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## Sport Policy in Canada

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## Sport Participation

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Peter Donnelly, University of Toronto

[By 2012] A significantly higher percentage of Canadians from all segments of society are involved in quality sport activities at all levels and in all forms of participation.

*Canadian Sport Policy* (Sport Canada, 2002, p. 4)

In some ways, it is intriguing to write a chapter on ‘sport participation’ for a book on *Sport Policy in Canada* when Canada does not have a specific policy on sport participation. In fact, the only policy that is directly concerned with participation is Sport Canada’s *Policy on Aboriginal People’s Participation in Sport* (2005). Of course, many documents recognize the importance of participation, and in the *Canadian Sport Policy* (Sport Canada, 2002) that was in effect from 2002–2012, ‘participation’ was given equal status to ‘excellence.’ However, as outlined in this chapter, the lack of formal policy dealing specifically with participation provides an indication that the federal government was more concerned with excellence than with participation, and may help to account, in part, for the relatively low levels of sport participation in Canada.

Participation in sport and recreational physical activity is still often thought of as fun—the joy of movement and the pleasure of sociality. However, starting some 150 years ago, participation also began to be about something else. The middle class, Victorian, *rational recreation* movement began to take a more functionalist or

instrumental view of participation—a view that quickly spread to British colonies such as Canada. Middle class values were imposed on sport and recreation in an attempt to accomplish two ends: (a) *social control*, to encourage respectable and ‘civilized’ behaviour when many of the activities of the working classes and the gentry involved drinking, gambling and rough pursuits; and (b) *self improvement*, in terms of health, fitness, education and character. Activities became productive, imbued with middle-class values such as rationality, purpose, respectability and, in the case of competitive sports, meritocracy.

Urban spaces for public participation began to be made available by local governments and philanthropists. These parks and playgrounds were regulated spaces, sometimes supervised and with many proscriptions on permissible forms of participation. Public provision of opportunities to participate has increased significantly since Victorian times, but the rationale for provision is still justified in terms of rational recreation—people should be involved because sport and recreational physical activity are good for them, and for society. The aims of *self improvement* and *social control* are still fundamental to the provision of opportunities to participate.

In Canada today, formal/organized opportunities to participate in sport and recreation have four main sources of provision—the educational system; clubs (with various levels of inclusion/exclusion in their membership policies); the commercial sector (including non-profit organizations such as the YMCA/YWCA); and various levels of government. This chapter considers the more recent strategies and trends to encourage involvement/participation in sport and recreational physical activity, examines the ongoing tension in terms of public funding for high performance sport *versus* grassroots participation, reviews the evolution and goals of the recent Sport Participation Strategy (including the development of the Sport Participation Research Initiative), discusses issues regarding the monitoring and measurement of participation among Canadians and the ongoing decline in rates of participation, and concludes by considering the potential effects of the new *Canadian Sport Policy* (Sport Canada, 2012) on sport participation in Canada.

### **From Recreation and Fitness to Active Living<sup>1</sup>**

Local governments’ Parks and Recreation departments (often in partnership with non-profit sport clubs and, more recently, non-profit

providers such as the YMCA/YWCA) and public educational institutions are still the main providers of opportunities to participate in sport and recreational physical activity in Canada. Their involvement is governed by policies to determine access and provision and, in the case of education, by curricular and extra-curricular policies. However, all discussions of sport policy in Canada begin with the 1961 *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act* (Bill C-131, discussed in Chapter I). With this Act, Canada joined a worldwide, post-war trend of governments in high-income countries acknowledging that sport and recreation were now appropriate aspects of public policy and spending. In Canada, the Act was conceived to deal primarily with hockey and the international sport performances of Canadians, and to a lesser extent with the fitness of Canadians. Federal government involvement in mass sport and recreation was always considered to be problematic in two ways: first, mass sport, recreation and health/fitness were considered to be matters of provincial jurisdiction; and second, there was little political gain from promoting mass sport and recreation participation.

### **Sport Canada, Fitness Canada, Recreation Canada, and Sport Participation Canada**

The 1969 *Report of the Task Force on Sports for Canadians* recommended the establishment of Sport Canada as a non-profit organizational and administrative centre to develop high performance sport, leaving the Fitness and Amateur Sport Directorate (established by the *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act*) to deal with mass sport, fitness, and recreation (Rea, 1969). While numerous re-organizations occurred during the 1970s, Sport Canada continued to grow as a government unit under the Ministry of National Health and Welfare; Recreation Canada and Fitness Canada were finally established as separate branches in 1979, and in 1980 Recreation Canada was dissolved.

While many European countries were beginning to see sport and recreation participation as the right of all citizens and incorporated 'sport for all' into their national sport legislation, Canada continued to focus primarily on hockey and high performance sport. There were concerns about this narrow focus, and, to add to the limited and divided powers of the Fitness and Amateur Sport Directorate, Sport Participation Canada was established as an arm's length agency in 1971; the agency quickly became known by its

motto, 'ParticipACTION'. ParticipACTION gave focus to the population health concerns, using publicity campaigns and public service announcements to educate Canadians about the benefits of participation in sport, exercise and recreational physical activity, and to motivate them to participate. MacNeill (1999) documented the problems with ParticipACTION, and it is not clear whether the campaign had any effect on increasing participation among Canadians. However, it was the closest Canada ever came to the now world-wide Sport for All movement.

The Canadian government was a signatory to the first international document declaring the right to participate in sport. The UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport (1978, paragraph 15) gave focus to the Sport for All movement; the first Article states: "The practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all." However, while many European countries were enshrining that right for their citizens with policies, legislation and a widespread campaign of public facility-building (e.g., sport centres, pools, playing fields), Canadian governments (i.e., federal, provincial, local) never declared sport participation as a right for Canadians, and it is now widely acknowledged in Canada that there has not been a widespread campaign of sport facility-building since the Centennial (1967).

Despite these differences, the participation trend line in Canada shows a similar curve to those for a number of European countries in the second half of the twentieth century, and into the first decade of the twenty-first century. The S-shaped curves show steep increases in sport participation between the 1960s and the 1980s (accounted for in large part in Canada by the massive growth of sport programs for children and youth), followed in the 1990s by a flattening of growth and, in the case of Canada, a quite significant decline (as noted subsequently). Participation has been high in Scandinavia and northern Europe and relatively low in southern Europe—Canada falls between these extremes—but the S-shaped trend in participation is similar for a number of countries (van Bottenburg, Rijnen, & van Sterkenburg, 2005). These similarities suggest that government policies may have less influence on sport participation than other forces such as demographic change (e.g., aging population, immigration). Two major trends that have affected sport participation since the 1970s are *differentiation* and *commercialization*.

### **Differentiation**

The growth of sport worldwide in the second half of the twentieth century led some German scholars to extend the figurational concept of sportization (Elias & Dunning, 1986) to refer to the “sportization of society” (*versportlichung der gesellschaft*; e.g., Cachay, 1990; Digel, 1990). This was accomplished with two quite distinct trends. In the first, traditional organized competitive sports shook off the old constraints of amateurism, combined the ideals of Olympism and professionalism, and emerged as a “global sport monoculture” (Donnelly, 1996) or, more precisely, a “global achievement sport monoculture” (Maguire, 1999). This occurred under the influence of processes such as commercialization, globalization, professionalization, scientization and specialization (Crum, 2001). Participation increased as a result of the emerging achievement-oriented (competitive and high performance) sport development systems, eventually slowing where selection and talent identification systems became more sophisticated.

