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## Sport Policy in Canada

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## Women in Sport Policy

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No one can deny that Canadian women have a rich history of participation and leadership in sport and that the current state of Canadian sport—at all levels—involves, and is vitally dependent upon, women as athletes, coaches, volunteers, administrators, and leaders. That said, girls and women in Canada continue to face obstacles to full participation and representation in the Canadian sport system—at all levels and in all capacities—and continue to require formal federal-provincial/territorial policy that advocates and pushes for gender equity in sport (cf. Sport Canada, 2011).

While we must be cautious of the ways in which participation in sport is measured and evaluated (cf. Donnelly et al., 2010), recent statistics from a variety of sources present a mottled picture of participation rates for women in various sport roles. According to the 2009 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's (CFLRI) monitor on sport participation among adults, approximately 27% of Canadians participate in sports as players, 19% as coaches and assistant coaches, 5% as officials/referees, 3% as leaders and 2% as team managers. As sport participants, CFLRI reports that women participate to a lesser extent (slightly less than 20%) than men (approximately 35%) across a variety of socio-demographic factors (e.g., age, class, educational background, income, etc.) (CFLRI, 2009). This echoes data from the 2005 General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by Statistics Canada that identified a continued large gap between

male and female participants in sport (36% versus 21%, respectively) despite its narrowing since 1998 (Ifedi, 2008).

Surprisingly, the 2005 GSS identified some positive trends around women in coaching and women as sport officials. With regard to the latter, the 2005 GSS pointed out that the rates for women as referees, officials and umpires had increased since 1992 such that the ratio of men to women in such roles was 2:1 as compared to 5:1 in 1992. With regard to women in coaching, the 2005 GSS highlighted that over 882,000 women coached in Canada in 2005, up 15% from 1998 and more than four times the total in 1992, whereas the number of men who coached had decreased by 9% (down to 874,000) in the same 13-year span (1992–2005) (Ifedi, 2008). Again, a call for caution is warranted since such statistics do not specify the levels of sport (e.g., community/grassroots versus high performance sport) at which women are coaching, nor does it tell us anything about the quality, including the opportunities or barriers women face, of their experiences as coaches throughout the Canadian sport system. For example, figures from the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) (2008) show that, within the National Coaching Certification Program, women constitute 29.7% of Canadian coaches with Level 1 certification, 33.9% of those coaches with Level 2 certification, 29.0% of those with Level 3 certification, 20.9% of those with Level 4 certification and only 11.0% of those coaches with the highest level of certification in the country (Level 5). While Canada has sent more female athletes than male athletes to the Olympic Games on two occasions, most recently to the London 2012 Olympic Games, the number of women coaches going to the Olympics remains low (Donnelly & Donnelly, 2012). In the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, only two of 22 head coaches were women (9%) and 11 of 95 total coaches were women (12%) (CAC, 2008).

In terms of women in sport governance, Canadian Heritage (2009a) reported that only 37% of organizations receiving funding from Sport Canada were headed by women in senior administrative roles and only 19% of Sport Canada-funded organizations have a volunteer governance structure led by a woman (Appendix B, paragraphs 11–12). Both of these figures represent an increase in participation of women in sport leadership roles and yet, much like the other statistics noted above, they also indicate an overall under-representation of women in sport in Canada despite the fact that slightly more than half of all people living in Canada are women.

It should come then as no surprise that the latest policy offering from the federal government, *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*, both highlights the tremendous improvements for Canadian girls and women in sport over the past few decades and yet retains, as its central objective, the fostering of “sport environments—from playground to podium—where women and girls, particularly as athlete participants, coaches, technical leaders and officials, and as governance leaders are provided with: quality sport experiences; and equitable support by sport organizations” (Canadian Heritage, 2009a, p. 6). No critical examination of Canadian sport policy would be complete without an understanding of policy pertaining to women and sport. An in-depth, comprehensive discussion of the complex history, the current struggles, and the pivotal individuals (e.g., see Keyes, 1989) and groups that have shaped Canadian sport for women falls beyond the scope of one chapter—in fact, volumes have been and can be dedicated to this one sport policy issue alone.

The purpose of this chapter, rather, is to introduce readers to the changing landscape of Canadian sport policy from the 1960s onwards as it has framed and influenced the inclusion (or, at times, the exclusion) and full participation of women in sport in Canada. The focus of this chapter is predominately on federal-level sport policy for women; however, it must be acknowledged that critical action around sport policy for girls and women has occurred (and continues to occur) at the provincial and territorial levels both in response to, and in anticipation of, federal-level developments (e.g., Vail, 1992). This chapter is structured in three main sections and follows Canadian sport policy for women in sport in a fairly chronological fashion although it is important to recognize that the development of sport policy for women in Canada does not follow so neatly or linearly its description here. The first section explores sport policy for women from the 1960s up to, and including, the 1986 *Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport*. The second section examines the state of Canadian sport for women following the 1986 policy on the Canadian sport system and leading up to Canadian Heritage’s 2009 *Actively Engaged*. The final section of the chapter explores theoretical and substantive issues that continue to impact—both negatively and positively—the full engagement of Canadian women in sport.

### **Starting at Square One? From WAAF to CAAWS and the 1986 Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport**

The passage of the Bill C-131, *An Act to Encourage Fitness and Amateur Sport* in 1961 marked the beginning of the federal government's formal involvement in Canadian sport, but it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that the federal government "embarked ... on a course of direct promotion of what was to become known as high performance sport" (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990, p. 4). The "kitchen table" approach that previously characterized national sport organizations and sport delivery gave way to increasingly bureaucratized, rationalized, evidence-based and corporate models of sport management, in exchange for financial support from the federal government (Hall, 1996). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a number of changes marked the transformation of the Canadian elite sport system. For example, a central administrative complex was created to house national sport organizations (NSOs) and multi-sport/service organizations (MSOs), funding for performance-enhancement research increased and, in time, an athlete financial assistance program was created, all in efforts to boost sport performance.

These shifts and developments in the delivery of sport in Canada impacted Canadian women in sport to varying degrees, but to more completely understand the state of sport and sport policy for Canadian women in this same period of time, it is important to understand the gains and losses made by Canadian sportswomen circa Bill C-131. In particular, two key points need to be explicated. The first speaks to the tremendous gains made by women throughout the first half of the twentieth century in sport participation and leadership, particularly through the creation and efforts of the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation (WAAF), while the second speaks to the real losses in opportunity and leadership experienced by women athletes upon the incorporation of the WAAF into the mainstream and male-dominated Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAU) by the early 1960s.

