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Athlete Development and Support

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Athletes play an important role in any sport system. Athlete development and excellence in international competitions have been central to Canada's sport system for many years (cf. Macintosh, 1996; Macintosh, Bedecki, & Franks, 1987; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990). As so aptly noted by the leaders of AthletesCAN, an organization created for athletes by athletes, "athletes are the *raison d'être* of the sport system," and as such "it is critical that the sport experience be positive for athletes" (AthletesCAN, 1994, p. 3). In fact, the concept of an athlete-centred/participant-centred sport system has been raised as an important principle for Canadian sport. For example, the original *Canadian Sport Policy* (CSP) called for a system where "athletes/participants . . . are the primary focus in the development of policies, programs, and procedures. Athletes/participants [should be] involved throughout the system in decisions that directly relate to them" (Sport Canada, 2002, p. 13). In the 2012 CSP, athletes and sport participants are identified along with a number of other stakeholders involved in Canada's sport system. In addition to athletes and participants, stakeholders include "coaches, officials, administrators, leaders, educators, sponsors, organizers, spectators and parents" (Sport Canada, 2012b, p. 5). As well, the policy framework for the 2012 CSP (outlined in Figure 1.2), clearly identifies a number of key areas that need to be considered in all aspects of Canada's sport system.

Effective stakeholder management practices encourage parties to communicate, negotiate and engage in dialogue in managing the relationship (Freeman, 2004). The key stakeholders in the Canadian sport system have varied priorities, unique interests, values, needs and expectations. In this chapter, we discuss the key stakeholders involved in developing and supporting Canadian athletes throughout their sport careers. These stakeholders include provincial and national sport organizations (PSOs and NSOs), federal and provincial governments, the Canadian Olympic Committee and other national multi-sport and multi-service organizations (e.g., AthletesCAN, Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, Coaching Association of Canada), corporate partners, coaches, officials and the athletes themselves. We discuss the key role of athlete stakeholders in this system and the need for their representation in decision making on issues that affect them. As stakeholder theory suggests, it is prudent to engage, prioritize and understand the needs, interests, and power and influence of the constituents affecting and affected by the policies and operations of an organization or system (Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2004). This chapter tracks and traces the evolution of the interests, legitimacy and power of various entities involved in supporting and developing athletes involved in high performance sport in Canada. The emphasis on collaboration in the *Canadian Sport Policy* (Sport Canada, 2012b) encourages the consideration of the power, legitimacy and urgency (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997) of the key stakeholders upholding this system.

In the *Canadian Sport Policy*, the importance of strengthening “co-ordination and communication among governments and key stakeholders; athlete support, coaching and technical leadership; research and innovation in training methods and equipment design; the development of qualified and ethical officials; and athlete talent identification, recruitment and development” is emphasized (Sport Canada, 2012b, p. 12). The policy document calls for “partnerships between and among sport organizations, municipalities/local governments, and educational institutions [to] align and leverage athlete, coach, and officials’ development (Sport Canada, 2012b, p. 13). The purpose of this chapter is to examine programs and services that have been developed for athletes in Canada’s sport system over the past 15 years. Although the focus is predominantly on federal government and national initiatives, we also examine programs and services in various areas of the country aimed at assisting

and supporting athletes and their development. For the purposes of this chapter, we cover three areas: 1) athlete development programs, 2) athlete funding programs, and 3) athlete advocacy and representation.

Athlete Development Programs

Several programs have been created to assist in the development of Canadian sport participants and athletes. In the following section, we examine programs and initiatives that are being implemented at the national level to contribute to participants and athletes' development. It is important to note that national, provincial and local sport organizations have programs and services available to participants and athletes to assist them in developing various sport-specific skills and to provide them with participation and competition opportunities. In addition to these sport-specific programs and services, there are generic sport programs developed by various organizations. These programs include Canadian Sport for Life, Canadian sport centres/institutes and Own the Podium, and are explained in the following paragraphs.

Canadian Sport for Life

The first such program is a relatively new initiative developed by members of the Canadian Sport Centres (Canadian Sport Centres, 2005). It is called Canadian Sport for Life and is also known as the Long-Term Athlete Development Model.¹ The Canadian Sport for Life initiative (including No Accidental Champions for athletes with a disability) is:

a seven-stage Canadian model of Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD), a training, competition and recovery program based on developmental age—the maturation level of an individual—rather than chronological age. It is athlete-centred, coach driven, and administration, sport science and sponsor supported. (Canadian Sport Centres, 2005, p. 7)

Canadian Sport for Life focuses on a progression from early initiation to sport skills and sport activities, to competitive opportunities and finally to high performance sport and/or to active for life initiatives. Initial stages of Canadian Sport for Life involve the development of

physical literacy among youth and ensuring children are initiated to age-appropriate skills so they can enjoy their sport experience and achieve their potential in sport participation and competition. With more children and youth initiated to sport skills, instructors and coaches can draw a larger base from which to identify talent for better regional, national and international competition. As well, a healthier introduction to acquiring sport skills may decrease dropout rates, improve safety and encourage life-long participation in sport (Canadian Sport Centres, 2005).

Stages one through three focus on the fundamental skills required to participate in sport. These stages include: *Active Start*, *Fundamentals*, and *Learn to Train*. For up-and-coming high performance athletes and for new athletes, the Canadian Sport for Life's stages four, five, and six are particularly relevant. In stage four, *Train to Train*, athletes are "ready to consolidate their basic sport-specific skills and tactics" (Canadian Sport for Life, 2009b, paragraph 1). During this stage, athletes must focus on training in order to perfect skills and develop physically. In stage five, *Train to Compete*, athletes are now ready to specialize into one sport and be introduced to competition. It is at this stage that "high volume and high intensity training begins to occur year-round" (Canadian Sport for Life, 2009a, paragraph 1). By stage six, *Train to Win*, athletes have reached the elite level and are involved in intensive training "suitable for international winning performances" (Canadian Sport for Life, 2009c, paragraph 1). The final stage, *Active for Life*, targets the entire population and encourages all Canadians to be active in sport as participants, as coaches and/or as officials (Canadian Sport Centres, 2005).

