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Exploring Funding Structures and “Success” in Elite Canadian Sport: Athlete-Centredness and Own the Podium

by

Keely Willment

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Human Kinetics
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Human Kinetics at the
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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I explored, through document analysis and interviews, how elite sport has been historically funded in Canada, the Own the Podium program, how elite winter athletes are currently experiencing sport, and the processes that can be employed to create an athlete-centred sport system.

An analysis of the rationale for funding decisions and sport programs, and the solutions provided, revealed that winning medals as a quantifiable measure of success has long been a priority for decision-makers in elite Canadian sport. Currently, athletes are still the object of, not a subject in, decision-making. Sport programming decisions provide for the *performance* of the athletes. Athletes largely feel powerless in influencing decision-makers or instituting change.

To enhance an athlete-centred sport system, processes must be developed to formalize communication between athletes and administrators, and programs need to be developed to support *all* areas of the athlete's development, not just their athletic performance.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	viii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	
Introduction and Statement of the Problem	1
Operational Definitions.....	4
Assumptions.....	11
Theoretical and Practical Justifications	16
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Sub-problem 1.....	20
Sub-problem 2.....	47
Sub-problem 3.....	54
III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Introduction.....	63
Sub-Problem 1 - Document Analysis	64
Sub-Problem 2 - Interviews	68
- Document Analysis.....	70
Sub-Problem 3 - Interviews	70
Limitations and Delimitations	71
IV. RESULTS	
Sub-problem 1.....	76
Sub-problem 2.....	106
Sub-problem 3.....	136
V. ANALYSIS	
Sub-problem 1.....	157
Sub-problem 2.....	173
Sub-problem 3.....	188
Inter-problem Analysis	200

VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	212
APPENDICES	222
REFERENCES.....	242
VITA AUCTORIS	259

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	Amateur Athletic Union (of Canada)
COA	Canadian Olympic Association
COC	Canadian Olympic Committee
CODA	Calgary Olympic Development Association
COEF	Canadian Olympic Excellence Fund
CPC	Canadian Paralympic Committee
CSC	Canadian Sport Centres
CAAWS	Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution (Centre)
FAS	Fitness and Amateur Sport
FASD	Fitness and Amateur Sport Directorate
IOC	International Olympic Committee
NAC	National Advisory Council
NSO	National Sporting Organization
OTP	Own the Podium
QPP	Quadrennial Planning Process
SFAF	Sport Funding Accountability Framework
VANOC	Vancouver Olympic Games Organizing Committee
WADA	World Anti-Doping Agency

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CANADIAN SPORT COMMUNITY	223
APPENDIX B: STRUCTURAL ARCHETYPES	224
APPENDIX C: LIST OF DOCUMENTS ANALYZED	225
APPENDIX D: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK	227
APPENDIX E: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK – EXAMPLE	228
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE – OTP ADMINISTRATORS	229
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE – ATHLETES	232
APPENDIX H: CONCEPTUAL BAGGAGE	235
APPENDIX I: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF OTP	239
APPENDIX J: PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT TEAM (PET) MODEL	240
APPENDIX K: SUB-PROBLEM 3 RESULTS – TREE	241

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Setting the Stage

The Canadian Sport System is comprised of a variety of actors and organizations, ranging from grassroots, community-based recreation programs to elite national and international teams. The one common element is the athletes. Athletes are integral to any sport or organization. Without athletes, there would be no sport. The challenge of decision-makers is to create a system that reflects the needs of all participants under their mandate. These mandates are dynamic, with regular debate over which organizations and which sports belong under whose control. Adding to these challenges are outside influences from international federations, international multi-sport organizations, and programs created by foreign governments and actors. What Canadians understand sport to be today is the culmination of decades of structural changes implemented by actors in varying levels of government and non-governmental organizations, with differing structural goals. International elite sport, as a mandate, has been the directive of the federal government since the early 1970s. The federal government has provided the overwhelming majority of the funds required to sustain and grow a 'competitive' Canadian team. Recently, the Canadian Olympic Committee has been increasing its power within the Canadian Sport System by influencing government funding, and creating new opportunities for revenue building.

Canadian elite athletes train and compete full-time, all over the world. They eat, sleep, train and compete with the specific goal of becoming the best athlete they can be. The support of these elite athletes has been growing steadily since the 1970s. This

support includes financial aid, coaching, physiotherapy, physiology, sports medicine, psychology, administration, and the personal support of friends and family. Billions of dollars have been poured into the sport system as part of determining the precise formula for producing 'successful' elite athletes.¹ The idea of 'success' is almost solely linked by sport decision-makers to achieving podium results in Olympic competition. Fuelled by the Winter Sport Partners' "Own the Podium" program, athletes are being financially supported by the federal government and corporate Canada, with a goal of ranking first in the medal standings when the Olympic Winter Games come to Vancouver in 2010.

Background to the Study

Analysis of the role of funding organizations in Canadian sport has been extensive, particularly surrounding the effects of the quadrennial planning process (QPP) that emerged in the early 1980s. These analyses focused on policy dialogue, taking into consideration cultural and historical influences and how policy developments changed the institution of sport (see Cavanaugh, 1988; Green, 2004; Green & Houlihan, 2005). Some research has examined the connection between sport and society, and how policy decisions are linked to larger political goals (see Macintosh, Bedeck & Franks, 1987; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990; Whitson & Macintosh, 1988). There has also been discussion on how specific funding initiatives, for example the QPP, impacted the structural organization of National Sport Organizations (NSOs) (see Kikulis, 2000; Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1995; Slack, 1997; Slack & Thibault, 1988; Thibault, Slack & Hinings, 1991). The main ideas that emerged from most of the research in the 1990s were

¹ This includes money entering the sport system from the federal government, contributions from the private sector, and resources that have financed human performance research at Canadian universities and abroad.

the notions of increased professionalization of the structure of Canadian sport, along with the increased desire for 'rational' decisions and funding accountability. Missing from this discussion is the role that the Canadian Olympic Association/Committee² (COA/COC) has played in the decision-making processes involved in funding policies and programs, and how they influenced and are influenced by the federal government. This discussion may presently have more relevance than it did in the past, because of the recent COC increase in power (i.e., in shaping rules and benefiting from rules and resources) relative to the supposed decreasing presence of the federal government in elite sport. What has not been covered adequately is how these funding and program decisions affect individual athletes. I believe there is a common sentiment among Canadians that elite athletes only practice their sport for the outcome of winning; thus any decision to increase their "success" is looked upon favourably.

Statement of the Problem

Through my analysis of three sub-problems, I investigated the structures of elite funding programs in Canada historically, and how current programs are experienced and viewed by athletes. My concern rests with the increasing emphasis on medal 'production' and how 'success' is equated solely with winning medals in the overwhelming majority of elite sport discourses. Building on the theoretical assumptions of social construction, practical consciousness, power relations, and duality of structure, I examine the rules, resources, legitimations and attributions of elite sport funding in Canada. I investigate how the federal government and the Canadian Olympic Association funded sport in the past, how the current Own the Podium program was created and is being implemented,

² The Canadian Olympic Association changed its name to Canadian Olympic Committee in 2002.

how athletes experience Own the Podium, and how they understand their role in the sport system. While Own the Podium is limited solely to Olympic sports, it is likely that such a program will affect *all* sports at *all* levels in Canada, because of the newly emerging structures and values attached to the current way of thinking about sport. After documenting the development and implementation of federal sport policies and specific funding programs, I will reflect on how decision-makers can more fully ensure that the sport system, including elite athletes, is first and foremost about the athletes. While my research focuses specifically on winter Olympic athletes and sports in Canada, the findings prompt similar questions concerning summer sports, and potentially elite sports in other countries. In analyzing my three sub-problems, I hope to provide some insights into the larger concern: “What approach should decision-makers take to ensure that the Canadian sport system is athlete-centred?”

Operational Definitions

Sport

According to Sport Canada (Canadian Heritage, 2004), in order to qualify for federal government funding, a “sport” must meet certain criteria. Sport Canada, in its Sport Recognition Policy, defines sport as “an activity with a significant physical component in which two or more participants engage for the purpose of competitively evaluating their personal performance” (Coaching Association of Canada, n.d.). While the focus is primarily on competitive sport – that is, a sport activity in which a winner is declared - the lead-up activity, wherein the non-competitive exercise and learning of basic skills (which will ultimately be used in competition) occurs, is considered to be part

of the sport continuum. A “sport” is defined as an activity that has the following characteristics:

1. It involves formal rules and procedures.
2. It requires tactics and strategies.
3. It requires specialized neuromuscular skills that can be taught and learned.
4. It requires, for either training or competition, a significant involvement of large muscle groups.
5. It involves, where repetition of standardized movements or forms are included in competition, a high degree of difficulty, risk or effort in such reproduction.
6. Its competitive mode implies the development of coaching personnel trained in both general subjects such as biomechanics, sport psychology, nutrition, group dynamics, physiology, etc., as well as the specific skills of the activity.
7. It may involve a degree of physical or emotional risk.
8. Its primary activity involves physical interaction of the participants and the environment: air, water, ground, floor or special apparatus; and, therefore, no activity in which the performance of a motorized vehicle is the primary determinant of the outcome of the competition is eligible (for example: racing of automobiles, power boats, aircraft, snow machines, etc.). Where mechanized vehicles or conveyances are used, the activity must entail significant physical effort in propelling the vehicle or conveyance. (Coaching Association of Canada, n.d.)

Funding for NSOs is based on many factors, including success at the elite level, breadth of participation nation-wide and compliance with Sport Canada programs and policies.

Presently, elite sports (also referred to as amateur and high performance sport) in Canada are those sports that are practiced at the Olympic level. This definition has changed over time, and had once included any sport that is practiced at the national or international level, exclusive of its practice at the actual Olympic Summer or Winter Game.³ Due to the changing funding priorities, which are discussed in the literature review, only those sports that can bring pride and recognition to Canada at the Olympic

³ Funding from Sport Canada is provided to most NSOs regardless of their Olympic recognition, based on the Sport Funding Accountability Framework (Canadian Heritage, 2004). Olympic sports receive additional funding, on top of what the government provides, from the Canadian Olympic Committee and from private corporations.

Games are currently “fully” funded in the Canadian Sport System (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004).