Created in 1926—in the wake of first-wave feminism and the feminist breakthroughs of World War I—by such notable Canadian female athletes as Alexandrine Gibb, Marie Parkes, Mable Ray, Ethel Cartwright as well as others, WAAF represented the first national forum for Canadian women to collectively address the sport interests of Canadian women. It was an organization about women's sport that

was controlled by women and it focused squarely on encouraging women to fully participate in sport as athletes, coaches and leaders. WAAF members, all of whom were volunteers balancing their personal and work lives with coaching, fundraising and administration, worked tirelessly to secure opportunities for women to compete nationally and internationally (Kidd, 1996). WAAF enjoyed a strong and relatively large membership in Canada, and Canadian women athletes, hand in hand with their international sister athletes, enjoyed tremendous success on the international sport stage. This was, in large part, due to the WAAF's acceptance of the belief that women's sport should be separate from men's sport—a philosophy criticized by some contemporary feminist scholars as reproducing the “dominant, male-privileging sexual division of labour” but recognized by others as an attempt by the women of the interwar period to “forge a new, vigorously active ‘womanhood’” (Kidd, 1996, p. 139). It is important to note that this debate between ‘separate but equal’ and ‘sex-integrated’ sport for women would be revisited time and time again in Canada over the next 30 years and will be discussed in greater length later in the chapter. Even though the AAU claimed official jurisdiction over women's athletics in Canada since the early 1920s, it never fully or consistently supported the growth and development of women's sport in Canada with the same commitment and dedication as the WAAFers. That noted, due to a variety of factors explored in great detail by Kidd (1996), members of WAAF agreed to amalgamate with the AAU in the early 1950s following World War II.

The consequences of this amalgamation—the loss of focused leadership for women's sport in Canada—were terrible for the development of Canadian sport policy relative to women in the 1960s and 1970s. As Kidd (1996, p. 144) evocatively noted:

“women's sport run by women” is so utopian an ideal that it cannot be imagined. As a result, girls and women struggle to develop identities of healthy womanhood in a cultural practice largely controlled by males and steeped in discourses of masculinity. In the absence of the sort of vigorous feminist debate about alternatives that the WAAF facilitated, there is little to challenge the naturalization of the male model. That so many women succeed does not discount the enormous contradictions they experience.

During the 1960s and 1970s, when the Canadian sport system was being transformed into a state-directed system of high performance, “women lacked an identifiable leadership to represent their interests and a forum to discuss issues and strategy. Very few women at all participated in the major decisions, and those who did were actively discouraged from speaking from a ‘women’s point of view’” (Kidd, 1996, p. 144).

It was not until the late 1960s that political attention to women in sport was renewed, albeit through a rather indirect manner. In 1967, a *Royal Commission on the Status of Women* was established and released a report in 1970. The report barely mentioned sport but did acknowledge that girls participated in sport at a much lower rate than boys in school sports and did make two separate recommendations (Recommendations 77 and 78) for further analysis of, and action on, sport for girls in Canada (Government of Canada, 1970). However, no further substantial developments occurred until 1974 (Hall & Richardson, 1982) and the first *National Conference on Women in Sport* spearheaded under the leadership of Marion Lay. At that particular conference, “virtually every woman significantly involved in organizing, coaching, leading and administering sport in Canada was represented” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 28). These sport leaders, such as Petra Burke, Abby Hoffman and Marion Lay, were responsible in large part for the new momentum generated around women’s sport in Canada and began to make their voices heard in the Canadian sport system. Ironically, though, the re-initiation of the formal organization of women’s sport in Canada occurred almost “as if WAAF’s control of women’s sports and the networks they created had never existed” (Kidd, 1996, p. 144). Furthermore, with the emergence of second-wave feminism, one of the key differences with this new generation of women sport leaders was a rejection of the ‘separate but equal’ approach to the provision and delivery of sport for girls and women. This brought some advantages in resources and organization, but also drew criticism since, in contrast to the approach taken by WAAF, once-separate women’s programs were “brought under male leadership, and men got most of the jobs created by the expansion in female participation” (Kidd, 1966, p. 144).

The 1974 conference produced numerous recommendations, but as Hoffman (1989, p. 28) noted, the recommendations “were indiscriminately directed to all and sundry without regard to jurisdiction, contradiction among recommendation, priorities, costs, realism, to

name a few. There was, in other words, no organizing principle or philosophy underlying the recommendations." The strategies for change that were suggested should not be overlooked but were insufficient in producing action since there were no means to monitor the process or implement the recommendations. This lack of focus contributed, in part, to the lack of further development for women in sport between 1974 and 1980. Even though 1975 was designated as the "International Women's Year" by the United Nations and even though during this time the first-ever Canadian minister of state responsible for fitness and amateur sport was a woman, Iona Campagnolo, "women barely rated a mention" in the Canadian sport system (Hoffman, 1989, p. 28).

It was not until 1980 that the federal government initiated a formal Women's Program within Fitness and Amateur Sport, in large part because the Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch was called to account for its progress on achieving sex equality in sport by the Minister responsible for the Status of Women in Canada (Hall & Richardson, 1982). While this entity also lacked a coherent policy framework, it did contain certain elements never seen before in a federal initiative for women's sport in Canada (Macintosh, Bedecki, & Franks, 1987). Under the thoughtful leadership of Sue Vail (1983), it conducted an important leadership survey that highlighted the under-representation of women sport leaders in Canada, it provided training and internship programs for women in sport management and leadership; it co-ordinated a workshop that eventually led to the creation of a national advocacy organization, to be discussed below; it developed various promotional campaigns on notable women athletes; and it provided seed money to NSOs for projects aimed explicitly at increasing female participation. The program operated for a few years with some success but also some clear limitations as it highlighted the continued ambivalence of the Canadian state towards women in sport. On the one hand, the federal state continued to provide more funds and opportunities for men than women in sport—further legitimating the perception of male superiority in sport—and yet introduced, via a formal women's program within Fitness and Amateur Sport, a means with which to address and attempt to rectify gender inequality in sport (cf. Hall, Slack, Smith, & Whitson, 1991). Part of the continued ambivalence from the government bureaucrats stemmed from the view that gender inequality in Canadian sport was a problem specific to women rather than a structural or

systemic problem of the broader sport system. The focus on women as a target population requiring special intervention in isolation of or outside of the existing sport system was a recognized shortcoming among women's sport leaders and advocates (cf. Hoffman, 1989) but it required a few more years before more significant political and policy progress could be initiated for Canadian women in sport.

