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**Investing in Canada:
Leveraging the Economic and Social Capital
Of Sport and Physical Activity**

**2005 Pre-Budget Consultation Brief
to the Standing Committee on Finance**

September 2005

The Sport Matters Group

The Sport Matters Group (SMG) is a voluntary group of national and provincial sport organizations and leaders who have come together to consider the future of sport in Canada and to collaborate on various sport policy issues. The SMG includes over 80 organizations and sport leaders actively involved in public policy issues that affect sport and physical activity. The SMG has been involved in bringing forward the sport sector's views on such things as the *Canadian Sport Policy*, the Voluntary Sector Initiative, the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, federal budgets, and the linkages between sport and healthy living.

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Executive Summary

Considerable progress has been made on the sport file over the last few years, in particular the doubling of Sport Canada's budget from \$70 to \$140 million in the last federal budget. Progress on the physical activity file has been substantially less.

Much remains to be done. Just over a year ago, the Prime Minister called for a new plan for sport that would strengthen the government's investment in high-performance and community sport. Progress on both these fronts—through government investments in programming, tax reform, and restructuring—will leverage sport and physical activity's significant contributions to entrepreneurial, human, and physical capital.

The sport sector makes an often overlooked contribution to the Canadian economy, with annual household spending on sport totaling \$15.8 billion/year or about 1.2% of Canada's GDP. The sport sector also employs over 260,000 Canadians or about 2% of the jobs in Canada. Investment in sport and physical activity is an investment in the health of the population, which is reflected in reduced health care costs. Investment in major games reaps substantial benefits beyond the construction of new facilities in the host community, including gains in tourism, transportation, productivity, innovation, and research & development.

Community sport and recreation represents the largest citizen and community participation activity in Canada, generating human and social capital in all parts of the country. Sport/recreation organizations make up the largest component of the voluntary sector (21%, or 34,000 organizations), with the largest number of volunteer positions (28%, or 5.3 million volunteer positions), performing the greatest amount of volunteer hours (23%, or 460 million hours).

Regular participation in sport/physical activity is vital to a healthy population. Physically active people report better overall health status, are more productive, have fewer mental health issues, report higher levels of happiness, and age better. Participation in sport, whether as an active participant or as a volunteer, is an important source of skills that are transferable to other aspects of life and work, such as teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, communications, and administrative skills.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities calls infrastructure “the platform upon which Canada's quality of life and international competitiveness depends.” Sport and recreation facilities and infrastructure enable Canadians to participate in sport and physical activity, while addressing critical health issues and strengthening our communities.

This brief makes clear that the sport and physical activity sectors make a fundamental contribution to the health and welfare of Canadians and to the achievement of broader societal goals, including a healthy economy. The Sport Matters Group has identified ways to strengthen investment by all segments of society in the sport and physical activity sectors that will lead to enhanced productivity and increased production of capital of all kinds—entrepreneurial, human, social, and, physical. Specifically, the SMG is calling for the following:

1. As the first step toward a new governance model for sport and physical activity, establish a full ministry for sport and physical activity in order to encourage greater physical activity and healthier Canadians and to build capacity in the Canadian sport system.
2. Establish stable, long-term federal investment in sport and physical activity equal to 1% of the federal health care budget, or approximately \$280 million.
3. Implement specific tax measures (outlined at page 8) to remove economic barriers to participation and to promote sport and physical activity at the community level.
4. Establish a designated envelope for sport and recreation facilities and infrastructure as the federal response to the declaration of sport and recreation infrastructure as the top priority of Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation.

Introduction

Considerable progress has been made over the last few years on the sport file, in particular the substantial increase in Sport Canada's (A-base) budget from \$70 to \$140 million. Much of this increase is focused on high-performance and the opportunities surrounding the 2010 Vancouver-Whistler Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. Progress on increased sport participation and physical activity remains a challenge if we are to fully implement the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002).¹

Just over a year ago, the Prime Minister personally called for a new plan for sport that would strengthen the government's investment in high-performance and community sport [1]. The Throne Speech affirmed the government's commitment to promote physical activity as a key factor in healthy lifestyle and to "enhance sports activities at both the community and competitive levels" [2]. In May of this year, the Prime Minister appointed the Hon. Paul deVilliers as Parliamentary Secretary to develop new organizational structures or mechanisms that would bring together sport, physical activity, and recreation in order to "to encourage greater physical activity and healthier Canadians, and to build capacity in the Canadian sport system"[3].