The second trend has sometimes been referred to as the ‘de-sportization of sport.’ Influenced by the less formal and more permissive youth cultures that began to emerge in the 1960s, there has been a widespread growth of ‘sports’ and physical activities characterized by their lack of formal structure and competition:<sup>2</sup>

In these sports—as diverse as jogging, surfing, rock climbing, mountain biking, snowboarding, rafting, skateboarding, paragliding, aerobics, and street dance—most people participate without the need of a formal club structure or competitive environment. They do not desire to move up to a higher level. They are motivated by having fun, experiencing nature, seeking adventure, socializing with friends, achieving body effects (improvements to one’s physique) or health improvement. (van Bottenburg & de Bosscher, 2011, p. 602)

This trend democratized participation to population segments that were less likely to participate in achievement sports. It was crucial to the success of the Sport for All policies and, despite the absence of a formal Sport for All policy in Canada, the growth in participation during the 1970s and 1980s was, to a great extent, fuelled by the growth of these more informal and often non-competitive activities.

### **Commercialization**

The growing interest in informal forms of participation, combined with the failure of all levels of government to provide enough opportunities to meet that growing interest, saw the growth of commercial-sector provision, beginning in the 1980s, in high-income countries worldwide. This was most evident in the areas of fitness and exercise, but it also encompassed the growth of ski resorts and golf courses, and significant increases in the production of specialized equipment and clothing for all sports and recreational physical activities.<sup>3</sup> The commercial sector also began to grow in achievement sports, with both specialized equipment and (in Canada, for example) a significant increase in the number of specialized private camps, schools and academies for the development of specific sport skills.

Involvement of the commercial sector provides a strong indication of the demographics of participation. Participants in sport, exercise and recreational physical activity include younger people rather than older people, men more than women, ethnocultural majorities rather than minorities and, above all, those in a higher social class (in terms of income, education and occupational status). The commercial sector became involved because those more likely to participate could afford their services. MacNeill's (1999) critical analysis of ParticipACTION pointed out that messages encouraging people to be more active were targeted precisely to those population segments that were already more likely to participate.

### **Active Living**

While ParticipACTION provided positive messages about participation in sport and recreational physical activity, the emerging concept of 'active living' made a more direct connection between participation and population health, and represented a real attempt to overcome the evident failure of the medicalized/prescriptive model of exercise. Despite the fact that medical professionals, fitness specialists (including Fitness Canada), exercise scientists and public service announcements (e.g., ParticipACTION) had been advising Canadians that they had to exercise regularly, for a specific period of time at a specific intensity (e.g., between three and five times a week at 60 to 90% maximal heart rate for 15 to 60 minutes or longer) in order to experience any health benefits from exercise, the majority of the population was not achieving these targets. The message of

'active living' was more moderate and claimed to be more accessible and appealing by including the activities of everyday life (active transportation, housework and gardening, using stairs and so on) in an exercise regimen.

'Active living' was part of an overall shift during the 1980s from 'sport development' to 'development through sport.' In Europe, specific under-participating populations were targeted by new policies, and the values of *rational recreation*, which had never really disappeared, returned in force. Participation in sport and recreational physical activity became a policy tool for the achievement of health benefits and other non-sport objectives such as reducing juvenile delinquency, and achieving social inclusion and community building. Although there was awareness in Canada of the various potential non-sport benefits of participation, and small localized attempts to initiate such programs, the main policy focus was on health. *Active Living* is a Canadian construct that first emerged at the 1986 Canadian Summit on Fitness. Bercovitz (1998) argued that the Summit:

marked (publicly) the beginning of Fitness Canada's shift away from program and service provision toward a strategic leadership, facilitating and facilitative role. Responsibility for direct program delivery was to fall within the jurisdiction of the provinces, municipalities, associations and the private sector. (p. 320)

The federal and provincial/territorial (F-P/T) governments affirmed the primacy of the provinces and territories with regard to recreation and sport participation in the *National Recreation Statement* developed in 1987 (Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council, 1987); however, that agreement recognized that the federal government had "a clear and necessary [cooperative] role" in recreation and mass sport participation (Sport Canada, 2008), despite having dissolved Recreation Canada in 1980.

The 'active living' trademark was officially adopted in 1989, and after implementing a national infrastructure under the Administration Bureau for Active Living, Active Living Canada was officially inaugurated in 1992 as a non-profit organization run by a board of directors (that included representatives of Fitness Canada and ParticipACTION). As with the European campaigns, Active Living targeted specific populations and began to be incorporated into employee fitness programs.

Despite the good intentions associated with advocating a more accessible means of being active rather than the former prescriptive regime, and despite a clear raising of consciousness about the benefits of being active, Active Living also seems to have had only a short-lived effect on increasing participation. In many ways, Active Living and the other 'sport for development' policies were a clear representation of the neo-liberal era ushered in by Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Brian Mulroney in the early 1980s. Responsibility for fitness was de-centralized, and the social responsibility for fitness and health was downloaded from government to the individual in a policy that fetishized terms such as 'lifestyle,' 'empowerment,' 'community,' and 'collaboration' (Bercovitz, 1998). As Ingham (1985) asked:

what shall we say to the victims of the fiscal crisis of the Welfare State? What do we have to offer the currently ill and the about-to-be-ill segments of the population; those whose illnesses have more to do with the workplace rather than lifestyle, with the ravages of unemployment rather than defects of character, with the cumulative effects of impoverishment which is becoming increasingly feminized? Shall we say that they should aerobicize, jazzercise, and jog their problems away? (p. 54)

It is striking that the launch of Active Living was followed in 1993 by "the most significant downsizing and restructuring of government ever undertaken in Canada" (Office of the Prime Minister, 1993). Among others, the position of Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport was abolished, Sport Canada was moved to Canadian Heritage, and Fitness Canada became a small part of the Health Programs and Services Branch of Health Canada.

As noted, Canada skipped the Sport for All phase of participation policy but still experienced increases in participation from the 1960s into the 1980s. The absence of Sport for All in some ways permitted Canada to be ahead of the trend in European countries in terms of 'sport for development,' with however an exclusive focus on health. According to the General Social Survey, participation in Canada peaked in 1992, with some 45% of the population over the age of 15 claiming that they participated in organized sport regularly during the previous year.<sup>4</sup> It is striking that, following the introduction of policies that limited Sport Canada's focus to high performance sport, marginalized Fitness Canada and downloaded

federal government responsibility for all forms of non-elite participation, there has been a precipitous decline in participation since 1992. The subsequent General Social Surveys showed that participation declined to 34% in 1998 and 28% in 2005. This decline raised some clear concerns but, as noted subsequently, little in the way of government re-assuming responsibility for increasing participation.