In addition to the establishment of the Women's Program in Fitness and Amateur Sport in 1980, two significant developments in the early 1980s need to be discussed. The first is the creation of, what is now known as, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS). The 1981 *Female Athlete Conference*, funded by the Women's Program in Fitness and Amateur Sport, gathered together a small group of sport administrators, federal bureaucrats, physical educators, athletes, coaches and representatives from major national feminist organizations and served as the catalyst for the founding of CAAWS whose purpose was (and is) to explicitly advocate on behalf of women in sport with the intent of making the Canadian sport system gender equitable (Hall, 2003; Robertson, 1995). CAAWS had an explicit feminist agenda that was not unusual given the politics of second wave-feminism at that time. As noted by Vickers (1992, p. 44), "an operational code of the second-wave women's movement in Canada is the belief that change is possible and that state action is an acceptable way of achieving it." This explicit feminist agenda has since been tempered as CAAWS has drifted from its original mission of advancing "the position of women by defining, promoting and supporting a feminist perspective on sport and [by improving] the status of women in sport" to, since the 1990s, providing "leadership and education, and to build capacity to foster equitable support, diverse opportunities and positive experiences for girls and women in sport and physical activity" (CAAWS, n.d.). The nature and consequences of this ideological shift will be discussed in greater detail in the last section of this chapter.

The second significant development of the early 1980s was the incorporation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* into Canada's Constitution in 1982 (cf. CAAWS, 1994). The Charter provides far-reaching and wide-ranging protection under the law for women and other groups, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, gender or sexual orientation and providing the fundamental freedom of equality to all. Until the establishment of provincial

human rights legislation and commissions in the 1970s and the Charter in 1982, there “was little to no recourse for Canadian girls and women who complained of sex discrimination in sport” (Hall, 1996, p. 94). Barnes (2010) (cf. Barnes, 1996 and Hall & Richardson, 1982) outlines a number of sport-related cases of discrimination (specifically the denial of girls and women from playing on boys’ and men’s sport teams). Arguably the most famous of these cases was that of Justine Blainey in the mid-1980s since her case helped “to legally strike down a discriminatory clause in the Ontario Human Rights Code that specifically exempted membership in athletic organizations, participation in athletic activities, and access to the services and facilities of recreational clubs from its sex equality provisions” (Hall, 1996, p. 94). With the institution of the federal Charter in 1982, there could be no exceptions to its provisions, and thus human rights legislation—and legal action (at times, even just the mere threat of legal action) based on human rights legislation—has been a powerful tool in bringing about change in policy (Corbett & Findlay, 1994; Hall, 1996; Hoffman, 1989).

It became understood over the early 1980s, with the founding of CAAWS and the enactment of the Charter, that it was neither sufficient nor appropriate to simply focus on and treat women as a disadvantaged target group whose condition can be improved exclusively by programs aimed at females. As Hoffman (1989, p. 31) stated:

it became clear to us by the mid-1980s that we needed a clear policy statement if we were to cross over from a series of programs which focused on particular aspects and problems facing women in sport, to an approach which addressed the basic issue: that is, that the Canadian sport system is fundamentally one which contributes through its very nature to sex inequality in sport. We had to move our target group from females as an isolated group to the overall sport system. Further, we had to acknowledge as well, that much of what we sought to change in sport had its root cause outside of the sport system, and that there were (and are) a number of basic gender equality issues which are bigger than sport that we would have to address in our policy and related programs.

Under Hoffman’s leadership, then Director General of Sport Canada, a policy milestone was reached in 1986 with the release of *Sport*

*Canada Policy on Women in Sport.* The policy represented the federal government's first step in changing the sport system as it made equality of opportunity for women at all levels of the sport system an official goal (Sport Canada, 1986). The policy specifically stated:

equality implies that women at all levels of the sport system should have an equal opportunity to participate. Equality is not necessarily meant to imply that women wish to participate in the same activities as men, but rather to indicate that activities of their choice should be provided and administered in a fair and unbiased environment. At all levels of the sport system, equal opportunities must exist for women and men to compete, coach, officiate or administer sport. (Sport Canada, 1986, p. 10)

The policy document went further than any previous federal statements on the issue by outlining an action-oriented approach and strategy for implementation supported by both the Women's Program and by Sport Canada. It identified a number of areas requiring attention including policy program development; an integrated sport infrastructure; leadership development; high performance competition; participation development; equitable resource allocation; liaison; research; education; promotion; advocacy; and monitoring and evaluation (Sport Canada, 1986).

The importance of this policy in changing the landscape of Canadian sport for women cannot be denied; however, the ability of the policy to effect change was limited by a number of factors. The federal government recognized that gender inequality needed to be resolved but provided little challenge to existing social structures or socio-cultural attitudes that perpetuated structural or systemic inequality or provided little additional funding (a few hundred thousand as compared to the millions spent on amateur sport more broadly) to adequately implement, monitor and evaluate the recommendations made in its policy report (Bell-Altenstad & Vail, 1995; Myers & Doherty, 2007). Furthermore, the policy was intended to be carried out through the NSOs. In the early 1980s, many NSOs created their own women's committees and developed strategies—often unrealistic and undeliverable—with which to increase participation among women (Macintosh et al., 1987). Following the release of the policy in 1986, the federal government through the Women's Program and Sport Canada still encouraged the formation of these committees

out of the belief that they could “act as internal watchdogs, develop policy and do more detailed planning on women and sport matters than would otherwise occur” (Hoffman, 1989, pp. 33–34), but the policy itself operated on a voluntary basis as far as the sport organizations were concerned. There was an expectation on these sport organizations but no accountability framework to ensure that they would implement the policy and make a commitment to gender equity (Hall, 1996). There was now policy on women in Canadian sport, but it proved to simply have “no teeth” (Ponic, 2001, p. 59). As will be discussed below, the 1986 *Women in Sport* policy was a landmark moment in the history of women’s sport in Canada but it fell short of its proposed aims, and subsequent policy needed to be introduced.

