the amount of money being spent on high performance sport. Most studies have found that despite increases in funding

⁵³ D. Nightingale, “Adopted homeland. It’s quite natural to dream about representing the United States at the Olympic Games. Even for athletes who grow up in a foreign country,” *Olympian* 21, 6 (Nov./Dec. 1995), pp. 18-19 and 21-22.

⁵⁴ Warren Payne et al., *Sports role models and their impact on participation on physical activity: A literature review* (Victoria, B.C.: University of Ballarat, 2002).

⁵⁵ T. Olds et al., *Children and Sport* (Australian Sports Commission, September 2004).

for high performance programs, participation rates in sports have steadily decreased over the past two decades.⁵⁶ Maybe investing in high performance sport is not resulting in increased participation overall, but is instead mitigating the trend toward inactivity.

Economic Benefits

The majority of studies have focused on the economic benefits of sports, in general, or on hosting major sports events.

Further research could focus specifically on the products and services associated with high performance sport beyond event hosting. For instance, studies could include revenues generated by manufacturers and retailers of high performance sports equipment and apparel and by operators of sports organizations and facilities. In addition, studies could look at jobs created by high performance sport.

⁵⁶ K. Hogan and K. Norton, "The Price of Olympic Gold," *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport* 3,2 (2000), pp. 203-218.

International Comparison—Communicating the Benefits

Introduction

Nations around the world, including both developed and developing countries, participate in high performance sports like the Olympics and World Championships. Participation by athletes, coaches, the sporting community and governments indicates that these stakeholders perceive that they gain benefits of some kind from their involvement in high performance sport. Depending on the stakeholder, these benefits can include winning a gold medal, increasing tourism or heightening their country's international exposure. The relative importance of these benefits varies from country to country; so do the opportunities for future gain.

Communicating the exact nature of the benefits of high performance sports to the right audiences in government and business is vital to gaining the additional funding required to maintain and enhance our high performance sport system. These are the groups that provide funding and set policy that largely supports the whole system. The funding, in turn, is crucial to ensuring that we match or exceed the level of economic and social benefits we have achieved in the past.

Communicating the benefits is also important to promoting people's awareness and interest, encouraging more people to become entry-level participants in the high performance sport system, and ultimately producing larger numbers of elite athletes and coaches.

There are many facets to consider in a communications strategy, including: who is delivering the message; the target audience; the objective of the message; the underlying evidence to support the message; and how the message will be disseminated.

The following discussion examines how other countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Scotland, are communicating the benefits of high performance sport. It also looks at the policy strategies and statements that various countries are communicating through print and online media.

Effective communication can be difficult. When a message is not clear, the target audience may find it difficult to make use of the information.

"I know you believe you understand what it is you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what I said is not what I meant."

Source: Robert McCloskey, U.S. State Department.

Who is Delivering the Message?

Countries' Sporting Structures

In most countries, there are several organizations at the national and regional level that communicate the benefits of high performance sports. The primary communicators are usually government organizations, or organizations that are funded by and report to the government. There can be several governing bodies simultaneously overseeing high performance sport in a given country, such as the federal government, state/provincial/territorial governments, Olympic Committees, Commonwealth Committees, national sporting associations and other organizations. Sport structures differ across countries. At one extreme, a country may have a highly centralized system with a single overarching governing organization for high performance sport that directs the rest and provides substantial funding and facilities for event use. At the other extreme, a country may have significant overlapping jurisdictions, with

many governing organizations competing for resources and authority. Whether there is one leading organization or the authority is widely shared, each organization wants to communicate messages that are fully aligned with its own objectives and target audience.

Other Countries

Australia is an example of a highly centralized approach. The governing body for high performance sport is the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). This federal agency coordinates the government's commitment and contribution to elite sport and the wider sporting community. As the primary national sports administration, it is also the primary communicator about high performance sports in Australia. Other key non-government agencies that communicate on high performance sport include the Australian Olympic Committee and the national sporting organizations that focus on particular sports, such as Athletics Australia.

The U.K. approach, currently under review, is somewhat less centralized. Since the United Kingdom comprises four "national" entities (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), the communication of elite sports is currently divided among several national agencies. However, at the U.K. level, UK Sport is the central agency responsible for co-ordinating overall policy, supporting high performance sport, and delivering U.K.-wide initiatives, such as major events.⁵⁷ It is funded by, and responsible to, the United Kingdom Government—Department for Culture, Media and Sport. In addition, each home country has its own national sports council that acts as the delivery arm for their respective governments. These sports councils—Sport England, Sport Scotland,⁵⁸

Sports Council for Northern Ireland, and the Sports Council for Wales—are responsible for co-ordinating sport at all levels. As with Australia, there are other private sector organizations that communicate on elite sport, including the British Olympic Committee and the national governing bodies of individual sports, such as British Swimming.