This brief will lay out the case regarding how progress on these fronts—through government investments in programming, tax reform, and restructuring—will lead to enhanced productivity through increasing capital of all kinds, entrepreneurial, human, and physical.

Sport and Entrepreneurial Capital

New research by the Conference Board of Canada showcases the substantial contribution that household spending on sport makes to the Canadian economy:

¹ The landmark *Canadian Sport Policy* was endorsed by the federal government and all 13 provincial/ territorial governments in 2002. It reflects a new approach to shared leadership and collaboration amongst all stakeholders in sport in order to achieve the goals of enhanced participation, excellence, capacity, and interaction.

\$15.8 billion of household spending is on sport (in 2004) or about 1.2% of Canada's GDP [4].

- § 2.2% of consumer spending goes to sport (comparable to spending on sport in other developed countries, which typically ranges from 1.5% to 3.0%) [4].
- § Household expenditures on sport average \$1,963—more than annual family spending on health care (\$1,588) and household furnishings and equipment (\$1,751) [5].
- § Household expenditures on sport have increased significantly, both in dollar terms and as a percentage of household spending, since 1996, when spending averaged \$718, representing 1.4% of total family expenditures [6].

The contribution of the sport sector to the economy is also reflected in terms of employment. Sport employs over 260,000 Canadians, about 2% of the jobs in Canada.² The sector's share of total employment exceeds that of numerous industries, including food, printing and publishing, motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts, wood, paper and allied products.

The economic health of a nation cannot be divorced from the physical health of its citizens, since the direct and indirect costs of disease and disability place a substantial burden on productivity and the economy. Recent research estimates that direct health care costs alone due to physical inactivity range between \$2.1 and \$5.3 billion per year, representing as much as 5% of annual health care spending. Thus, as a recent report by the Conference Board of Canada concludes, "Increasing sport participation as a strategy for improving the health of Canadians could significantly reduce national health-care costs" [4].

- § The World Health Organization has similarly concluded that increasing physical activity is the most cost-effective and sustainable way to reduce a population's burden of lifestyle-related diseases and improve its economic performance:

"Even though there has been great progress in the treatment of noncommunicable diseases and in the pharmacological control of many risk factors, from a public health point of view, the greatest potential is in influencing the risk-factor distribution in the population through general lifestyle changes, notably in diet and physical activity. This is a cost-effective and sustainable way for controlling such diseases. Successful primary prevention not only reduces human suffering and increases economic productivity, but also limits the growing cost of treatment" [10].

- § The Romanow Commission concluded that a 10% reduction in the number of inactive Canadians would save \$150 million per year in direct health care costs and \$5 billion in indirect costs [4].

² Note that this figure is from 1994-95, when sport's percentage of GDP was 1.1%. More recent research by Conference Board indicates a higher level of spending on sport, at 1.2% of GDP, suggesting that there may be more sport-related jobs than a decade ago, as well. House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, *Sport in Canada: Everybody's Business—Leadership, Partnership and Accountability*, December 1998, as cited in Conference Board of Canada.

- § The average number of calls and visits to health care professionals for general health issues (i.e. not including visits related to sport injuries and sport performance) is more than 40% lower for active participants than for non-participants [4].

Investments in major games reap substantial benefits beyond the construction of new facilities in the host community, including gains in productivity, innovation, and research & development. On this front, much can be learned from Australia's experience, whereby Australian businesses have capitalized on the expertise gained during 2000 Sydney Olympics to become leaders in a significant international market in sport-related goods and services [7]:

- § More than 35 Australian companies won goods and services contracts for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, worth over \$200 million and quadrupling Australia's exports to Greece.
- § Specific expertise has been developed in the following fields:
- Sports consultancies in Indonesia, the Philippines, South Africa, and Thailand;
 - Junior sports programs in Hong Kong, New Zealand, Papua, New Guinea, and South Africa;
 - Elite athlete training programs in Brunei;
 - Event management services in the United States.

