

Discussion Paper: A New Model For Sport Development in Alberta
Regional Sport Centres

Purpose

The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to invite comment from Sport Alberta Directors and other interested stakeholders that are invested in this issue related to the future focus of Sport Alberta (SA). The basic intent is to declare a focus area for Sport Alberta and then concentrate resources (financial, human, effort) toward the realization of this preferred future direction.

Background

This Discussion Paper provides background information to the issue and suggests further investigation and expenditure of time and resources. The intent is to conduct further dialogue on the impact of the issue, request corrections to the existing document, and, most importantly, to invite stakeholder suggestions as to viable and focused future direction for Sport Alberta.

As a ‘work in progress’, the attached document (Development of Regional Sport Centres in Alberta) will go through several iterations as the position and concept are developed.

Problem Statement

At present there is no policy related to sport in Alberta. A policy would entrench the values and benefits of sport in legislation. Without policy/legislation there is no framework to guide decisions, no basis for protecting the financial commitment to sport in times of difficulty or for leveraging additional resources in “times of plenty”. However, there are policies within the government that exist to provide direction for individuals with discretionary decision-making authority and to ensure decisions and outcomes of decisions are aligned with political priorities and objectives. How does sport use these priorities to also accomplish its goals?

The companion piece to the policy is the implementation plan (i.e., the *Sport Plan for Alberta*) that translates the policy recommendations into action.

What is the Issue?

How does sport better position itself with government priorities?

Discussion: Aligning the Alberta Government to the Needs of Sport in Alberta.

The following position is put forward regarding a need to garner a greater focus for sport in Alberta. Not all of these ideas have been fleshed out but they remain ideas that could potentially move people to action. What is clearly lacking is an inspirational idea or concept that we, as a sport community, can build around. Though there is multitude of good reasons for Government to invest in communities through sport they are not motivated to do so because the picture is so cloudy as to how they should act. The reality is that sport can not really deliver on that message as we are not in alignment collectively and we really have no way to motivate our cause to ourselves let alone Government. This has been demonstrated repeatedly by the sport community. With the possible exception of some of the larger and more well organized Provincial Sport Associations

(PSA), sport in Alberta is largely a hit and miss entity that is locally inspired and delivered but provincially rudderless. We often spend our preaching to each other (within Sport Alberta) and really have no impact on how to motivate and inspire the larger sport community or the larger population to act.

Trying to work through and with PSA's on a plan for attack, although politically correct, is a failing strategy because of several important factors:

1. Most PSA's have too many responsibilities to be appropriately addressed by their present level of resources. Their tendency seems to be "survival" and to only focus on what is in front of them today not tomorrow.
2. Most lack the professional management, governance and HR skills and experience to act as a business and proactively plan for the future as individual organizations or as a sport collective.
3. There has been little evidence of a commitment or interest in working as a collective group to advance the position of sport in Alberta.

There is an abundance of evidence based research promoting the values and benefits derived from sport, whether they are health implications, inspiration and unity of a community, positive self esteem or reduced youth crime. An inordinate amount of information promotes the reasons why governments should invest in sport. By increasing the investment in sport, the citizens are better. The harsh reality is that this is not occurring, and in fact relative to Alberta, the government is investing \$1 million less today than they did 18 years ago. Fewer dollars at a time when inflation has increase, the population has increased by 35% costs and expectations are ever higher.

At present, there are four primary priorities of the Alberta government as they endeavor to make Alberta the best place to live, play and work. These are **advanced education, infrastructure, rural development and health**. How does sport integrate with these priorities?

Where do we start?

1. a meeting of interested parties

It is proposed that a regional sport centre concept be advocated with regional sport development through Alberta's Colleges and Universities. This model would encompass the four provincial priorities. A model for such action presently exists in the Central Alberta Sport Development Alliance – CASDA. There is a focus on regional sport development (not sport delivery but regional sport development) through Advanced Education.