### **The Great Divide**

As suggested in the previous section, the federal government, Sport Canada, many national sport organizations (NSOs) and a number of provincial (e.g., Quebec, British Columbia) governments and sport organizations (PSOs) have focused their attention, and funding, on high performance sport. Just as the failure to implement Sport for All policies permitted Canada to be ahead of the trend in Europe in terms of 'sport for development' (specifically, ParticipACTION and Active Living), the absence of Sport for All policies also helped to give Canada a lead in the development of high performance sport policies. After failing to win any gold medals at the Montreal Olympic Games (1976), Sport Canada and a number of NSOs began to learn from the successful Eastern European systems of high performance development. The systems put in place in Canada were so similar to those in Eastern Europe that MacAloon (1990) referred to the Canadian sport system as "the Big Red Machine."<sup>5</sup> The system stalled in 1988, with the Ben Johnson doping scandal at the Seoul Olympic Games and the subsequent Dubin inquiry, and Canada winning a total of only 15 medals at the Winter (Calgary) and Summer Olympic Games that year. However, the high performance system quickly rebounded in the 1990s with a total of 25 medals in 1992, and 35 medals at the 1994 Winter (Lillehammer) and 1996 Summer (Atlanta) Olympic Games.<sup>6</sup>

During the Cold War, between the 1950s and 1990, many of the battles between the protagonists (the United States and the Soviet Union) and their satellites (mainly Canada and some Western European countries for the US; Eastern European countries for the USSR) were fought in terms of sport supremacy at the Olympic Games and world championships.<sup>7</sup> With the end of the Cold War, countries such as Australia and a number of Western European countries also shifted their focus to join more fully the 'global sporting arms race'

(the struggle between countries to win Olympic and world championship medals) and began to outspend Canada in terms of high performance sport development. Canada fell back to 29 medals in the following two Olympiads (1998/2000 and 2002/2004) but rebounded sharply following substantially increased spending to win 42 medals in 2006/2008, and 44 in 2010/2012 (including a record number of gold medals in Vancouver 2010).

The key term here is 'spending.' As Donnelly (2010a) pointed out, Olympic medals cost a great deal of money.<sup>8</sup> Given that there is a finite amount of federal (and provincial) funding available for sport, investments in high performance sport and in hosting major events have certainly been made at the cost of grassroots participation. For example, Bercovitz (1998, p. 325) used Fitness and Amateur Sport annual reports from 1971 to 1993 to document the growing strength of Sport Canada in comparison to Fitness Canada. Funding allocations to Sport Canada during the 1970s exceeded those for Fitness Canada between 3:1 and 5:1; during the 1980s, the ratio was between 6:1 and 8:1; and by the early 1990s, the ratio ranged between 7:1 and 9:1. By 1992/1993, Sport Canada received a government allocation of CA\$ 72,162,084 while Fitness Canada received an allocation of CA\$ 9,823,289—a 7:1 ratio that was actually closer than the two preceding years (9:1 and 8:1 respectively).

Investing in high performance sport and the achievement of medal winning performances, and hosting major sport events are favoured by the federal government, and even provincial governments, because they command media attention in a way that mass participation never does, and because governments claim the positive effects of medal winning and hosting on national pride and international prestige. Government spending is also justified with the "convenient fictions" (Donnelly, 2010b) that medal winning performances *inspire* increased sport participation, and that the facilities built to host major sport events will be available for subsequent mass participation. Coalter (2004), Donnelly et al. (2008), Hogan and Norton (2000), Murphy and Bauman (2007) and others have all shown that there is very little substance to the widespread view that winning medals has a trickle-down effect that increases participation (finding, in some cases, that participation in a sport actually decreases after the success of national team athletes). Donnelly et al. (2008) have specifically argued that, while inspiration may occur, inspiration is not enough if a sport does not have the capacity, infrastructure

and incentives to accommodate new 'inspired' recruits to the sport. McCloy (2006, see also Chapter VIII) has also shown that facilities constructed in Canada for major sport events are often turned over to professional teams after the event, reserved for high performance athletes or closed because of the costs of maintenance. Only in rare cases do they become available to the public for mass participation (e.g., the Calgary Olympic Oval) and then often at the cost of substantial user fees—the public pays to construct the facilities, and then pays to use them.

Some, such as Canadian Sport for Life, still claim that mass participation sport and high performance sport are inextricably linked *via* the 'pyramid'—the idea that a broad base of participation is necessary in order to discover, and develop through the ranks, talented athletes who will be recruited to the high performance sport system. However, the systems of talent identification and selection developed since the 1960s in Eastern Europe, and now widely used in countries involved in the 'global sporting arms race,' avoid the need and expense for a broad base of participation to feed the peak of the pyramid. Individuals who show talent in sports with well-established elite development systems are selected out from mass participation in order to train and participate in a separate system. If they continue to develop, this system leads to success in professional and/or international sport. In countries such as Cuba and China the system is relatively meritocratic, with children from all classes of society being identified and recruited on the basis of their talent. However, in neo-liberal societies such as Canada, the UK, and the US, with little public support for sport in schools and communities, parents are expected to fund the development of talented athletes (e.g., travel, equipment, instruction, and other costs) until they become eligible for other forms of government or National Olympic Committee support. Consequently, high performance athletes are drawn from a narrower and narrower segment of the population. In an extreme example, private school students in Britain constitute between 7 and 8% of the school population, but it is estimated that some 65% of the British Olympic team in 2012 will have gone to private school.

Other distortions appear in sport systems such as that in Canada where a significant public financial investment has been made into winning Olympic medals. For example, Canada and many other countries in the 'global sporting arms race' have begun to focus

their efforts on individual sports—especially those such as swimming, track and field, cycling and boxing, where multiple medals are available. Only two gold medals (men’s and women’s) are available in team sports, and the rationalization of efforts to win medals results in team sports being starved of funding and other forms of support. Given the nature of individual sports, support actually goes to fewer and fewer athletes, with consequent limitations on participation. Focus on individual sports has the potential to become even more specialized—Christie (2010, p. S7) pointed out, with respect to track and field, “Kenyan dominance in distance events, Jamaican prowess in sprints, [and] Scandinavian and Eastern bloc power in throws.” He went on to cite Canadian hurdler, Perdita Felicien: “Every country has picked what they’re good at. In Canada we’re not even remotely close to being a powerhouse. In hurdles, we’re good but we need to have a supporting cast” (Christie, 2010, p. S7).

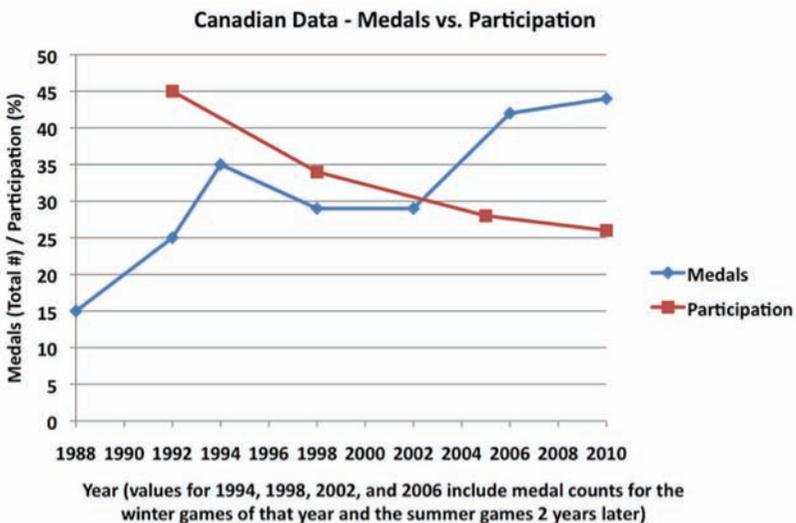
A further consequence of the distortions introduced by a single-minded focus on medals is high levels of funding for sports in which very few people are able to participate. A recent Australian report (*Crawford Report, 2009*) pointed out that more government funds were spent on archery (an Olympic sport with a relatively small number of Australian participants, but where a number of medals are awarded) than cricket (a national team sport, but not an Olympic sport). Joint public–private funding initiatives such as Own the Podium (OTP, in Canada) contribute to such extreme specialization, providing additional funding not just to sports where Canada is perceived to have a chance of winning a medal, but to specific athletes in those sports. According to OTP, the sliding sports (bobsled, skeleton, luge) received CA\$ 2.87M in OTP additional funding (over and above their usual levels of funding) in the year leading up to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games. There are probably fewer participants in the sliding sports in Canada than there are in archery in Australia; but that level of funding needs to be compared with funding for a mass participation sport. For example, the annual budget for Basketball Canada is approximately CA\$ 3M.