Sport and Social Capital³

In its 2004 Throne Speech, the government made a commitment to cultivate social capital: "The Government is determined to foster the social economy—the myriad not-for-profit activities and enterprises that harness civic and entrepreneurial energies for community benefit right across Canada" [2]. An investment in sport and physical activity is one of the key ways in which the government can promote the social economy, since sport and physical activity are one of seven individual behaviours that constitute "citizen and community participation." Citizen and community participation creates social capital, reaping substantial benefits for the participating individuals and for the communities in which they live [8]:

"Health and psychological research shows that individuals who feel connected to others and to their community experience higher levels of well-being and health status, do better in work and economically, raise better adjusted children and are encouraged to stay active. Community development and economic research tells us that communities with high levels of citizen participation are safer, more democratic, more attractive

³ The World Health Organization defines social capital as follows: "Social capital is created from the myriad of everyday interactions between people, and is embodied in such structures as civic and religious groups, family membership, informal community networks, and in norms of voluntarism, altruism and trust. The stronger these networks and bonds, the more likely it is that members of a community will co-operate for mutual benefit. In this way social capital creates health, and may enhance the benefits of investments for health." Health Promotion Glossary, WHO/HPR/HEP/98.1, Division of Health Promotion, Education and Communications (HPR), World Health Organization, 1998. URL: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1998/WHO_HPR_HEP_98.1.pdf. Accessed September 2005.

to investment, have lower incidences of crime, homelessness, pollution, youth and newcomer alienation.”

The magnitude of the contribution of the sport and recreation sector to the social economy was made clear in the 2004 landmark report *Cornerstones of Community: Highlights of the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations* [9]. Sport/ recreation organizations constitute the largest component of the voluntary sector, at 21%, or some 34,000 organizations. While these organizations are represented at all levels of Canadian society, the vast majority, 71%, operate in communities.

The viability of tens of thousands of sport/recreation organizations and miles-upon-miles of physical infrastructure, from pools to bike paths to soccer pitches, is maintained by millions of Canadian volunteers:

- § Sport/recreation organizations have the largest number of volunteer positions, at 28%, or 5.3 million volunteer positions.
- § Sport/recreation volunteers work the greatest amount of volunteer hours, at 23%, or 460 million hours
- § The sport/recreation sector has only 131,000 paid employees, or 6.4% of all paid staff, to support such a large component of the social economy. This amounts to one paid staff for every 40 volunteer positions. Almost three-quarters (73.5%) of sport/recreation organizations have no paid staff.

Sport and Human Capital

Despite the well-known fact that regular participation in sport/physical activity is vital to physical health, 64% of Canadians are not sufficiently active to achieve personal health benefits. Physically active people report better overall health status, are more productive, have fewer mental health issues, report higher levels of satisfaction and happiness, and age better [4]:

- § According to the Conference Board of Canada *National Household Survey on Participation in Sport*, about 80% of active adult participants—more than 6.2 million people—rate sport as very important in improving their physical fitness and health.
- § More than 70% of active participants describe their overall state of health as either excellent or very good, compared with less than 50% of non-participants.
- § Expending energy actively can have a profound effect on personal health. Expending 1,000 kilocalories of energy per week (4,200 kJ/wk) is associated with as much as a 30% reduction in mortality rates from all causes.
- § Physical activity shortens the morbidity curve, reducing the period of ill health and dependency and the need for institutional care in the latter stages of life.
- § Regular physical activity has multi-faceted benefits for children, including healthier growth and development; better academic performance; higher self-esteem, less stress and anxiety, and development of skills that foster participation in sport/physical

activity later in life. Adolescents who are active in sports are less likely to use illicit drugs and to become regnant.

In addition to enhancing physical health, involvement in sport, physical activity, and recreation plays a substantial role in promoting psychological and mental health [8]:

- § Participation in sport generates a sense of belongingness and community, uniting people around a common goal and helping to break down ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural barriers that can be divisive.
- § Involvement of immigrants in community sport helps to integrate new Canadians into society.

Sport is a valuable element of Canada's learning culture, enabling participants to develop a broad set of skills that are transferable to many aspects of work and life [4]:

“Skills gains are among the most important benefits of sport participation because they contribute to personal development and well-being, more productive work performance and improved business performance, which underpins economic growth” [8].