Canada

Compared to these countries, Canada's sports structure is more decentralized, with several organizations providing support and direction. One of the main governing bodies for elite sports is Sport Canada, a branch of the International and Intergovernmental Affairs and Sport Sector within the Government of Canada's Department of Canadian Heritage. Its mission is to enhance opportunities for Canadians to participate and excel in sports.

Another key contributor to high performance sports is the Canadian Olympic Committee. It is a not-for-profit organization committed to sport excellence and to helping Canadian athletes reach the Olympic podium. Other organizations involved with high performance sport in Canada include the Canadian Paralympic Committee, Commonwealth Games Canada and the National Sports Federations, as well as, to a lesser extent, provincial organizations such as Sport BC.

Each of these organizations seeks to communicate the benefits of high performance sport (and sometimes also sport more generally, especially at the provincial level). As such, there is no single national governing body for high performance sport; and, therefore, no one-stop-shopping for information on high performance sport. The implications of this are examined below.

⁵⁷ UK Sports was established by Royal Charter in 1996.

⁵⁸ SportScotland is a non-departmental public body that works closely with the government (Scottish Executive). SportScotland is the national body for

sport in Scotland. It advises Scottish ministers and carries out policy for physical recreation and sport at all levels.

Non-Government Communicators

Universities, associations and private sector organizations also communicate the benefits of high performance sport. For example, the Social Science Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong has conducted public awareness surveys on high performance sport. The Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance, a membership-based organization, conducts research and communicates the economic benefits of high performance sporting events, such as the MasterCard Skate Canada International (2002), the Road World Cycling Championship (2003), and the Canada Winter Games (2003). As well, numerous private-sector organizations are often commissioned by public bodies to conduct and disseminate research on high performance sport.

Table 2 shows the most important national organizations with communications responsibilities and oversight of high performance sport in various countries.

Table 2
National Sporting Organizations (lead organizations in bold)

| | Federal | Ministry | Other national administrative organization(s) |
|--------------------|---|----------------------------|---|
| Australia | Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Sports Commission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Australian Institute for Sport | Arts and Sport | Australian Olympic Committee; Australian Commonwealth Games Association; national sport organizations (individual sports) |
| New Zealand | Ministry for Culture and Heritage | Sport and Recreation | Sport and Recreation New Zealand (crown agency); New Zealand Olympic Committee; national sport organizations (individual sports) |
| Scotland | Department of Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism, Culture and Sport Group | Tourism, Culture and Sport | SportScotland (non-departmental public body); national sport organizations (individual sports) |
| UK | Department for Culture, Media and Sport | Sport | UK Sport ; British Olympic Committee; national sport organizations (individual sports) |
| US | None | None | US Olympic Committee ; national governing bodies (individual sports) |
| Canada | Department of Canadian Heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International and Intergovernmental Affairs and Sport Sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sport Canada | Canadian Heritage | Canadian Olympic Committee; Canadian Paralympic Committee; Commonwealth Games Canada; National Sport Federations (individual sports) |

Source: Adapted from the University of Calgary, "National Sport Structures and Organizations."
www.uclagary.ca/lib-old/ssportsite/natorg.html.

What Are the Messages?

Three common themes underpinning most messages emerge from our analysis of governmental and non-governmental organizations in several countries: economic benefits of hosting; national pride and identity; and social/cultural value. These three overarching themes shape communications strategies and content.

Ultimately, successful communications efforts produce two types of outcomes: they either increase knowledge and understanding, or change people's and behaviours. The three overarching themes, in turn, generate a wide range of specific communications objectives and messages depending on the interests and objectives of the communicating organization and the country within which it operates.

Specific objectives can focus on: communicating information to the public and others that increases understanding of high performance achievements by athletes (to foster national pride); and communicating information to the private sector about the importance of supporting Canadian athletes (to encourage investment).

Specific objectives can also focus on communicating to change behaviour. Messages about the need for volunteers, the importance of volunteers and the benefits of volunteering are designed to encourage individuals to participate as volunteers in the high performance sport system.

“Skate Canada is a very successful national organization and one of the reasons for this is the involvement of thousands of volunteers that help to keep things running.”

Source: Skate Canada, “Getting Involved.”
www.skatecanada.ca/en/getting_involved/volunteering.

Messaging can also target elite audiences, such as government decision- and policy-makers as well as business sponsors. For instance, a message might set out a specific target or goal to motivate the government, business and other key stakeholders to take action in order to meet the stated goal.