Donnelly et al. (2008) have pointed out the need to support high performance athletes and, through strategic policy and planning, to also support mass participation sport. They proposed ways to achieve both, but current thinking tends to focus on high performance and the achievement of medals, despite the continuing decline in participation. As R. Gruneau (personal communication, April 29, 2010) and

Donnelly (2010b) pointed out, “the more medals we win, the fewer Canadians participate in sport” (Figure 6.1).

### Evolution of the Sport Participation Strategy

Sport Canada’s *Sport Participation Strategy 2008–2012* noted that: “The *National Recreation Statement*, the CSP [*Canadian Sport Policy*] and the *Act [Physical Activity and Sport Act]* provide the legislative and policy framework for Sport Canada’s role in sport participation” (Sport Canada, 2008, p. 3). It is striking that, of these three documents, only the *National Recreation Statement* (1987) deals directly with mass sport and physical activity participation and recreation, identifying them as a ‘social service,’ conceding primacy in those areas to the provinces/territories (“Recreation in Canada, in common with other social services, lies within the jurisdiction of provinces”) and reserving a supporting and co-ordinating role for the federal government (Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council, 1987). The policy (Sport Canada 2002) in effect until 2012 and the legislation (Parliament of Canada, 2003) that governs Canadian sport at the time of writing both deal with the sport system as a whole, in particular attempting to resolve the struggles and disparities noted in the previous section. They give equal status to the two goals of



**Figure 6.1** Canadian Sport Participation Levels and Medals Won in Olympic Games

Canadian sport—*participation* and *excellence*. The *Physical Activity and Sport Act* (Parliament of Canada, 2003, p. 3) is intended: “to increase *participation in sport* [and] support *excellence in sport*.” The intent of the policy and legislation is clear: the two goals are to find a way to work together to create a seamless Canadian sport system. Unfortunately, for too long the relationship between the two goals has been at worst antagonistic, and at best one-way (with high performance sport often recruiting and taking fees from participation sport but providing little in return).

Van Bottenburg and de Bosscher (2011, p. 607) reminded us that sport policies do not develop independently of other social processes and policies, that there is a great deal of borrowing from other national sport policies,<sup>9</sup> but also that the policies and:

processes have worked out differently in each country so that the sports development policy and its impact on sports participation exhibit unique characteristics as well. The literature gives the impression that this (difference in) impact is particularly determined by the balance of power between the state, market and society in the sports sector, and—more specifically—the capability of national, provincial and local authorities, commercial agencies, schools and universities, and the voluntary sport organizations to influence the sports policy making process at the national level, and contribute to the provision and development of sport at the local level.

They also pointed out the importance of “critical junctures in the history of national sport policies.” As noted, Canada’s founding sport policy (*Fitness and Amateur Sport Act*) emerged during the Cold War, at a time when ongoing losses to the Soviet Union in Olympic and world championship ice hockey took on added significance. During the Trudeau years (1970s), pan-Canadian unification concerns were added to the need to achieve success in international sport, and the Canada Games became part of the high performance sport development system.

Given that Canadian sport policy was born and sustained in a policy climate that favoured high performance sport, the 1988 doping scandal became the first major ‘critical juncture’ for that policy. Analyses of the Dubin inquiry (1988–1989; Dubin, 1990), and the subsequent Sport Canada report, *Sport: The Way Ahead* (Minister’s

Task Force, 1992), show that despite the fact Canada could have used the scandal to turn away from the strong emphasis on high performance sport in order to focus more on participation, that never happened.<sup>10</sup> The new emphases were to be on ethical, more equitable and athlete-centred high performance sport. As noted previously, Canada rebounded from the scandal to achieve its highest medal totals to that time in the 1992 Olympiad (25) and the 1994–96 Olympiad (35). “Choices made during these critical junctures . . . close off alternative options and lead to the establishment of institutions that generate self-reinforcing path-dependent processes” (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 361).

With Fitness Canada marginalized to a relatively small branch in Health Canada, primacy for sport and recreational physical activity ceded to the provinces, and a relatively strong Sport Canada with staff, systems and procedures reinforced in their focus on high performance sport and working within a restrictive definition of sport that precluded exercise and most forms of recreational physical activity (including sports played recreationally),<sup>11</sup> it is not surprising that Canada reached the millennium without a policy on sport participation. However, two events occurred to change that situation: first, the 1998 General Social Survey showed that sport participation in Canada had declined to 34%, from 45% of the population in 1992; second, a series of cross-country consultations were held in preparation for the new *Canadian Sport Policy* (Sport Canada, 2002). During these consultations, the sport establishment in Canada heard clearly from a wide segment of the population that there were concerns about declining participation, that broad-based participation was important, that provinces/territories (and municipalities) were not living up to their part of the 1987 *National Recreation Statement* and that far more support was needed in order to increase sport participation across the country.

As noted, the resulting policy (*Canadian Sport Policy*) gave equal status to the two ‘goals’ of “enhanced participation” and “enhanced excellence,” (along with “capacity building” and “interaction” as supporting goals) (Sport Canada, 2002), and the supporting legislation, Bill C-12 an *Act to Promote Physical Activity and Sport* (Parliament of Canada, 2003), affirmed the equality of “participation” and “excellence.” However, Sport Canada’s “self-reinforcing, path-dependent processes” were difficult to change. Three main responses were evident initially: first, a small administrative unit was established

in Sport Canada to deal with sport participation. Of the other two responses, one is apparently cosmetic, and the other has the potential to assist in achieving enhanced participation. These are discussed in turn below.

### **Sport Funding and Accountability Framework**

The Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) was established in 1995 in order to establish a set of criteria for Sport Canada funding of NSOs. Only those sport organizations that meet the eligibility criteria and are in compliance with requirements for the SFAF (e.g., official languages, gender equity and so on) are supposed to receive funding. Following the introduction of the CSP (2002), the criteria changed to incorporate the four goals of the policy. However, the weighting of those criteria, and the assessment items for meeting those criteria, do not give equal weight to excellence and participation.

For both summer and winter sports, the current Assessment Weighting Grid allocates 60% to excellence and 40% to “sport participation and development”—the latter clearly incorporating capacity building. For example, of that 40% for summer sport NSOs, only 5% is actually for “sport participation”—explained as: “skill development and awareness/first contact” (NSOs are supposed to have a Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model in place). With regard to the remaining 35%, 25% is allocated to “sport demographics” (including overall membership, and the number of individuals registered in coaching certification programs), and 10% to “sport development” (the development of coaches, officials and clubs/leagues). For the winter sport NSOs, the 40% for “sport participation and development” does not include a specific component for “sport participation.” However, 6% is allocated to “sport initiation and growth,” which includes the following criteria: skill development; awareness; targeted populations; delivery partners; non-member participants; and club/league development.

It is quite clear that the funding for NSOs does not depend on increasing the number of participants in the sport. Even for the item labeled “membership” (worth 10% for the summer sports and 7% for the winter sports), it is not clear whether additional points are given for increasing membership. The SFAF changes following the CSP appear to have been cosmetic, acknowledging that it is necessary

to include participation and capacity building but not deflecting most NSOs from their main purpose of attempting to achieve excellence. Concerns have been expressed that even sport-specific LTAD programs have been used for talent identification and elite athlete development purposes. It is no surprise that, in a number of interviews with NSO staff carried out in 2009–2010 (Donnelly et al., forthcoming), it was not unusual for respondents to claim that the NSO was responsible only for developing high performance athletes, and not for “enhancing participation.”