- § The vast majority of active participants, volunteers, and attendees rate sport as an important source of skills that they can apply away from sport. These skills include teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, communications, personal management, and administrative skills [4].
- § Sport also builds personal qualities, such as courage and the capacity to commit to a goal or purpose, as well as values, such as honesty, respect for others, self-discipline, and a sense of fair play. These characteristics help people play a more positive role in their communities and family life [4].
- § At their recent meeting, federal and provincial/territorial Ministers of sport acknowledged the importance of physical literacy (i.e. fundamental skills such as throwing, running, jumping) to the development of lifelong involvement in physical activity and sport and to development of future elite athletes. To this end, Ministers committed to the implementation of a new approach to sport and physical activity development called long-term athlete development (LTAD), in consultation with national and provincial/territorial sport organizations [11].
- § Sport is a collective activity that gives Canadians the opportunity to acquire and practice skills that makes civic engagement possible. Participants learn how to work together, trust each other, network with each other, and organize their common interests [8].

Sport and Physical Capital

In recognition of the direct connection between physical activity, participation in sport, and healthy communities, investment in sport and recreation infrastructure has become the

number one priority of federal and provincial/territorial Ministers responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation [11]:

“Improved infrastructure will advance sport and physical activity in communities across the country while addressing critical health challenges and strengthening Canadian communities.”

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities calls infrastructure “the platform upon which Canada’s quality of life and international competitiveness depends.” The Federation has likewise identified community and children’s infrastructure for sport and recreation as priorities [12]:

“In its 2005 budget submission, FCM asked that \$30 million in new money be set aside from infrastructure funds to finance community/municipally managed social infrastructure initiatives including parks, play spaces, community facilities and libraries. FCM suggested this initiative start as a three-year pilot program.”

The hosting policy under the *Canadian Sport Policy* has created the framework for an integrated, planned, and sustainable strategy. Sport hosting—including local hosting initiatives, the Canada Games, and the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games—drives cost-sharing and joint public-private investment in infrastructure. The 2014 Commonwealth Bid provides another opportunity to host a major international event, with a non-Vancouver focus on infrastructure development. The Bid, currently in the domestic phase, has a high likelihood of success.

Leveraging Sport’s Contribution to the Generation of Capital

Clearly the sport and physical activity sectors make a fundamental contribution to the health and welfare of Canadians and to the achievement of broader societal goals, including a healthy economy. Two major reports produced in 2004, *Investing in Canada* and *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada* reached the same conclusion:

“Given the value of sport to our economy and society, and the gradual weakening of involvement, government has a strong motive to promote sport” [4].

The Sport Matters Group has identified ways to strengthen investment, by all segments of society not only by government, in the sport and physical activity sectors that will lead to enhanced productivity and increased production of capital of all kinds—entrepreneurial, human, social, and, physical. Specifically, the SMG is calling for:

1. A new governance model for the national sport and physical activity sectors.
2. Stable, long-term federal investment in sport and physical activity equal to 1% of the federal health care budget.

3. Tax and policy changes to promote greater participation and leverage new sources of funding from the private sector and the public.
4. Long-term investment in facilities and infrastructure.

New Governance Model

A new governance model for the national sport and physical activity sectors is needed to provide leadership of the system, timely decision-making, and better integration of policy, program, and funding decisions. In our 2004 brief, the SMG outlined three possible models: a full Ministry, an arm's length agency, or a combination of the two. Based on additional research [13], we have reached the conclusion that a combination of full Ministry and arm's length agency is the optimum model to meet the needs of the sport and physical activity sectors and maximize the sectors' contribution to Canadian society.

The first step toward this new governance model is the establishment of a full ministry. The SMG therefore fully supports the Prime Minister's call for a new organization to integrate sport, physical activity, and recreation in order to promote greater participation by Canadians in sport and physical activity and enhance the capacity of the high performance sport system. This position is also supported by the federal and provincial/territorial Ministers responsible for Sport:

“Ministers concluded that health promotion through physical activity, sport and recreation, in conjunction with the education system, needs to be better integrated in each jurisdiction in order to maximize the benefits for Canadians. They will encourage the development of mechanisms from the community level to the national level that will facilitate better collaboration and improve program efficiency.”