Canadian Sport System

The Canadian Sport System is the group of institutions, governed by the state and private actors, which makes decisions on the orientation and direction of sport in the country. The sport system includes athletes, politicians within the federal government who create policy, the bureaucrats in Sport Canada, national sport organizations (e.g. Speed Skating Canada), multi-sport organizations (e.g. Canadian Olympic Committee), administrators, coaches, scientists, therapists, and technicians within these organizations who maintain the day-to-day functions of both elite sport and grassroots/development sport. Provincial/territorial and regional/municipal governments, local and provincial boards of education, and commercial sport are also a part of the Canadian Sport System (Canadian Heritage, 2002).

National Sport Organizations are members of their respective International Federation. International Federations usually establish procedures, rules and eligibility standards for international competition, as well as financially support NSOs in hosting international events. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has power over the operation of all Olympic-related activity. The IOC recognizes one official National Olympic Committee per country, and regulates the operations of the Olympic Games. Athletes (participants) are the centre of the sport system, as they are the *raison-d'être*. However, while being at the centre of the system, they are usually the objects of, not

active participants in, the decisions that affect them.⁴ (see Appendix A for an organizational chart of the Canadian Sport Community)

Athlete-Centred

An athlete-centred sport system is premised on the idea that athletes are the *raison-d'être* of the sports system, and thus they should be central participants in all decisions. For many years, athletes were merely the objects of decisions, recipients of decisions, passive acceptors of decisions made on their behalf, with no opportunity to decide what is best for them. The federal government and the Canadian Olympic Committee describe the current Canadian sport system as 'athlete-centred' because athletes are involved in the decision making of NSOs and other organizations such as COC, Vancouver 2010 Organization Committee (VANOC), The IOC, and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). AthletesCAN, an athlete-run organization advocating on behalf of athletes, defines athlete-centred as both a concept and a process where:

The values, program, policies, resource allocations and priorities of sport organizations and agencies place primary emphasis on consideration of athlete's needs in a holistic sense and performance goals within that context. Those responsible for leadership and decision-making in sport must include the athlete in both defining the needs and goals and in determining how to meet them; i.e. the athlete should be the active subject, not the object of, sporting programs. (AthletesCAN, 1994, p. 3)

However, I believe that for a sport system to be truly athlete-centred, athletes are the main concern, and are the actors who make all decisions regarding their development,

⁴ In addition to national sport organizations representing the interests of individual sports, the Canadian sport system includes a number of multi-sport / multi-service organizations (MSOs) that have specialized expertise and mandates. MSOs in Canada include: the Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport, AthletesCAN, the Coaching Association of Canada, the National Coaching Institute, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre, the Canadian Olympic Committee, and the Canadian Sport Centres. These organizations represent athletes' interests on a broad range of issues, develop coaching programs, direct multi-service centres, provide dispute resolution and educational services, and manage Canada's representation at Olympic Games (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2002).

training and competition, with the support of 'professionals' (e.g. coaches, trainers, psychologists). Shogan (1999) characterizes an athlete-centred sport system as taking a pedagogical role

that encourages an active and ongoing questioning by participants of the ways in which sport discipline 'normalizes' practices that would otherwise be considered harmful and that produce athletes capable and willing to engage in these practices...By asking questions about the demands of sport discipline, it is possible for athletes to become aware of how they are produced as high-performance athletes, and, once aware, to consent then only to those processes that affirm one's values while refusing the others (p. 91).

An athlete-centred sport system will contain structures that support all aspects of an athlete's life - as an athlete, and as a student, employee, mother, or friend. Athletes will be the primary decision-makers in the sport system.

Elite/Amateur/High Performance/'State' Athlete

The definition of athletes who compete at the international level has changed significantly since the inception of the modern Olympic Games. For much of modern sport, athletes needed an amateur status in order to compete at the Olympic Games. As amateurs, athletes were not able to receive payment for their participation, money from competing in any sport at any level, or sponsorship dollars. The IOC changed its eligibility status in 1974, making allowances for lost-time compensation (Macintosh et al, 1987, p. 87).⁵ The Canadian federal government currently defines a high performance (elite) athlete as:

A person of high skill level seriously committed to sport belonging to national and/or provincial sport organizations through team or club and heavily involved in competition having attained high levels through intensive training, skill, technical development, and competitive success. (Cadieux, 1993)

⁵ Lost-time income compensation, also known as broken-time payments, provided athletes with funding to replace their lost wages from not working during training or competition.

The change in name from the *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act* in 1961 to the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* (2003) reflects the ambiguity of the term 'amateur,' as evidenced by professional athletes competing in the Olympics and amateur athletes collecting fees at some competitions. This change reflects the move away from referring to athletes as 'amateur.' In recent government documents, 'high performance athlete' is the accepted nomenclature.⁶

Currently, in the Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program, which 'pays' certain elite athletes a monthly stipend to assist with training, living and education costs, there are different levels of 'high performance'. To qualify for a Senior Card, the athlete must finish in the top 8, 12, or 16, depending on the number of entries per country, in international competition, mainly the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games and World Championships. Development cards are available to junior athletes who have proven records in national and international events, achieving top 4, 6, or 8 in a world championship at the junior level. Senior Carded athletes receive \$1500 per month, and Development athletes receive \$900 (Canadian Heritage, 2005).

NSO/NSF/NSGB

A National Sport Organization (NSO), National Sport Federation (NSF), or National Sport Governing Body (NSGB), is an organization that is charged with the administration, coaching and support of its respective sport, both at the grassroots and elite levels. NSOs receive funding from the federal government to operate their National Team and participation-based programs, as well as funds from the Canadian Olympic Committee (if an Olympic sport) to augment their National Team program. An NSO is

⁶ The term high performance (or high-performance) athlete appears in the 2002 Canadian Sport Policy, the 2005 Athlete Assistance Program, and the federal Hosting Policy (2000), among others.

staffed by professionals in a head-office, and this staff reports to a volunteer board of executives. While professionals make most of the administrative decisions, NSOs still rely heavily on volunteers to run their participation-based programs, for fundraising campaigns, and for hosting national and international competitions.

Winter Sport Partners

“Winter Sport Partners” is a term I am using to describe those organizations and individuals involved in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium. The Partners include the Canadian Olympic Committee, Sport Canada and the federal government, all winter National Sport Organizations and their staff, Canadian Sport Centres, and private funding partners including Bell Canada, Rona, Royal Bank, GM Canada, and McDonald’s. Winter Sport Partners implies that all aforementioned partners have contributed to the program, and will receive benefits from Canada “Owning the Podium” in Vancouver.

Sustainable Sport

The idea of a sustainable sport system is one where the desired results are achievable today (for example, being first in the medal standings in Vancouver) without diminishing the possibility for all future sports to achieve their goals. Sustainable sport comes into play when funding and building a sport system. One of the goals of the Own the Podium program is that it will help maintain a sustainable sport system. For example, a sustainable sport system will fund elite sports to achieve podium results today, and grassroots sports will also be funded today so that today’s young athletes will develop

appropriately into elite athletes ten years from now. An unsustainable system will direct all its funding to one goal in the immediate future.

Assumptions

Recognizing that this research question is grounded in personal experiences and prior knowledge, I would like to acknowledge the following assumptions:

Social Construction of Knowledge

Knowledge can be seen as provisional, and as culturally and historically specific. Knowledge, and what is known to be reality, is socially constructed. People will experience the same event differently because unique social experiences have shaped each person's beliefs, and what they understand to be 'real.' Berger and Luckmann, in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), explain social construction as "Everyday life present[ing] itself as a reality interpreted by men [sic] and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world" (p. 19). Sport, as an institution, is also socially constructed. Sport is the result of individual beliefs and actions, which have been reinforced in society to the point where sport appears natural. A major indicator of social construction in sport is the idea of 'legitimate' knowledge. As Shogan (1999) identifies, within the sport system 'real' knowledge is the only legitimate source of preparation, training and competition decisions. This 'real' knowledge is the knowledge gained by professionals through formalized education and experience in the professional field. Shogan contrasts 'real' knowledge with the 'technical' knowledge that athletes have created practicing their respective sports.

As the habits (beliefs, ideas) of individuals in positions of power are reproduced by a group of people, these habits become institutionalized. When institutions themselves

are reproduced by a larger group, the roles, rules and actions of these institutions become naturalized (Berger & Luckmann, 1965). When habits are naturalized, people do not question their origin, relevancy or validity; they become “true” and “real”. The definition of “sport” has also been socially constructed. Olympic-stream sports are often considered to be the only ‘true’ sports, when compared to non-Olympic sports in the “whitestream”⁷ sport system (e.g., ringette) and especially those sports in the aboriginal and non white sport streams (e.g., one hand reach or two foot high kick) (Paraschak & Tirone, 2003). This belief is reinforced in the funding structure of the sport system, in that Olympic sports receive the most financial resources.

Practical Consciousness

People generally act in accordance with a set of understandings about social life. This idea is identified by Giddens (1984) as practical consciousness. He notes that “[P]ractical consciousness consists of all the things which actors know tacitly about how to ‘go on’ in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive meaning” (p. xxiii). Giddens also comments that this practical consciousness, (unconscious motivation) is a significant element of human behaviour. Giddens acknowledges the difference between discursive and practical consciousness as the difference between what can be said and what is characteristically simply done (p. 7). Paraschak (2000) interprets Giddens’ model by explaining “how the unconscious reproduction of ‘naturalized’ sporting practices, along with their underlying assumptions, follows from our practical consciousness and has concrete consequences” (p. 154).

Practical consciousness is what is taken for granted, what is “naturally” believed to be

⁷ According to Paraschak and Tirone, “the rules of mainstream or “whitestream” sport have been primarily shaped by individuals of White, European heritage, in ways that privilege their traditions, practices, meanings and sport structures (2003, p. 125).

true. A naturalized belief reproduced by Own the Podium, for example, is that an athlete is 'successful' if and when he or she wins a medal.

Power Relations

Certain people in the Canadian sport system are in positions of power. They have the resources, the authority and the will to make decisions. It is these people, the proprietors of power, whose individual beliefs are reproduced, institutionalized and then naturalized. In the sport system, those who control resources and are favoured by rules have power. Those who do not have power must change their understanding of sport in order to receive funding (Slack & Thibault, 1988). They are passive recipients of decisions made by those in power that do not necessarily benefit their circumstances. These positions of power are held by people who have qualities that have been socially constructed as important. Following the shift towards rationalization⁸ in the sport system, professionals were granted (hired into) positions of power because they had the knowledge and experience (a university education) that was thought to be necessary for a sport organization to 'survive' in the new system (Kikulis et al., 1995). Green (2004) states that power is about shaping context, and is the "capacity of actors to redefine the parameters of what is socially, politically, and economically possible for others" (p. 381). People in positions of power make the rules based on what *they* believe is important, and/or have greater access to resources, and/or are favoured by the rules.