### **The Second Shift: Moving Towards *Actively Engaged***

The release of the 1986 *Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport* was a success in the growth and organization of women’s sport in Canada but, in general, a very measured one (cf. Doherty & Varpalotai, 2001; Myers & Doherty, 2007). It facilitated the development of some unique initiatives for women in sport; for example, the establishment of a National Coaching School for Women that included both an annual educational program supported by partnerships with various NSOs as well as special three-year coaching apprenticeships for aspiring female coaches (Hall, 1996; Hoffman, 1989). Yet, despite some modest achievements, gender inequality continued to be part of the Canadian sport system. The fallout of the Ben Johnson scandal in the late 1980s included intense introspection of the Canadian sport system by the Dubin inquiry and two recommendations regarding gender equity in his report (Dubin, 1990). A mere two years later, the Minister’s Task Force on Federal Sport Policy, *Sport: The Way Ahead* (Minister’s Task Force, 1992, pp. 148–152), concluded that “even with an advocacy organization [CAAWS], a federal equity policy, and staffing guidelines to encourage fuller participation by women, little change had occurred over the past 10 years” (as cited in Hall, 1996, p. 94). Rates of participation by female athletes were nowhere close to that of men and, although the number of women among lower and middle-level management had increased, women made “little progress . . . in penetrating the ranks of the senior executive and technical staff in the national sports bureaucracy, or in membership on NSO Board of

Directors and Executive Committees" (Macintosh, 1996, p. 63; see also Hall, Cullen, & Slack, 1989; Whitson & Macintosh, 1989). The report rebuked the sport community for dragging its feet around gender equity and for not working towards equality: "in accountability for public funding, national sport organizations must understand the legal definition and intent of gender equity and implement it through legislation, constitution and policies. NSOs must work toward equality by removing systemic barriers and discrimination" (Minister's Task Force, 1992, p. 152).

The early 1990s marked the many contradictions of the Canadian federal government with regard to gender equity in sport (although it must be acknowledged that the contradictory character of the state around sport and gender equity can be seen before and after this period of time). On the one hand, policies and strategic documents would be produced that positioned the need for gender equality in sport as a top priority while, on the other hand, little was done to ensure the implementation of these policies and/or evaluation of these policies in action. Furthermore, funding for existing programs committed to improving sport for women was either kept to a relative minimum (e.g., funding for the Women's Program was a mere fraction of what was devoted to the entire elite sport system) or was taken away all together.

The removal of state funding was certainly experienced by CAAWS. The decision by the Secretary of State Women's Program to stop all funding for CAAWS in 1989–1990 had tremendous implications for the only major national organization advocating for women in sport and physical activity. Immediately following the loss of funding from the Secretary of State, CAAWS downsized drastically and relied even more heavily on volunteers to fulfil select projects associated with its partnership with the Women's Program—a decision initially made in order to avoid being co-opted by the state and Sport Canada (Robertson, 1995). However by 1991, CAAWS, in an effort to survive, went into an agreement with Sport Canada as a multi-sport/service organization (MSO) that would work with NSOs and other MSOs to assist them in becoming gender equitable. By 1994, CAAWS had moved into the Canadian Sport and Fitness Administration Centre and received its core and project funding from Sport Canada. This had implications for CAAWS' organizational philosophy. While CAAWS initially positioned itself as a feminist organization that promoted sport for women, by 1992, CAAWS had

reformulated their mission and vision and shifted towards identifying itself as an organization that advocates for women in sport and physical activity. The distinction here is that:

the former denotes a more radical feminist perspective in the sense that CAAWS is a women's organization that promotes its aims through sport; the latter represents a distinctly liberal approach that seeks to improve the lot of women already in sport through a sport organization for women. (Hall, 1996, p. 97)

We could speculate at length as to all the factors that may have motivated this shift in vision (e.g., the fear of feminist backlash), but one key factor is the absorption of CAAWS into the mainstream sport system through its Sport Canada funding and physical presence in the Canadian Sport and Fitness Administration Centre (cf. Hall, 2003). Comeau and Church (2010) similarly suggest that while "CAAWS has . . . been successful in promoting sport for women and girls . . . its cooptation has at times influenced the strategies it uses and its abilities to criticize governmental action" (p. 471). Whatever the motivation, CAAWS continued to advocate for girls and women in sport and physical activity, but also took a decidedly more educational and consultative role producing handbooks (e.g., *Towards Gender Equity for Women in Sport: A Handbook for Sport Organizations*), guidelines, research reports, promotional campaigns and awards to highlight the accomplishments of girls and women in Canadian sport.

The contradictory character of the state, with regard to gender equity, can also be seen in the short tenure of the Canadian Sport Council, a now-defunct coalition of NSOs and MSOs that championed the creation of a gender equitable Canadian sport system. Drawing on Kirby (1999), who provided a thoughtful and comprehensive discussion of the Canadian Sport Council including the "building blocks" that went into its formation in 1993, the entire sport system's moment of self-examination following the Johnson positive drug test and the Dubin inquiry opened up an opportunity for those in the Canadian sport community who wanted to push for equitable sport. As she noted:

when opportunity knocked, women and other marginalized groups in sport were well prepared and conversant with the equity issues. They vigorously sought representation at all levels

of decision-making during their creation and implementation of the CSC [Canadian Sport Council]. As a direct result of their readiness, gender equity was identified as a key value of a quality sport system. (Kirby, 1999, p. 57)

Arguably, the most pivotal feature of this coalition was its incorporation of gender equity into its own system of governance; a true push for women sport leaders and leaders in women's sport. The Canadian Sport Council maintained that each of its governing and working committees must have a gender composition of no less than 40% of one gender and that each delegation of two or more people attending the Canadian Sport Council general assembly must include one person from each gender with the overall goal of 50/50 gender representation (CAAWS, 1993; Kirby, 1999). Although the Canadian Sport Council had tremendous potential to mobilize change, it had a very short lifespan as, by the late 1990s, all of its funding from the state was removed. Again, on the one hand, we see the Canadian state responded to the needs of women for greater opportunity and representation through its initial support for the Canadian Sport Council while, on the other hand, despite its own acknowledgement of the chronic under-representation of women in all facets of the Canadian sport system, the state continued to legitimate male privilege by providing more funding and opportunity for men (in the case of the Canadian Sport Council, by withdrawing funding for an initiative that privileged affirmative action).

Following the release of *Sport: The Way Ahead*, the federal government continued to acknowledge the under-representation of girls and women in sport in Canada (Sport Canada, 1993). Furthermore, the federal government continued to address and redress gender equity through various initiatives, all with varying degrees of success. Even though it was dissolved by the late 1990s, the Canadian Sport Council was one such initiative as was the movement of CAAWS into Sport Canada. In a very strong statement of its commitment to gender equity, Sport Canada appointed Marion Lay as the Program Manager for the Women's Program and provided her with a clear mandate to examine why the *Women in Sport* policy was not being fully (or in some cases, even partially) implemented by NSOs and to provide recommendations to make the policy work (Kirby, 1999; Robertson, 1995).

