

Canadian Sport Policy Renewal New Brunswick Report

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June 2011



Summary Report

New Brunswick's participation in the Canadian Sport Policy Renewal was in three parts. The Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport held a provincial forum of key stakeholders on May 25, 2011, gathered data via the on-line survey and hosted a municipal consultation in the City of Saint John.

Representatives from 28 Provincial Sport Organizations, Provincial Multi-sport organizations and Provincial Recreation organizations were in attendance. Throughout this day, participants were asked to share their thoughts for seven questions: 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 14.

The online e-survey hosted by SIRC generated a response from 61 individuals and 39 organizations.

A municipal consultation around the role of sport in community building was facilitated by the Public Policy Forum and held on June 7, 2011 in Saint John. Representatives at the event included municipal staff and community groups from the Saint John Greater Area.

New Brunswick was able to elicit a reasonable response to the data collection process. This consultation took place amid other government consultations on regionalization of rural services amongst other things. It also occurred in the same time period that government held a consultation about its new funding programs for sport and soon after several regional sport forums had taken place. There is a certain degree of volunteer fatigue with regards to consultations.

There was a high degree of consensus observed regarding the feedback received from all 3 processes. Some key messages were:

1. While the sport system has moved forward in the last 10 years, it has taken a small step forward rather than large leaps. It was felt that without radical changes to funding, its volunteer base and infrastructure, the sport system will continue to inch forward over long periods of time.
2. Population shifts and an aging population are placing significant stress on New Brunswick's sport system. The population in most rural areas is declining which further emphasizes existing capacity issues related to financing facilities, finding leaders for programs and enough participants to make programs financially and practically viable. On the other hand, population shifts toward the larger cities in the south is increasing human and financial resources. This shift, however, is also placing a greater demand on existing facilities. When new facilities are built to meet the demand, municipalities must pursue a reasonable contribution towards the cost of facilities and services from out of town residents. Out of town users are being asked to contribute in terms of taxation or additional user fees.
3. There is still a lot of work to be done to align sport with long-term athlete development principles. There was consensus that the model had yet to penetrate down to the grass roots level in most sports. The fact that over a quarter of on-line respondents had not heard of CS4L was evidence of this, although, it was interesting that one sport volunteer leader referenced their sport specific LTAD guide, but did not realize that this was related to CS4L. It is possible that even as change impacts the system, many people will be unaware of its links to CS4L. Awareness, funding and training were seen as key to implementation.

4. Organizations and individuals felt strongly that sport made a significant contribution to community development through its ongoing programs at the grass roots, regional and provincial level. Sport leaders, however, largely see community development as a bi-product of their efforts. There is very little capacity for sport organizations to extend to pure community development initiatives without impacting ongoing sport development efforts. Even mutually beneficial partnerships can be difficult to achieve due to human resource capacity issues.
5. A comment was made regarding the lack of mention of persons with a disability in the current policy, and the need to meaningfully engage this population in the new version.
6. The lasting comment from this consultation lies with communication. Municipal and community leaders shared the importance of communication at all levels, from national to grass-roots and everywhere in between. Communication of a policy, a model, or a program requires a partnership of all levels to make any new initiative a success.

Detailed Report

Theme : Participation

Question 1.0 What are the reasons for your organization's interest in promoting participation in sport?

The Provincial Forum identified a variety of reasons that can be categorized as personal reasons, social reasons and organizational reasons. Participating will lead to overall skill acquisition and physical development on a personal level. **It will produce well-rounded individuals who engage in lifelong participation and active living.**

Sport has been identified as an avenue to belong, whether for youth, new Canadians or the population as a whole. It increases social interaction leading to pride in the community and ultimately, community development. Organizations involved in sport encourage participation for membership growth, increased revenue and the promotion of the sport itself. It is also an avenue for talent identification and eventual increased infrastructure and resources.

Question 1.1 What are the most important challenges/issues/opportunities affecting your organization's efforts to promote and increase participation in sport?

The Provincial Forum led to the identification of challenges on personal, organizational and systemic levels. Personal challenges that can affect a participant's willingness to participate can stem from parents' involvement (or lack of), the pressure to succeed (from coaches or parents) and the general lack of imagination of today's youth.

Organizations are affected by declining enrolment in sport programs, liability issues that stem from running a program and costs associated to the sustained programming. Overall, the recruitment of volunteers is an increasing challenge. Aging facilities, lack of coaches and declining demographics were also identified. The professionalism of sport was also targeted as an issue, requiring experts to lead, as opposed to participation and fun. Another challenge is the inconsistent availability of school facilities across the province. While there are good agreements in some jurisdictions and provincial policies in place, implementation, particularly in rural areas is a problem which limits participation.

Increasingly, the cost of participation is cited as a factor limiting participation. While programs such as KidSport and Canadian Tire Jump Start can support participation at the community level, **any child who wants to play competitively is faced with rising and often prohibitive costs to register, purchase the necessary equipment and pay travel costs.**

Question 1.2 What strategies have you identified to deal with the above challenges/issues/opportunities?