### **Sport Participation Research Initiative**

The Sport Participation Research Initiative (SPRI), part of the Sport Canada Research Initiative (SCRI), was established in recognition of the fact that a great deal of scientific research had been carried out in the areas of exercise and fitness, and high performance sport, but very little research had been carried out in an attempt to understand sport participation. In an era of ‘evidence-based policy,’ Sport Canada had little evidence on which to base any new policies on sport participation. The SPRI grew out of the pan-Canadian consultations that led to the *Canadian Sport Policy* (Sport Canada, 2002) and the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* (Parliament of Canada, 2003). Consultations with the academic community made Sport Canada aware of the limitations of their former contract-based research program. The academic advisors argued that, if the research was to gain the respect of the academic community, it must be administered through the ‘gold standard’ granting councils (Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)), where research funds are allocated strictly on the basis of merit, as determined by peer review, and disseminated through peer-refereed conference presentations and publications.

The SPRI, the council-based research stream of the SCRI emerged from these considerations. Sport Canada pledged an initial sum of CA\$ 1M per year for five years, to be administered through the granting councils. The criteria for the SPRI were established at a 2004 workshop of interested researchers to summarize ‘what we know and what we do not know’ about participation in sport, and to identify a research agenda for the first years of the program.

Representatives of the three granting councils were invited to attend the meeting, but only two (CIHR and SSHRC) attended and expressed a strong interest in co-operating. The workshop identified the following five priority areas for research:

- research concerned with identifying and overcoming barriers to participation in sport;
- research concerned with the training of participants, volunteers, coaches and administrators in sport;
- research concerned with the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies designed to enhance participation in sport;
- research concerned with the development of capacity and infrastructure for the purposes of enhancing participation in sport; and
- research concerned with determining the benefits and outcomes of participation in sport.

The SPRI was established in 2005, and made its first awards of grants through SSHRC in 2006. Academic research is a slow process, and no one expected to make startling discoveries that would immediately begin to increase sport participation. However, the SPRI has three important accomplishments. First, it has significantly enhanced the capacity of the Canadian research community to carry out sport participation-related research. Second, the annual conferences, where researchers report ongoing results of their work, are attended by staff from Sport Canada and the sport community, and they have become important sites for mutual understanding between the policy and research communities. The addition of a 'knowledge translation' requirement for those receiving grant funding was an outgrowth of discussions between the two communities. Third, the research funded by the SPRI is beginning to generate a substantial body of knowledge about sport participation, knowledge that is freely available because it is not the result of a private contract between Sport Canada and a researcher.

### **The Sport Participation Strategy**

The 10-year CSP ended in 2012, and there is not, at the time of writing, any evidence of enhanced participation in sport. In fact, the 2005

General Social Survey reported a further decline in participation, to 28% (from 34% of Canadians over the age of 15 in 1998). This is clearly a problem for Canadian society and for governments at all levels when participation levels are measured against rising rates of obesity and the diseases of inactivity. Participation in sport, exercise and recreational physical activity could clearly help, but the majority of research funding related to obesity is channeled to the medical community rather than to consideration of the behavioural and social determinants of inactivity.

The Government of Canada has introduced two measures in an attempt to address declining rates of participation, both of which have little chance of success. First, the 2007 Children's Fitness Tax Credit (CFTC) provides tax credit on up to CA\$ 500 of the expenses involved in children's participation in sport, fitness or activity programs. Parents eligible for the full amount receive a tax credit of less than CA\$ 90. The CFTC was introduced despite available evidence that it would have no impact on increasing physical activity (Madore, 2007); and a recent expert panel (Faulkner et al., 2010) concluded that, not only would the CFTC provide no benefit for parents whose income was not taxable, but also that the only benefit was likely to be enjoyed by wealthier Canadians who would already have involved their children in programs of sport and physical activity—a view supported by the first study of the CFTC (Spence et al., 2010). Second, the government increased its allocation to ParticipACTION to support a new awareness campaign. There is no specific evidence that ParticipACTION was directly responsible for any increases in participation in its earlier incarnation; and it is not evident if there are many Canadians who are unaware that physical activity is good for them (or that smoking is bad for them)—what is missing is the possibility of realizing behavioural change.

A response by Sport Canada to declining rates of participation has been the *Sport Participation Strategy 2008–2012* (Sport Canada, 2008). The language is important here. Once more there was no specific *policy* to achieve enhanced participation; instead there was a *strategy*, developed for the last three years of the 2002 CSP<sup>12</sup> in an attempt to achieve the goal of enhanced participation. "Sport Canada's *strategic goal* in sport participation was *for more Canadians to participate in quality sport activities as athletes/participants, coaches, officials, administrators and volunteers*" (Sport Canada, 2008, p. 9; *emphasis in original*). The *strategic objectives*

included targeting specific populations (children and youth, and under-represented groups) and increasing participation in schools. However, the *Strategy* continually recognized that ‘primacy’ for participation has been downloaded to the provinces/territories; that any federal initiatives must occur in “consultation and cooperation” with the provinces/territories; and that the *Strategy* did not provide for any capital funding (for the construction or upgrading of facilities) (Sport Canada, 2008, p. 11). In the final analysis, the *Strategy* affirmed the targets and actions of the federal-provincial/territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation established at a 2006 meeting (Sport Canada, 2007). However, as noted in the following section, the *Strategy* included no reasonable means of achieving these targets, or of knowing if the targets had been achieved.

### **Current Issues, Problems and Resolutions in Sport Participation**

The previous sections described the growth and decline of sport participation in Canada—a decline that is also evident in European data, although the top of the S-shaped curve actually turns down in Canada while just flattening out or showing slower increases in some other countries. In the 13 years between 1992 and 2005, the General Social Survey indicated a 17% decline in sport participation in Canada. This downturn is significant during a ‘reported’ crisis of obesity and increases in the diseases of inactivity. And yet, there is a policy void—no overall plan or direction to increase participation. This section considers the problems of measuring participation; the fragmentation of responsibility for attempting to increase participation and potential ways to resolve that fragmentation; and ends with a call for sport for all Canadians.

### **Measuring Participation**

It is often assumed that we have accurate measures of sport participation and that announcements reporting, for example, ‘the fastest growing sport in Canada,’ or the previously noted decline in participation, have some validity. Nothing could be further from the truth. The data are quite crude, depend on a wide range of factors such as how sport is defined, the requested frequency of participation, the population sample surveyed and so on. In 2006, the

federal-provincial/territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation used some available data to establish the following three participation targets for 2012 (Sport Canada, 2007; Sport Canada, 2008, p. 15):

- Girls, 5–9 years of age  
By 2012, increase sport participation rates of 5 to 9 year old girls by five percentage points, from 68% to 73%, while at least maintaining the current rate of participation of 5 to 9 year old boys (77%);
- Teens, 14–17 years of age  
By 2012, increase sport participation levels among teens (14–17 years old) by five percentage points (from 66% to 71%), while at least maintaining tweens' current participation rate of 78%;
- Women, 25–39 years of age  
By 2012, increase by six percentage points the sport participation levels of women aged 25 to 39 (from 27% to 33%), while at least maintaining the current rate of participation of men (53%).

These data are drawn from two quite different surveys (the General Social Survey, and the Physical Activity Monitor) and, given the stated concerns about the validity and accuracy of the surveys, it is quite reasonable to suggest that the surveys may not be able to accurately measure 5 or 6% targeted increases; and to ask, 'how will we know if the targets have been achieved?'

