

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget  
Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget**

**By: THE SPORT MATTERS GROUP**

**Recommendation:**

**In order to ensure the continued strength and success of the Canadian sport system, we recommend a 25 percent increase to the core funding component of the Sport Support Program. This amounts to an additional \$18 million per year on an ongoing basis.**

**This 25 percent increase will allow National Sport Organizations, Multisport Organizations, and Canadian Sport Institutes – who play a critical role in governing sport in Canada – to hire the right people, develop the right programs, and build the policies we need to keep kids active and make sure Canadians of all ages, backgrounds and abilities are able to access the benefits of values-based sport.**

## **Introduction**

The Sport Matters Group is a coalition of more than 80 sport, physical activity, and recreation organizations that gives sport leaders from across the country a platform to connect with one another, address common challenges and ensure a strong, cohesive sport system that serves the needs of all Canadians.

Our collective mission is to promote values-based sport at all levels of the Canadian sport system. This is because participation in sport that is values-based and principle-driven results in the best outcomes: Not only can it lead to better health and greater productivity, it can build character in our children, strengthen our communities, and increase our athletes' chances for excellence on the world stage.

As Nelson Mandela once said, "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair."

Canada's sport system, however, is under pressure. Our National Sport Organizations (NSOs) have taken on additional responsibilities without any commensurate increase in funding in the past decade. NSOs are facing a range of emerging and urgent priorities, from governance issues to ensuring safe sport experiences for our athletes, to the pressing need to create more opportunities for Indigenous people and new Canadians to participate in sport.

In order to continue to build a strong and vibrant sport system that benefits all Canadians, the Sport Matters Group is recommending a 25 percent increase to the core funding component of the Sport Support Program. Representatives of high performance sport, and proponents of physical activity and recreation, have collaborated to bring this submission and its recommendation to your attention.

## **Sport improves physical and mental health**

Canada is facing an obesity epidemic, particularly among young people. According to ParticipACTION's 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, kids of all ages are simply not moving their bodies enough to get the benefits of regular physical activity<sup>1</sup>. These benefits include reduced risk of diseases like Type 2 diabetes and some cancers, better scores in reading and math, a healthy body weight, and better mental health.

The Report Card indicates that only a third of five- to 17-year-olds achieve the level of daily physical activity recommended by the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth, while more than half spend more time on screens than they should.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.participaction.com/en-ca/thought-leadership/report-card/2018>

One of the ways we can get our kids more active is by encouraging their participation in physical activity and sport.

For decades, we've known that physical activity improves heart health, helps maintain a healthy body weight and builds strong bones and muscles in kids across a range of skills and abilities. And, it can also have a profound impact on their most vital and complex organ: the brain. Research shows that regular physical activity improves cognition, brain function, and mental health. It also plays a key role in preventing and reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, managing stress, and improving self-esteem in children and youth.<sup>2</sup>

Sport can also be a boon to productivity for people of all ages. Keeping yourself active means you'll have more stamina and energy, which works as an overall mood booster. In 2006, the Social Issues Research Centre found that participation in sport can improve morale in the workplace, create bonds among coworkers, and lead to greater motivation and productivity.<sup>3</sup>

### **Sport strengthens communities**

While some 38 percent of Canadians don't feel as though they have a stake in their communities, 85 percent agree that participation in sport helps build community, according to the 2015 Vital Signs report from Community Foundations of Canada.<sup>4</sup>

Sport participation can also be particularly important for new Canadians, with more than 20 percent of our population having been born outside of Canada<sup>5</sup>. A 2014 study by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship found new citizens to be eager to participate in sport, with 53 percent identifying sport as a means of integrating into Canadian society and 69 percent saying sports helped them learn about Canadian culture.<sup>6</sup>

While most Canadians attach a high level of importance to the health benefits of sport<sup>7</sup>, participation rates for Canadians age 15 and older have been declining since 1992<sup>8</sup>. Sport organizations must now look for new ways to attract kids to their sport as the lower number of participants puts pressure on fees and the range of services they can offer.