The 1990s saw continued work on gender equity within Canada and was also witness to pivotal international events specific to gender equity in sport. Canadian women sport leaders have been integrally involved with key international women's sport organizations including the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Women and Girls (IAPESGW), WomenSport International (WSI) and the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG). The first *World Conference on Women and Sport*, held in Brighton, England in 1994, brought together hundreds of delegates—representing governmental and non-governmental organizations, National Olympic Committees, international and national sport organizations and educational/research institutions—from over 80 countries. The conference saw the creation of not only the IWG (see [www.iwg-gti.org](http://www.iwg-gti.org)) but also the first international declaration of global gender equity principles in sport, commonly referred to as *The Brighton Declaration* (1994; cf. Hall, 1996). The declaration was designed to be used as a tool with which to pressure resistant governments and sport organizations to pass equal rights legislation and to ensure opportunity for participation in sport and physical activity to all girls and women. CAAWS was centrally involved in the conference as well as in the development of the declaration.

The declaration was updated and reaffirmed during the second world conference in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1998. The *Windhoek Call for Action* (1998) built on *The Brighton Declaration* and linked it to other international women's rights declarations, particularly the *Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. Where *The Brighton Declaration* focused on the principles that underlie inclusive sport for women, the *Windhoek Call for Action* was a call away from statements of principle to action. Action was critically needed in Canada, as identified in the 1999 *Sport Gender Snapshot* (Sport Canada, 1999). While there was some progress in some areas (e.g., access to resources, increase in representation for women on national teams, more equitable training and competing opportunities) for women in sport at the elite level, there remained a "considerable amount of work still to be done to achieve equality for women in sport" (Myers & Doherty, 2007, p. 323). Despite CAAWS's repeated calls for attention among the sport community to such issues as childcare and leadership, officiating and coaching opportunities, the *Gender Snapshot* demonstrated that although some NSOs and MSOs embraced alternative

and equitable discourses of gender relations, others continued to rely on dominant inequitable understandings of gender relations (Shaw & Hoerber, 2007).

A key question then becomes: how did the Canadian government take action on gender equity in sport? At risk of skipping over smaller scale but important initiatives, programs and services brought forth through the Women's Program, CAAWS, or through other MSOs (e.g., Coaching Association of Canada; see Strachan & Tomlinson, 1994) throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, three key points highlight the action that the Canadian federal government did take with regard to gender equity in sport. The first relates back to the IWG and the decision by the Canadian government to support the organization and to host the 2002 *World Conference on Women and Sport* in Montreal, Quebec (IWG, 2002). This commitment stimulated the government to continue combating gender inequity in two substantial ways—specifically, the incorporation of gender equity principles into Canadian sport policy and federal legislation (rather than in a stand-alone gender equity document) as well as the explicit linking of funding and accountability for NSOs/MSOs to a commitment to equity and access for women.

The release of the *Canadian Sport Policy* (Sport Canada, 2002a), and its follow-up 2002 and 2007 strategic directions documents (Sport Canada, 2002b; 2007), as well as the assent of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* in 2003 saw the Canadian government explicitly identify the enhanced participation of all Canadians in sport and physical activity as its first of four pillars underpinning the Canadian sport system and the increased participation in sport for all Canadians by 2012 as its first priority. The Act identified the reduction of barriers to participation for all Canadians as one of its principal aims, and, more specifically, the policy (Sport Canada, 2002b, p. 5) highlighted three strategies with which to achieve the reduction of barriers:

- Action 1: Develop collaborative strategies to increase the public's understanding of and participation in sport for all;
- Action 2: Participate with the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity and provincial/territorial counterparts, where

possible, in the development and implementation of a Canadian Strategy on Women and Girls in Sport and Physical Activity; and

Action 3: Undertake initiative to increase opportunities in coaching, officiating, and volunteer leadership for women, persons with a disability, Aboriginal peoples, and visible minorities.

The 2007 strategic directions highlighted progress to date, chiefly the development of *ACTive: The Canadian Strategy for Girls and Women in Sport and Physical Activity* (CAAWS, 2007). With the support of Sport Canada (Canadian Heritage) and Health Canada, and as informed by *The Brighton Declaration* (1994) and the *Windhoek Call to Action* (1998), CAAWS initially developed this national strategy in 2002 with the specific goal of increasing physical activity and sport opportunities for girls and women. Following further development and consultation with government officials, sport community representatives, the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Coaching Association of Canada and CAAWS, the *ACTive* strategy was approved by federal-provincial/territorial sport ministers in 2004 and has since been operationalized in many ways (cf. CAAWS, 2007).

The federal government also demonstrated action around gender equity by implementing an accountability process in 1995–1996 that explicitly identified and linked funding for, and the accountability of, NSOs/MSOs to a commitment to equity and access for women. Following the winter and summer Olympic cycles, the *Sport Funding and Accountability Framework* (SFAF) requires NSOs and MSOs to demonstrate through their policies, programs, procedures, and practices a commitment to equity and access, notably for women (as well as for members of other marginalized groups such as persons with a disability and Aboriginal peoples) as participants, athletes, coaches, officials, and leaders. The SFAF identifies national standards within the four key areas identified by the Canadian Sport Policy (excellence, participation, building capacity and interaction) and the standards describe a set of criteria that will apply across all organizations, ensuring a consistent minimum level of service. It is expected that each NSO and MSO provide basic services to meet or exceed all the identified standards. The only situation where an NSO or MSO is not required to demonstrate an organization-specific formal policy on gender equity is where the organization exceeds

40% female participation or representation in all areas (athlete participants, coaches, officials, and leaders). NSOs and MSOs can no longer approach or treat gender equity on a voluntary or haphazard basis in contrast to the approach adopted in the 1980s. The SFAF system has been relatively more successful in encouraging (and at times pushing) NSOs and MSOs to adopt and implement gender equity initiatives because of its ‘teeth’ (cf. Ponc, 2001)—sport and multi-sport organizations in Canada are now required to address and account for gender equity in their policies, programs, and services in exchange for federal government recognition and funding. This is not to suggest that Sport Canada has been completely successful with regard to the implementation of gender equity within NSOs/MSOs through the SFAF; having a policy and taking action is not the same thing. Although there is better monitoring within the Canadian sport system now than in the past, collecting data in this area remains relatively difficult—some NSOs do not post their gender equity policies in publicly accessible ways (e.g., websites) nor do all NSOs identify gender equity in their strategic plans. Furthermore, not all NSOs require or rely upon Sport Canada funding. While some solid progress has been made with some sport organizations, non-compliance or lack of full compliance remains a feature of some NSOs/MSOs and Sport Canada continues to study (in order to determine the difference between lack of compliance and not meeting the standard due to barriers or other limitations) and strategize around how to address lack of compliance with the national standards.