⁸ The shift towards a more rationalized model is characterized by increased professionalization within NSOs, including the hiring of business professionals, and the focus on accountability of funding. Rationalization is described in greater detail in: Harvey, Thibault & Rail, 1995; Hinings, Thibault, Slack & Kikulis 1996; and Kikulis, 2000.

Duality of Structure

According to Giddens (1984) duality of structure is a process whereby “structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize” (p. 25). Ponc (1994) states that “the duality of structure dynamic is based on the idea that structures not only facilitate and/or inhibit the action of agents, but that structures are also transformed via agents’ interaction with them” (p. 25). Agents are, on one hand, bound by the existing structures, but on the other hand they actively produce, reproduce and alter these structures. Giddens (1984) states how “Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling” (p. 25).

The more power agents have (i.e. the strength of their agency), the easier it will be for them to alter existing structures, produce new structures, or reproduce existing structures (if it is in their best interest to do so). All actions by an agent within a structure will either reproduce or alter existing structures, or produce new structures. Kikulis (2000) explains how agents are being shaped by ideas that are fully institutionalized within the Canadian sport system, while simultaneously engaging in the process of creating new ideas (p. 302). Shogan (1999) identifies the production of new structures as the creation of new ways of knowing and participating in sport (p. 101). Continually reproducing existing structures is understood as the process of social maintenance. Producing new structures, or altering existing ones, is the process of social change. Paraschak (2000) describes duality of structure as existing in the “broader social context within which sport exists” (p. 154). She believes our choices for understanding sport are shaped by existing structures or possibilities, and that some people are privileged by these

existing structures. However, since individual actions in sport matter, there is always the possibility for actors to shape the structures (p. 154).

"Holistic Success"

My assumption is that Own the Podium and the Winter Sport Partners believe success can only be measured by the number of medals won at all international competitions, but most importantly at the Olympic Games. Any other benefits are secondary and/or unimportant. In contrast to this, I believe that success can be measured, and in many cases should be measured, beyond the idea of "medals won." Success of athletes should be a process that includes the holistic development of the athlete as a person, including their mental, physical and emotional health, and the opportunity to positively impact their sport and their community. Success is ultimately defined by the athlete, and he or she should be supported regardless of his or her 'potential' to medal in Vancouver.

An athlete-centred approach is the best approach to administer the Canadian Sport System

I assume an athlete-centred sport system is the best approach to administer the Canadian sport system, because it will fully support both the athletic and 'outside' lives of athletes. The health and safety of athletes should be of primary importance to decision-makers. However, currently in the Canadian sport system there are many instances of unhealthy and unsafe practices, including doping, abuse, assault, and eating disorders. Actively engaging athletes in the decision-making process could help alleviate these issues.

When comprehensive programs such as Own the Podium are implemented, the diversity of athletes in the sport system decreases. Those athletes who cannot (or choose

not to) commit to full-time training, or who are not able to access adequate resources, are excluded through formal and/or informal rules. Athletes, and in the case of Own the Podium entire sports end up being actively pushed outside the core understanding sports/individuals who are seen as 'legitimate,' and thus 'deserving' of recognition and support. An athlete-centred sport system, which includes other understandings of 'success', can provide alternate opportunities for participating in and experiencing elite sport.

Each athlete's experiences with Own the Podium will be different

People experience the same event differently because unique social experiences have shaped each person's beliefs (i.e., social construction). Likewise, athletes will experience Own the Podium differently. Athletes' differing experiences can be linked in part to their sport, to their NSO, and to the support and resources they have received through Own the Podium. Because athletes' knowledge will be different, they will have unique answers to my questions.

Theoretical Justifications

Amis and Silk (2005) agree that a healthy approach towards sport management is one that is constantly questioning and challenging itself. Questioning the status-quo will thus help expand sport management into a thriving field. Sport is about winning, defined as contests of physical activity between two or more sides, wherein the side with better skill at that moment comes out victorious. No one can fault athletes for wanting to win, nor should we fault the federal government and the Canadian Olympic Committee for supporting athletes so that they can achieve their best. However, when *owning the podium* is the only goal for an entire sport system, critical questions about potential

benefits and negative consequences need to be explored.

Hinings and Greenwood (2002) argue that “answering questions that focus on the role and effect of organizations in society requires long-term perspectives, a grasp of history, and a focus of understanding [on] the complexities of political and social movements” (p.417). In general, my research will critique, as Frisby (2005) suggests, the distributions of resources and power in high-performance sport. Amis and Silk (2005) call this process of critique a “decentering,” in that it moves thought beyond the centre of wealth (medal) production as the ultimate goal. Cavanaugh (1988) describes critical analysis as being able to identify that:

the organization of amateur sport by the state, through Best Ever [or in the present context, Own the Podium], elaborates a set of dominant beliefs which thread throughout our social fabric, [but] it is the less visible, ‘common sense’, articulation and reproduction of power extending from this which merits critical analysis.” (p. 132)

Frisby suggests that “knowledge of [Critical Social Science] will help sport managers uncover and begin to deal more adequately with the bad and ugly sides of sport so that more people, including managers themselves, will be able to enjoy the good sides of it” (Frisby, 2005, p. 5). She also asks why instrumental and humanitarian goals are often viewed as competing. What needs to happen is program creation that broadens and balances agendas to include programs that empower athletes, and also increase performance levels; the two ideas are not exclusive. Frisby’s process of conducting critical sport research includes:

1. Questioning taken-for-granted knowledge, and identifying power relations.
2. Critiquing these power relations to determine how certain groups are favoured over others.
3. Exploring alternative structures and arrangements to ‘disrupt’ dominant discourses, which will allow for new patterns of understanding.

The overriding philosophy of excellence that has saturated the sport delivery system in Canada has become naturalized, and alternative understandings of what sport is, have been removed from the dominant discourse (Green 2004; Whitson & Macintosh 1988). Green (2004) identifies that “an overemphasis on elite sport merely serves to silence alternative voices whose interests do not rest on the seemingly inexorable drive towards...” (p. 392) what Whitson (1998) has termed “the normative legitimations of the calculating pursuit of victory” (p. 1). Along the same line, an overemphasis on winning medals in elite sport has also silenced alternative voices on the benefits of participating at the international level.

My research builds on several authors’ findings on political interpretation and policy dialogue in the Canadian sport system (Green, 2004; Green & Houlihan, 2005; Macintosh, 1996; Macintosh et al., 1987; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990; and Whitson & Macintosh (1988). It will employ some discussion on organizational change (Amis, Slack and Hinings (2004); Kikulis, Slack and Hinings, 1995), and values and organizational change (Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2002). My research will explore the interorganizational linkages discussed by Thibault and Harvey (1997). My interviews and document analysis will challenge Thibault and Babiak’s (2005) claim of an athlete-centred system. And finally, my examination of *Own the Podium* will heed the call of Frisby (2005), Amis and Silk (2005), and Green (2004) for critical research, to analyze sport within historical, political and cultural frameworks. As Green states, “if there is to be more to sport than the scientific production of performance, then the deconstruction of these discourses stands as an important theoretical and practical task for future research” (Green, 2004, p. 392).

Practical Justification

With the increased media attention on elite, Olympic athletes leading up to the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver, this study will provide an alternative view of elite sport in Canada. It will allow Canadians to critically think about the intricacies of 'producing' high performance athletes. I hope that this process will help me understand the dynamic between the federal government and the Canadian Olympic Committee – to identify who has power in certain situations, and where focus should be in order to effect change in the system. I aim to create recommendations for the Own the Podium program, and the Winter Sport Partners, on how to improve the current funding program and/or improve future funding programs. Most importantly, my research on elite athlete funding and Own the Podium will help athletes better understand their current position in the sport system, what power they may have, and how to develop their agency. With greater understanding of their current roles and responsibilities within the sport system, athletes will be able to create new ways for understanding and experiencing sport.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sub-problem 1: How were selected elite sport funding decisions constructed in Canada from 1961-2004?

The growth in Canadian sport has been attributed, by many, to the advent of professional administrators. These professionals became the “norm” in national sport organizations (NSOs) in the 1980s. While the biggest change in the sport system occurred during the 1980s, processes and programs had been making steady changes in the structuring of sport since the 1960s. Elite sport in Canada has been crafted over the decades from a purely volunteer-run endeavor, to one with multi-million dollar budgets. Kikulis, Slack and Hinings (1995) illustrate the change in Canadian sport administration, from the kitchen table to the boardroom in the 1970s, to the executive office as a direct result of Best Ever ‘88. Kikulis et al.’s studies took place in the 1990’s; the sport system continually evolves, and can no longer be characterized by the ‘executive office’ label. (See Appendix B for an overview of Kikulis et al.’s archetypes).

Bill C-131, identified as the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act (1961), officially committed the Canadian federal government “to encourage, promote, and develop fitness and amateur sport in Canada” (Canada, 1961, chapter 59, section 3). The federal government was passive in the implementation of any programs stemming from this act, addressing matters identified by the newly formed National Advisory Council (NAC). The federal government contributed monetary grants to NSOs, non-competitive sport organizations, national program operating agencies that conducted or coordinated fitness and amateur sport programs, and national multisport organizations, such as the Canadian Olympic Association (COA). These monies were only granted for: extending or

strengthening existing services (not for the creation of new programs); a percentage of total operating costs (a gesture to maintain the autonomy of the aforementioned non-governmental organizations); providing assistance to travel to national and international competitions; and for special projects charged with developing and promoting fitness and amateur sport (NAC Appendix G to the Minutes of the 13th Meeting, 28 and 29 October 1966, as cited in Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 34). Macintosh (1988) identified that the National Advisory Council created the criteria for grants to NSOs, that these funds did allow for increased participation in national and international competitions, and that 'modest improvements' at the international level were realized (FASD Annual Report 1965, 66:1-2 as cited in Macintosh, 1988, p. 123). This mention of modest improvement on the international stage, though not qualified by 'proof' of more medals won or an increase in international ranking, does foreshadow the direction that the government will take with elite, amateur athletics. Many authors (Hill, 1996; Senn, 1999; Payne, 2006; Beamish & Ritchie, 2004) connect this rise in consciousness of the relative success of Canadian amateur athletics to the intensification of the Cold War. The sentiments were "Us" versus "Them" and "each new victory [could be seen as] a victory for the Soviet form of society and the socialist sport system; it provides irrefutable proof of the superiority of socialist culture over the decaying culture of the capitalist states" (Senn, 1999; p. 90). Meanwhile, each Canadian victory against the Eastern bloc was 'proof' of the superiority of the West. At this time, NSOs were structured informally and volunteer-run. There was little emphasis on formal planning, and the goal of the organization was to ensure the satisfaction of its members (Thibault, Slack & Hinings, 1991).