Partnerships and collaboration are key to participation and the development of sport as a whole. Fostering school/community partnerships could lead to the use of facilities at low or minimal cost, allowing the available funds to be used towards paid leadership.

A multi-sectorial model for delivery of the sport system, leading to the breakdown of silos and again, partnerships throughout the community are favoured. The regionalization of programming and services could also lead to increased participation.

Question 2.0 How do you define a quality sport experience?

The response to the on-line survey and the question posed at the provincial forum is summarised below.

A quality sport experience is defined as one in which participants have fun while improving their skills under the guidance of a quality certified coach. They take part in developmentally appropriate competition at a level that is challenging and takes place in a safe, friendly, positive and functional environment that fosters sportsmanship and team spirit. The sport experience is rewarding and engaging leaving each individual with a passionate desire to participate over and over again.

Delegates to the Provincial Forum agreed that a quality experience requires that all players need to be working toward this common goal. The athlete, the coach, volunteers and the parents are all contribute to a quality sport experience.

Question 2.1 What barriers currently exist?

A large barrier for New Brunswick stems from New Brunswick's population shifting from the North to the South and the rural to the urban. This is creating a major challenge for northern and rural communities to provide sport and recreation services. Existing capacity issues in these areas are limiting factors in financing facilities, finding leaders for programs and enough participation to make programs financially and practically viable.

Other barriers include the availability of funding, facilities, volunteers and coaching.

Theme: Values

Question 3.0 What values do you think should define sport, on the field of play, in Canada?

Respondents believe that the Canadian sport system should value access to the full range of programs and services that will allow all Canadians to participate in sport and develop to their full potential. This means providing access to persons with a disability, aboriginal youth, economically disadvantaged youth, etc. and providing them with a means to not only participate, but to have the same opportunities to advance as anyone else anywhere in Canada.

Theme: Under-represented populations

Question 4.0 Should efforts be made to increase the participation of under-represented groups in sport?

A nearly unanimous Yes was the response for New Brunswick's e-survey. The only respondents who did not respond in the affirmative believed that opportunities should be equal for all.

Question 4.1 Which groups should be targeted?

Children and Youth was the most popular response. Other popular choices included Girls and Women, Youth at Risk, the Economically Disadvantaged, Persons with a Disability, Aboriginal Youth and Persons at-risk of Obesity.

The few who responded negatively to this question felt that all groups should be targeted, to continue to build on the success already seen in these areas.

Theme: Official Languages

Question 5.0 Does your organization offer programs and services in both official languages?

The availability in both official languages varies greatly. Most PSO materials, websites and newsletters are available in both languages. However, leaders are not always available. The system generally relies on volunteers to provide the service, with obvious shortcomings.

Question 5.1 What are the current challenges in offering such programs and services in both official languages?

As Canada's only official bilingual province, New Brunswick provincial sport organizations (PSOs) are challenged more than most to operate in both official languages. While provincial legislation does not extend to non-profit autonomous organizations, PSOs are influenced by membership composition, demands and expectation, government funding and the desire for equitable service delivery. That said, the capacity of PSOs to operate in a bilingual manner is limited by their ability to attract and retain appropriately skilled bilingual employees and board members, the capacity of coaches and program deliverers in both languages, funding and volunteers for translation. Another factor is the desire of the membership to expend their limited resources on providing bilingual services at the expense of other important services. In the most harmonious organizations both the leaders and the membership put forward their best efforts to provide bilingual services, but will accept some shortcomings.

Theme: System Design and Enablers

While the sport system has moved forward in the last 10 years, it has taken a small step forward rather than large leaps. It was felt that without radical changes to funding, its volunteer base and infrastructure, the sport system will continue to inch forward over long periods of time. It is restrained by the same factors now as it was 10 years ago and likely 20 years ago. What will it take to make systemic change? A sport system run largely by volunteers with a chronic shortage of funding,

leadership, volunteers and an over-reliance on inconsistent partnerships (schools and municipalities) for facilities is always likely to fall short of growing public expectations.

Question 7.0 What is the current impact of CS4L implementation?

There is still a lot of work to be done to align sport with Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) principles. There was consensus that the model had yet to penetrate down to the grass roots level in most sports. An interesting outcome, however, that one sport leader referenced their sport specific LTAD guide, but did not realize that this was related to CS4L. It is possible that even as change impacts the system, many people will be unaware of its links to CS4L.

Question 7.1 What do you think will be the future impact of CS4L implementation?

Ideally, the future impact of the CS4L will be increased participation in sport at all levels and a more physically literate population being physically active for life. Other by-products will be better skill development, improved relationships between athletes, coaches and parents, using a common language to everyone.

Question 7.2 What are the current barriers to successful implementation of the CS4L model?

Currently, the lack of communication from NSO to PSO to community groups is the largest barrier. Awareness was cited as the biggest issue, with the problem related to a lack of CS4L expertise and training programs. Funding was also identified as a major impediment to progress. It is also often difficult to change the 'old school' thinking and get parents on board, particularly when changing competition systems.

Question 8.1 Identify the top three components (in order of priority) in which programming is currently sufficient and/or appropriate (sport development)?