The 2002 *Canadian Sport Policy* was notable in one additional way—it expressed interest in revisiting and rewriting the 1986 *Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport*. This initiated a series of consultations with key stakeholders throughout the Canadian sport community and culminated in the release *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* in 2009 (Canadian Heritage, 2009a). *Actively Engaged* now represents the current acting directive regarding women in sport and reaffirms the government’s commitment to a sport system that engages and equitably supports girls and women in a full range of sport roles. The policy operates alongside the 2002 *Canadian Sport Policy* and other Sport Canada protocols such as the SFAF, the *Federal Policy on Hosting International Sport Events*, the *Policy on Aboriginal Peoples Participation in Sport* and the *Sport Canada Policy for Persons with a Disability*. In fact, it is important to acknowledge that—despite the policy’s call for increased equity for all Canadians—

specific provisions for equity, gender or otherwise, are not integrated into the *Canadian Sport Policy*; they continue to come in the form of secondary documents such as *Actively Engaged*. In contrast to the 1986 policy, where the focus was predominately on increasing the quantity of women participating in the Canadian sport system, the current policy focuses on—in addition to the provision of (increased) opportunities for participation—the quality of opportunity for participation and representation by women in the sport system. As noted within the policy document, during consultations:

Stakeholders consistently highlighted the need to “do things differently” to recruit, develop, and retain women in sport, including the potential to re-recruit women into similar or other sport roles after a hiatus, e.g., to raise a family. In contrast to the traditional “build it and they will come” approach in Canadian sport of creating opportunities and expecting uptake, this policy will promote innovative quality sport experiences for women and girls, to not only remove barriers but also to encourage ongoing involvement. (Canadian Heritage, 2009a, Section 3—Context, paragraph 12)

*Actively Engaged* makes repeated reference to its central objective of fostering the active engagement of women as athlete participants, coaches, officials, and leaders in sport governance. The policy is to be implemented through existing programs and services with intervention focusing on four components:

1. Program Improvement—alignment and refinement of programs and activities to enable sport organizations and other sport system stakeholders to deliver innovative quality sport experiences for women and girls;
2. Strategic Leadership—proactive promotion of complementary measures within other Canadian and international jurisdictions to strengthen quality sport experiences for women and girls through participation in multilateral and bilateral instruments and fora;
3. Awareness—promoting the benefits for individuals and organizations of meaningful involvement of women and girls; and
4. Knowledge Development—expansion, use and sharing of knowledge, practices and innovations concerning the

sport experiences of women and girls through research and development. (Canadian Heritage, 2009a, Section 6—Policy Interventions, paragraph 1)

Its follow-up Action Plan (Canadian Heritage, 2009b) outlines specific activities to be implemented between 2009 and 2012 as well as the measurement and evaluation strategy to be employed. Again, it may be too soon to tell the sharpness of *Actively Engaged's* 'teeth' in enacting genuine and sustainable change for girls and women in Canadian sport. The revision and updating of the policy as well as the shift in focus towards the quality of sport experience (as opposed to quantity) holds promise and yet the policy was released without much publicity or promotion within and outside the Canadian sport community (J. Northcott, personal communication, November 2010). Furthermore, while *Actively Engaged* speaks most directly to the pillars of enhanced participation and enhanced excellence (both of which address opportunity and access in sport from playground to podium), critics suggest that it suffers from the same weaknesses as the 2002 *Canadian Sport Policy* (Public Policy Forum, 2010). As one example, commentators point out that integration across all levels of government with regard to sport has been weak even with the identification of enhanced capacity as a key pillar such that one must question whether policy on women in sport has travelled through and across different departments or ministries in government or has remained contained in its own silo? Furthermore, critics point out that the four pillars—while given equal rhetorical support in government documents and missives—are not equally supported in reality such that enhanced excellence remains top priority for government officials (Public Policy Forum, 2010). With regard to women in sport, this results in emphasis on the achievements of female athletes in high performance sports (e.g., the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games) even though such evidence deflects attention from the reality that a majority of women do not participate in sport as noted in the introduction of the chapter.

### **The Third Act: Dynamic Change?**

The above two sections follow the chronological development of Canadian sport policy for women from the 1960s onwards and are, by necessity, relatively descriptive attempts to map the major events

and institutions involved. This final section attempts to more deeply and critically analyze some of the social, political, and historical forces that have shaped policy development in this area and which continue to shape sport policy for women in Canada.

We can easily identify watershed moments in the development of sport policy for women in Canada but, as a whole, policy development in this area has been marked more by incremental change over time than whole-scale revolutions in policy direction and implementation. In large part, this has been a function of the dynamic and changing tensions between different groups, people and organizations—including advocacy groups (e.g., CAAWS), federal-provincial/territorial departments, international governing bodies, key individuals including public figures, sport leaders and activist-scholars—as situated within the broader dynamic and changing social, political, and cultural forces (social movements) over time (cf. Comeau & Church, 2010). Clearly, the same could be noted of policy development in Canadian governance, within and outside of sport, more broadly. This chapter has, on a number of occasions, highlighted the contradictions of the state with regard to policy development and implementation for women in sport and yet, a word of caution is needed: the state is neither a neutral referee between groups nor is the state a homogenous entity that acts only in either-or fashion. As Hall et al. (1991, p. 90) rightly acknowledged:

the point here is that the Canadian state (and its provincial and local branches) cannot be viewed as a monolithic bloc, nor can we assume that the state acts in a consistent, non-contradictory way. The state itself is site of conflict and struggle as social groups, whether based on gender, class, race, or ethnicity, seek to change or uphold the myriad state policies, agencies, and processes.