While the government, at the direction of the NAC, was providing opportunities for advancement through the funds they provided, NSOs were the lead organizations with the mandate and ability to improve the competitiveness of their respective athletes. Though NSOs were receiving new monies to assist in their and/or the government's endeavor to become more successful, as Macintosh et al. (1987) describe, it was a futile effort because NSOs did not have people in positions of influence with administrative and organizational skills, and leadership necessary to alter their 'production' of elite athletes (pp. 34-35). Macintosh (1988) described this period following the adoption of Bill C-131 as not improving the strengths of NSOs, but rather "more noted for exposing the barriers to further gains" which was an equally useful exercise (p. 123). The NAC became convinced that while funding is necessary for NSOs, so too was the adoption of professional staff (p. 123). This idea of professionalization gained an ever-increasing stronghold in the dialogue of elite amateur sport in the country. Professionals in the NAC believed that the one answer to the ills of Canadian sport (ills being the lack of 'success' in international competition) is the professionalization of NSOs. Facilitated perhaps by the success of the NAC as a "professional organization," the NAC believed having professionals at the helm of NSOs would lead to a more organized system, and consequently better athletic performance. The NAC never identified what qualities of professionals were imperative to success, just that they needed to be 'professional' by having attained some level of education and experience in a professional culture. The only noted downside to the hiring of professionals was the potentially negative interactions between the 'new' professionals and the long-standing volunteers. No one identified the potentially negative effects of professionals who have no experience in the

sport, and who may adopt a win-at-all costs philosophy. It was easy for the government and the NAC to turn a blind-eye to this possibility because the common belief was that a dollar granted to a professional organization would create a positive output (i.e. “success”).

Government officials have been concerned about the ‘success’ of Canadian athletes since the 1960s. John Diefenbaker was leader of the official opposition following his time as Prime Minister (1957-1963). As leader of the opposition in 1965, he made several statements in the House of Commons that showed his concern over the “poor showing” of the Canadian hockey team in international competitions. His sentiments echoed concerns of the media at the time. Diefenbaker suggested establishing a parliamentary committee that would work with the NAC to “assure hereafter that Canada’s representation in the field of international competition, particularly in amateur sport, shall be of the very best” (*HC Debates*, 15 March, 1965, p. 12336). For Diefenbaker, ever concerned with the portrayal of Canada on the international scene, success in hockey equated to international prestige. Diefenbaker was not the only elected official who championed the perceived relationship between international sport and the state of the country. Trudeau⁹, a proponent of federalism, viewed sport as an integral part of *Canadian* culture and vital to the unity of the country, especially during “La Revolution Tranquille” in Quebec. His campaign promise of developing a task force responsible for investigating amateur sport in Canada was realized in 1969, with the creation and the Report of the Department of National Health and Welfare’s Task Force on Sport for Canadians (Macintosh et al. 1987; Misener, 2001, p. 40). Because of the impact of the separatists on the entire country, increasing federal government intervention

⁹ Trudeau was the Prime Minister of Canada from 1968-1979, and again from 1980-1984.

in sport was legitimized as a tool to maintain and/or increase feelings of national unity (Green, 2005, p. 50). Not only was intervention in amateur sport legitimized, so too was the disinterest in mass participation. As Macintosh (1988) states:

Success in high-performance sport was not only attainable with a substantially smaller outlay of money [compared to mass participation initiatives], but could be easily verified in quantitative terms. Because of its high visibility, elite sport also had the potential for a much more attractive political payoff than did mass sports and fitness programs. But for sport to be an effective unity symbol, greatly improved performances by Canadian athletes in international events were necessary. (p.125)

Cantelon (2003) believed that the federal government took its “rightful place” in the provision of sport, because sport promotes national unity, which is important for a country “as geographically expansive as Canada and with two official language groups,” and heightens the stature of Canada on the international stage (p.181). Harvey and Proulx (1988) believe that federal involvement (or intervention) in sport is consistent with the development of a welfare state, and the government’s foray into the social lives of its citizens. No longer was sport practiced for the sake of sport itself. Cavanaugh (1988) believed it was these political structures (i.e., goals of increasing unity and prestige) that were responsible for the emergence of high performance “achievement where medals, points standings and national heroes serve as an implicit rationale for continued involvement and organizational input” (p. 129). Strengthened by the 1969 Task Force Report, the power and dynamism of the state was commonly believed to be measurable by the results of its athletes. This belief was perpetuated with each government dollar spent in the elite sport system.

The 1969 Task Force on Sports for Canadians was led by Toronto businessman Harold Rea. Task Force member Dr. Paul Wintle Des Ruisseaux was a sports medicine

specialist from Quebec City who had previously served on the National Advisory Council. And, in an unprecedented move, Nancy Greene, a woman and an athlete, was named to the Task Force (Department of National Health and Welfare “Task Force Report”, 1969, p. 89). However, as Macintosh et al. (1987) note, the members possessed little background and thus little knowledge about the sport system in Canada including amateur sport, recreation and physical education; the scope and breadth was thus quite limited. Also, because the report was submitted to parliament only ten months later, the task force members could not conduct or commission original research on the subject (p. 59). The results, while limited and not backed by substantial research, have governed the direction of sport since 1969, and programs implemented can still be seen in structures and procedures today.

The members reported that the federal political agenda would best be served through involvement in elite, amateur sport. Recommendations addressed all levels of sport; however, high-performance sport and the structures of the sport delivery system were of greatest importance. In discussing the strengths and weaknesses of governmental versus private action in sport, the members of the Task Force identified the problem of a lack of Canadian identity, especially when compared to the “strong, populous, wealthy and self-confident nation [the United States]...which exerts an enormous pull upon many aspects of our life” (p. 7). The Task Force saw elite amateur sport as the new national symbol with which all Canadians could identify, promoting Canadian unity. On the issue of international prestige, the Task Force concluded that “It is clear that international success is a proof of the superior merit of their social and political structure” (Task Force Report, 1969, p. 7).

The Task Force recommended the creation of a non-profit corporation that would be the national administrative centre for all nationally-organized sports in Canada, with all the advantages (and economic benefits) that the concentration of professional sport administrators will entail. Identified weaknesses in the sport system (mainly in individual NSOs) included poor internal communication, overtaxed executives, and inadequate relations with the press and the public at large (Task Force Report, 1969, p. 75).

Along with the acknowledgement of the perceived importance of professionalism among NSO administrators, was a belief in instituting youth development programs in a structured National Team: “The national team must have a ladder of achievement by which it can be reached, and every coach and athlete in each sport with a national team must know the ladder and how one ascends it” (Task Force Report, 1969, p. 67). This statement illustrates that the Task Force acknowledged the role NSOs have in developing elite athletes. This is the first indication of a long-term vision for elite sport, and the first mention of the perceived merits of understanding the development of athletes.

Macintosh et al. (1987) conclude that the greatest outcome of the Task Force was to legitimize federal government involvement in amateur sport. As the members of the Task Force wrote:

There are few aspects of our national life that contribute so significantly to a distinctive Canadian consciousness as the feats of our athletes and teams...yet it is remarkable how little appreciated the role of sport in forming our values and attitudes has been, and how scant the involvement of government in encouraging the development of so potentially influential a psychological nation-builder. (Task Force Report, 1969, p. 13)

This comment on sport forming our values and attitudes is interesting, and can be explored further. Is it the values of sport, of teamwork and fairplay, being disseminated,

or is it the values placed on sport, such as hard work, planning and organization¹⁰ that can be amplified through sport? Sport is a vehicle used by the government to disseminate the values of planning to the population. It is the responsibility of the organization's elite members to make decisions. Values underpin the way organizations are structured and operated.¹¹

The orientation of structures and systems within an organization is a function of the values embodied within them (Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2002, p. 437). Amis et al. (2002) found in their study of changing values in national sport organizations, that organizations whose decision-makers held values that match the prescribed changes were able to "successfully engage in the transition process" (p. 436). Those NSOs with decision-makers who opposed the change entered into a period of "superficial conformity," largely in response to coercive pressures by the government, but in the end they mostly reverted back to their old ways (p. 436). In effect, any revision of the value structure is likely to be accompanied by a change in structural design, and any substantial change to the structure is likely to include a value-shift.

After the Task Force Report (1969) was published, many people believed it was too narrowly focused on elite sport. The NAC commissioned a subsequent report, conducted by P.S. Ross and Partners, to examine physical recreation, fitness and amateur sport. Basic recommendations from the Ross report were: increased federal involvement in recreation, that every Canadian should maintain an acceptable level of fitness to be 'healthy,' and support for the Task Force's recommendations of increasing elite

¹⁰ Values such as hard work, planning and organization, and the need to see concrete/quantifiable results from funding originate from 'professional' business practices.