Additional details of the role Canadian Sport for Life/LTAD plays in high performance sport are provided in the previous chapter (Chapter IV). As evident in the 2012 CSP, the stages of the Canadian Sport for Life model are infused throughout four of the five policy goals (i.e., Introduction to Sport, Recreational Sport, Competitive Sport and High Performance Sport) (Sport Canada, 2012b).

While Canadian Sport for Life prepares athletes for competition from the playground to the podium, there are other programs that focus exclusively on supporting and perfecting the skills and performance of our top Canadian athletes. Two such programs, Canadian sport centres/institutes (CSCs/CSIs) and Own the Podium (OTP), are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Canadian Sport Centres/Institutes²

CSCs are training centres for high performance athletes. The CSCs were founded as a partnership between three organizations: Sport Canada, Canadian Olympic Committee and the Coaching Association of Canada (Babiak, 2007; Canadian Heritage, 2010a). Collectively, these founding partners work together with provincial governments and other local partners to ensure that athletes train in an environment that is conducive to perfecting their skills. As part of their mandate, the CSCs “support the achievement of high performance athletes ... [through] an enriched training environment in key locations across the country” (Canadian Heritage, 2010a, paragraph 2). In total, there are three CSCs and four CSIs. Calgary was the first centre and was established in 1994. Others locations include Montreal, Ontario (Toronto), Manitoba (Winnipeg), Saskatchewan (Regina and Saskatoon), Atlantic Canada (based in Halifax with some support in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, and St. John’s, Newfoundland) and Pacific (Vancouver, Victoria, and Whistler) (Canadian Heritage, 2010a). Recently, four CSCs (Calgary, Ontario, Pacific, and Quebec) were reorganized as Canadian Sport Institutes. This change to Canadian sport institutes has led to “a shift from [an exclusive] service-based model . . . to establish[ing] or exploring plans for the building and construction of sport facilities” to better serve high performance athletes (CSI Pacific, 2012, paragraph 3). In order to have the ‘Institute’ designation, the organizations must meet a number of criteria, among them “dedicated sport and related training areas, world-leading performance staff and a critical mass of high performance athletes and coaches to develop an environment of excellence” (Own the Podium, 2009a, paragraph 2).

Within these centres/institutes, athletes can access a number of different services that support their quest towards success in international competitions. These include services related to living (i.e., life services) and services related to training and competition (i.e., performance services). Life services consist of assistance with everyday activities such as finding accommodations for athletes who are relocating to the ‘Centres/Institutes’ location for training purposes, seeking affordable travel to/from training facilities, providing academic support, finding part-time work or transitioning from being a full-time athlete to undertaking a career. Performance services include strength and conditioning and access to services

from the following experts: dietitians, nutritionists, sport psychologists, physiotherapists, massage therapists, physicians specializing in sport medicine and exercise specialists (e.g., physiologists, biomechanists). Centres/institutes may have facilities where athletes can access most services in one central location and/or may operate in a decentralized fashion where leaders of the centres/institutes broker a wide-ranging gamut of programs and services for their athletes. As such, centres/institutes may provide a combination of centralized and decentralized service delivery options. During an announcement of increased funds invested in the Canadian Sport Institute—Pacific (i.e., British Columbia), a ski-cross national team member, Davey Barr, explained “just the access we have is amazing, to be able to come in here at any time and not have to fight for machines [for weight training] with the general public like I have been for a while ... It just makes it a lot easier to really focus on what you need to get done” (as cited in Kingston, 2010, p. C4). The level of funding invested in Canadian sport centres/institutes by Sport Canada over a period of 12 years is shown in Table 5.1.

Own the Podium

As addressed in the previous chapter (Chapter IV), Own the Podium (OTP) was created in 2005 to provide targeted investments in winter athletes and sport organizations to enhance podium success at the Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. A parallel program targeting summer sports called Road to Excellence was subsequently initiated in 2006. Although Own the Podium and Road to Excellence have been operating jointly under the name Podium Canada since 2006, it was not until 2009 that a realignment of operations led to both initiatives being officially subsumed under the Own the Podium initiative (Own the Podium, 2009b). As stated in its mandate, OTP “is a national sport technical initiative” to enhance Canada’s rank in Olympic and Paralympic Games (summer and winter) (Own the Podium, 2010a, paragraph 12). In other words, OTP is about devising strategies and investing in athletes and sports to maximize the number of medals at Olympic and Paralympic Games. The OTP program ties this objective to the goal of ‘enhancing excellence’ identified in the *Canadian Sport Policy*. Its funding originates from Sport Canada, from the Canadian Olympic Committee and from corporate partners.

For many athletes, Own the Podium represents an important source of training and competition support to assist them in reaching podium results in international competitions. In its structure, OTP does not provide this assistance to all national team athletes. The targeted athletes are specifically selected because of their potential to achieve medal results in high-profile international sport events (i.e., Olympic and Paralympic Games). In 2012–2013, for example, OTP supported athletes, teams and organizations dividing its pool of funds (i.e., CA\$ 21.7M) allotted to winter sports (Own the Podium, 2013b). The athletes, teams and organizations from summer sports shared a total of CA\$ 33.7M (Own the Podium, 2013a). As one of their ‘pillars of excellence,’ OTP has the following goal for athlete and team excellence:

a sufficient number of highly-motivated athletes are training and competing without compromise, and are led by world-class coaches and support teams. Canadian athletes have the best equipment, information, competitive opportunities and innovative training practices of any country leading to the achievement of their performance goals. (Own the Podium, 2010b, paragraph 4)

OTP funding for the quadrennial period leading up to the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games consisted of CA\$ 97.5M (Own the Podium, 2009d). This funding was earmarked for NSO Olympic and Paralympic winter sports, for Canadian Sport Centres and for OTP operations (Own the Podium, 2009d). For summer sports, OTP funding for the quadrennial period leading up to the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games consisted of CA\$ 59.2M (Own the Podium, 2009c).