The General Social Survey (GSS; Statistics Canada) measurement of sport participation is carried out every six or seven years (1986, 1992, 1998, 2005); while the Physical Activity and Sport Monitor (PASM; Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute) has been carried out annually since 1995 (except 1996). Both are telephone surveys, but the GSS has a far larger sample (25,000 in 2005, with a response rate of 80%) than the PASM (6,033 in 2005, with a response rate of 51%). The GSS has a somewhat more limited definition of 'sport' than PASM<sup>13</sup> and also stipulates a frequency of participation ("regularly," i.e., at least once a week during the season, in the past 12 months); thus, PASM could also include activities in which an individual only participated once in the past 12 months). It is therefore not surprising that PASM reports higher rates of participation

than the GSS (36% in 2004 and 2006–07; compared with 28% for the 2005 GSS).

The *Sport Participation Strategy 2008–2012* (Sport Canada, 2008, p. 14) notes that PASM “can be used to collect data for children under 15 years of age (boys and girls).” Given that both surveys have the same target population (15 years of age and older), it is worth asking how the ministers, using these data, were able to report participation rates and establish targets for 5–9 year-olds, “tweens,” and teens under the age of 15? The data are primarily drawn from PASM and GSS questions for parents in the sample, inquiring about the participation of their children. Thus, sampling and non-sampling errors are a problem for these surveys—for PASM even more than the GSS. Each person interviewed for the 2005 GSS represents approximately 1,300 Canadians. As the overall samples are divided to report on participation rates by gender, age, province, sport and so on, the samples become correspondingly smaller. Given all of the other potential sources of error in terms of recall, social desirability and interpretation of the questions, it is apparent that such surveys are useful, but particularly blunt instruments of measurement.<sup>14</sup> It is reasonable to assume that data from the GSS, a Statistics Canada time use survey, carried out periodically and using the same questions, may reliably show increasing or decreasing trends in participation. Whether it is possible to use such a survey to measure small increases in participation in relatively small population segments is much more open to question.

Even NSOs are concerned about the quality of their participation data. In recent interviews with staff at some 25 NSOs in Canada (Donnelly et al., forthcoming), only Bobsleigh Canada felt that they had reliable data on the number of participants. For a variety of reasons, including concerns about data reported by the PSOs, all of the other NSOs felt that they could not provide a reliable estimate of the number of participants in their sport. For example, although Hockey Canada maintains registration statistics for minor hockey, they do not have clear estimates of the number of players involved in high school, college and university hockey, intramural leagues, ‘beer’ leagues, industrial leagues, gay and lesbian leagues, church leagues, leagues associated with the Canadian Adult Recreational Hockey Association, outlaw leagues, regular pick-up games, and so on.

Further complicating the issue is the lack of reliable data on the frequency and intensity of participation; and data on the

demographics of participants have the same sampling and non-sampling errors as participation data. Perhaps a starting point for setting any policy on sport participation should be the collection of a more reliable set of data. Without a good set of baseline data, it is impossible to determine if policies and measures intended to increase sport participation overall, or among specific targeted segments of the population, are effective. It is entirely possible that the GSS and PASM are under-reporting participation. Given the differentiation of sport participation noted above, and given the inclusive construct of active living (supported by recent studies suggesting that any activity is better than no activity in terms of health), it is important to attempt to achieve accurate and regular measures of all of the forms of sport, exercise and recreational physical activity in which Canadians are engaged, along with measures of the frequency and intensity of participation and accurate measures of participant demographics. Only with such data is it possible to more effectively identify target segments of the population for increasing levels of participation and to know if the measures taken in an attempt to increase participation actually worked.

### **Using the *Canadian Sport Policy (2002)* to Develop a More Integrated Sport System**

Donnelly et al. (forthcoming) reviewed eight different surveys of sport and physical activity carried out recently in Canada (including the GSS and PASM). All have different questions, different samples, different definitions of sport and physical activity, and so on. They are symbolic of the fragmentation of the Canadian sport system and, for the purposes of this chapter, of the fragmentation of programs and initiatives intended to increase participation in sport, exercise and recreational physical activity. The programs and initiatives include those noted above undertaken by Sport Canada and the federal-provincial/territorial ministers in an attempt to follow the CSP, but they also include municipal initiatives, school-based initiatives, sport-specific initiatives, non-profit sector initiatives, commercial-sector initiatives, community initiatives, workplace initiatives, and so on. Such a diversity of programs and initiatives, usually sustained by anecdotes of success but carried out without any independent monitoring and evaluation, make it impossible to discover and determine best practices: What works, and what does not work, in what contexts?

While the development of a more ‘seamless’ sport system is unlikely, the CSP did provide an overall vision for Canadian sport. The four goals of the *Policy* provided a framework for action that has barely been realized. The goal of ‘enhanced interaction’ is evident in the regular meetings and co-ordination attempts of the federal-provincial/territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation—but has not really addressed the fragmentation of the system noted above. The goal of ‘enhanced capacity’ has increased awareness of the need to build facilities and develop programs and personnel, and a few steps have been taken in that direction *via* the recent ‘infrastructure’ program (federal spending in an attempt to alleviate the effects of the 2008–2009 worldwide economic crisis), facility construction for the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games and increased efforts to train coaches and officials. But capacity is expensive, and estimates of Canada’s sport facilities deficit are huge. For example, in 2006, the Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation estimated that the capital deficit was CA\$ 15B for replacing and refurbishing sport facilities and adding facilities to accommodate the significant increase in Canada’s population since the last major phase of facility building in the 1960s and 1970s (Christie, 2006).<sup>15</sup>

The goal of ‘enhanced excellence’ was the most politically popular aspect of the CSP, and substantial federal-provincial/territorial government funds were provided to ensure both the success of hosting the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games and successful performances by Canadian athletes at those Olympic Winter Games. The goal of ‘enhanced participation’, while in many ways the most popular goal of the CSP, is also perhaps the goal on which the least progress has been achieved. The popularity of the goal is evident in public opinion surveys that routinely report, for example, that “91% of Canadians think that physical education should be mandatory to Grade 12” (*Canadian Heritage*, reported by Christie, 2001), or that 90% of Canadians believe that sport has a positive influence on youth and is an effective vehicle for reinforcing societal values (True Sport, 2005). This chapter has emphasized the various ways in which little progress has been made towards the goal of enhanced participation.

If we consider participation and excellence as the two main goals of the Canadian sport system, two sides of the same coin (with

capacity and interaction as the supporting goals), then the claims of the high performance system (excellence) about participation might be used to leverage a more mutually supportive relationship with participation. It is widely claimed that hosting major sport events and the successful performances of Canadian athletes in international sport events inspire increased participation in sport. In fact, such claims—repeated frequently by successful athletes and by sport leaders—are often used by sport leaders as a case for increased funding for high performance sport and as an example of the participation legacy of high performance sport. As noted previously in this chapter, these are “convenient fictions” (Donnelly, 2010b). Data from various studies show that inspiration is not enough unless policies and procedures are implemented to ensure that hosting major sport events and the success of athletes is directly tied to initiatives to increase sport participation. If young people are inspired and motivated by seeing ‘excellence’, then ‘excellence’ has a responsibility to ensure that such ‘inspired’ young people have the opportunity to become participants, and not to be turned away because they (their families) lack the resources to support participation and/or because the sport does not have the capacity or infrastructure to welcome ‘inspired’ young people. Donnelly et al. (2008) outlined one set of possibilities for suturing such a relationship between excellence and participation in anticipation of the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games. None of the proposals were implemented, and it is unlikely that Canada will experience ‘enhanced participation’ as a result of hosting those Games and winning a record number of gold medals.