¹¹ An investigation into values is useful because, as Amis et al. (2002) state, values are important in determining legitimization of changes.

performance to contribute to national unity and international prestige. Macintosh et al. (1987) identify that the Ross report did not have the same following as the Task Force Report, and while supporting the Task Force's recommendations, the primary objective of increased involvement in recreation was not followed (p. 67). Munro, in the 1970 Proposed Sport Policy for Canadians, claimed that elite and mass sport were uniform parts of an integrated structure (Munro, 1970). Contrary to what the Task Force reported, this proposed policy stated that elite sport cannot survive without recreation. Competitive sport would reap the benefits of a wider base, increased participation, quality athletes, and greater international success (NAC Minutes of the 23rd Meeting, 20 March 1970 cited in Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 64). However subsequent, government (in)action supports the view that increased recreation and participation support was merely rhetoric.¹²

The façade was of broad interests and the rhetoric of support for fitness and recreation initiatives. However, both the Task Force Report (1969) and the Proposed Sport Policy (1970) promoted elite sport involvement and assistance over all else. The policies did include 'philosophical' content that placed a higher priority on mass participation; in the end though, most recommendations addressed the desire to develop competitive excellence (Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 69). The creation of two distinct bodies, Sport Canada and Recreation Canada, in 1971 signaled the government's siding with the beliefs portrayed in the Task Force Report. The Task Force Report concluded that separation was needed between the two focuses, whereas the Proposed Sport Policy believed that both goals would be best achieved if sport and recreation was combined. Sport Canada was charged with the development of high-performance sports and athletes,

¹² Also supporting the view that support for recreation and participation was merely rhetoric, the statement "Pursuit of Excellence" appeared in the 1970 Proposed Sport Policy to describe the desired directional orientation of the federal government with respect to amateur sport

with a main objective of sporting excellence being to further the goals of the federal government in promoting national unity and fostering international prestige. Recreation Canada was to provide opportunities for mass participation in recreation and the promotion of physical fitness. This separation allowed the federal government to focus on ways to promote its policy objectives, rather than continuing to fund the debate between sport and recreation (Misener, 2001, p. 45). With the execution of recommendations of the Task Force Report, and the resulting increase in federal funding, the sport system has evolved into a structure identified by Kikulis et al. (1995) as the “Boardroom.” In this structure there is a greater emphasis on nurturing elite-level athletes through increased competitions, increased technical expertise and an increase in administrative efficiency.

Not only was Sport Canada officially created in 1971, but the National Sport and Recreation centre was also opened in Ottawa, and Montreal was formally awarded the right to host the 1976 Summer Olympic Games. With the advent of the Games, concern rose over the poor performance of Canada’s athletes in the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico. Speculation also surfaced over the possible impact of a poor performance by Canadian athletes in the first ever Olympics hosted on Canadian soil.

The Canadian Olympic Association

In an attempt to be granted participation rights in the Olympic Games, the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada created a special Olympic Committee in 1904. The IOC officially recognized this Olympic Committee as the national Olympic committee of Canada in 1907. The committee changed its name in 1946 to the Canadian Olympic Association (COA), and gained autonomy from the AAU of Canada in 1952. The initial roles and responsibilities of the Association revolved around supporting Canadian

athletes during the Olympic Games. The COA was concerned solely with transportation, accommodation, clothing, management and support for Canadian competitors while at the Games (Stidwill, 1981).

Contained in the Task Force Report (1969), were searing criticisms of sport organizations in general, but mentioned specifically were the weaknesses of the Canadian Olympic Association. These weaknesses included: part-time workers; a lack of full time administrators; a concentration of directors and executives in one area; no long-term development plans; and a lack of funds and fund-raising programs (Task Force Report, 1969). In response, the COA employed its own consultants to examine the current situation. The result was the adoption of a new constitution in 1969, which extended the mandate of the Association. The COA was still responsible for athlete support at the Games; it was now also charged with developing and protecting the Olympic Movement, promoting Olympism, promoting amateur sport in Canada, and raising and administering the funds required to achieve such objectives (Canadian Olympic Association, 1980, p. 5). Along with the expanded mandate, membership rose from 40 people to 225, with the majority of the growth from NSOs (Stidwill, 1981, p. 98). The greatest outcome of the constitution is identified by Macintosh et al. (1987) as the creation of a fundraising-arm. The Olympic Trust was established in 1971. The COA now could make a concerted effort to acquire funds from the private-sector to support its new goals. Olympic Trust ensured interest in the Olympic Movement by the private sector. The COA, with Olympic Trust, had the ability to provide the necessary focus and leadership for promoting amateur sport (Stidwill, 1980, p. 107). This was one of the most far-sighted steps taken by the COA; they did not have to rely exclusively on the federal government for support. Along with

the decision for the COA head-office to remain in Montreal, instead of moving into the National Sport and Recreation Centre in Ottawa, the COA was one of the only sport organizations that was able to keep an 'arms-length relationship' (remain autonomous) from the federal government (Macintosh, 1988, p. 127; Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 82). The new constitution heralded the beginning of profound change in Canada.

Sport administration was beginning to take on characteristics of big business. Again, responding to criticisms of the Task Force, the COA hired permanent and professional staff. The COA agreed that "the financial and administrative requirements had surpassed the ability of the volunteer to cope effectively" (Canada and Olympism, 1980, p. 6). On the heels of the structural changes in the COA, Montreal was awarded the right to host the 1976 Summer Olympic Games. This development fuelled the desire for successful international performances by Canadian athletes.

Game Plan '76

Administrative stakeholders gathered in Ottawa in late 1971 to discuss the upcoming Montreal Games. The major aim of the "National Conference on Olympic '76 Development" was to devise ways to improve Canada's performance in international sporting competitions, particularly at the Olympic Games. One of the major recommendations from the conference was a resolution calling for financial aid for coaches and athletes. Sport Canada heeded this call and initiated an 'Intensive Care' program geared towards those athletes who had the potential to win medals in Munich and Sapporo in 1972.¹³ Athletes were identified by their respective NSOs, and were provided with extra financial support in the months leading up to the 1972 Games.

¹³ Intensive Care was referring to the need for immediate and substantial support for athletes. Administrators only had a short time available to influence results before the Games.

Despite the influx of \$2,545,725, Canada won only five medals at Munich and Sapporo, showing negligible improvement over 1968 results (Stidwill, 1981, p. 100). Many criticized the program as a waste of money, as it was initiated too late to have any impact on performances at the 1972 Summer and Winter Olympics. 'Poor' performances in 1972 solidified in the minds of administrators the need for drastic changes. The COA believed a highly specialized and costly program of athlete development was the answer. The concept of a program to increase international performance levels was based on the premise that with reasonable support, Canadian athletes could compete and excel at international competitions (Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 86).

A program of this magnitude was beyond the scope of the Association; however they knew that no other organization was going to step forward. The COA looked again to P.S. Ross and Partners and commissioned a special study to design the appropriate program to increase levels of performance. The findings of the report, entitled "Improving Canada's Olympic Performance: Challenges and Strategies," included the need to develop National Teams, the professionalization of coaching, the use of sport science and medical support, increased exposure to international competition, and access to adequate training and competition facilities (P.S. Ross & Partners, 1972, pp. 2-3). To achieve maximum results, sport federations would be supported through existing structures. Game Plan '76 was an attempt to bring together all key agencies to coordinate and finance the effort for increased international performance (Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 86). With the endorsement of the provinces and NSOs, the COA pressed the federal government for support. However, due to several outside factors, including a federal election, the federal government did not endorse the program with its financial support

until May of 1973. Many believed that it was again too late for Game Plan to have any effect on performances. However, a cooperative effort was staged between the Canadian Olympic Association, its subsidiary Olympic Trust and the federal government.¹⁴ Game Plan '76 required each Olympic sport to develop a plan to ensure the best performance possible. Athletes were classified into A, B, or C categories according to their current performance level in international competition (i.e., world cups, world championships, and past Olympics). Those with the higher classification received the most funding and support. In order to be included in Game Plan, athletes committed to a training and competition program/schedule set by their respective NSO. While the federal government and Olympic Trust were providing the funding, it was the responsibility of the national sport organizations to develop their athletes (Macintosh et al., 1987, pp. 86-87). It is not clear in the literature how funds were actually allocated to the national sport federations, but one can surmise that the federation received a set amount of dollars for every classified athlete. It is also unclear what role the athlete development plans of the federations played in funding considerations. The literature does not provide any insight on what the federations did with the Game Plan funds once received. Without knowing how the funds were actually used in the federations¹⁵, it is impossible to deduce that Game Plan specifics were the cause of 'success' rather than the influx of money in general, or the fact that the athletes had home field advantage in the case of Montreal.

In 1974, the International Olympic Committee updated its amateur eligibility regulations and made allowances for athletes to receive lost-time compensation (also

¹⁴ The provinces had initially dedicated funds to Game Plan '76 well before the federal government. However, all provinces backed out of their commitments shortly after the federal government got on board (Macintosh et al., 1987)

¹⁵ There is some speculation that NSOs continued to operate as they had before Game Plan was introduced (Amis et al., 2002).

known as broken-time payments). Lost-time allowances meant that the athletes could receive payments from outside sources to make up for the wages they lost at their job when they had to take time off to train and compete. At this time, students were already receiving financial support through bursaries. In April 1975, the COA introduced lost-time compensation. Due to the number of athletes who now could be supported, and because the government would not provide these payments over fears of setting precedence, the COA and Olympic Trust supported this part of Game Plan. The federal government took over financial responsibility for the original Game Plan programs, which included funding to national sport organizations (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990).

Game Plan '76 was considered a success by Sport Canada and the COA. According to the COA, "[t]he faith of the Canadian Olympic Association was vindicated on the playing fields where Canada, ranked 23rd among the nations of the world at the previous Olympic Games [and] finished 10th in 1976, an unprecedented advancement in international competition" (Canadian Olympic Association, 1980, p. 7). Success was measured only in the results achieved. While the relations between the COA and Sport Canada were strengthened because they achieved their goals, I believe the COA perceived itself as a lesser partner to the federal government with respect to the 1976 Olympics. A report commissioned by the COA in 1973 found that the public perceived Game Plan as a federal program, and there needed to be more promotion of the shared-sector concept (Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 87). These sentiments can be felt in the following passage from the COA:

While Game Plan provided much increased training, coaching and competition opportunities, it did not supply funds for many of the expenses incurred by athletes as they responded to the demands of Game Plan. Nor was any account taken of loss of earnings where athletes found themselves obliged to interrupt

their working careers in order to train and compete. The COA was the only agency in Canada which could move with sufficient speed and flexibility to meet this need. (Canadian Olympic Association, 1980, p. 7)

The COA believed that they did a better job than the government in providing services for the program and the athletes, and that it was not until the federal government knew the program would be successful that they stepped in and helped out. The COA realized that the federal, provincial and municipal government resources far outweighed their own; however, they “devoted a great deal of time and energy to achieve the flexibility, the imagination and, though limited, the financial resources to play a catalytic role” in the development of Game Plan (Canadian Olympic Association, 1980, p. 7). In the end, the COA claimed that their coordinated and cooperative efforts and financing produced the major contribution to the success of Game Plan specifically and more generally to the development of high performance athletes (Canadian Olympic Association, 1980, p. 9).¹⁶

Best Ever '88

The propensity to judge the merit of sport on purely objective measurements – medals won and records broken - gathered strength after the “success” of the 1976 Games. Purely objective measures were valued by the government and by the COA more than the versatility and aesthetics of performance, or the struggle of competing itself. As Macintosh et al. (1987) concludes “[t]his rationalization of sport fitted nicely with the values that sport bureaucrats had assimilated in the scientifically based education institutions” (p. 113). Because of the increase of ‘professionals’ in positions of power in sport organizations, the values they learned in school were more likely to coincide with the values of the government and the COA. The idea of rationalization of spending

¹⁶ The creation of Game Plan was another indication that the entire sport system evolved into the ‘Boardroom’ structure (Kikulis et al., 1991).

became much more prominent with the advent of Best Ever '88, specifically the Quadrennial Planning Process (QPP).