Although OTP has helped a number of athletes achieve success in international sport events, it has been the object of several criticisms. For example, Donnelly (2010a, p. 44) argued that the program “represents a particularly narrow strategy based on an extraordinarily narrow definition of success”—medals. In an assessment of Own the Podium’s success following the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games, Donnelly (2010b) explained that even though Canada collected 14 gold medals at the Games, they won only two medals more than the previous Games in Torino in 2006, and our position in the rankings behind Germany and the United

States did not change. Furthermore, Donnelly (2010b, p. 85) noted that:

all of the athletes who won medals in Vancouver were expected to do so; so there were no surprises. Failing to spread the wealth, and creating two classes of athletes, may have discouraged some of the team from believing that they could win. A renewed funding program should support as many athletes as possible.

Along similar lines, Brean (2010) reported on the concerns of Roger Jackson, former Chief Executive Officer of Own the Podium—referring specifically to the program’s timing relative to the Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Jackson explained the program “did not have enough time to guide a solid amateur up to international level . . . and so the spending was focused on athletes who were already ‘in the system’, and especially in sports with an already deep talent pool, such as curling and hockey” (Brean, 2010, paragraph 21).

With renewed funding from Sport Canada announced in 2010 for OTP, the strategy of identifying athletes on the cusp of international success and providing them with the best technical and coaching support to achieve their goals may lead to an increase in the number of medals won in Olympic and Paralympic Games and other international events (Canadian Heritage, 2010b). We now turn our attention to another important element tied to the success of high performance athletes in international competitions—their financial support.

Athlete Funding Programs

In Canada, high performance athletes have been able to access a number of funding sources to assist in their training, competition and living expenses. Some of these sources have also helped them cover expenses beyond their sport (i.e., education, living). In the following section, we review a number of programs developed to financially support athletes’ efforts in achieving international success. This financial support originates from traditional sources (e.g., federal and provincial governments, Canadian Olympic Committee, NSOs) and from non-traditional sources (e.g., charitable organizations, corporate sponsors).

In Canada, funding initiatives for athletes started in 1970–1971 with a student athlete Grants-in-Aid program. The program was devised for athletes at the national or international level who were also full-time students. At the time, national-calibre athletes received CA\$ 1,000 per year while international-calibre athletes received CA\$ 2,000 per year (Health and Welfare Canada, 1972; Macintosh et al., 1987). In 1971, another funding program called Intensive Care was initiated to help fund a few athletes with the greatest potential to win medals at the 1972 Summer and Winter Olympic Games (Beamish & Borowy, 1987, 1988; Macintosh et al., 1987; Macintosh, 1996). At the time, Sport Canada and provincial governments provided the funding for Intensive Care '72. In preparation for the upcoming Olympic Games in 1976 in Montreal, a more concerted effort took place to fund athletes. The Canadian Olympic Association,³ with subsequent financial support from the federal government, NSOs and some provincial governments (i.e., Ontario and Quebec), provided the funds for a new athlete funding initiative called Game Plan '76 (Beamish & Borowy, 1987, 1988). This program funded international-calibre athletes. Game Plan '76 would eventually become the responsibility of Sport Canada following the 1976 Olympic Games (Macintosh et al., 1987). During this time, in addition to Game Plan '76, other programs were also developed to financially assist athletes—Lost Time Payments (compensation for lost income from training and competition) and Olympic Training Support. These two programs were developed by the Canadian Olympic Association and were based predominantly on the financial needs of athletes rather than on their athletic performances (Beamish & Borowy, 1987, 1988; Macintosh et al., 1987). In 1977, Sport Canada created the Athlete Assistance Program (Fitness and Amateur Sport, 1979). Then, both the Grants-in-Aid and Game Plan programs were eventually merged in 1979 and subsumed under the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) where Sport Canada would focus on the financial support of top athletes in Olympic and non-Olympic sports (Fitness and Amateur Sport, 1979; Macintosh et al., 1987). In the following section, we review the AAP and other programs currently offered to support athletes financially.

Federal Government Funding—Athlete Assistance Program

The most common source of funding for high performance athletes in Canada originates from federal and provincial governments.

As discussed in the previous paragraph, the federal government funds high performance athletes through the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP). Athletes who are approved for funding and are financially supported through the AAP are referred to as ‘carded’ athletes. The Athlete Assistance Program:

identifies and provides funding directly to athletes who have already placed, or demonstrate the potential to place in the top 16 in the world. The AAP recognizes the commitment that athletes make to the National Team training and competitive programs provided by their NSO and seeks to relieve some of the financial pressures associated with preparing for, and participating in international sport. (Sport Canada, 2012a, p. 1–1)

In the 2011–2012 budget, nearly CA\$ 27M was allocated for the AAP (Sport Canada, 2012c). Table 5.1 outlines the level of funding invested in the AAP by Sport Canada. As well, the percentage allocated to

Table 5.1 Sport Canada Funding to Athletes and Canadian Sport Centres/Institutes from 2000–2012 (CA\$)⁴