At the provincial forum, it was identified that none of these components have sufficient levels of programming, however, Capitalizing on international events, Research and innovation and Parasport development (on an elite level only) have been identified as the components who are moving in a positive direction.

Question 8.2 Identify the top three components (in order of priority) in which programming is currently insufficient and/or inappropriate (sport development)?

It was identified that all these components failed to meet the needs of the sport community. The areas most lacking were identified as facilities, coaches, school sport, officials and organizational capacity.

Question 9.1 Identify the top three components (in order of priority) in which programming is currently sufficient and/or appropriate (high performance)?

The e-survey results lead to believe that none of these components have sufficient levels of programming, as responses are scattered.

Question 9.2 Identify the top three components (in order of priority) in which programming is currently insufficient and/or inappropriate (high performance)?

The e-survey results show, once again, scattered results, which lead to conclude that all or many programs are insufficient. The following three components were consistent between individual and organization responses: direct athlete support and incentives; athlete talent identification, recruitment and development; coaches and technical leadership.

Question 10.0 What are the resources (eg. Human, financial, equipment, facilities) that your organization needs to fully achieve its potential in delivering sport programs and services?

The primary resource identified was human resources at all levels. Coaches, officials and volunteers are key to delivering programs. The next obvious resource needed is financial, whether from levels of government (national, provincial or municipal), from memberships or in-kind. Finally, adequate, accessible facilities are also key in delivery.

Question 10.1 What are some of the current limitations?

Current demographics are key limitations to our province. In northern New Brunswick, the population is declining leading to a reduced youth population as well as fewer recreation professionals. There is an increasing need to provide regional programs and services to draw on a larger pool of funding, leadership and participants, but regional politics and political boundaries are a barrier. A concern is that when services are taken out of a community and made regional, accessibility can be an issue for those without transportation or shorter on time. On the other side of this issue, New Brunswick's southern cities are benefitting from the population shift as populations remain stable or increase. Cities too, however, are challenged when the new settlers decide to reside outside of the city limits, but take advantage of city services. Cities are finding it difficult to attain a reasonable contribution towards the cost of facilities and services from out of town residents in terms of taxation or additional user fees.

Question 10.2 What can you do about them or what have you done about them?

Programmers in our province have shifted their programming to address the needs of the athletes and participants that are available. By prioritizing around these needs, partnerships can be fostered and community development becomes a focus, using sport as a tool.

Question 11.0 Does your organization have the human resource capacity to meet the demands of the next decade?

Altogether 77% of organizational respondents believed that they did not have the human resource capacity needed to carry their association through the next decade. The main issues cited were recruitment and retention of staff and volunteers.

Question 12.0 What are the benefits of improving linkages between national sport organizations and their provincial/territorial counterparts?

The e-survey results identified athlete development, coach/leader development and knowledge transfer as the main benefits for New Brunswick.

Question 12.1 What are the challenges to improving these linkages?

The e-survey results indicate communication and human resources as the main challenges in New Brunswick.

Question 13.0 What are the benefits of improving linkages between provincial/territorial sport organizations and municipal-level sport clubs and recreation departments/organizations and/or schools?

The e-survey results identified shared expertise, partnerships and knowledge transfer as the main benefits for New Brunswick.

Question 13.1 What are the challenges to improving these linkages?

Once again, the e-survey results indicate communication and human resources as the main challenges in New Brunswick.

Theme: Community Building

Question 14.0 Do you promote sport participation intentionally for community-building purposes (where community-building is defined as pursuit of non-sport outcomes such as youth development, health promotion, gender equity, social inclusion, and conflict resolution) or is your orientation primarily for sport objectives?

At the provincial forum, delegates concluded that sport organizations make a significant contribution to community development through their ongoing programs at the grass roots, regional and provincial level. Sometimes, these programs target or include underrepresented groups, but rarely is the primary goal community development. Sport leaders see community development as a bi-product of their efforts. There is very little capacity for sport organizations to extend to pure community development initiatives without impacting ongoing sport development efforts.

Somewhat surprisingly, 69% of organizational survey respondents reported that they did promote sport for community development purposes. The reported target of their efforts was youth development (94%), social inclusion (61%), gender equity (56%) and health promotion (50%). A lack of funding and human resources were the two major obstacles to doing more.

Question 14.2 If yes, please share the positive outcomes from your efforts.

Key outcomes of community development through sport identified at the provincial forum spanned from the development of leaders in the community; a community pride, leading to national pride; improved overall behaviours in youth; health promotion and an avenue for belonging.

Question 14.3 Some partnerships between sport organizations and non-sport organizations as a means to pursue non-sport objectives while simultaneously leveraging greater resources and accessing new audiences to increase sport participation. Is this your experience or could you see merit in such a notion?

Yes, it was the collective experience at the provincial forum and results are promising.

Theme: International Initiatives**Question 15.0 Canadians are involved in a wide range of international activities related to sport, in which areas should Canada continue to focus?**

The e-survey results indicated that all areas should continue, with split opinions on whether hosting international sporting events and promoting quality sport for disadvantaged or underrepresented groups should continue or increase.