

SUMMARY REPORT

Canadian Sport Policy Renewal

Women and Sport Round Table

Sport Canada

Toronto, Ontario – July 7 2011

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The views expressed herein are those raised by the participants at the meeting and do not necessarily reflect those of Sport Canada or the Government of Canada.

Introduction

Certain segments of the population face challenges related to their ability to participate in sport and, once involved, to their ability to successfully pursue the opportunities that exist within sport. In the process to renew the Canadian Sport Policy (CSP), Sport Canada hosted round tables to capture the policy issues specific to sport for women and girls, persons with a disability, Aboriginal Peoples, and Canada's increasing diverse ethnocultural communities.

Sport Canada worked with leaders within each population to identify eight to 10 representatives for each round table with the requisite knowledge and experience to contribute to the discussion. It was explained to participants that, although they may have participated in other CSP consultations or completed the online survey, the purpose of the round table was to focus on the issues specific to their population that they believed needed to be considered in the development of the next iteration of the CSP. This report outlines the results of the round table on sport for women and girls hosted in Toronto on July 7, 2011. The participants are listed at the end of this report.

What We Have Heard So Far

The round table began with a presentation of what the CSP evaluation and renewal consultations to date had revealed so far in terms of women and girls followed by a discussion of those results.

Participants were not surprised that the efforts of the 2002 policy to increase participation in sport lagged behind excellence as the latter has clearly been the focus over the last decade. Participants believe there should be a greater emphasis in the next decade on education - informing individuals and organizations how they can implement the policy's participation objectives. Canadian Sport for Life is driving a new and different focus, including the notion of sport for life. For women and girls, opportunities to participate in sport have improved as more sport organizations offer programs for women and girls; however, it was recognized that overall participation rates continue to decline and women and girls continue to participate at lower rates than their male counterparts. Despite these increased opportunities as athlete/participants, there has been little or no progress to increase the involvement of women in leadership roles as coaches, officials, administrators and volunteer leaders.

Participants were dismayed to learn from the consultations to date 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.

General Comments

In terms of the new policy, women and girls should be specifically referenced and reflected throughout the language of the policy. The policy should make clear the importance of the involvement of men and women. There was a caution not to isolate target groups - to set them apart. It is important for sport organizations to promote the participation of women in different roles and at all levels within the sport system as a fundamental objective - not as an add-on or secondary consideration.

The issue of representation on boards and gender-neutral recruitment of leadership positions was reinforced. It was suggested that 30% is the minimum representation for a voice to be effectively heard. 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. It was obvious to participants that achieving greater international success for Canada requires greater success by both men and women.

Participants believed the policy should emphasize gender equity in the governance of sport and not only on the field of play. When an organization receives public funding, governments are obligated to ensure that there is fair and reasonable gender equity on their board. Public funders should make better use of financial incentives and penalties to achieve gender equity in sport. It was suggested that government could use a review panel, similar to the Own The Podium model, to review the organizational performance of funded organizations.

Government should be consistent in enforcing the expected standards for funded organizations, for example, there should be as much “teeth” at the federal level for gender equity as there is for official languages. However, this approach must be system-wide, not just at the federal level.

Other general comments were that:

- Good plans are often being developed by sport organizations but the capacity is not there to implement them.
- The wide use of the term “from playground to podium” is problematic because it is too limiting. The end is not necessarily the podium; the end is sport for life. The policy language should reflect the many faces of lifelong involvement.
- There needs to be the same emphasis on education and awareness as there is on programming.
- Federal-provincial connections need to continue to improve.
- The system needs to do a better job of supporting communities. Sport should work more closely with the Canadian Federation of Municipalities and at the local level with schools, clubs, and municipal governments.

- The newcomer issue is superseding the gender issue and people do not recognize that gender is part of the newcomer issue.

Themes

The discussion continued and comments were collectively organized into a number of themes.

1. Philosophy/culture

- there is a need to change the culture of sport so that gender equity is the norm
- leadership should be understood to be provided by men and women
- there is a need for specific mention of women and girls in the new policy because they are currently not fully represented, especially in leadership positions
- the policy can help to create a female-friendly environment, addressing issues such as homophobia, hyper sexualisation of women, harassment, and gender verification.