SA should commence discussions with interested parties, such as representatives of CASDA, to learn more about their approach. Attendees at a preliminary meeting could include:

Gord Inglis/Al Ferchuk/Michael Donlevy – CASDA/RDC
Rob Litwinski/Terry Engen/Tim Leer - Hockey Alberta
Sport Alberta – Dale Henwood, Scott Robinson, Sue Bulmer, Scott Hayes
ASRPW F – TBA

2. Contact would be made with other interested colleges/Universities to further discuss their involvement in this approach to sport development.
3. Engagement of ASRPW Foundation personnel
Orest Korbutt
Doug Jones
Lloyd Bentz
4. Media would be invited to join the cause of SA.

What does this Mean?

The foundational rationale for this approach is predicated on the importance of sport and the values and benefits of sport and aligning them to the provincial government priorities: i.e., **advanced education** is a present focus of the Alberta Government and thus, the colleges and universities are well positioned for both capital and program dollars that support the four pillars of the Alberta Government's vision which also includes the **rural development** strategy [most of Alberta's post secondary institutions are located outside the two major cities (Olds College, Keyano College, Medicine Hat College, Red Deer College, Augustana University)], **health and wellness** and **infrastructure** initiatives.

As we endeavor to position sport with respect to the government's four priorities, a renewed emphasis will be placed on coaching education, emerging regional athlete development, talent identification and training. This does not mean actions related to sport club administration and competition development or provincial teams as these remain the focus of the PSA's.

Why is This Significant?

An focused emphasis allows Sport Alberta the opportunity to have an impact in an area that will, possibly, see the investment of new resources in areas that are a priority to the government of Alberta while also meeting a critical sport community need – creating better communities, developing and equipping volunteers, enhancing development of youth who are able to remain in their home environment as they develop. This approach would fundamentally change the development system with an impact on both the health wellness/issues and elite athlete performance.

The new Sport Alberta will advocate relentlessly with one voice. Rather than a singular opinion of what should, Sport Alberta will represent a collective vision of what could be.

Financing

It is essential that SA initiate a process immediately to secure staff. Permanent staff is required to move this initiative on a day to day basis. Possible sources of funding include:

- Community Initiatives Program
- Corporate
- ASRPW Foundation for annual funding
- SA Membership

Development of Regional Sport Centres in Alberta

Model for the Enhancement of the Sport Development Throughout the Province

Preamble

The intent of this proposal is to generate discussion on a coordinated approach to the delivery of services to identified athletes and coaches throughout Alberta. The regional model would be flexible, responding to local interests and needs and allows the athlete/coach to access a wide range of local based programs and opportunities. A more effective and efficient system of athlete development is the primary purpose of the network.

Overview

In recent months there has been considerable discussion regarding both the Alberta and the Canadian sport systems. These discussions revolved around several topics related to our commitment to excellence, the resources allocated to sport, lack of structure in the sport system, lack of connectedness within the system, lack of leadership and management in the sport system etc. The establishment of a network of regional sport centres across Alberta can not only help remedy the high performance concerns but can also be a major impacter of athlete and sport development at the regional level.

What is the Concept?

The primary focus of the regional network is integrated sport development whereby athletes have the opportunity to access regionally based programs and expertise. It is understood that the achievement of high performance results, on a repeated basis, is a long-term process. Our efforts occur with the full understanding of the long-term nature of the process and the need to have a strong base of athletes so there is a succession plan for athletes and coaches. Without a plan, good results occur by chance rather than by design.

The Vision

“A harmonized sport development system linking local sports groups, clubs and schools to provincial programs, national teams and international podium performance through the regional centres.”

What is a Regional Sport Centre?

A regional sport centre offers programs and services for athletes, coaches and other sport leaders and takes a leadership/facilitation role to impact the development of individuals and sport. The focus is both on the performer and the performance. The centre is an entity that delivers quality services and develops better citizens and builds a stronger sport system and this is accomplished with both a long-term and partnership approach.