### **Our collective challenges**

While most NSOs are professionally managed organizations, there are still some that are run primarily by devoted volunteers off the corner of their kitchen tables.

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<sup>2</sup> [Ibid](#)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.sirc.org/publik/sport\\_and\\_the\\_workplace.pdf](http://www.sirc.org/publik/sport_and_the_workplace.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://communityfoundations.ca/sportandbelonging/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2016006-eng.htm>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.icc-icc.ca/site/pdfs/PlayingTogether\\_FullR%20Online\\_Final.pdf](https://www.icc-icc.ca/site/pdfs/PlayingTogether_FullR%20Online_Final.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/81-595-m/2008060/s12-eng.htm>

<sup>8</sup> [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2013/pc-ch/CH24-1-2012-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/pc-ch/CH24-1-2012-eng.pdf)

In addition to developing and governing all aspects of a particular sport, NSOs have taken on significant new responsibilities over the past decade (such as increased reporting and risk management) in order to adapt to the increasing demands of an evolving international sport system and a changing world. Today's demands are more complex, require better and higher standards, and subject matter expertise. However, without the adequate funding, organizations are forced to spend less time on the development of sport itself.

Some of the issues and priorities NSOs are juggling as they strive to promote values-based sport, include:

- Gender equity. While a majority of girls participate in sport in their early years, the number declines sharply when they reach adolescence. In 2010, only one-sixth of Canadian women reported participating in sport, compared to one-third of Canadian men.<sup>9</sup>
- Creating opportunities for Indigenous children and youth: Indigenous people in Canada experience a profound disparity in health status, but Indigenous sport leaders from across Canada have identified youth sport and recreation “as one of the primary means for community wellness: as preventative medicine for the social dilemma that Aboriginal youth face.”<sup>10</sup>
- Concussion and return to play protocols: Too many individuals experience concussions while participating in sports, sometimes with tragic consequences. Concussions in sport are a recognized public health issue because of their frequency and their potential short- and long-term consequences. All NSOs are required to develop concussion protocols and return to sport strategies.
- Cannabis legalization: Cannabis will continue to be listed as Prohibited in Competition on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)'s Prohibited List. Athletes will be held strictly liable for any prohibited substance that is found in their sample. Providing athletes and coaches with information about cannabis legalization and its impact on sport is critical.<sup>11</sup>
- Creating safe environments, free from harassment and abuse: All Canadians deserve to participate and compete in a sport environment, free from harassment, abuse or discrimination, regardless of gender, race, religion, language, age and ability. Sport organizations are required to have a formal policy to address harassment and abuse in order to receive federal funding. While these policies have been updated over the years

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<sup>9</sup> [Ibid](#)

<sup>10</sup> Aboriginal Sport Circle (1998): The role of Coaching Development, the North American Indigenous Games and Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies.

<sup>11</sup> <https://cces.ca/cannabis#anchor>

to stay effective and relevant, the new measures announced on June 19<sup>th</sup> by the Minister of Science and Sport will strengthen existing tools and provisions.<sup>12</sup>

### **How NSOs are funded**

The Government of Canada supports our athletes and many of the national organizations that make up our sport system through Sport Canada programs and policies.

The Sport Support Program (SSP) provides funding to promote sporting opportunities to all Canadians, regardless of background, as well as support elite athletes in their pursuit of excellence on the world stage. The SSP is designed to ensure that:

- National Sport Organizations (NSOs), Multisport Organizations (MSOs), and Canadian Sport Institutes (CSIs) meet established national standards;
- Sport knowledge is developed and disseminated;
- Collaboration around programs and policies is expanded and strengthened;
- Canadians, including identified under-represented groups, have opportunities to participate in sport;
- Canadian athletes have improved performances at Olympics, Paralympics, and senior world championships; and
- Canadians have access to quality sport programs and services.<sup>13</sup>

Since the awarding of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Government of Canada has increased financial support towards high-performance sport and cultivating the next generation of national team athletes.