Year	Total Sport Canada Budget	Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) Funding	Portion to the AAP Program in %	Canadian Sport Centres Funding
1999–2000	\$ 52,895,586	\$ 9,010,000	17.03%	\$ 1,903,000
2000–2001	\$ 82,060,618	\$14,750,000	17.97%	\$ 3,003,000
2001–2002	\$ 97,553,404	\$15,117,854	15.50%	\$ 3,200,000
2002–2003	\$ 79,522,155	\$15,108,514	19.00%	\$ 3,200,000
2003–2004	\$ 89,500,000	\$15,200,000	17.00%	\$ 3,400,000
2004–2005	\$121,735,422	\$19,845,324	16.30%	\$ 7,448,000
2005–2006	\$133,241,616	\$24,800,000	18.61%	\$10,409,357
2006–2007	\$138,302,344	\$25,300,000	18.29%	\$ 7,033,722
2007–2008	\$136,558,878	\$25,345,868	18.56%	\$ 7,677,295
2008–2009	\$151,350,728	\$26,518,955	17.52%	\$ 8,173,022
2009–2010	\$160,113,348	\$26,426,161	16.50%	\$ 8,718,805
2010–2011	\$197,105,538	\$25,820,645	13.10%	\$15,217,803
2011–2012	\$198,908,005	\$26,913,932	13.53%	\$14,676,333
2012–2013	\$210,793,641	\$27,366,946	12.98%	\$15,614,796

high performance athletes relative to total Sport Canada contributions is presented.

More than 1,900 athletes participating in over 80 sport disciplines are funded through this program (Canadian Heritage, 2012; Sport Canada, 2012a). It is important to note that only athletes who participate in high performance sport programs that “are financially supported by Sport Canada following the successful completion of the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) process” receive funding (Sport Canada, 2012a). Since 2004, eligible high performance athletes receive CA\$ 1,500 per month (senior card) or CA\$ 900 per month (development card) based on their performance in international competition and the stage at which they are in their athletic career (Sport Canada, 2012a; Thibault & Babiak, 2005). The AAP also provides financial assistance for tuition support (“CA\$ 5,000 per carding cycle up to a lifetime maximum of CA\$ 25,000” (Sport Canada, 2012a, p. 8–1)) for athletes attending Canadian universities and/or colleges. In addition, special needs assistance is available (up to CA\$ 18,000 per carding cycle) (Canadian Heritage, 2012). Special needs include “excellence living and training allowance, excellence child dependent allowance, training and competition allowance for athletes with a disability, relocation assistance, child care assistance and retirement assistance” (Sport Canada, 2012a, p. 8–4). In a Government of Canada fact sheet, officials claim that since the inception of the program in 1977, over CA\$ 292M has benefited 10,556 athletes (Government of Canada, 2010).

On the topic of Sport Canada’s AAP funding, Peel (2010), a former high performance athlete and an advocate for athletes for many years, argued:

one of the greatest needs of athletes is access to adequate resources to support excellence. World-class Canadian athletes are eligible to benefit from the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) . . . The AAP provides a tax-free monthly stipend as well as various financial and training supports, including post-secondary tuition. This allocation is of great benefit to athletes, but is rarely adequate. (p. 29)

As a condition of receiving AAP funding, athletes must sign an agreement with their NSOs. This agreement “sets down in writing the rights, responsibilities and obligations of the athlete and the

NSO" (Sport Canada, 2012a). It specifically addresses various elements, among them:

- Benefits available to the carded athlete through his or her NSO;
- The NSO's obligations;
- The athlete's obligations, including a commitment to follow an agreed-upon training and competitive program;
- Any other commitments to the NSO that the carded athlete is required to make (for instance, time, promotional activities or financial commitments);
- The agreement's duration (not to exceed one carding year). Specific Sport Canada and NSO policies the carded athlete must abide by, including the following:
 - The Canadian Policy Against Doping in Sport in effect;
 - The Canadian Anti-Doping Program;
 - The NSO's anti-doping policy;
 - AAP policies and procedures;
 - Federal government sport policy regarding competitions where participation is not permitted; and
 - Completion of the AAP anti-doping education module as requested and available on the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport website.
- The hearing and appeal procedure that will be used in any dispute between the carded athlete and the NSO;
- Details, if applicable, of the carded athlete's trust fund;
- The lead time for the publication of the NSO approved AAP compliant carding criteria. (Sport Canada, 2012a, p. 7–1)

According to Peel (2010, p. 29), these agreements "restrict athletes' abilities to determine their own paths by requiring athletes to attend predetermined competitions and training camps." As well, "the agreements usually include giving up the intellectual property in his or her image for the benefit of the NSO" (Peel, 2010, p. 29). On this topic of athlete/NSO agreements, Findlay and Ward (2006) noted:

The main vehicle for establishing relations between athletes and their national sport organizations (NSOs) has been the athlete agreement. These agreements originated over two decades ago as a way to formalize the terms and conditions of the

government-funded athlete assistance program (AAP), which provided modest stipends to athletes to offset training costs. These agreements specified the respective obligations of the carded athlete and his or her sport organization and addressed details such as conduct, doping and training commitments, and largely followed a standard template. More recently . . . these standard agreements have begun to morph into full-fledged commercial contracts of 60 to 70 pages. Thus added to the basic athlete agreement is now a commercial transaction between the athlete and the sport organization over the athlete's image rights. In many cases, these agreements have called upon athletes to relinquish these rights to the sport organization, while in other cases the parties have achieved a delicate balancing act between the right of the athlete to exploit his or her image, and the right of the sport organization to derive its own commercial benefit to offset the costs it incurs providing programs for athletes. (paragraphs 4–5)

Setting aside the issue of athlete/NSO agreements, the AAP has received both praise and criticism from the athletes. As outlined in the 2009 *Status of the High Performance Athlete* report, most athletes (80%) “agree that the AAP has made it possible to achieve higher levels of athletic performance” (Ekos Research Associates, 2010, p. 55). In fact, the largest proportion of athletes' annual income originated from the AAP at an average amount of CA\$ 12,136 (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). Several athletes surveyed (50%) however, felt that the funds received from the AAP were insufficient and 47% believed that AAP funding came too late in their athletic career (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). As outlined in this report, Sport Canada's AAP is one of many sources of direct funding to high performance athletes. In the following paragraphs, other sources of direct funding for athletes are presented.