The purpose of the centre is to contribute towards an enhanced training environment of current and emerging high performance athletes and coaches striving for top performance in provincial, national and international competition. In addition to providing a leadership or catalytic role in building a stronger sport system there is an opportunity to leverage support from the regional communities. The centre provides support services to athletes and coaches in areas of sport medicine, sport science, education and coaching stability as well as in areas of personal and professional development, to assist in their well being in a holistic manner.

The delivery of services and programs is done through an extensive network of service providers. Each regional centre would capitalize on the local resources and partnerships to enhance sport delivery and development within their respective region. A formal plan for the establishment of centres and the coordinated delivery of sport minimizes the role of chance in attaining results.

Regional Sport Centres in Alberta – Providing Community Support to Sport

Alberta was considered one of the leaders in the development of athletes and coaches in Canada. Regional sport centres, using the service delivery model of the CSCC, will be able to provide much needed support much deeper in the sport system to the developing athletes and coaches training in the respective regions throughout Alberta. Regional sport centres will be able to deliver support to sport in an integrated fashion through partnerships with Provincial Sport Associations (PSA) and the regional infrastructure of clubs, facilities and service providers, educational institutions, corporate and business community and other stakeholders. Regional centres offer a longer-term view of athlete development and are a key component of a systematic approach that causes performance to happen. Aspiring athletes and coaches can be educated on appropriate training techniques and background training for transition from one level to the next. There could be tremendous impact for Alberta's Canada Games teams.

It is at the community level of sport where regional sport centres will achieve their maximum impact. They will operate within a flexible framework to meet the needs of the communities of the region that they serve through the development of a customized range of services and programs. A much higher degree of local "buy in" and support will occur when the regional community feels that their needs are being directly met. Regional sport centres will facilitate integrated sport delivery where athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers have the opportunity to pursue regionally based programs and services that will play a significant role in enhancing sport development throughout Alberta.

The present sport system is not connected! Everyone knows what everyone else is doing - except in sport. Centres facilitate vertical integration and connections (local club, PSO, NSO) as well as lateral or horizontal connections (club to club, PSO to PSO). Today these connections are almost non-existent. Ideally, there is connection from the playground to the podium.

For identified Canada Games athletes and coaches, the centre would emphasize athlete development versus sport development. This change in orientation ensures the individual athlete is allowed to pursue excellence close to their home environment.

Where are the Potential Locations for Regional Sport Centres?

It is suggested that the regional sport centre concept would begin initially with piloting regional centres in communities that already has a strong demand for support. Subsequent development should include establishing a maximum number of regional centres in communities where a significant number of athletes and coaches train. The actual implementation schedule is subject to discussion.

Based on population, geographic location and sport activity the following communities are examples (for discussion) of potential locations for regional sport centre development:

- Red Deer – in partnership with the Leadership Centre, Red Deer College, Central Alberta Sport Development Alliance and the City of Red Deer
- Grand Prairie – in partnership with the multi sport development centre (a 1995 Canada Winter Games legacy)
- Olds College
- Lethbridge – in partnership with the City of Lethbridge, the University and College

Note: A prime factor in deciding the location for potential regional sport centres should also be the degree of interest that regional communities express through the resources that they are prepared to contribute.

What are the Benefits?

The objective is to enhance individual development through sport as well as to enhance the development and delivery of sport in Alberta through the provision of more and better opportunities for athletes and coaches. The regional centre model enhances both individual and community development through partnership agreements, resulting in the following:

- multi-sport sharing of information and resources and cross fertilization
- exposure of young athletes to better coaching and to sport science/sport medicine expertise
- full-time employment for coaches (see Appendix A)
- regular contact with key sport leaders and facilitation of opportunities and relationships
- stimulation for grassroots and new club development as well as sport school initiatives
- positive economic benefits and the cost effective delivery of programs and services
- development of local area athletes for the Alberta Games and, primarily, the Canada Games
- development of the whole person/athlete to a higher level while remaining in a nurturing (home) environment
- development of the key players in the sport system – athletes, coaches, Boards, administrators, volunteers
- development of sport technical officials

What are the Outcomes?