Economic Benefits of Hosting

As mentioned previously, a substantial amount of research focuses on the economic impacts of hosting major sporting events. Consequently, this research becomes the source of information for communicating messages to the public, government and business. Economic benefits of hosting a high performance event that have been studied and identified include: increased local or regional spending; increased tourism; and enhanced international exposure and awareness, which can lead to increased trade and foreign investment. In particular, two types of economic studies have been conducted—pre-bidding evaluations and post-event (games) evaluations.

Pre-Bidding

Pre-bidding cost-benefit analyses are often undertaken to determine whether or not it would be economically advantageous for a country to bid for a potential event, such as the Commonwealth or Olympic Games.

For example, the professional consulting firm Arup⁵⁹ was commissioned in January 2002 by a stakeholder group comprised of the U.K. government, the mayor of London and the British Olympic Committee to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of a possible London bid for the 2012 Summer Olympics. The study did not include a consultation process, but was guided by a project steering group comprising representatives of the stakeholder group organizations.

⁵⁹ Arup is a professional consultancy that provides technical expertise to its clients. The company brings together a range of technical, design, creative and management skills.

This independent report, released publicly in November 2002, assessed the costs and benefits of bidding, staging and hosting the games. It also assessed wider socio-economic benefits such as tourism, tax revenue and job creation. Non-quantifiable benefits included in the report were the boost to the United Kingdom's image, regeneration of the local area, and the social, cultural and sporting benefits that would arise during and after the games. The report concluded that bidding for and staging the Olympics would produce a financial surplus of £79 million.⁶⁰ Five months later, the government announced that it would go ahead with its London bid.

Post-Games

There are also numerous studies that offer cost-benefit analyses of events after they've been held. Canada, the United Kingdom, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand have all examined post-game costs and benefits. For example, UK Sport and Bristol City Council commissioned an independent report on the economic impact of the 2001 International Association of Athletics Federation World Half Marathon Championships in Bristol. The report concluded that the event injected £580,000 into the local economy.⁶¹

Elsewhere, three studies were commissioned by the New Zealand Government to look at the economic impacts of the America's Cup (sailing) hosted in New Zealand in 2000 and 2003. Market Economics Ltd. prepared an economic impact assessment of the 2003 America's Cup for the New Zealand Ministry of Tourism. This study concluded that

NZ\$529 million was added to the Auckland economy due to hosting this event.⁶²

National Pride

The message that success in high performance sport can instill national pride is frequently included in policy documents produced for public consumption. This message is also often found in newsletters and magazines produced by non-government organizations responsible for high performance sport. Sporting success is often measured and communicated through the achievements of individual athletes and the number of medals won for a country at specific sporting events.

The ultimate source of these messages is usually public opinion surveys that specifically ask people about how they feel after their (usually) national representatives achieve success in international competition.

A 1995 International Social Science Survey indicated that Australians identify with their sporting heroes. The survey found that 92 per cent of Australians felt proud of Australia's achievements in sports, and 84 per cent agreed with the notion that sporting success made them feel proud to be Australian.⁶³ Similar sentiments were found in New Zealand, where more than 60 per cent of respondents said that New Zealand's international sporting success is important.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Arup, *London Olympics 2012: Summary* (London: Arup, May 21, 2002).

⁶¹ UK Sport, *Countdown to Athens: Annual Review, 2002-2003* (London: UK Sport, 2004), p. 16.

⁶² Market Economics Ltd., *Comparison of America's Cup Economic Impacts 2000-2003* (Auckland: Ministry of Tourism, October 2003), p. 4.

⁶³ The Australian Sports Commission, *Beyond 2000* (Sydney: ASC, 1999), p. 11.

⁶⁴ Sport, Fitness and Leisure Ministerial Taskforce, *Getting Set for an Active Nation* (Auckland: Ministerial Taskforce, January 2001), p. 9.

“Excellence and success in sport at national and international levels contribute to national prestige and moral and reflect well on Scotland’s standing in the world.”

Source: Scottish Sport Council, *Sport 2000: A Strategic Approach to the Development of Sport in Scotland* (1989).

Social/Cultural Gains

The social/cultural benefits that are communicated include greater community involvement, enhanced skills resulting from volunteer programs, and improved health. However, many of these messages are associated with sport in general, or with hosting sports events.

“Beyond the pride generated in the community by Australian sporting success at the elite level, the most significant justification for government involvement in sport is health benefits.”

Source: Australian Sports Commission, *Beyond 2000* (Canberra: ASC, 1999), p. 8.