The Best Ever '88 Winter Olympic Team Program received federal government approval in June 1982. It was established in an effort to capitalize on hosting the 1988 Calgary Games (Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 141; Cavanaugh, 1988, p. 130).¹⁷ The IOC had desired 'opulent' Games, and the host committee obliged by creating structures that would 'ensure' Canadian athletes would perform well (Hobson, 1988). The Quadrennial Planning Process was designed by Sport Canada decision-makers to create 'frame-breaking' change in the Canadian sport system. The program was largely based on the belief that elite performances would increase if NSOs became much more formalized, and much more professional (Amis et al., 2002, p. 443). A government task force reported on the status of technical programs of the national sport organizations. As was the case for Game Plan, the Best Ever task force also determined the financial requirements that would satisfy the strategic purpose of fielding a "Best Ever" team (by increasing the performance of elite athletes) for the 1988 Olympic Games in Calgary (Kikulis et al., 1995, p. 75). Amis et al. (2002) created a list of the seven values in Sport Canada's push for a more bureaucratic and professionalized sport system:¹⁸

1. High performance emphasis: a commitment to the identification and development of elite athletes who could compete successfully at the international level.
2. Government involvement: a commitment to viewing the federal government as a partner, with a role of supplying resources and expertise to NSOs.
3. Organizational rationalization: a commitment to organizational development in the direction of specifying and codifying activities

¹⁷ It is not clear in the literature whether Best Ever '88 was initiated by the COA or Sport Canada, only that it received federal government approval in 1982 (Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 141)

¹⁸ The list of values was derived from their analysis of published research, specifically noting Hinings et al. (1996) and Thibault (1987).

4. Professionalization: a commitment to full-time professional staff working in Canada's NSOs.
 5. Planning: a commitment to long-term planning.
 6. Corporate involvement: a commitment to the involvement of corporate sponsors to support high performance sport.
 7. Quadrennial plans: a commitment to the outcomes and objectives of the quadrennial planning process (coterminous with the Olympic cycle).
- (pp. 445-446)

These were the institutionally approved values to which NSOs were expected to comply.

They represent the key changes Sport Canada was trying to impose on NSOs through consultation and quadrennial planning (p. 446).

The federal government committed \$25 million in 1983 for the program, which brought the total 'athlete support' investment in the ten winter sports to \$50 million. This amount was in addition to the \$200 million in federal funds committed for capital and operating costs of the Calgary Games (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990, p. 22). To receive this special program funding, NSOs were required to prepare a four-year plan for 1984-1988. These plans were prepared with the assistance of Sport Canada consultants. The plans were to set specific goals for 1988 medal performances, along with plans to improve and upgrade coaching, facilities, training and competition opportunities, athlete assistance, creation of national training centres, and administration (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990, p. 23; Harvey & Proulx, 1988, p. 105).¹⁹ Funding was directed to the appropriate national sport organization, to use the money according to their specific requirements as outlined in their quadrennial plan. As with Game Plan '76, the literature does not reveal what NSOs actually did with the funds received from the Best Ever program. Sport federations continued to lobby for unconditional grants, insisting that as experts in their particular sport, they knew how to best spend money. However, in this

¹⁹ Best Ever was subsequently expanded in 1984 to include summer sport NSOs who would be competing in Seoul, South Korea (Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 142).

case, an organization's chances of survival (survival being maintained by receiving funds) were greatly enhanced by conforming to the values of the institution. Conformity provided the organization with enhanced legitimacy and status, and could increase the access to scarce resources.

Prior to Best Ever, the government supported national federations by providing relatively unconditional grants. Essentially, the role of the government was to react to requests for funding submitted by NSOs. There was little strategic direction on the part of Sport Canada. The Quadrennial Planning Process was a tool the government used to more or less set the strategic direction of NSOs, to improve their efficiency and increase accountability. With funding being tied to planning, the government now had leverage to influence the operations of NSOs (Kikulis et al 1995, p. 75). With this direct influence by Sport Canada, NSOs lost most of their autonomy to make decisions. However, the QPP was successfully implemented because of: (a) the increasing performance expectations of the public following the 1978 Commonwealth Games and the 1984 Olympics; and (b) changing federal governments (leadership and parties), which meant public servants had a relatively free hand to pursue their own objectives. Rationalized spending was also an important concept in this period, linked partly to the (perceived) withdrawal of federal government funding. However, in a period where federal expenditures were presumably under close scrutiny, the Sport Canada budget continued to rise in the 1980s to \$40.4 million in 1982-1983 (Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 152).

Best Ever '88 was the first official financial commitment by the federal government for periods longer than one year. However, Macintosh and Whitson (1990) identify that many NSOs had great difficulty in creating their four-year plans, because of

the conflicting needs of high performance sport versus mass participation programs. The mandate of the NSOs was for elite and mass sport, and yet they were being directed or rewarded for expending most of this effort and attention towards national team programs. The Quadrennial Planning Process brought to the surface what “the legitimate goals of the high performance mandate within NSOs should be” (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990, p. 24). However, sentiments of opposition developed in many NSOs (Amis et al., 2002). Many NSO staff believed the “single focus of this mandate and the single criterion of success, from the federal government’s view, was [athlete] performance at the 1988 Olympic Games,” which was inappropriate (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990, p. 24). This focus not only deemphasized other important international events (world cups and world championships), but many questioned the sustainability of a system when all efforts and funds are geared for one single event. The Best Ever ’88 effectively meant that NSOs had little choice but to prioritize high performance sport over domestic development.²⁰ The Quadrennial Planning Process also forced NSOs to think more systematically about ‘producing’ successful high performance athletes. This production of athletes and reproduction of values is expressed by Cavanagh (1988):

As the economic commitment of the state to elite sport reaches its most significant level through Best Ever, so too does the organization of amateur sport work as a remarkable pedestal upon which structures of power work to produce and reproduce dominant features of ideology and consensus, and in doing so, work to reproduce themselves. (pp. 131-132)

²⁰ Amis et al. (2002) found in their study of values and organizational change, that NSOs:

1. Were coercively pressured to change (an example of institutional conformity)
2. Reverted back to their traditional modes of operation, when coercive pressures from Sport Canada were relaxed.
3. Half of NSOs that responded to coercive change exhibited signs of ceremonial conformity (structural changes were made, but their value structure remained constant)
4. Experienced a period of structural stability following the radical change

Whitson and Macintosh (1988) found in their study of six NSOs following the implementation of Quadrennial Planning, that most organizations agreed that the process was worthwhile because it clarified the extent of the support needed for national teams to be 'successful'. However, there were others who believed the process was rigged, since the QPP steering committee (i.e., the committee that created the QPP), composed of Sport Canada representatives and "professional staff," were selected by Sport Canada as members because they favoured the focus on high performance. Whitson and Macintosh (1990) state that the committee "had only discussed how High Performance could be accomplished more effectively, and had not really considered options which start from premises different from this 'presupposed system goal'" (p. 91). The QPP was intended to produce a wider commitment to 'rational' change by involving the NSOs, than would occur if Sport Canada had merely imposed them. However, any questions or problems that occurred outside these 'rational planning' boundaries would not be accommodated. While some interest groups (including professionals) and certain ideologies gained significant strength, "other constituencies and other visions of what sport is about [were] pushed to the sidelines" (p. 92). Whitson and Macintosh questioned if NSO participation in the development of the QPP was really designed to assist in the ratification of an already agreed upon solution. The negatives in such a system are the losses of volunteers whose heart and soul have been entwined in the sport system and who have provided a level of understanding other than performance. As well:

[As] rational and performance-oriented discourses come to construct our experiences of sport at every level, [] we lose touch with the fact that sport can have other meanings and other pleasures. For those who believe that there is more to sport than the production of performance, and those who have misgivings about the erosion of democracy which is part of the brave new world of rationalized

sport, the deconstruction of these discourses stands as an important theoretical and practical task. (p. 95)

'Best Ever '88' was deemed a success by the Canadian Olympic Association and Sport Canada. The results at the Winter Games were indeed the 'best ever' for a Canadian team. Athletes won five medals and had 19 top-8 finishes (Macintosh, 1996, p. 56). However, Cavanaugh (1988) identified that several journalists touted Best Ever as the program that did not produce a gold medal (p. 131). In any case, these achievements were quickly forgotten seven months later at the Summer Games in Seoul, when Ben Johnson had his gold medal in the 100m sprint stripped after he tested positive for steroids.²¹ Not only that, but Canadians "failed" to win more than 10 Olympic medals in Seoul.²² How could a program that was so successful in Calgary, lead to such disastrous outcomes in Seoul?

The period following the Ben Johnson affair, including the Dubin Inquiry and its aftermath, has been characterized as one of confusion, turmoil, and introspection for the Canadian sport system. Acting in response to public outcry, the federal government initiated a public inquiry into doping in the Canadian sport system. While focusing on the changes needed to curtail doping in sport, the Dubin Inquiry had ramifications for the entire sport system. Reflecting on recent sport policy decisions, the government admitted that in a sprint to improve international performances, ethical issues had been all but ignored. The results, however, of this omission could not be ignored. Dubin declared that

²¹ Ben Johnson was a Canadian 100m sprinter. Johnson beat American Carl Lewis in a world record-breaking time of 9.79 seconds in the finals of the 100m sprint at the Seoul Olympics. However, his medal and world-record were subsequently stripped after he tested positive for steroids.