Some of the expected outcomes of the regional centre network include:

- full-time coaching. Professional leadership through appropriately qualified coaches is an integral part of athlete development
- local management – providing the guidance to each centre will be a volunteer Board of Directors who are responsible for the long-term growth and sustainability of the centre
- provincial marketing – a regional centre brand will be developed and a coordinated approach to marketing and fund development will be implemented with considerable opportunity to generate regionally-based resources.
- integrated model – a systematic, year round, scientifically based and professional model will guide athlete/coach development

- vertical and horizontal integration – sport development from the community level to the provincial high performance athlete to the national team athlete as well as co-ordination between sports and within and between other sport partners
- professional development - regional coaching resources and volunteer development materials and workshops will be offered
- to enhance the support available, on a regional level, to athletes/coaches who are committed to representing Alberta at the Canada Games
- hosting sport events to promote sport in the region and to bring economic benefits to the host community
- increased cost effectiveness by providing programming and services on a multi-sport basis
- increased awareness by athletes, coaches and parents of what is required to progress to the next level

Regional Sport Centre Services and Programs

The following are examples of the type of services and programs that regional sport centres could offer. These programs and services create a dynamic environment for athlete development and performance by integrating athlete services, coaching and long-term sport development.

- creation of a local service provider network (sports medicine, sport science, facility access, personal and professional development).
- linking of qualified athletes and coaches with services required through service provider network. The Centre pays for those services on behalf of the athletes and coaches on a negotiated partner basis.
- support for the education and certification of qualified coaches through assistance in the local delivery of the Level 1-3 – National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP).
- establishment of local training group partnerships to enhance the training environment through the provision of customized training support.
- stabilization of existing coaching positions and the creation of new positions for well defined training groups through coach salary support.
- coordination of sport related education and information sharing sessions for regional athletes, coaches, volunteers, administrators, etc.
- provide leadership in the development of local partnerships that access private and public resources.
- provide leadership to the establishment of “sport schools” for aspiring athletes.
- become a repository of sport related “best practices” and information for the region.

What is the Support Structure of Regional Sport Centres?

The recommended support structure of the regional sport centres would include the establishment of a local management committee made up of regional and provincial contacts. The management committee would be involved in the hiring of a coordinator that would develop and manage the programs and activities for the centre. It is understood that the principles upon which a centres would operate would be consistent; however, there would be allowance for considerable innovation and flexibility at the regional centre level.

Additionally, it is recommended that the coordinator have access to some administrative staff support and office space to effectively perform their responsibilities.

Marketing Approach

An essential component for the establishment and growth of the network is regional expertise in the development of a consistent marketing, promotional and fund development strategies. Consistent program protocols and templates for athletes and coaches would be established and an integrated provincial wide marketing plan established.

Partnerships

The regional centres will build partnerships with provincial sport associations, regional clubs, community sport organizations, local businesses, municipalities, educational institutions and other interested partners. An example of the contribution of the various partners includes:

- financial support – coaches’ salary, centre coordinator
- operational expenses – equipment
- expertise – research, professional services (athletic therapy, medical access, and sport psychology)
- access to facilities
- promotion and awareness
- event management assistance
- administrative support – office space, Internet connections, phone fax, supplies etc.

Financial Requirements of the Regional Sport Centres

It is recommended that a consortium of funding partners be established to fund the regional sport centres. It is suggested that, initially, regional sport centres be supported primarily by the Alberta Government and Municipal support partnered with Federal support. Additionally, regional fundraising and corporate sponsorship will help programs and services expand throughout the community. The partnership approach ensures maximum leverage of resources.

The following is a suggested minimal expense budget to start a regional sport centre:

Coordinator	\$45,000.
Admin/office support	5,000.
Coaching (salary share)*	100,000.
Equipment/Program/services support**	<u>50,000.</u>
Total	\$200,000.