UK Sport commissioned a study prior to the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester. The study involved a survey that used the Games as an example to understand the wider benefits of staging major sports events. Wider benefits studied included producing more winning athletes and encouraging more people to participate in sport. When asked about benefits, more than 80 per cent of survey respondents said that hosting major events:

- is important for the United Kingdom;
- helps the United Kingdom develop good relations with other countries; and
- provides opportunities for people to take part in sport.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ UK Sport, *Countdown to Athens: Annual Review, 2002-2003* (London: UK Sport, 2004), pp. 15-16.

Another message often communicated is the importance of volunteers in the high performance system and the benefits gained from volunteering, such as the varied social interactions that build skills and a sense of connection and community involvement.

How Are the Messages Disseminated?

Generally, a communications strategy uses several delivery mechanisms, such as brochures, newsletters, annual reports, research papers and media releases. “Different audiences respond to different media, and how a message is communicated will determine whether its content is understood and how stakeholders will respond.”⁶⁶ The countries studied use a combination of these delivery mechanisms. Table 3 offers a brief look at the various delivery mechanisms used by selected organizations.

Internet

Both the Australian Sports Commission and UK Sport are good examples of how information is disseminated. These organizations provide a central clearinghouse of information through their websites. These websites include: daily news updates on sport in their respective countries; information about sporting events; and literature such as annual reports, journals, newsletters and research papers.

Magazines

ASC produces *Ausport* to meet the needs of various ASC target audiences, such as: government officials (including the Federal Minister for Sport and other ministers, senators and MPs); the ASC board and sponsors; major agencies like the Australian Olympic Committee; national and state

⁶⁶ Marylee O’Neill, “Communicating for Change,” *CMA Management* (Toronto: CMA Management, June 1999), pp.23-24.

sporting organizations; state/territory departments of sport and recreation; institutes and academies of sport; and ASC networks of schools, clubs, indigenous sport and sport with a disability. The purpose of *Ausport* is:

- to report major achievements and initiatives of ASC and the Australian Institute of Sport;
- to provide sporting organizations with information and guidance on sport management and development issues; and
- to share good practices.

This quarterly journal is available in both print and electronic format. The electronic version is available for free to the public.⁶⁷

UK Sport also produces a quarterly magazine called *Performance*, targeted at the elite sporting community. This magazine includes news and features on the latest issues affecting high performance sport in the United Kingdom. Stories focus on athletes' performance and profiles, coach profiles, sports events, and sports science and medicine. This magazine is also available in print and electronic format.⁶⁸

Research Papers

In general, economic assessments and public opinion surveys on high performance sport are communicated through research papers. Selected information from these papers trickles down to other media via citations in annual reports, journals/magazines, newsletters and press releases. For example, UK Sport commissions economic assessments on major events and then incorporates key findings from these independent reviews into its annual reports.

⁶⁷ Australian Sports Commission, *ASC Journals* (Canberra: ASC, 2005).

www.ausport.gov.au/journals/index.asp.

⁶⁸ UK Sport, *Corporate Publications* (London: UK Sport, 2005).

www.uk sport.gov.uk/generic_template.asp?id=12326

All Media

Another type of information communicated is the performance of athletes as it pertains to national/cultural pride. This kind of information is sometimes found in research papers, annual reports, newsletters and press releases. However, it is emphasized much more in annual reports and newsletters than research papers, partly because performance outcomes help demonstrate the effectiveness of sports programs. This is a desirable message to communicate to government officials as well as to businesses and the general public.

Table 3
Delivery Mechanisms by Various Organizations

| | Research papers (including policy papers) | Annual report | Newsletters | Magazines | Press/news releases | Websites |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|----------|
| Australian Sports Commission | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| UK Sport | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| SportScotland | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Sport and Recreation New Zealand | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Canadian Olympic Committee | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Sport Canada | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |

Policy—Strategies and Statements

Governments and government agencies often communicate sports policies and/or strategies. These messages tend to focus on sports in general, but most of them explicitly mention high performance sport. Governments are setting out a vision, even defining goals, for what they want their country to achieve in sports at all levels in the coming years. The commitments they articulate suggest that they value sport highly at all levels, including high performance sport.

United Kingdom

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport released a strategy for sport in 2000 entitled *A Sporting Future for All*, which sets out the U.K. government's vision for sport in the 21st century. In 2001, the government published an action plan called *The Government's Plan for Sport* to implement the vision it had identified in the previous report. The following year, 2002, saw the release of a joint publication by the government's Strategy Unit and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

This document outlines the government's vision and strategy for participation and performance in sport as far ahead as 2020. These reports are inclusive; they discuss sports participation, physical activity, and high performance sport. They link benefits, especially health benefits, to all sports participation and physical activity. High performance sport is mentioned separately in terms of improving performance and supporting major events.