²² Beamish & Ritchie's (2004) discussion of doping in Olympic sport, concludes that doping was a natural progression in a sport system that was continually pushing the limits of human performance: "The means to achieving world class results have been allowed to progressively expand to the limits of what is scientifically possible" (p. 367). In effect, a system had been created where doping was 'necessary' for success.

there was a moral crisis in high performance sport in Canada (Dubin, 1990). Dubin placed much of his blame directly on the shoulders of the government, identifying their intervention into sport organizations, and the preoccupation on winning which lead to the current state of sports in the country (Macintosh, 1996, p. 60). Reacting with an equally quick hand, the federal government imposed penalties on those implicated in the Dubin report, submitted a Proposed Policy Framework for Doping Policies, and established a Minister's Task Force on Federal Government Sport Policy. The Task Force report, *Sport: The Way Ahead* (also known as the Best Report, 1992) contained 117 recommendations, all revolving around the premise that "Sport must above all be based on ethical values. It must become athlete-centred, community-based and more accessible in a better harmonized system where shared leadership goes hand-in hand with clearly defined accountabilities" (p. 2). The Task Force Report outlined the need for the government to relinquish its hold on the sport system, which would allow NSOs the opportunity to create their own procedures and programs. Only then would there be a truly national sport plan that would address elite and mass participation, and increase the accessibility of programs to minorities. Macintosh (1996) noted that these directives had been included in previous policies, and Kikulis (2000) identified that there was an increased possibility for change because of the "poor performance" of the system. Kikulis described this process as delegitimation or deinstitutionalization that can occur when challenge or resistance is present, or when there are changes in the surrounding political structure (p. 297). The tendency of politicians to use high performance sports to legitimize their government and to promote national unity and international prestige had severely limited the development of mass participation and recreation programs.

The Johnson drug scandal was instrumental in bringing to the attention of the public the results of a sport system that was fully oriented towards winning medals. Preoccupation with this goal (i.e., winning medals) over all else, had meant a neglect of equity and ethical issues. The 1990s saw funding support reduced by 17 percent between 1990-91 and 1996-97 by the Liberal government. While funding was cut, elite sport remained the priority. The sport system largely ignored the findings of both the Dubin Inquiry and the Best Report (1992) (Green, 2005). One Canadian sport administrator describes the political environment at a conference held in Ottawa in 2001:

During the 1990s...everything was cut back. What was left in the NSOs were the elite sport programmes and the grass roots development programmes were cut to the bone. So, there was more and more focused into high performance...and in one sense the federal government created that situation. So that created a kind of structure or framework that led those NSOs to put all their eggs into high performance sport. (Green, 2004, p. 384)

Green and Houlihan's (2005) analysis of the Best Report agreed with its criticisms that Sport Canada exercised excessive day-to-day control over national and multi-sport organizations. The Best Report asked several value questions about sport in Canada: (a) why do we support high-performance sport at all?, and (b) do we appreciate the difference between 'being the best you can be' and 'being the best'? What Green and Houlihan concluded was that the issue of government involvement in elite sport was not merely about funding, but rather about political priorities and political will. Political priorities were also examined by Harvey et al. (1995) in their exploration of neo-corporatism.

While many academics point to the 1988 drug scandal as triggering the discussion on amateur sport in Canada, Harvey et al. (1995) point to the election of a conservative government in 1984, which started the trend towards neo-corporatism and rationalization

of spending. They note that the Johnson affair simply accelerated this process. Harvey et al. claim that a corporatist structure was adopted by the conservative government to help manage the state's relationship with interest groups.²³ Harvey et al. highlight that in a neo-corporatist system, opportunities for social change and innovations are limited because "the political game is closed." This is because representatives participating in decision making are those selected by the state (p. 254). In the reports and documents analyzed in Harvey et al.'s study, all had one common denominator: it is clear that the state has adopted principles to manage interest groups involved in amateur sport (p. 257). The state no longer wanted to support the large number of sport organizations. By reducing the number of organizations they financially supported, the state had better control over the sport system. Because representatives are chosen by the state, they will usually all submit to the same principles and values. Differing voices are non-existent in the discussion. Corporatism limits the democratic process, which includes competitions of ideologies: "The healthy process of questioning, disputing, or disagreeing that leads to a group's integrity does not occur" (p. 260).²⁴ As funds decrease, the need to be 'accountable' for every dollar spent increases. And, because of this need to be accountable, those people involved in the decision process are the paid staff of organizations (i.e., the 'professionals'), decreasing the role of the volunteers. Rationalization of funding has gathered steam since then, and was important in the new Sport Canada funding structure – The Sport Funding Accountability Framework.

²³ Harvey et al. (1995) compare the corporatist system where the state takes an active role in the "organization" of interest groups, to a pluralist system, where all interest groups are equal and are competing for access to resources. In a corporatist system, various interest groups are represented, and the number of groups is limited by the state.

²⁴ If these processes do not occur, then the opportunity for agents to effect change is severely limited.

The first edition of the Sport Funding Accountability Framework (SFAF I) was initiated by the federal government in 1995 to help realize elite sport policy objectives. Directives for NSO funding were focused on high-performance athletes, programs, coaches and coaching developments, sport delivery services, as well as access for women, disabled and aboriginal persons. Funding to specific sport organizations was based on eligibility, purpose and accountability. While on one hand the SFAF purported the desire to support the social factors of elite sport, (e.g., social development, youth integration, growth and prosperity of all sport) (Misener, 2001, p. 64), SFAF criteria was weighted heavily towards elite success, with far less weight given to the social objectives. The SFAF structure emphasized the win-at-all costs mentality (Green & Houlihan, 2005; Misener, 2001, p. 65). The SFAF was designed to align funding with federal government priorities, by ensuring accountability as part of the NSO/government relationship. Programs of each NSO needed to be in line with goals and objectives of Sport Canada in order to receive funding (Misener, 2001, p. 64).

The Mills Report (Sport in Canada: Everybody's Business, 1998) was the next government sport document. This report was an overall picture of the entire 'sport industry' including the total economic impact of sport equipment sales and impact of hosting regional, national and international events. While the SFAF had responded to criticisms by limiting the number, or the degree to which sport organizations were funded, the Mills Report recommended an increase in the number of NSOs to be funded, an increase in funding for coaches' training, and increased funding to 'carded' athletes.²⁵

²⁵ Carding is a term used to describe the monthly funding provided to athletes by Sport Canada through the Athlete Assistance Program.

The government finally decided that a new sport policy was needed to bring cohesion to a system that had seen enormous changes in the last 15 years. The Canadian Sport Policy, released in 2002, called for a focus on four pillars: participation, excellence, capacity, and interaction. The vision of the policy is, by 2012, to have:

A dynamic and leading-edge sport environment that enables all Canadians to experience and enjoy involvement in sport to the extent of their abilities and interests and, for increasing numbers, to perform consistently and successfully at the highest competitive levels. (p. 13)

This policy outlines the need to address both participation issues (i.e. barriers to underrepresented groups and declining participation rates) and elite issues (i.e. gaps in athletic development and coaching development). Many people concerned with the inclusiveness of the sport system and the health of the country praised this policy for acknowledging the importance of mass participation to Canadians. Shortly after the release of the Canadian Sport Policy, the Physical Activity and Sport Act was passed in 2003 to replace the 1961 Act. In this Act, there was a lessened emphasis on the philosophy or ideology of excellence (Green, 2004). However, bureaucrats were not sure how the dual focus would play out. As Green (2004) illustrated, a Sport Canada official discussing the new policy stated that the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport,

broadened [sport's remit] and that's why we have the Participation pillar, and that hasn't been resolved yet at Sport Canada. We're not sure yet how that participation angle that is now appearing to be part of our mandate and that never had been there before [will be dealt with].

(Interview, 12 June, 2002 as cited in Green, 2004, p. 384)

At the same time as the federal government was developing these 'new' mandates and placing less emphasis on elite sport, the Canadian Olympic Committee was creating its own programs to ensure international performances improved.

Canadians have experienced a continually changing sport structure since the late 1960s. Initial changes saw increased funding for elite sport over its developmental and recreational counterparts. The gap between elite sport and recreation and fitness initiatives continued to grow in the 1980s. NSOs were required to create quadrennial plans for their sport, which directed more funds towards the elite teams in hopes of performing well at international sporting competitions. After the drug scandal in Seoul, subsequent government policies and documents highlighted the need to decrease emphasis on elite sport; however, actions continued to support the goal of increasing 'success' at the international level. What has not been examined is how each one of these structural changes affected the elite athletes. When NSOs were provided with increased funding, it is not clear how these additional funds changed the experiences of the athletes. It is likely that most of the structural decisions were made without considering the athletes, aside from the general belief that increased funding to NSOs would increase the ability for athletes to win international sporting competitions.

Sub-problem 2: What approach was employed by the Winter Sport Partners in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium?

"Own the Podium – 2010" is a sport technical program created by the Winter Sport Task Force, with a goal of ensuring Canada is ranked number one in the medal standings when the Olympics are hosted by Vancouver in 2010. Own the Podium, while initiated by the winter sport NSOs, is supported by the Canadian Olympic Committee, the federal government, the B.C. provincial government, and numerous private organizations and corporations. The naturalized foundation of this program is that success is only measured by 'podium performances.' The Winter Sport Partners believe that the

success of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games is largely dependent on the number of medals Canadian athletes win.

There have been several previous funding programs created by the Canadian Olympic Committee that have directed funding towards national sport organizations. The aim of these programs, often in response to public criticisms of the results of athletes at recent Games, was to increase the number of medals won by Canadian athletes. Discourses of failure have been projected by journalists through the media. As documented by Knight, MacNeill, and Donnelly (2005),²⁶ discourses of disappointment appeared in the media following the non-winning medal performance by the men's hockey team in Nagano in 1998, the Sydney Summer Games in 2000, and the Athens Summer Games in 2004. They found that narratives of disappointment, which initially blamed the athletes, quickly changed to blaming the federal government for a lack of funding and for organizational problems in the sport system. Disappointment became the dominant theme characterizing the Games in the media. As Knight et al (2005) explain: "Disappointment speaks to a breach between actions and expectations that is potentially disruptive and calls for explanation and understanding" (p. 26). Disappointment (i.e., failure) is seen as a threat to material interests and social expectations. When disappointment is felt, people often look for explanations as to "why?" The Canadian narrative focused on explaining why they were disappointed, which then led them to identify potential problems and solutions. Disappointment provokes a process of social reflection and collective self-interrogation, where values are examined. The powers that be in Canadian elite sport decided that they valued Canadian athletes being successful on the international stage.