Annual Investment Equal to 1% of the Health Budget

There is a substantial imbalance between the contribution of the sport and physical activity sectors to the health of the nation and the contribution of the federal government to the health and viability of the sectors [9]:

- § While sport and recreation organizations make up 21% of the nonprofit/voluntary sector, they account for only 5.4% of total voluntary sector revenues.
- § Only 12% of total revenues come from governments and 15% from corporate sponsorships, donations, and non-government grants. By comparison, governments contribute 28% of the revenues of the arts and culture sector and 27% of the environment sector.
- § The average annual revenue of sport/recreation organizations is \$181,000. By comparison the average revenue of arts and cultural organization is \$249,000 or 38% more than their counterparts in sport/recreation.
- § For 70% of sport/recreation organizations, revenues have remained the same (46%) or decreased (24%) over the past three years. Less than one-third of sport/recreation organizations benefited from an increase in revenues.

At present annual federal funding for sport is \$140 million and for physical activity is \$3 million. To finance the Prime Minister's plan for an organization to strengthen the participation by Canadians in community and high performance sport and physical activity, predictable and adequate long-term federal investments are needed, equivalent to 1% of the federal health care budget. This represents a minimum of \$180 million/year for sport and a minimum of \$100 million/year for physical activity.

New Sources of Funding

In addition to greater financial support from the federal government, the sport and physical activity sectors are seeking innovative ways to promote greater participation in sport/physical activity and leverage additional funding from the private sector and the general public. As an example, we support establishing a new non-profit, non-governmental foundation or using an existing foundation to unite the efforts of government and the sport and physical activity sectors to encourage innovative public-private partnerships in sport and physical activity.

We are also seeking the Committee's endorsement of our recommendations regarding specific tax measures to remove financial barriers and enhance participation:

- § An increase to 150% from 100% in the allowable tax deduction for the sponsorship of community sport by private corporations.
- § A non-refundable tax credit for parents supporting high performance athletes.
- § A non-refundable tax credit for registration fees for community sport and recreation programs. The Nova Scotia government recently implemented a similar program, called a "healthy living incentive," whereby an allowable tax credit of \$150 per child is provided to help defray the cost of registering children in sport and recreation activities that offer health benefits.⁴ Ontario's new Minister of Health Promotion has proposed that fitness club memberships likewise qualify for a tax credit [14].
- § A non-refundable tax credit for fees paid by volunteers to take mandatory courses in order to serve as coaches and officials.

Substantial Long-Term Investments in Community Infrastructure

Substantial long-term investments in community facilities and infrastructure for sport and physical activity are necessary, consistent with the established priority of the Federal, Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport and of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. The federal government should establish a designated envelope for facilities and infrastructure for sport and physical activity, being a designated percentage of the federal infrastructure budget. This level of commitment to infrastructure development

⁴ Sport, recreation and municipal organizations must register online with Nova Scotia Health Promotion for their members to benefit from the tax credit. Qualifying programs include any organized sport, physical recreation, or physical activity offered by the federal, Nova Scotia, or any municipal government within the province, or by a private organization operating in the province. "Nova Scotia Health Promotion: Healthy Living Incentive," URL: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/ohp/HealthyLivingIncentive.html>. Accessed August 2005.

is also necessary if the federal and provincial/ territorial governments are to realize their goal of a 10% increase in the number of active Canadians by 2010.

One example of an initiative to facilitate greater investment in facilities and infrastructure is the recent decision by Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority (OSIFA) to include municipal recreation infrastructure projects among infrastructure renewal projects eligible for long-term low-interest loans [15].

Summary of Recommendations

1. Consistent with the proposal of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and as the first step toward a new governance model for the sport and physical activity sectors, establish a full ministry for sport and physical activity in order to encourage greater physical activity and healthier Canadians and to build capacity in the Canadian sport system.
2. Establish stable, long-term federal investment in sport and physical activity equal to 1% of the federal health care budget, or approximately \$280 million.
3. Implement specific tax measures (outlined at page 8) to remove economic barriers to participation and to promote sport and physical activity at the community level.
4. Establish a designated envelope for sport and recreation facilities and infrastructure as the federal response to the top priority identified by the Federal Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation.

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