

March 2, 2009

It's that time of year when we step back and think about our collective efforts as Sport Matters.

How are we doing?

When I think about how we are doing, I think about the way we work together and how much leaders are able to find the time to contribute. Despite all of our own individual and organizational pressures, there is a desire to work on collective activities.

And not just those activities that offer a direct return on investment. But because there is a sense that good sport, for more active Canadians, and in support of aspiring athletes and coaches, will only be achieved if we work together.

We work together because it works and also because it matters.

As we head into 2009 and the final phase of preparation for 2010, it's an opportune time to take an even closer look at how we are working together as a sector. What systems and institutions must we change to be even better and to provide the leadership we need in challenging economic times, and as we prepare for a post 2010 transformation?

What have we achieved together?

In 2008 our shared leadership had an impact on the federal policy scene. For example, the 2008 budget initiated federal investment - \$24m annually at maturity - in the Road to Excellence initiative.

The federal election campaign last fall produced widespread support for sport and physical activity amongst all of Canada's national political parties – a promising sign. Not only that but we engaged over 8000 Canadians in the process, demonstrating that working through networks will expand our reach and impact.

Most recently, we've experienced the introduction of a \$500m dedicated infrastructure fund for recreation and sport, setting the stage for a series of provincial budget commitments to match funds and accelerate the implementation of shovel ready projects.

Below the radar, we also see how our sector is more and more capable of contributing to community, economic, and social development agendas. Interdepartmental cooperation through the Working Together Initiative is just one example of how this is made real, resulting in new investments and new relationships for sector organizations across 7 different federal departments – public health, citizenship and immigration, Indian affairs and northern development, policy research, First Nations and Inuit health, and sport.

We've also initiated new work with our provincial colleagues in building our capability to influence public policy – one such example being the on-going preparations for a sport campaign within the upcoming B.C. election this May.

Of course, our collaboration with the McConnell and Trillium Foundations is helping to create conditions in which much of this inclusive, developmental work can take place – helping us to build bridges to others beyond sport and to extend our impact as a collective.

Contributing together

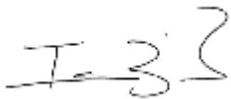
As you know, Sport Matters' way of working – the method and the achievements described above – is underwritten by a long series of contributions by committed individuals like you and by organizations like yours. You, and your colleagues in sport – all of us - are the Sport Matters Group.

In fact, that's the only way that we can all make it happen, by marshalling contributions of money, time, expertise, in kind capacity, and all of the intangibles towards shared goals and common purpose. If you want to see how this works in practice, check out the Contribution Centre on the SMG website.

SMG does not accept financial contributions from governments so it's all the more important that we look at investing in ourselves – in our public policy capability for the sport and physical activity sector.

March is our month, this year, for encouraging you to make your financial contribution to our on-going activities, so please take the opportunity to help us build on our success. Please call us or send us a note – and reach out to your peers in other sport and physical activity organizations – so that we can make the greatest difference for Canadian sport.

With best wishes,



Ian Bird

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Sport Matters Group