Provincial Government Funding

The AAP has been replicated in most provincial and territorial governments. Several provincial and territorial governments developed funding programs for their own athletes. These provincial/territorial athlete assistance programs vary extensively in the level of funding and the selection criteria for athletes to receive funding. In some provinces, lottery funds are used to support athletes (e.g., British

Columbia Athlete Assistance Program; Nova Scotia Sport4Support program; Quest for Gold—Ontario Athlete Assistance Program; Saskatchewan Future Best; Northwest Territories High Performance Athlete Grant Program).

As an example, the Quest for Gold—Ontario Athlete Assistance Program provides financial assistance to Ontario athletes to encourage them to stay and train in the province. The program offers two different funding cards: the Canada Card and the Ontario Card. Canada Cards provide ‘top up’ for Ontario athletes who already receive funding from Sport Canada’s AAP. Athletes in this category receive CA\$ 6,000/year (Sport Canada’s AAP Senior Card) or CA\$ 3,600 per year (Sport Canada’s AAP Development Card). The Ontario Cards target junior athletes who are identified as individuals likely to achieve national level competition. These junior athletes may receive full funding at CA\$ 7,106 per year or half-funding, CA\$ 3,553 per year. In the 2011–2012 fiscal year, a total of 1,229 athletes from 51 sports were funded through the Ontario funding program (Cooper, 2012, personal communication, October 22, 2012; Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion, 2009). In another example, New Brunswick’s Athlete Assistance Program provides five different tiers of funding (ranging from CA\$ 500 to CA\$ 6,000) (Government of New Brunswick, 2012a, 2012b). In 2012, 88 athletes from New Brunswick received funding from this program (Government of New Brunswick, 2012b). For the Northwest Territories High Performance Athlete Grant Program, there are three levels of funding, gold, silver, and bronze. For the gold level, athletes may receive up to CA\$ 15,000 per year in funding assistance. For the silver level, funding support is up to CA\$ 10,000 per year and for the bronze level, athletes may receive up to CA\$ 5,000 per year. In the 2011–2012 fiscal year, a total of 34 NWT athletes received funding (Government of Northwest Territories, 2009, 2011). In the 2009 Status of the High Performance Athlete report, average yearly funds received by athletes from provincial government sources were CA\$ 3,490—an amount considerably inferior to Sport Canada’s AAP at CA\$ 12,136 (Ekos Research Associates, 2010).

Canadian Olympic Committee—Athlete Excellence Fund

In addition to Sport Canada’s AAP and provincial government athlete assistance programs, athletes may also obtain funding from the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC). In 2007, the COC announced

its Athlete Excellence Fund (Canwest News Service, 2007). The COC Athlete Excellence Fund is “an athlete support and reward program that . . . provide[s] Canadian athletes with performance awards of CA\$ 20,000, CA\$ 15,000 and CA\$ 10,000 for winning Olympic gold, silver or bronze medals. It . . . also provides funding of CA\$ 5,000 during non-Olympic years” to the top five Canadian athletes (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2010a, paragraph 1). For the first time, in 2008 the COC rewarded Canadian athletes who won medals at the Beijing Olympic Games. The COC allocated a total of CA\$ 515,000 to 34 medalists (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2010a). Following the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, the COC awarded CA\$ 1.7M to the athletes who collectively were responsible for Canada’s 26 medals at these Games (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2010a). Just prior to the 2012 London Olympic Games, the COC extended the Athlete Excellence Fund to financially reward the coaches of Olympic medalists. The program is entitled the Coaches Reward Program and provides CA\$ 10,000 to the coach of a gold medalist, CA\$ 7,500 to the coach of a silver medalist, and CA\$ 5,000 to the coach of a bronze medalist (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2012).

It is important to note that the COC Athlete Excellence Fund and the Coaches Reward Program apply only to Olympic athletes and their coaches. Paralympians and their coaches do not have the same opportunities for earning financial rewards for medals obtained at the Paralympic Games. This situation led to some discussion following the Beijing Games about the unequal treatment of Paralympians (Handfield, 2008). The Canadian Paralympic Committee argued that it simply did not have the funds to undertake a similar reward program for its medalists.

In addition to the Athlete Excellence Fund, the COC through its charitable arm, the Canadian Olympic Foundation (COF), generates funds to support high performance athletes across winter and summer Olympic sports. Among the COF’s most prominent fundraising initiatives, the Red Mitten campaign was launched in 2009 for the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games. In its first year, the Red Mitten campaign raised more than CA\$ 14M with sales exceeding 3.5 million pairs (Associated Press, 2011). Gold Medal Plates is another important fundraising event for the COF. Gold Medal Plates was created in 2003 as cross-Canada culinary competitions to celebrate “excellence in cuisine, wine, the arts and athletic achievement” (Gold Medal Plates, 2010, paragraph 1). These competitions

include the participation of top Canadian chefs, members of the wine industry, food critics, Olympic and Paralympic athletes, sport officials and media.

In the following paragraphs, we address two other sources of funding for athletes: the Canadian Athletes Now Fund and B2ten, two charitable organizations that financially support high performance athletes.