Evidence to support performance improvements includes indicators such as the number of medals won, or Olympic medals per million population. "Team GB's gold medal haul in the last Olympics was the best since 1920 and we have world champions in more than 50 sports."⁶⁹ In addition to presenting current performance, the government is establishing future performance. For instance, UK Sport

⁶⁹ Joint report with: Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives* (London: Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, December 2002), p. 7.

announced that the United Kingdom would become one of the top five sporting nations by 2012.⁷⁰ Other key messages concerning high performance sport are perception-based rather than evidence-based.

“International sporting success helps generate pride and a sense of national identity, and a ‘feel good factor’. It also boosts the profile of a sport and increases interest in participation.”⁷¹

Scotland

In 1998, SportScotland published *Sport21*, a national vision for the development and delivery of Scottish sport in the coming years. Four years later, a review was undertaken to evaluate its impacts and update the document. The review process involved consultations with partners and a series of background papers prepared by SportScotland. A survey of public attitudes toward high performance sport in Scotland was included in this series of papers.

As part of a larger household survey, questions were included that pertained to high performance sport in Scotland. These questions focused on individuals’ views on the importance of Scotland’s success at international sport and funding for Scottish athletes. Based on the background papers and consultations, a vision and 11 targets were identified.

The vision set out in *Sport21* highlights the importance of high performance sport “...a country achieving and sustaining world-class performance in sport.” As well, one of the 11 targets is directed at high performance sport—“to have had over 250 Scots being medalists on the world stage.”⁷²

⁷⁰ UK Sport, *Countdown to Athens: Annual Review, 2002-2003* (London: UK Sport, 2004), p. 10.

⁷¹ Joint report with: Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government’s sport and physical activity objectives* (London: Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, December 2002), p.9.

⁷² SportScotland, “Our Activities.” [online]. [cited December 2005].

In order to achieve this vision and targets, SportScotland’s structure includes three delivery arms: widening opportunities; developing potential; and achieving excellence.

Australia

The Australian story is slightly different. The pivotal message that prompted the country to increase its support for high performance sport was a failure rather than a success. Australia’s poor performance at the Montreal Olympics in 1976, and the subsequent media coverage, prompted the government to establish the Australian Institute for Sport (AIS) in 1981. A few years later, in 1987, the government established the Australian Sports Commission (ASC)—the agency responsible for general sports participation and high performance sport. The AIS merged with the ASC.

“With its meagre five medals of the total of 613 awarded, Australia could manage only a 32nd place in the final medal standing. This low ranking insulted national pride.”

Source: J. Bloomfield, *Australia’s Sporting Success: the Inside Story* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 45.

Since that time, the Australian government has published several sport policy documents concerning sports participation and high performance sport. *Shaping Up* (1999) is the government’s white paper on the future of Australian sport. This white paper was produced by a task force appointed by the Minister for Sport and Tourism. The review examined the effectiveness of strategies, roles and responsibilities of the key agencies involved in delivering sport and recreation. Its purpose was to contribute to the development of the government’s sport and recreation policy for the new millennium. During the review, the task force met with, or received submissions from, more than

www.sportscotland.org.uk/ChannelNavigation/Our+activities/TopicNavigation/Sport+21.

130 organizations. One of the recommendations made in the white paper was that the level of funding for high performance sport be maintained at current levels.⁷³

Other inquiries into sport during this time included:

- the Australian Sports Commission's internal review entitled *Beyond 2000*, which identifies areas where the ASC can make improvements in the national sports system;
- the National Elite Sports Council's inquiry into the organization and delivery of funding to elite sport after the 2000 Olympics; and
- the Department of Industry, Science and Resources discussion paper, *End Goal 2006*, which sets forth an action agenda for the sport and recreation industry.

In 2001, shortly after the release of the white paper, the government published its sports strategy, *Backing Australia's Sporting Ability: A More Active Australia*. The strategy included an explicit statement that "a more active Australia will be built upon continued achievement in high performance sport."⁷⁴ The strategy outlines goals, actions and funding to ensure Australian athletes have the systems and resources they need to succeed.

⁷³ Sport 2000 Task Force, *Shaping Up: A Review of Commonwealth Involvement in Sport and Recreation in Australia* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1999).

⁷⁴ Prime Minister's Office and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Backing Australia's Sporting Ability: A More Active Australia* (Canberra: Prime Minister's Office and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, April 2001), p. 2–3.

"The Backing Australia's Sporting Ability package includes an additional allocation of \$122.2 million over four years for Australian athletes—taking Federal Government funding for high performance sport to an unprecedented level."