Feminist activism in sport and the shift from equality to equity are two sites where we examine tensions that have marked policy development. The predominant feminist approach to sport in Canada has been liberal in nature, with a primary focus on securing equal access for women to sport opportunities long available to men (Hall, 1996; Hoffman, 1989). The 1986 *Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport's* central goal was “to attain equality for women in sport” such that “at all levels of the sport system, equal opportunities must exist for

women and men to compete, coach, officiate or administer sport" (Sport Canada, 1986, p. 10). This call for increased numbers of women participating in sport at all levels in all capacities (athletes, coaches, administrators, journalists) was consistent with some of the principles of the organized second-wave feminist movement that was starting to emerge in Canada circa the late 1960s and was necessary given the marked quantitative difference in the number of women participants and in the number of opportunities for women in sport (Hall, 1996). However, criticism from some feminist activists followed this approach since many argued that quantitative difference does not necessarily culminate into a fully and genuinely gender equitable sport system (Hargreaves, 1990, 1994). As Lenskyj (2008, p. 102) argued:

in fact, increased female participation did not necessarily bring with it an increase in leadership opportunities for women; unless organizations adopted an affirmative action policy, new positions were likely to be filled by male applicants who, as a group, were more experienced and qualified for coaching and sport administration than females.

Radical and socialist feminists routinely called (and continue to call) for strategies that go beyond an "add women and stir" recipe preferring those that address the structural and cultural roots of women's oppression in society and in sport. For these advocates, any approach for gender equality in sport that failed and fails to take into account and address the patriarchal nature of sport was and is destined to fail itself. In fact, some argued that patriarchy is so deeply embedded within contemporary sport that it simply cannot be unpacked and that a separate system of sport is required for women (Travers, 2006, 2008).

Clearly, the 'separate but equal' model of sport for women has not been taken up in the contemporary Canadian sport system (cf. Hoffman, 1989). Yet, this does not mean that radical and socialist feminist activism has not had an impact. In demanding that greater attention be paid to inequities arising from "prevailing gendered culture and power imbalances" (Shaw & Hoerber, 2007, p. 194), the policy discourse has shifted from equality to equity. That is, a shift from identifying women as a target group who need to be 'fixed' in order to fit into the sport system towards challenging and changing the social system that perpetuates oppression (Bell-Altenstad & Vail,

1995). The shift towards gender equity recognizes that the provision of equal opportunity or the equal distribution of resources between women and men does not adequately bring about structural change since women begin from a point of disadvantage not experienced by men. As Hoffman (1995, p. 85) urged, “real gains will only be achieved if we take account of the social, cultural, economic and political realities of women’s lives beyond sport, and if we endeavour to change those structural and cultural conditions beyond sport that limit sport involvement.” This compels us to pay attention to such factors as women’s ‘double shift,’ domestic and family responsibilities, lower incomes and higher poverty rates, since these contribute to barriers to participation in sport by women. We are also compelled to more fully understand interlocking and overlapping dimensions of power and privilege in women’s lives. A common criticism among radical feminist advocates is that liberal approaches to gender equity within the state and existing advocacy organizations (e.g., CAAWS) assume “a universal Canadian female” (i.e., white, able-bodied, middle-class, heterosexual) without paying sufficient attention to the “the impacts of systemic racism, classism, ageism, ableism and homophobia on girls’ and women’s lives. As a result, gains were not evenly distributed across boundaries of race/ethnicity, social class, age, ability and sexuality” (Lenskyj, 2008, p. 102; see also Cranney et al., 2002; Donnelly & Harvey, 1996; Paraschak, 2007, Giles, 2002; Olenik, Matthews, & Steadward, 1995).

The federal government has endorsed the liberal feminist shift towards gender equity such that the 2002 *Canadian Sport Policy*, the 2003 *Act to Promote Physical Activity and Sport* and the 2009 *Actively Engaged* directive speak to not just a continued desire to increase the number of women sport participants but also a commitment to improve the quality of experience and opportunity for women in sport. Paradoxically, while the 2002 *Canadian Sport Policy* explicitly identified women as one of a number of under-represented groups in Canadian sport, requiring intervention in the elimination of barriers to participation, the 2012 *Canadian Sport Policy* makes no such mention. Although the consultation process during the renewal of the policy involved a dedicated round table session on women and sport, the document itself only goes so far as to (albeit repeatedly) state that a major policy objective is the provision of opportunities “for persons from traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized populations to actively engage in all aspects of sport

participation, including leadership roles” (Sport Canada, 2012, p. 9ff).

The *Women and Sport Round Table Summary Report* (Sport Canada, 2011, p. 3) offers more insight into the apparent softening around language related to women and sport as round-table participants expressed concern that:

equity policies were identified as an area within the sport development delivery system where programming was deemed sufficient. They were concerned that this might suggest that issues for women and girls were no longer a concern of the sport community—that women have reached parity with men and the sport system can move on to other challenges.

In fact, in light of the above concerns, participants at the round table asserted that “women and girls should be specifically referenced and reflected through the language of the policy” (Sport Canada, 2011, p. 4) and that the policy must enforce and reinforce commitment to gender equity: “there was a strong message from participants that Governments should hold funded organizations accountable for gender equity with clearly articulated indicators and consequences for non-performance that are seriously enforced” (Sport Canada, 2011, p. 8). Although it is too soon to tell how ‘indicators and consequences’ will be articulated in the action plans that emerge from the 2012 *Canadian Sport Policy* document, this will clearly be an important issue. The themes emerging from the round table summary report reproduce the liberal feminist discourse endorsed by government but also, interestingly, reflect some of the broader political and economic shifts. In particular, it is important to note the profit-oriented language in the document:

Participants pointed out that research has shown that more gender diversity on Boards results in better decision-making and, in the private sector, greater profitability. The private sector has recognized the value of women as leaders, employees and consumers. Participants wondered why sport, which seeks to be leading edge, is lagging behind other sectors in terms of gender representation. (Sport Canada, 2011, p. 4)

Given the global economic downturn of the past few years as well as the federal government’s leaning towards fiscal conservatism, such

language reflects the political opportunity structures of the times and reminds us to take into account the institutional, cultural and economic factors that act as backdrop to sport policy.

The reasons for the adoption of a liberal approach in Canadian sport are complex; however a key question is whether equity can be accomplished through existing models of governance or through liberal feminism? For liberal feminist sport advocates, "government policy is a viable vehicle for change" since society is not "so monolithically patriarchal that at least worthwhile incremental change is impossible" (Hoffman, 1989, p. 31), whereas more radical advocates argue that the long entrenchment of the existing sport system in patriarchy precludes it from the provision of creative, women-centred sport alternatives. According to proponents such as Hall (2002, 2003), Lenskyj (1986, 2003) and Travers (2008), male-defined models of sport remain in need of transformation as the performance ethos, the "authoritarian power structure that demands discipline and obedience and works against political awareness," (Hall, 1996, p. 89) and the Olympic model of 'faster, higher, stronger' privileges the involvement of a select few women willing to assimilate rather than full participation of all women. In general, there is little connection between feminism and gender equity now in the sport movement (Hall, 2002, 2003), and radical feminism has never truly enjoyed the same reception as liberalism in sport, nor have radical feminists truly engaged with sport, often "marginalizing or dismissing sport as unimportant to the real struggles over sexual equality" (Hall, 1996, p. 90). Yet, feminist activism has been important in pushing for attention to, and strategies of change around, gender inequity in sport.