Canadian Athletes Now Fund

The Canadian Athletes Now Fund (CAN Fund)⁵ was created in 1997 by Jane Roos. The impetus for creating the CAN Fund was drawn largely from Roos's former role as heptathlete (Blatchford, 2010; Christie, 2009). When her athletic career ended, she decided to become a "fundraiser for financially struggling athletes on their Olympic [and Paralympic] journey" (Christie, 2009, p. S1). Since its inception, the CAN Fund has raised more than CA\$ 11M to assist hundreds of athletes with grants of CA\$ 6,000, which can be awarded up to twice a year (CAN Fund, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). As explained in their mission statement, CAN Fund is:

devoted solely to raising funds and awareness of our Canadian athletes . . . We provide our athletes with the opportunity to focus on success instead of focusing on unnecessary financial hurdles. Donations go directly to Canadian athletes so they can afford proper nutrition, better equipment, coaching, travel to competitions and training camps and basic living expenses. (CAN Fund, 2012b, paragraph 1)

On discussions of the CAN Fund, Peel (2010, p. 28) remarked that:

athletes flock to support Jane Roos's Canadian Athletes NOW Fund. Jane gives funds to aspiring Olympians and Paralympians, no strings attached. One of her major sources of revenue is from athlete donations (athletes supporting athletes). Jane has no bureaucracy and no systems to support. She trusts athletes to know what they need to succeed.

B2ten

B2ten was created in 2005 by Olympic athletes, Dominick Gauthier, Jennifer Heil and business executive J. D. Miller, as "a privately

funded, not for profit organization that supports Canadian elite athletes” (B2ten, 2010b, paragraph 1). The level of support includes financial resources, expertise, support services and technology to enhance athletes’ chances to succeed in international competitions (B2ten, 2010b). In a newspaper article praising the efforts of the business community’s involvement in supporting athletes, Starkman (2008, p. S1) wrote “the program provides services and goods to try to complement what already exists and generally recruits athletes who are on the cusp of an international breakthrough but might be short of resources.” In early 2010, B2ten was supporting 24 athletes, 20 of which were expected to compete in the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games (B2ten, 2010b); a total of 14 of these athletes medaled at these Games (B2ten, 2010a). In 2012, B2ten was supporting 37 athletes (23 athletes from summer sports and 14 from winter sports) (B2ten, 2012). While CAN Fund raises donations from individuals and corporate sources, B2ten is funded by private donors who believe that they can play an important role in the success of Canadian athletes by providing them with the means to reach their goals in international sport.

Other Funds

Other sources of funding for athletes include NSOs or other national organizations. For example, some NSOs provide funding support to their athletes (e.g., Canadian Ski Coaches Federation—Alpine Canada Alpin Athlete Bursary Fund; Alpine Canada Alpin Win 2010. ca; Dressage Canada Levy Program; Skate Canada’s Athlete Fund). The level of funding from NSOs is relatively low when compared to federal and provincial government sources. In fact, in the *2009 Status of the High Performance Athlete* report, athletes surveyed reported an average yearly income of CA\$ 843 from their NSOs (Ekos Research Associates, 2010).

In addition to NSOs’ athlete funding programs, a number of initiatives have been undertaken by corporate Canada to financially assist athletes. For example, Petro-Canada’s “FACE [Fuelling Athlete and Coaching Excellence]⁶ program provides 50 up-and-coming pre-carded athletes and coach pairings with an CA\$ 8,000 grant” to assist these athletes in their quest for success in high performance sport (Petro-Canada, 2013). Since 1988, FACE has provided over 2,300 athletes and coaches with financial support of over CA\$ 8M (Petro-Canada, 2013). Another example of funding support for athletes

by corporate Canada is the Investors Group and their Amateur Athlete Bursary Fund. Created in 2000, Investors Group collaborates with AthletesCAN to award 20 bursaries of CA\$ 5,000 each to top Canadian senior national team athletes. So far, Investors Group has provided more than CA\$ 1.3M to athletes since the beginning of the program (AthletesCAN, 2010b). Other examples of corporate programs funding Canadian athletes include RBC (Royal Bank Canada) Olympians Program, Rona Growing with Our Athletes, and Team Visa.

As a novel and alternative source of funding and fundraising opportunity, crowdfunding has recently gained popularity for anything from small businesses, events, or individuals with an idea who want financial support in launching their initiative. Crowdfunding is the collective co-operation of individuals who pool their money/resources via the Internet to support innovations and ideas created by other people or organizations. Some of the top crowdfunding websites, such as *Kickstarter*, have seen tremendous success. In 2012, the *Kickstarter* platform supported “2,241,475 people who pledged a total of US\$ 319,786,629.00 to successfully fund 18,109 projects” (Mott, 2013, paragraph 6).

In sport, an international crowdfunding website called *Sportfunder* helps amateur athletes and sport organizations around the world raise funds via ‘the crowd’ to help them pursue their goals. In Canada, a new crowdfunding vehicle called *Pursu.it* “enables Canadian athletes to set up their own funding campaign. Campaigns can raise money for everything from the purchase of a new track bicycle, travel to their next competition, or support for altitude training in a remote part of the world” (Springwise, 2012, paragraph 2). *Pursu.it*, launched in 2012 by five Canadian Olympic athletes, works by allowing an athlete to set up their own campaign with a video and description to inspire people to donate. They set a funding goal and time limit and spread the word to friends, family and members of the public. As of December 2012, *Pursu.it* athletes had raised more than CA\$ 63,000 from 31,000 donors (Casey, 2013). This new innovation, while still in its infancy, has tremendous potential for providing financial support to Canadian athletes in the future.