Source: Prime Minister's Office and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Backing Australia's Sporting Ability: A More Active Australia* (Canberra: Prime Minister's Office and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, April 2001), p. 4–5.

New Zealand

New Zealand is another country that emphasizes the importance of sport and physical activity. Over the past 20 years, the government has commissioned or published several reports on this topic, including:

- *Sport on the Move* (1985);
- *Recreation and Government in New Zealand* (1985);
- *The Winning Way* (1995);
- *Sporting Directions 2010* (2000);
- *Getting Set for an Active Nation* (2001); and
- *Our Vision, Our Direction* (2002).

These papers have led to the current organizational structure and funding to deliver services and resources to elite athletes. For instance, in June 2000 a Ministerial Taskforce on Sport, Fitness and Leisure was established. This task force was asked to define a vision for sport, fitness and leisure for the next 25 years. In order to meet this objective, the task force invited submissions from interested organizations and individuals. It also arranged consultations and meetings with key stakeholders. The process resulted in 365 submissions and more than 170 meetings.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Sport, Fitness and Leisure Ministerial Taskforce, *Getting Set for an Active Nation* (Auckland: Ministerial Taskforce, January 2001), p. 15.

In January 2001, the task force published *Getting Set for an Active Nation*, its vision for New Zealand's sporting future. Following the release of this document, the government made three key announcements. The first was that it would increase funding to the Sport, Fitness and Leisure sector by nearly \$100 million over the next five years to implement recommendations made in the task force report.⁷⁶ The second announcement was a commitment of NZ\$16 million for high performance sport.⁷⁷ The third was that a new recreation and sport agency would be created to deliver the government's vision for a more healthy and active nation.⁷⁸ The following year a crown entity was formed, Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC), to bring together policy, strategy development and delivery of sports and recreation in New Zealand.

Canada

Canada's progress toward a national sports policy has emerged on a similar timeline to New Zealand and Australian initiatives. It can trace its roots back to a 1988 report by the Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport. The report, entitled *Toward 2000: Building Canada's Sport System*, recommended assisting the National Sports Organizations (NSOs) in strengthening Canada's integrated sports system. With regard to high performance sport it

recommended adding to the high performance centres concept.⁷⁹

Sport: the Way Ahead was published in 1992 by the same ministry. The report itemized Canada's policy view on many elements of sport, from bilingualism to volunteerism. It proposed a vision of a high performance system, listing recommendations on everything from coaches to support services⁸⁰. In 1998, a report was prepared by the Sub-Committee on the Study of Sport in Canada.⁸¹ Entitled *Sport in Canada: Everybody's Business*, this report identified the need for stronger leadership, partnership and accountability. Included in the recommendations was the need for greater intergovernmental consultation, co-operation and partnership.⁸²

The next important step came in May 2000, when the Government of Canada followed up on the recommendations contained in the 1998 report and initiated a national sport consultation process. It consisted of six regional sport conferences across Canada, as well as roundtables with key stakeholder groups including athletes, officials, Aboriginal peoples, national sport organizations, multi-sport organizations and national media representatives. This process culminated in a discussion paper entitled *Building Canada Through Sport: Towards a Canadian Sport Policy*.

This discussion paper served as the basis for constructing a National Summit on Sport

⁷⁶ New Zealand Government Executive's Press Release, *\$100 Million Funding Increase for Sport, Fitness and Leisure* (Auckland: Executive Government, May 2001).
www.executive.govt.nz/speech.cfm?speechralf=34746&SR=0.

⁷⁷ New Zealand Government, *Launch of SPARC* (Auckland: NZ Government, June 2002).
www.beehive.govt.nz.

⁷⁸ New Zealand Government Executive's Press Release, *Bill Introduces New Sport Agency* (Auckland: Executive Government, May 2001).
www.executive.govt.nz/speech.cfm?speechralf=34004&SR=0.

⁷⁹ Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, *Toward 2000: Building Canada's Sport System* (Ottawa: Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, August 1988).

⁸⁰ Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, *Sport: The Way Ahead* (Ottawa: Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, May 1992).

⁸¹ This sub-committee was established in 1997 by the House of Commons Tanding Committee on Canadian Heritage.

⁸² Dennis Mills, *Sport in Canada: Everybody's Business* (Ottawa: Parliament of Canada, December 1998), p. 1.

in April 2001. The objective of the summit was to discuss and identify strategies and actions that could form the core of Canada's first sport policy. During the summit, a survey was distributed to delegates that included questions about high performance sport. Significantly, fully 86 per cent of respondents supported the idea of setting targets for participation and excellence. However, there was no consensus as to the types of targets that should be used. In addition, respondents were not overwhelmingly supportive of the idea that government contributions should be tied to the achievement of performance targets in sport.