Such missed opportunities are not exclusive to Canada—several studies showed a similar failure to ‘inspire’ participation in Australia following the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games (e.g., Bauman, Armstrong, & Davies 2003; Veal, 2003). In order to avoid such missed opportunities in the future and to realize the goals of the CSP in a more integrated manner, ‘enhanced interaction’ between high performance sport and participation sport, along with the ‘enhanced capacity’ to accommodate new participants, could assist in the achievement of ‘enhanced excellence’ and ‘enhanced participation.’ It would also help to resolve the imbalance and the tensions between participation and high performance addressed previously in this chapter.

## Sport for All Canadians

One way to approach the development of sport policy intended to increase participation—a sport for all policy—is to attempt to understand the reasons why participation declines. A number of interpretations have been offered to account for the 17% decline in sport participation (as measured by the GSS) between 1992 and 2005 (Gruneau, 2010b; Ifedi, 2008). First, Canada's aging population helps to account for the decline since older Canadians are less likely to be involved in sport. Second, the growing number of immigrants helps to account for the decline since there is evidence that immigrants are less likely to be involved in sport than people born in Canada. However, it seems likely that socioeconomic factors are the most important in terms of accounting for the decline in participation. Data continually show that those with higher income and/or higher education (and their children) are significantly more likely to participate in sport than those with lower income and/or education; and a review of recent surveys indicates little or no decline in participation among higher income Canadians (cf. Gruneau, 2010b). A growing economic polarization of Canadian society since the introduction of neo-liberal policies in the 1980s (i.e., the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer), combined with the increasing economic pressures of the last two decades that have people working longer hours, suggest that there are more people with less time and money to be involved, or to involve their children, in sport participation. The decline in participation appears to be accounted for mainly by this lower income population segment. In fact, lack of time is given as the main reason for non-participation by respondents to the GSS; and when the increasing costs of participation are also taken into account (for example, Slack (2003) found that, by the late 1990s, all municipal Parks and Recreation departments in Ontario were charging user fees), it helps to account for declining participation.

However, even before addressing the above concerns, an effective sport for all policy should start with good data on participation. As noted previously, the GSS employed Sport Canada's narrow definition of sport, leaving open the possibility that the decline in participation in a broader, more differentiated range of activities is not so significant. For example, the recent rapid increase in the number of people involved in running, especially women, would not for the most part be measured by a survey such as the GSS, since

many would define it as a recreational or fitness activity. However, increases in obesity and diseases of inactivity, while not accounted for only by increasing inactivity, are indicators that large segments of the population are more inactive. A comprehensive measure of participation in a broad range of sports and recreational physical activities—a measure that may be repeated at regular intervals—is both a key starting point for a sport for all policy and a means to determine if the policy is working.

Another crucial aspect of a Canadian sport for all policy would be the targeting of older and immigrant populations, and any other population segments identified as having low levels of participation. Specific measures to increase participation among the targeted populations work best when they are a result of widespread consultations with those populations. Far too often, policies have failed because they did not take into account the wishes and life circumstances of those for whom the policies were developed. In the example of Women Organizing Activities for Women (WOAW), low-income single mothers in Vancouver (the targeted population) were at the table helping to negotiate the form of an activity program (Frisby & Millar, 2002). None of the ‘experts’ at the table had raised the crucial issue of child care, until the mothers pointed out that they would not be able to attend the program without the provision of care for their children. If the program had been developed without the involvement of the mothers, there would have been no child-care component, no one would have attended, and the experts could well have concluded that the target population was not interested in participation. The provision of child care ensured that the women were able to participate, and their presence at the negotiating table also meant that they had some control over the design of the program and which activities were included—thus making attendance even more attractive.

It seems likely that socioeconomic barriers are the most crucial to overcome, and the most expensive, when developing a sport for all policy. Evidence of the cost-sensitivity of participation is available in an example from Toronto. Following the 1998 amalgamation of Toronto into a mega-city, the former City of Toronto, which had no user fees for Parks and Recreation, joined with five other municipalities that all had different user fees. This was harmonized into a single fee-structure—introducing user fees into the former City of Toronto and reducing user fees in the five suburban municipalities. In the initial harmonization model, fees were introduced for all adult

programs but removed for all children's and seniors' programs. The subsequent assessment of the effects showed a significant increase in the number of participants in the suburban municipalities where fees were reduced (e.g., an increase of 45% in Scarborough), and a significant reduction (33%) in participation in the former City of Toronto where fees were introduced for the first time (Clutterbuck & Howarth, 2002; Slack, 2003). These data suggest that user fees may have strong effects on participation. However, there is growing evidence that the cost of providing increased opportunities to participate may be offset and, in some cases, more than pay for itself in terms of reduced costs in other areas of public spending such as physical and mental health, crime, and education.

The shortage of sport facilities in Canada is significant (*viz.*, the CA\$ 15B capital deficit for facilities noted previously). Anecdotal evidence lends support to the idea that, 'if you build it [a sport facility], they [participants] will come.' Many local governments have waiting lists for their Parks and Recreation programs and facilities, and some universities report waiting lists for their intramural sport programs. Whenever new facilities become available, they seem to quickly be filled with users. The Toronto example given above suggests that if those public opportunities are affordable and accessible, they fill up rapidly.

Well-designed financial subsidies to low-income populations can also be extremely effective in increasing participation. Poorly planned subsidies where, for example, tax returns have to be shown to Parks and Recreation or YMCA/YWCA staff in order to claim a means-tested subsidy, are considered to be demeaning and are often not claimed. 'Smart card' access to facilities, whereby no one knows who is receiving a subsidy, and appropriate and dignified means of applying for and granting subsidies, are far more effective. Subsidies may also be more program-specific. The following three examples show effective cases where subsidized programs of sport and/or recreational physical activity have been made available and, in two cases, where they have more than paid for themselves:

- Gina Browne and her colleagues at McMaster University carried out an extensive four-year study which, in part, provided recreation subsidies and transportation to children in low-income, sole-support families (Browne et al., 2000). The study, in the form of a field experiment, involved

765 households that included 1,300 children and youth. In a five group comparison, the study found that “the *child care/recreation alone* group was associated with the lowest per-child annual expenditures for use of health and social services four years after intake (CA\$ 908 ± CA\$ 2,041) even after including the cost of recreation” (Browne et al., 2000, p. vi). The report concluded that:

Age-appropriate child care and recreation for children on social assistance results in a 10% greater exit of parents from social assistance in one year, maintains the academic, social and physical competence with baseline behaviour disorder at two and four years, and pays for itself within one year because of reduced use of professional and probationary services and after four years, not only continues to pay for itself but results in one-third the annual per child health and social expenditures when compared to children of parents [in the] *employment retraining* [group]. (p. vii)

Thus, recreation participation was sustained while cost subsidies and transportation were provided, and the children’s health status improved.

- In research with a similar population, Dan Offord, a psychiatrist also at McMaster University, provided a one-year program of non-school skill development (including transportation) involving all children aged five to 15 living in a public housing complex in Ottawa. The apparent effect of recreation participation/skill development on improved school performance and home behaviour was marginal. However, overall levels of skill development and self-esteem were believed to have improved, and there was a clear effect on the reduction of anti-social behaviour. In fact, in terms of cost-effectiveness, the savings resulting from reduced vandalism and reduced police and fire costs were far more than the cost of the program (e.g., Jones & Offord, 1989; Offord & Jones, 1990; Offord, Hanna, & Hault, 1992). Offord’s work on this project led him to start the Christie Lake project for children and youth from low-income families in Ottawa.