However, since 2008-09, core funding for NSOs, as well as for MSOs and CSIs, has remained virtually stagnant, even though inflation has risen by 15.77 percent over the last 10 years<sup>14</sup>. These organizations are expected to provide sport programming and opportunities for Canadians and high-performance athletes, develop programs that reflect changing demographics, establish policy to support and protect Canadians participating in sport activities, and generate private sector financial support to expand and enhance existing programs.

Despite these growing responsibilities, NSOs and their counterparts have received no additional funding to support the rising costs of hiring professional staff, conducting innovative research, mounting legal appeals, and developing the sophisticated, inclusive programming needed to encourage Canadians of all backgrounds, ages and abilities to participate in values-based sport.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2018/06/minister-duncan-announces-stronger-measures-to-eliminate-harassment-abuse-and-discrimination-in-sport.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.820229/publication.html>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>

Status quo funding, year over year, cannot support status quo program delivery, let alone respond to the emerging and urgent priorities facing Canadian sport today.

The following table outlines funding for NSOs, MSOs and CSIs, as well as the number of organizations that receive support from Sport Canada as part of the SSP:

	NSO		MSO		CSI		Total Core Support
	#	Core Support	#	Core Support	#	Core Support	
<b>2008-2009</b>	57	\$35,061,040	15	\$16,072,062	9	\$3,480,000	\$ 54,613,102
<b>2009-2010</b>	56	\$35,479,680	15	\$13,714,718	7	\$3,660,000	\$ 52,854,398
<b>2010-2011</b>	56	\$35,987,100	15	\$21,392,538	7	\$3,480,000	\$ 60,859,638
<b>2011-2012</b>	57	\$37,082,710	15	\$20,675,136	7	\$3,400,000	\$ 61,157,846
<b>2012-2013</b>	58	\$37,229,580	23	\$30,389,552	7	\$3,530,000	\$ 71,149,132
<b>2013-2014</b>	56	\$41,060,536	23	\$30,049,465	7	\$3,500,000	\$ 74,610,001
<b>2014-2015</b>	56	\$40,000,350	21	\$28,994,630	7	\$3,820,000	\$ 72,814,980
<b>2015-2016</b>	56	\$40,372,350	21	\$29,331,280	7	\$3,620,000	\$ 73,323,630
<b>2016-2017</b>	56	\$39,477,850	19	\$30,340,171	7	\$3,600,000	\$ 73,418,021
<b>2017-2018</b>	56	\$39,721,850	19	\$30,363,030	7	\$3,500,000	\$ 73,584,880

It's important to note that not all NSOs and MSOs receive funding from Sport Canada. And with every Olympic and Paralympic Games we are seeing the addition of new disciplines and sports to the program. For example, on Aug. 3, 2016, the International Olympic Committee voted to add baseball/softball, karate, sport climbing, surfing, and skateboarding for the 2020 Summer Olympics. The addition of the latter three is expected to create additional pressure on the SSP budget so these newer sports can build capacity and field teams to represent Canada in 2020.

## Conclusion

Participating in sport – particularly sport that's values-based and principle-driven – can produce a wide range of benefits, from better physical and mental health to stronger, more cohesive communities. But NSOs, MSOs and CSIs are under pressure thanks to a range of competing priorities and increasingly complex demands.

**In order to ensure the continued strength and success of the Canadian sport system, we recommend a 25 percent increase to the core funding component of the Sport Support Program. This amounts to an additional \$18 million per year on an ongoing basis.**

**This 25 percent increase will allow NSOs, MSOs and CSIs – who play a critical role in governing sport in Canada – to hire the right people, develop the right programs, and build the policies we need to keep kids active and make sure Canadians of all ages, backgrounds and abilities are able to access the benefits of values-based sport.**