One year later, in May 2002, the Government of Canada's Department of Canadian Heritage and its provincial counterparts released *The Canadian Sport Policy*. The vision of this policy incorporates all levels of sport, including high performance sport "to have, by 2012 a dynamic and leading-edge sport environment that enables all Canadians to experience and enjoy involvement in sport to the extent of their abilities and interests and, for increasing numbers, to perform consistently and successfully at the highest competitive levels."⁸³ As well, one of the four overarching goals is "enhanced excellence," which includes a commitment by the federal-provincial/territorial governments to setting performance targets for major games.⁸⁴ Given the lack of consensus around the specific performance targets, and only moderate support for linking funding to achieving performance targets, it is not surprising that the 2002 policy does not set out clear, measurable performance targets.

Since the release of this policy paper, Canada's sports system has experienced greater intergovernmental policy and program harmonization, increased funding levels for sport, and further adoption by the sporting community of policy to engage with governments. For example, the Government of Canada has increased annual funding for sport to an historical high of \$143.4 million annually. Provincial governments have also increased their funding for sport. To be of real benefit, the increased funding will need to be continued over time. This increased spending will likely lead to increased scrutiny. More defensible data is needed to support this funding. The investments will take time, however, to bear fruit. We await results on how the increased funding is benefiting high performance sport, and how, in turn, this has benefited Canada at large.

In January, The Canadian Olympic Committee released *Own the Podium*, a challenge to all governments and citizens to renew Canada's commitment to its high performance system. Its stated ambition is for Canada to be the top medal nation at the Vancouver Games. To do this, the report says, Canada will need to win 35 medals, up considerably from the 17 it attained at Salt Lake City in 2002. The report also calls for an increase of \$21 million in annual funding in order to finance the performance objectives.⁸⁵

The Canadian Sport Policy is now being implemented through several initiatives that are defined within the policy's newly created Evaluation Framework and Performance Management Strategy (2005).⁸⁶ Within the Canadian Sport Policy's framework, the Excellence Policy Logic Model is defined. It sets out activities, outputs, and short-, mid-

⁸³ Department of Canadian Heritage, "The Canadian Sport Policy." [online]. [cited December 2005]. www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/pol/pcs-csp/index_e.cfm.

⁸⁴ Department of Canadian Heritage, *The Canadian Sport Policy* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, May 2002), p. 17.

⁸⁵ C.P. Allinger and T. Allinger, *Own the Podium—2010* (Toronto: Canadian Olympic Committee, January 2005).

⁸⁶ FPTSC Work Group 8 with Harry Cummings and Associates Inc., *Canadian Sport Policy: Evaluation Framework and Performance Management Strategy* (April 2005).

and long-term outcomes. The ultimate goal of the Excellence Policy Logic Model is stated as a vision for future accomplishment: “The pool of talented athletes has expanded and Canadian athletes are systematically achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition through fair and ethical means.”

Conclusions

1. There is limited empirical evidence, especially quantitative evidence, to support anecdotal claims that high performance sport offers a package of benefits that includes building national pride, enhancing cultural awareness, encouraging healthy behaviours and stimulating Canada's economic performance.
2. Public opinion surveys clearly link high performance in sport to stronger national pride in Canadians. Results from a recent survey that asked "Who is the 'greatest Canadian?'" reinforce the importance of sporting figures to Canadians. When Canadians were asked to name the greatest Canadian, three sports figures made it into the top 10, and no fewer than 20 figured in the top 100. Three of these were Olympic competitors, arguably the ultimate high performance athletes.
3. Canada is a nation of immigrants, and sport provides a venue to demonstrate our diverse ethnic background. Some of our most prominent elite athletes, such as Donovan Bailey, are members of visible minority and immigrant populations. However, many minority groups, such as francophones, are statistically under-represented at the elite level. Government funders and other stakeholders may want to put more effort into ensuring high performance sport opportunities are available to all Canadians.
4. The capacity of high performance sport to encourage healthy behaviour in Canadians is sometimes cited in the literature. These citations are mainly based on anecdotal evidence and by people's perceptions. However, the relationship between high performance sport and health has not been examined using independently quantified evidence of impacts, such as increased participation in sport, reduction in average weight, or corresponding benefits (such as reductions in health care deliver costs due to a trickle-down effect).
5. Most of the research focuses on the economic benefits of hosting major sports events—for example, increased tourism, employment, and national and international investment. Hosting, although important, is only one dimension of a much larger economic picture.
6. More empirical research needs to be conducted that moves beyond hosting to understand the economic impacts of high performance sport such as employment and revenues generated from associated products and services.
7. Three common themes underpin most messages emerging from our analysis of other countries' communications strategies—economic benefits of hosting, national pride and identity, and social/cultural values. The economic analysis provides the most quantitative methodology; most countries use some type of economic modelling to support their findings. Public opinion surveys are another common method for supporting claims about national pride and social/cultural values. Again, most of the messages rely on findings that are qualitative, or that focus on hosting or sport in general.
8. Compared with professional sport, the business operations of high performance sport are subject to infrequent and sometimes sporadic revenue streams. Yet athletes, to compete successfully at the highest