* see Appendix A for rationale (could also include generic coaches – i.e. strength coaches)

** All additional resources raised by the community will be applied to programs and services. Administration will be kept to a minimum.

Regional centres require a new investment. The financial and in-kind contributions could be from the following partners:

-Government of Alberta (via the ASRPW Foundation) but from several Ministerial budgets (i.e., Health and Wellness, Infrastructure, Advanced Education, Rural Development).

Government of Canada (Canadian Heritage) – bi-lateral agreement

Municipalities

Canadian Sport Centre Calgary

Local/regional Clubs

Provincial Sport Association

Local/regional Business

Next Steps

This document needs to be thoroughly discussed. It is proposed a discussion and planning meeting of interested personnel be scheduled in Red Deer (in January 2006). Discussion items include;

- Discussion of the regional centres concept
- Implementation of a pilot project
- Approach to the Alberta government and corporate sector
- Formation of regional centre Boards
- Formation of a “council” responsible for the management of the network, managing the delivery of services (each regional centre retains responsibility for their policies, procedures and the direction of their respective centre)
- Templates for Partnership Agreements
- Identification of a common name, visual identity and branding
- Plan for communications, revenue sharing (from joint sponsorships and fundraising) and governance structure
- Formal application to funding sources – including 3 levels of government
- Discussion of expansion of this model – i.e. to other regions, as resources allow and to the whole spectrum of athletes - bottom to top.
- Evaluation process and accountability framework

(Source – Report of the Coaching Working Group, Sport Canada, Draft, February 2001)

Amateur sport is only of value to society if sport is fair and ethical and reflects the values and ethics of a nation. The coach is the most influential factor in the development of a society that participates actively in sport and recreation and in an individual's decision to continue to participate and to further develop their skills.

- Coaches, at all levels of sport participation, play an important role in shaping and communicating the values of sport -- and, thereby, in shaping public opinion about sport. Thus, through the regional centres approach, full time and competent coaching is the foundation.
- The role of coaches in the school system is diminishing. There is a declining emphasis on physical education in Canadian schools. Funding cuts have meant reductions in recreational and athletic programs. Coach education programs have largely failed to reach teachers who perform much of the coaching activity in schools. Further, increasing workloads have meant fewer teachers are willing to volunteer their time to coach after school. Those trends, combined with the fact that of the some 50 sports represented at the national level, only about 10 are taught in Canadian schools, have led to a shift toward the coach as a community, rather than schools.
- Good coaching is critical to children's safety, to the desire to participate and to the development of positive values. Children today are much less active than they were in the past. Given this, physical activity through play and sport has become an important social concern. Good coaching will inspire young people to continue to participate in sport and to further develop their skills. Well-trained coaches are an important measure in ensuring the safety of sport participants. Beyond that, the coaching of children represents an opportunity to instill values - of respect, responsibility, and fairness. New models of community-based coaching recognize the incredible impact a coach can have on young participants and capitalize on that opportunity by using sport as a means to instill principles of democracy and community.
- Good coaching is critical to the development of high performance athletes. It is universally recognized that the coach is one of the most important factors in an athlete's individual performance. Just as financial support of athletes has now been recognized as a factor in Canada's results internationally, so too is the support of coaches.
- A complete picture of coaching activity in Canada does not exist. Because coaches are not required to join a coaching association, either sport-specific or nationally, there is no central registry of coaches active in sport today. The vast majority of coaches in Canada today volunteer their time. There are an estimated two million coaches in Canada today - though only a small percentage of them are paid for their time, and only a small percentage of those are paid full-time. The majority of sports in Canada rely on volunteers to provide expertise to their sport.
- The public perception of coaching is a serious barrier in making it a viable career option. The general view held by many people is that coaching is something done as a hobby, in one's spare time, rather than a real job. The public must understand that an investment in coaching is an investment in the development and performance of athletes at all levels.

Note: The concept of regional sport centres has also been included in the document *A New Century for Sport in Alberta* (Draft, January 19, 2001, page 21)