In a later study, Offord, Lipman, and Duku (1998, p. 4) found that, “in the community domains, as would be expected, the presence of good parks, playgrounds and play spaces in the neighbourhood was strongly associated with increased rates of participation in supervised sports, and to a lesser extent, in unsupervised sports and the arts.” As with Browne et al. (2000), Offord and his colleagues provide indirect evidence that participation increases and is sustained for the period of subsidization or when quality activity spaces are readily available.

- Wendy Frisby, at the University of British Columbia, started the WOAW project in several British Columbia communities, including Vancouver. The physical activity programs were provided for low-income single mothers and, as noted, with advice from the participants, the programs included child care. Although the main remaining barrier to participation was transport for those who lived some distance from the activity site, participation was sustained for the period of the subsidy.

Again, targeted subsidies to a specific population, when combined with additional funding to overcome other barriers to involvement (e.g., child care, transportation) suggest that this economic instrument is worthy of further exploration with regard to increasing participation. Unfortunately, many of these projects are based on short-term or grant funding, rather than being sustained in the base budget of the appropriate agency or department. When the funding ends, the program usually ends, sometimes leading to a reversion to the status quo. In fact, Offord suggest that there may be a relatively short ‘halo’ effect of the positive benefits of the programs, but noted that vandalism and false 911 calls were back to former levels within one year of the program ending.

## Conclusion

This chapter ends as the former sport policy ends (CSP 2002–2012). In June, 2012, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers for sport, physical activity and recreation endorsed its replacement (Sport Canada, 2012) at their meeting in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The new policy is intended to outline the direction for Canadian sport

until 2022. It is far too early to determine any influences of the new policy, and it is only possible at this stage to suggest some possible outcomes. The policy vision of Canada as “a dynamic and innovative culture that promotes and celebrates participation and excellence in sport,” and its values, principles and goals are all important ideals. As with the previous policy, the 2012 CSP outlines an integrated view of Canadian sport as a whole system while at the same time affirming the jurisdiction of the 14 governments involved. In addition, ‘participation’ and ‘excellence’ are given equal value as in the preceding policy (and current legislation), but no means are outlined for resolving the division and disparities between the two (Sport Canada, 2012).

The new policy outlines a direction for Canadian sport, and identifies desired outcomes, but—as with its predecessor—it fails to outline the means for staying on course and achieving the outcomes. With regard to participation, ‘inclusive’ sport is a key policy principle, and “[a] desired outcome of the Policy is that both the number and diversity of Canadians participating in sport will increase between 2012 and 2022” (Sport Canada, 2012, p. 3). This chapter suggests that we know quite a lot about what factors limit participation and how to overcome them in order to increase participation. The new policy still endorses the value of increased participation but does not provide any means for achieving increased participation and gives responsibility for achieving increased participation to federal and provincial sport systems that have “generate[d] self-reinforcing path dependent processes” (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 361) to focus on (and receive funding for) achieving ‘excellence.’

If sport participation is to increase in Canada, there is enough evidence to suggest an appropriate direction for policy—a direction that does not include tax credits and public service announcements. The European phase of ‘sport for all’ was accompanied by substantial provision of facilities for participation. Such facilities were designed to benefit both participation sport and high performance sport, and this would be an ideal place for Canada to start. The last major phase of facility provision occurred at the centennial (i.e., 1967); perhaps a new phase of facility construction would be an ideal goal for the sesquicentennial (i.e., 2017).

It will be key to develop a bridge between ‘high performance’ and ‘participation’—a means to cooperate and share resources (e.g., facilities, expertise). To use an educational analogy, at this time

all of the best teachers are contracted to teach only the best students in all of the very best facilities available. This is not an ideal situation in which to increase participation. For the not-so-skilled, participation is more difficult. The Long-Term Athlete Development model (now re-branded as Canadian Sport for Life) has influenced the new policy and envisages a track from 'physical literacy/introduction to sport' to 'high performance sport'—however, it too fails to incorporate any means to sustain 'recreational sport' i.e., participation among the vast majority of Canadians who enjoy sport but who are not continually improving their skills.

Effective measurements of participation, and the development of targeted programs resulting from inclusive consultations, are key to realizing the desired outcomes of the new policy. However, if we are unable to develop a way to involve that substantial proportion of the population who cannot find the time or the means to become (or for their children to become) participants, then the new policy will fail, just as the previous policy failed to realize increased participation.

## Notes

1. The work of van Bottenburg and de Bosscher (2011) helped to provide focus and context for parts of this section.
2. Of course, there is some overlap between the two trends noted here, and some of the new activities that developed with little structure or competition eventually developed into new forms of achievement sport (e.g., snowboarding). The examples of activities in the following quotation could also include the revival/re-emergence of folk and traditional games.
3. As Donnelly (2007) pointed out, traditional Indian yogis would be astonished at how much clothing and equipment is now considered necessary in order to practice yoga, and at the growth of companies such as Lululemon to design and sell those items.
4. Questions relating to the definition and measurement of participation are addressed in a later section.
5. The double entendre is intentional, with 'Red' referring to both the Canadian team colour and to communism.
6. Before 1994, both Summer and Winter Olympic Games were held in the same year.

7. The famous 1972 hockey series between Canada and the USSR was characterized as a classic Cold War battle between capitalism and communism.
8. Or, as British Olympic champion rower, Steve Williams put it, "You can't buy gold medals, but you do have to pay for them" (as cited in Syed, 2008, paragraph. 1).
9. For example, Houlihan and Green (2008) and de Bosscher et al. (2008) point out the ways in which high performance sport programs in countries engaged in the "global sporting arms race" have grown to resemble each other.
10. In fact, Dubin's first recommendation (Dubin, 1990, p. 527) was to base sport funding on "broad participation in sport, not solely a focus on elite sport."
11. See footnote 13 for Sport Canada's particularly narrow definition of "sport."
12. The *Strategy* was published on December 5, 2008 (Sport Canada, 2008).
13. The GSS uses Sport Canada's (*Sport Participation in Canada—1998*) quite restrictive definition of sport ("...an activity that involves two or more participants engaging for the purpose of competition. Sport involves formal rules and procedures, requires tactics and strategies, specialized neuromuscular skills, a high degree of difficulty, risk and effort. Its competitive mode implies the development of trained coaching personnel and does not include activities in which the performance of a motorized vehicle is the primary determinant of the competitive outcome."). The GSS offers a list of "sports" provided by Sport Canada, and a list of exclusions ("...aerobics, dancercise, aquafit, bicycling for recreation or transportation, body building, car racing, fishing, hiking, jogging, lawn bowling, motorcycling, skate boarding, snowmobiling and walking").
14. For example, the 1998 GSS found that 6.2% of Canadians claimed to play hockey regularly, while 2.7% claimed to play tennis regularly. Such claims call into question the accuracy of the data—it seems unlikely that there were almost half as many tennis players as hockey players (aged 15 and older) in Canada.
15. Ministers noted, for example, that 30 to 50% of the facilities in Ontario were nearing the end of their life. In a comparison that is often made between two similar-size cities, there are two Olympic-size swimming pools in Toronto (with a third now under construction for the 2015 PanAm/ParapanAm Game) and an estimated 30 in Sydney, Australia. The 2005 National Arena Census noted that 73% of arenas in Canada were built before 1973, and that the 'use by' date is imminent for many of them.

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