level, require constant, regular financial assistance which is not always possible given sporadic revenues. To overcome these financial challenges, high performance sport requires external funding from government, industry and individuals.

9. Currently, Canada's governments are not funding high performance athletes and facilities to the level found in top-performing countries. Past experience indicates that additional funding will be needed in order to achieve a high level of sporting success as measured by medals won on the international Olympic stage and at other major international venues.
10. Communicating the exact nature of the benefits of high performance sport to the right audiences in government and business is vital to gaining funding. Other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand, have a relatively centralized sports structure compared to Canada's. Their centralized structures provide more user-friendly communications delivery. Interested stakeholders are able to access information on high performance sport at a central location. Coordinated, if not centralized, communications are one key to building support for further investment.

Future Directions

The findings from this literature suggest future directions for government action. We present them with a cautionary note: we must emphasize that these suggestions are not based on an extensive body of original data or evidence; further empirical research may well alter the form or emphasis of the recommendations below.

High performance sport, as a means to achieve wider social and economic goals such as national pride and identity, national branding and economic performance, has been studied in some fashion for decades. Over the years, reports and government documents have made claims for sport that are not always supported by hard empirical evidence. This evidence is becoming more necessary for Canada's governments, as the principal funders of high performance sport, to justify their current or heightened investment.

The problem has been compounded by communications issues. In the absence of a large-scale communications strategy to share information about the impacts, benefits and costs of high performance sport, there has been little concerted pressure for substantial change to the system. For this to change, key messages based on robust research will need to be communicated systematically and effectively to government policy-makers and funders, corporate sponsors and the general public in order to build interest and encourage support.

Some actions could be undertaken by governments in the short- to medium-term that would help build interest and generate a broader, shared understanding among stakeholders. At the same time, more substantial, robust research on the benefits and costs of investment, and international comparisons of support for athletes and the high performance system in general, would

create deeper understanding and add powerfully to the medium- to long-term prospects for national engagement.

In the short to medium term, government should consider doing the following:

1. Fund research to gain a stronger empirical basis for setting policy directions and identifying program priorities.

There are still many gaps in the research as to the impact of high performance sport in many key areas, including economic development, tourism, and health. Further research could shed light on the long-term benefits of high performance programs and present them in a holistic manner. Findings that support the relationship would strengthen the likelihood of a consistent stream of government funding in the future.

2. Create a more unified voice for message delivery in Canada.

Currently, the messages about high performance sport that are being delivered to the Canadian public and the sporting community are competing with many other voices. There needs to be a clearer delivery of high performance information in Canada.

3. Provide a "one-stop" online location for information on high performance sport in Canada.

Currently, there many voices to be heard and many avenues in which to hear them. High performance sport should have a specifically designed media to deliver information. This single delivery mechanism does not mean that

there needs to be a single voice, but all voices should have a common forum.

4. Create a new source of information specifically about high performance sport.

Create a magazine or newsletter that highlights high performance sport achievements by Canadian teams, athletes, coaches and others. Feature the broader benefits of high performance sport, such as improvements in health treatments, new training equipment and other products and services. This publication should be released regularly, perhaps quarterly. It should highlight the achievements in the area of high performance sport by Canadian athletes.

5. Identify clear performance targets in frameworks and plans under Canada's Sports Policy and establish metrics to measure them.

Performance targets, clearly identified and linked to funding, and metrics that are widely accepted as accurate measures of performance in achieving the targets, will provide athletes and the public with a way to understand whether or not we are on track to succeed. A clear, concise, reader-friendly document that underlines the performance targets, sports programs, policies and specific goals could be prepared. It could also highlight the amount of funding going to the different sports and related bodies.

6. Create an annual or biannual independent review of the success of high performance sports programs.

In order for high performance sports programs to remain a valid public investment priority in the long term, there needs to be a system of checks and balances. This report, prepared every year or two, would measure the program's achievements against its

goals, and provide feedback to officials and the public. It would point out shortfalls and trumpet successes. For maximum credibility and impact, the annual review should be produced by an independent, neutral, third-party organization.