Challenges to gender equity continue to persist in the Canadian sport system. While more women than ever are participating (and winning) in elite international competition, participation rates in physical activity and sport among girls and women more broadly are dropping; women of colour, including aboriginal girls and women, continue to experience severe disadvantage and marginalization; and opportunities for, and the recognitions of, sport for women with disabilities continues to lag behind sport for able-bodied women (Sport Canada, 1999). The chronically limited opportunities and under-representation of women in leadership positions remains a large and overarching obstacle within the Canadian sport system. Despite the initiation of affirmative action programs following the introduction of national and provincial human rights legislation in

the 1980s, women continue to be generally under-represented in sport leadership positions (coaching, officiating, and administration) and often remain in low level, less valued positions and with less influence in the decision-making process in the highest levels of sport (McKay, 1997, 1999). With regard to coaching, an increase in women coaches has occurred at participatory or developmental levels since the early 1990s—which, while valuable, are seen as less noteworthy than elite or competitive levels—but the number of women coaches remains less than that of men and the number of women coaches declines more significantly with age, often in relation to such factors as burnout, frustration, low compensation, and the demands of combining family and coaching career (Hall, 2003).

The marginalization of women in Canadian sport organizations may in part be explained by the gendered histories and organizational cultures (e.g., the continuing belief among many that gender equity is a ‘woman’s issue’) of NSOs and MSOs, but it can also be explained by the federal government’s lack of consistent attention to, and reinforcement of, gender equity and affirmative action within its own administration (Hall et al., 1989; Hoeber, 2007; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990; McKay, 1999; Shaw & Hoeber, 2007; Whitson & Macintosh, 1989). As Kirby (1999, p. 67) stated, “while commitments have been made within the formal political process, the politics of private interactions [between individual men and women and between gender-equitable and non-gender equitable organizations] have not been addressed.” While the pursuit of excellence in international sport has supported the increased participation of women in some areas, it has not been consequence-free and some have argued that the federal government’s preoccupation with medal production in international sport events has pushed gender equity, as well as others among its oft-cited equity goals (e.g., bilingualism), to the background (cf. Donnelly, 2008; Kidd, 1996; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990).

The controversy surrounding women’s ski jumping in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games is an important case in point. To date, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has excluded women from ski jumping in Olympic competition on the grounds that too few female participants compete in the event internationally (this despite the fact that men’s ski jumping suffers the same criticism). In the lead-up to the 2010 Games, over a dozen female ski jumpers filed a law suit against the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010

Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC 2010) citing that the exclusion of a women's ski jumping event in the Games constituted a direct violation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The women lost the suit as, "in *Sagen v. Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games* ("VANOC"), it was found that the decision not to include women's ski jumping had been made by the International Olympic Committee ("IOC") which was not subject to the Charter" (Barnes, 2010, p. 39). In other words, even though the judges felt that the women were being discriminated against, the event was seen as under the jurisdiction and responsibility of the IOC and thus not governed by the Charter. While the federal government has, in the past, been willing to make political statements in connection to high performance sport (e.g., the boycotting of South Africa from international competition during the anti-apartheid movement), this decision was met with relative silence on the part of Canadian political leaders. We must question the willingness of our political leaders and the public to accept such discriminatory policy—in essence, to continue to tolerate sexism in sport—when in direct conflict with the Canadian Charter?

The continued need for an organization such as CAAWS underscores this point. CAAWS has been pivotal in the historical and ongoing struggle for a gender equitable sport system in Canada and has secured a position for itself as a necessary and needed political force in the Canadian sport system. This is particularly critical since, as Hargreaves (1990, p. 301) noted:

... gaining power is necessary for those who seek change and power comes from organization. For women to become a political force in sport, there must be an organization to attract them to the movement and to gain support to fight and win campaigns.

Yet, commentators have questioned the efficacy and political manoeuvring of CAAWS. As noted above, in constructing itself as the organization for women and sport in Canada, CAAWS has also adopted a less radical approach to its advocacy, positioning itself less as a feminist women's organization promoting its aims through sport and more as an MSO committed to helping the sport community become more gender equitable. In its acceptance of a more liberal feminist orientation inside the Canadian sport system, a key question

becomes, “how will CAAWS protect itself from co-optation” (Kirby, 1999, p. 67)? This question is not meant to suggest that CAAWS can no longer contribute to the advancement of gender equity in Canadian sport. CAAWS has played and continues to play a key role in the promotion of gender equitable sport policy and the development of strategic documents (e.g., CAAWS, 1994) in a wide variety of areas—sexual harassment (cf. Barnes, 2010; Kirby, Greaves, & Hankivsky, 2000), organizational cultures, media awareness and promotional campaigns, childcare policies, coaching—but these achievements have not made it impervious to the broader social, political and historical tensions framing and influencing Canadian sport for women.

## Conclusion

This chapter introduced readers to the changing landscape of Canadian sport policy from the 1960s onwards in an attempt to outline the dynamic policy events that have framed and influenced—so far—the inclusion (or, at times, the exclusion) and full participation of women in sport in Canada. The rich history of participation and leadership of Canadian women in sport has been shaped by numerous factors—pivotal individuals, important groups, human rights legislation (cf. Donnelly, 2008), the feminist movements, dynamic historical change and the development and implementation of formal government policy. While policy cannot be seen as the only force propelling the advancement of women and sport in Canada, its importance should also not be underestimated. As Hoffman (1989, p. 25) noted, “changes do occur, women do take up new sports, but in the absence of formal mechanisms and institutional and possibly legislative support, the process is long and hard.” We continue to strive for gender equity in the Canadian sport system as women sport participants (e.g., athletes, coaches, volunteers, administrators) continue to face obstacles to full participation and representation. Formal mechanisms such as legislation and policy are still needed to push for gender equity in sport; however, such mechanisms cannot succeed without the political will of individuals and groups to adhere, enforce, and be accountable to such interventions (Harvey, 2001; Hoffman, 1995; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990). The history of women in sport policy in Canada is still being written and, if we are serious about gender equity in sport, we can still author new commitment and action to the full engagement of girls and women in sport.

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