2. Data

- there needs to be a greater investment in collecting data (participation, leadership, officials, coaches)
- data collection needs better coordination (who collects what) so that there is common, consistent data collected across jurisdictions
- there is a need to provide broad and easy access to the data, for example, a national database to which funded organizations are required to contribute
- there should be a goal to have such a data collection and distribution system in place within 3 years (Dec. 2014)

3. Governance

- governance structures are critical to change/influence, so women need to be represented
- sport organizations should have in place nominating committees for Boards
- women should have 50 % representation on Boards (true gender equity)
- representative Boards should not be used as an excuse to exclude women
- there should be a limitation on tenure for Board members
- organizations should have by-laws on harassment, homophobia, equal gender representation in marketing/promotion plans and media stories, equity on the field of play, and sending both male and female representatives as voting delegates to meetings where key decisions are being made

4. Technical Leadership

- more effort is required to address the gap of women in positions of leadership (sport administrators, senior staff, coaches, officials and team support)
- this objective should be tied to funding accountability frameworks
- to complement efforts to recruit more women in leadership positions, effort and support should also be provided to increase the capacity of women leaders

5. Participation

- there is a need to continue to increase opportunities for women and girls by enhancing existing opportunities and creating new ones
- there needs to be a better recognition within the sport community that more effort is required to increase women's participation
- we need to continue to alleviate the problem of access to facilities by women and girls, e.g., the issue of historic assignments
- the barriers are well know and need to be addressed, e.g., cost, especially for single parents; time, e.g., providing child care support, and it needs to be made clear that addressing these barriers will also benefit men
- there is a need to identify and promote more female role models

6. Accountability

- the issue of ownership and accountability is paramount
- there must be measures in place that hold publicly funded organizations that receive core funding accountable to provide and support equitable opportunities
- funding should be tied to performance/deliverables outcomes with "teeth"
- establish incentives, based on a percentage of overall funding, for meeting targets and penalties for not meeting targets, i.e. funding will decrease
- need for a review panel of experts to undertake regular program audits

7. Support structures

- support structures must be in place to enable women to more fully participate in the sport system, e.g., care giving, travel policies, mentoring
- governments need to make these support structures eligible expenses and perhaps set side a specific funding envelope for them
- F-P/T governments need identified staff responsible for the women in sport file
- establishing these support structures should be an integral part of sport organizations' objectives

8. Education /awareness

- increase the general understanding and appreciation of why women and sport objectives are important and beneficial to Canadians and sport stakeholders

- need to move from a moral argument for engagement of women to a clear business argument that demonstrates it is in the best interests of the organization to capitalize on the knowledge and skills of women
- require better communication of evidence that explains the status of women in the sport system, e.g., that despite equity policies, equity has not been reached

9. Diversity

- Canada is committed to a diverse, inclusive and welcoming society
- gender equity is a Canadian value that must be better reflected in sport
- sport lags behind society in its recognition of the benefits of gender equity
- people may need to better understand the need and benefits of diversity before they can understand the need and benefits of gender equity
- there is good, progressive language on diversity in the Sport Canada policy on sport for women and girls that could be used in the CSP

10. Business case

- the policy should make a case for why gender equity improves the performance of an organization to achieve its objectives
- involving women to a greater degree expands the breadth of ideas, is reflective of the audience, and increases the pool of volunteers
- use the available research, e.g., research from the private sector shows that companies that increased the percentage of women on Boards to more than 30% were top performers
- basic message is don't ignore 50% of the population

11. Engagement

- need to engage multiple partners in the sport system in addressing the full participation of women and girls to achieve the objectives of the CSP
- achieving the full and active participation of women and girls in sport is everybody's responsibility
- engagement should be a guiding principle in the policy
- engagement means commitment, that is, everyone is engaged in finding a solution.
- need to move beyond the traditional sport sector to get more engagement.

Conclusion

Women and girls should be reflected in the language throughout the policy. The policy should reinforce the need for all organizations to commit to gender equity. There is a need to recognize that creating a policy that promotes greater participation of women and girls in sport is not the end, but the beginning. There needs to be implementation. Participants noted that significant background work was done in the development of the Sport Canada policy on sport for women and girls which produced some great ideas and

information to build on. 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. The full and fair participation of women and girls in all roles and all levels of sport strengthens sport, is consistent with Canadian values, and should be the norm, not a continuing struggle.

Round Table Participants

Sport Canada would like to thank the following women who took time from their busy schedules to bring their significant passion, experience and knowledge to this round table:

- Phyllis Berck – (Toronto) former CAAWS Chair, Women and Sport advocate
- Sheilagh Croxon – (Toronto) CAC Women and Coaching
- Martha Deacon – (Kitchener/Waterloo) COC Chair Women and Sport Committee, Commonwealth Games, Badminton
- Lori Johnstone - (Fredericton) writing CAAWS LTAD resource, former Athletes CAN Chair and Advisor to the Sport Minister, Athlete
- Nancy Lee (Toronto) Women in sport media, women in leadership, CAAWS Board
- Karin Lofstrom (Ottawa) CAAWS Executive Director, International Women and sport organization (IAPESGW)
- Dru Marshall (Edmonton) Coach, Academic, Researcher, women and coaching, CAAWS Chair
- Jasmine Northcott (Ottawa) Athletes CAN, CAAWS Board