Even though we have demonstrated a number of sources of funding for high performance athletes in Canada, for the most part, many of Canada’s high performance athletes have expressed con-

cerns about the level of funding they receive to serve unofficially as Canadian ambassadors in international competition. As outlined in the 2004 and 2009 *Status of the High Performance Athlete* reports, athletes believe more financial support is needed. In the 2004 report, athletes called for greater levels of recognition and financial support (Ekos Research Associates, 2005, p. 92). In the most recent version of the report, athletes' yearly revenues were well below their expenses leading to a shortfall of approximately CA\$ 10,000 (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). As noted by the executive director of AthletesCAN, "sport is expensive at the national team level . . . There has been great strides at the national team level by way of Own the Podium financing that came through for certain sports and for certain athletes. But certainly it doesn't speak to the broad spectrum of need and expenses within the national team athletic community" (The Canadian Press, 2010, paragraphs 6–7).

Although AAP funding has increased over the years (the last increase in monthly stipends to athletes occurred in 2004 after the Athens Olympic and Paralympic Games) and athletes have acknowledged the value of funding in assisting their training and competitive endeavours, there are still concerns that funding is not adequate (Thibault & Babiak, 2005). If athletes are to represent Canada on the international stage, then perhaps the level of financial support they receive from various sources (i.e., Sport Canada, COC, CPC, NSOs) should be increased.

Although financial support of athletes is an important element of the sport system, advocacy and representation are also important for the well-being of athletes. In the following section, athlete advocacy and representation are addressed.

Athlete Advocacy and Representation

Recent developments in Canada's sport system have resulted in better representation, fairness and advocacy for athletes. One of the organizations initiated by athletes for athletes was created in 1992. At the time, it was called Canadian Athletes Association and was renamed AthletesCAN in 1996 (Thibault & Babiak, 2005). The organization was created by a number of athletes under the leadership of Ann Peel, a race walker and an advocate for athletes' rights (Canadian Television Network, 1995; The Ottawa Citizen, 1999; Thibault & Babiak, 2005). As reported by Thibault and Babiak

(2005, p. 117), “as a lobby group representing high performance athletes’ interests, leaders of AthletesCAN were able to exercise pressure on politicians and bureaucrats and on sport organizations.” Peel (2010, p. 25) explained that the mandate of AthletesCAN “was to work with others in leadership, advocacy and education to ensure a fair, responsive and supportive sport system for athletes. In doing so, we were committed to accountability, equity, inclusiveness and mutual respect.” Peel (2010, p. 25) also noted that AthletesCAN’s strategy was to address athletes’ major concerns such as “funding (the Athlete Assistance Program of Sport Canada), legal rights (fair selection, discipline and dispute resolution procedures), communication, leadership and self-marketing skills.” AthletesCAN often argued for a more athlete-centred sport system calling for greater involvement of athletes in the governance of sport organizations.

In a 1994 report, leaders of AthletesCAN wrote “those responsible for leadership and decision-making in sport must include the athlete in both defining the needs and goals and in determining how to meet them; i.e., the athlete should be the *active subject* in, not the object of, sporting programs” (AthletesCAN, 1994, p. 3). In the report, elements of an athlete-centred system were identified. One of these elements is accountability, where “the sport system is accountable to its consumers—the athletes and to the membership of sport organizations” (AthletesCAN, 1994, p. 5). Other elements included as part of an athlete-centred system consist of respect, empowerment, equity/fairness, excellence and mutual support to name a few.

On the topic of representation, the report on the *Status of the High Performance Athlete in 2004* noted that athletes were aware of AthletesCAN, but their impression of AthletesCAN’s impact on issues that affected them was moderate (Ekos Research Associates, 2005). In the subsequent research undertaken in 2009, 30% “were not able to rate their satisfaction with the representation of AthletesCAN” while 44% “rated their satisfaction as moderate” (Ekos Research Associates, 2010, p. 53). This suggests an apparent disconnect between AthletesCAN’s perceptions of its own efforts and those formed by practicing athletes.

AthletesCAN’s mandate to represent the interests of athletes has remained constant over the years and became an integral facet of the Canadian sport landscape as Peel (2010, p. 27) noted:

AthletesCAN is now over 15 years old. It is part of the sport system in Canada, and no longer fights for legitimacy. Perhaps because it is now so firmly entrenched in the system, it is no longer an activist organization.

Some current examples of AthletesCAN initiatives include an advocacy campaign to increase direct funding to athletes to match cost-of-living increases over the past six years, as well as efforts to enhance athletes' focus on social responsibility and giving back (AthletesCAN, 2010a).

In addition to AthletesCAN, some provincially focused organizations are now being created to provide a voice for their athletes, such as the British Columbia (BC) Athlete Voice. The BC Athlete Voice was established in 2005, and its mandate is "to ensure [athletes] have the opportunity to become leaders and advocates in sport and in the community" (BC Athlete Voice, 2009, paragraph 1).

Although athletes are increasingly gaining opportunities for advocacy, Peel (2010) expressed concerns that they are still not equal partners or stakeholders in the system. Simonson (2009) made similar claims in his work. Although there may have been some movement toward increasing athletes' involvement in the decision- and policy-making processes of their NSOs regarding issues that affect them, there is still evidence that athletes' issues are not fully addressed.

Some recently formed organizations have been established to assist athletes in other ways. Two such organizations are the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada and the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. The focus of these organizations is discussed in the following paragraphs. The Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC) was formally established in 2004 to assist in the area of disputes among stakeholders involved in sport. The "timely resolution of disputes in sport" was a founding policy principle in Bill C-12, *An Act to Promote Physical Activity and Sport*, which came into effect in March of 2003. To this end, the SDRCC has been working to prevent or reduce sport-related disputes and foster a culture of fairness in Canadian sport. The organization also provides tools to assist sport stakeholders to address disputes and to educate them about strategies to minimize the incidence of disputes in sport. In its 2011–2012 fiscal year, the SDRCC dealt with "a total of 47 new cases . . . including 6 carding [AAP] appeals, 8 team selection disputes and 27 asserted doping violations" (Sport Dispute Resolution Centre

of Canada, 2012, p. 1). Based on a review of the SDRCC's Annual Reports, the organization has addressed a total number of 371 cases over years fiscal years (for the period covering 2003–04 to 2011–12) with an average of 41 cases per year. As Thibault and Babiak (2005, p. 113) noted, SDRCC contributed to a more athlete-centred sport system in Canada by providing athletes "with a new formal and legitimate channel to voice their concerns and have these concerns addressed outside of their national sport federations by an impartial group."

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is another organization that addresses important advocacy issues for athletes and coaches as well as the ethical dimensions of participation and governance of sport. For instance, the organization seeks to stimulate understanding and fairness in the areas of equal playing time, gender issues, multiculturalism in sport, athletes with disabilities, sport nutrition, bullying, and codes prohibiting certain conduct in sport—particularly in the area of doping and performance enhancing substances. In fact, in their 2011–2012 annual report (CCES, 2012), the CCES discusses the impact they have made regarding the education of over 25,000 Canadian athletes about making the right choices in sport (i.e., principles of True Sport, rules and procedures of anti-doping). As explained in CCES's annual report, the organization contributes "in three interconnected ways to fair, safe and open sport" (CCES, 2012, p. 3) in Canada's sport system. Central to their mission is "protecting the integrity of sport . . . work on preventing doping and other ethical issues by helping to activate a principle-driven sport system at all levels" and "advocating and facilitating an ethical orientation and approach to all issues in sport" (CCES, 2012, p. 3). CCES is also responsible for managing the Canadian Anti-Doping Program, and within this program the organization collected a total of 2,600 samples during the 2011–2012 fiscal year (CCES, 2012).

Conclusion

As central stakeholders in Canada's sport system, athletes have an important role to play in its governance. Although several changes have occurred in recent years to ensure an athlete-centred system, there are still improvements that could be made. Kihl, Kikulis, and Thibault (2007, p. 24) argued that Canada's sport system had "become more athlete-centred through the adoption of a more deliberative and

democratic policy process”; however, they also noted that “deliberations involving athletes, or athlete representatives [were] often limited and/or expedited rather than judged as a critical component to enhancing the quality and value of decisions and policies.”

This chapter has revealed the tensions and challenges in prioritizing objectives and engaging with stakeholders in a national sport system. Issues related to allocation and levels of funding, development, support and decision making require collaborative involvement in the Canadian sport system—with stakeholders (such as athletes) who have not traditionally been part of the discussions on issues affecting them. Balancing and prioritizing stakeholder interests is a difficult task, yet one which allows for a broader set of interests to be represented (Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2004). This approach will ultimately allow for a broader representation of constituents who have a voice in national sport strategies and policies. However, it must be noted that stakeholder salience in the Canadian sport system has shifted over time and may also be cyclical (e.g., in the months before an Olympic Games, athletes may receive more attention and focus with respect to their ability to perform as it relates to the resources allocated to them and thus they may have more legitimacy—and urgency—in the conversation as key stakeholders; similarly, federal government agencies such as Sport Canada who control the purse strings, may have more power prior to the hosting of an Olympic Games, as was the case when Canada hosted the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games). Thus, a conversation on athlete support and development must necessarily consider the broad array of constituents and interests and will be useful in the development of guidelines on how to evaluate which groups of stakeholders deserve or require attention and priority over competing claims (Boesso & Kumar, 2009).

While there has been a considerable increase in funding commitments for sport by the federal government, non-profit sport organizations, and corporations leading up to and following the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, ongoing support for Canada’s high performance athletes is still needed (Blatchford, 2010; Ekos Research Associates, 2010; Starkman, 2008). In their study of high performance athletes in Canada, researchers from Ekos Research Associates noted that athletes often leave their athletic careers because of insufficient support (financial and technical). Given the extent of resources invested in developing these athletes to

reach international results and the important role they play in being ambassadors of Canada in high-profile sport events, their support is central to their success and longevity in the sport system.

Notes

1. Even though Canadian Sport for Life and Long-Term Athlete Development are officially the same initiative, when sport leaders refer to the Long-Term Athlete Development Model, they are usually focusing on high performance sport and the strategies needed to achieve it (e.g., skill acquisition, talent identification, training principles and access to competitions). When sport leaders discuss Canadian Sport for Life, they are usually referring to sport for all and lifelong participation in sport.
2. Some Canadian Sport Institutes (Calgary, Ontario, Pacific) were formerly called Canadian Sport Centres (cf. CSI Ontario, 2012; CSI Pacific, 2012). Quebec's high performance training centre was called *Centre national multisport Montréal* and is now called *Institut national du sport du Québec* (INS Québec) (cf. INS Québec, 2013).
3. In April 2002, the Canadian Olympic Association changed its name to the Canadian Olympic Committee.
4. Data for this table were obtained from Sport Canada's funding reports published online at <http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/sc/cntrbtn/index-eng.cfm>
5. The original name of the Canadian Athletes Now was 'See You In Sydney.' For subsequent Olympic and Paralympic Games, Sydney was replaced with the location of these Games (i.e., See You In ... Salt Lake, Athens, Turin, Beijing and Vancouver). In 2004, the Canadian Olympic Committee contested through the judicial system that Roos's organization's name was violating an official mark of the COC. In essence, the COC believed that Roos's charity's name was "creating an authorized commercial association with the Olympics" (Lee, 2007, paragraph 13). The courts ruled in favour of Roos's organization and ordered the COC to pay Roos's legal costs (Lee, 2007).
6. The FACE program was originally called the Olympic Torch Scholarship Fund (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2010b).

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