²⁶ "The Disappointment Games: Narratives of Olympic Failure in Canada and New Zealand"

At a COA workshop in 1999, a high performance sports plan was established; this Vision for Sport was to establish Canada as one of the top sporting nations. A pilot program for a collaborative funding model was created, and winter athletes with medal potential in Salt Lake received financial support from Podium 2002 (Canadian Olympic Committee, n.d.). Ninety-three athletes, chosen for their potential to win medals (based on past Top-5 performances) received direct financial support. Monies for the program came from Sport Canada, the COA, the Calgary Olympic Development Association (CODA), and Petro-Canada²⁷ (AthletesCAN, 2001). Eligible athletes received their money only eight months prior to the Games. The program was deemed a success by the COC, and a more permanent *Canadian Olympic Excellence Fund* (COEF) was established. The COEF prioritized funding to athletes, coaches, NSO technical programs, and Canadian Sport Centres, based on: (a) demonstrated capacity to achieve podium results at the 2004 Athens Games, (b) demonstrated capacity to achieve a top-8 finish at the 2004 Athens Games, (c) potential to achieve podium or top-8 results in Torino in 2006, (d) potential to achieve top-8 in the 2008 and 2012 Games, and lastly (e) Pan Am sports with demonstrated capacity to achieve podium results at the 2003 Pan Am Games. The Excellence Fund committed \$9 million over two years, and consisted of COC grant monies and \$1.35 million from the federal government (COC, n.d.).

²⁷ Petro-Canada supports a program called the Petro-Canada Torch Scholarship Fund, which was established following the 1988 Calgary Olympic Games. Money was taken from the scholarship fund to support Podium 2002.

Own the Podium - 2010

*"The review team is confident that Canada can break our pattern of never winning a gold medal when we host an Olympic Games. We believe that with a focused vision and well-executed implementation, Canada can be number one and **Own the Podium** at home, in 2010"*

Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004, p. vi

When Vancouver was awarded the right to host the 2010 Winter Games in Prague in 2003, Wayne Gretzky proclaimed that "Canada *will* win a gold medal" (McLean's, 2003). Actually, the COC is banking on Canadian athletes winning 35 medals (many of them gold) when the Games return to Canada for the first time since 1988. The winter sports, supported by the Canadian Olympic Committee, the federal government, VANOC, CODA, and private financial partners have created a plan that will put Canada on the podium more than any other country, thus placing first in the medal standings at Vancouver. According to the COC, Canada will "Own the Podium." *Own the Podium - 2010* is the title of a business plan, a "sport technical program" that will allocate funds to specific sports based on the probability that they will win medals in Vancouver.

The whole program promotes the belief that the success of the entire 2010 Vancouver Games hinges on Canadian athletes winning medals. This narrow focus has caught hold with NSOs, athletes and funding partners. A survey published by NRG Research Group revealed that "almost 3 out of 4 Canadians (73%) approve of the *Own the Podium 2010* goal to make Canada the top medal finisher at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games." In addition, 69 percent of Canadians agreed with the statement that it is important for Canada to be the top medal finisher in Vancouver (*Own the*

Podium, 2006).²⁸ By winning medals, Canadian heroes will be created, the country will be united, and perhaps most importantly, Canada can *finally* take its rightful place with the world's sport superpowers. This vision for the sport system has been legitimized by its acceptance and reproduction in the sport system. Financial support also legitimizes Own the Podium and its goals.

Several large Canadian corporations have agreed to be involved in Own the Podium. Royal Bank (a perennial sponsor of the COC since 1947) has committed \$500,000 to Own the Podium to support both Olympic and Paralympic athletes. Bell Canada announced its support of \$10 million over five years, as well as \$5 million in proceeds from selling Olympic related products. General Motors Canada will contribute \$4 million. RONA will provide the COC will \$2 million, which will be partly allocated to 100 Canadian athletes in the "Growing with our Athletes" program. While these contributions are necessary for the successful running of Own the Podium, it is important to explore the nature of these 'marketing agreements.' Kidd and Eberts (1982) noted that when unconditional grants were disappearing in favour of sponsorship and licensing agreements, athletes took on extra roles and duties. Athletes knew that the sponsorships were conditional on their sporting performance. In the case of Own the Podium, many of these marketing agreements include a component where athletes are 'ambassadors' of the corporation. Athletes will receive funding, or career experience, in exchange for purporting the merits of the corporation's products or services. Athletes are also 'ambassadors' of Canada.

²⁸ The survey was carried out by NRG Research Group. A total of 1,213 randomly selected interviews were administered between May 18 to 29, 2006. The margin of error associated with the results is +/-2.8%, 19 times out of 20.

Responding to the need to back up recent financial decisions (expenditures to VANOC and Own the Podium) with a clear statement, the federal government released the “Sport Excellence Strategy: Achieving Podium Results at Olympic and Paralympic Games” (2005). This strategy describes the federal government’s commitment to high performance sport in Canada. The strategy claims that focusing on podium results is “essential in defining Canada as a leading sport nation” (p. 2). This goal of excellence will promote internationally the Canadian values of personal excellence, creativity, diversity, achievement, and leadership. The federal government argues through the Canadian Sport Policy that they need to initiate collaborative research, sustainable funding, and sport system performance. Because the federal government needs to be accountable for the use of public funds, success will be measured by athletes reaching pre-determined performance targets at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The document did not describe how elite sport contributes to Canadian values of creativity and diversity. Other than including goals for both winter and summer sports, there is nothing in this document that further explains or challenges Own the Podium. The media, on the other hand, has brought to light several elements of the program, and how it is affecting NSOs in Canada.

There have been many recent accounts published in newspaper articles on the effect of Own the Podium on athletes and NSOs. Grouping topics thematically, discussion has revolved around (a) resources provided by Own the Podium, (b) the influence of results on funding, and (c) the experiences of athletes. The Canadian Disabled Alpine Ski Team received additional funding to support three full-time coaches, two equipment technicians, a sports psychologist and a trainer. However, expectations of

athlete performances are rising along with the increased funding (Roberts, 2006). The story for Biathlon Canada is similar. Biathlon Canada had its Own the Podium funding cut by 20 percent this season, because they did not meet their performance targets. Biathlon is in a tricky place. They have a young athlete who, with proper training, could be a potential medalist. However, they are trying to maintain a balance between needing immediate results to secure future funding, and not putting too much pressure on this young athlete so he does not burn out before the Games (Bell, 2006a). Ski Jumping Canada is in another position. As a 3rd Tier Sport according to Own the Podium, they are not receiving much financing. However, if Women's Ski Jumping is added to the Olympic program for 2010, they will likely receive more money from Own the Podium because of the potential for the women to medal. An influx of funds into ski jumping would help the women, as well as the struggling men's program²⁹ (Bell, 2006b).

Many supporters agree that Own the Podium is the answer athletes, coaches, and national sport organizations had been looking for to address the issue of a fragmented sport system. There were too many applications for too many different funding programs and grants. Nevertheless, the different programs and grants did allow for some diversity in qualifications. All Canadian sports are not equal, thus they all will not benefit from one program. But this could be the hope of decision-makers in the Canadian Sport System. They have the ability to weed-out those sports and programs that do not meet their single standard of success. Funding fewer programs overall will result in increased funding to select *Canadian* sports. We need to question, though, what else is lost when this happens.

²⁹ In November 2006, the IOC decided not to include women's ski jumping in the 2010 Vancouver Games.

Sub-problem 3: What are athletes' experiences in the current Winter Olympic sport system, with respect to Own the Podium?

While the 1980s can be accurately characterized as a shift to a more professionalized and rationalized system, many characterize the period following the Dubin inquiry as a shift away from bureaucracy. Thibault and Babiak (2003), for example, identify this shift as a focus on the technical development of high performance athletes. They classify this shift as "athlete-centred," because more Government resources are directly invested in high performance athletes, rather than in the administration of national sport organizations (p. 106). AthletesCAN, an athlete-run organization advocating on behalf of athletes, interprets athlete-centred as both a concept and a process where athletes are involved in creating the goals of the sport system, and in determining the processes to meet them (1994, p. 3).

Thibault and Babiak (2003) support their argument about a shift in the sport system by illustrating key changes: athlete representation on decision-making committees of NSOs; the creation of Canadian Sport Centres; increased direct funding to athletes for training and living expense and to coaches for professional development; and the creation of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre (p. 107). In 2001,³⁰ Sport Canada included in its eligibility for funding under SFAF the 20% Solution. The 20% Solution meant that NSOs must have 20% athlete representation on committees dealing with high performance issues. Recommendations from the Mill's Report (1998) on the sport industry in Canada included the need to ensure that top-level athletes had significant input on decisions that affect them. Thibault and Babiak identify an athlete-centred system as one where financial investments are made in athletes. The advent of the

³⁰ 'Mandatory' athlete representation was first considered by Sport Canada in 1998.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre³¹ is an important indication of the desire of the federal government decision-makers to create a 'fair' and equitable sport system for athletes, who now have a formalized procedure for bringing procedural complaints against coaches or their NSO. Along with the dispute resolution arm, ADR plays the important role of informing all actors in the sport system of rights to procedural fairness.

Athletes should be involved in the decision-making process. Chelladurai and Turner (2006) identify that an athlete's participation in decision making "enhances the rationality of the decision insofar as there is more information available in a group to generate and evaluate alternate pathways to a goal" (p. 142). They also explain that once a decision is made, the athletes feel that it is their own decision, and these feelings of ownership lead to acceptance and commitment. Finally, active participation in decision making is said to contribute to the personal growth of athletes "by enhancing their feelings of self-worth and self-confidence and by facilitating development of their problem-solving skills" (Chelladurai & Turner, 2006, p. 142). Jones, Armour and Potrac (2002) believe that involving athletes in decisions will lead to empowerment: "A philosophy of empowerment aims to makes athletes increasingly responsible for their own performances by giving them a degree of ownership over them" (p. 44). This could lead to increased commitment from the athletes, because they are making a greater investment of self in the process (p. 44).

Shogan, in *The Making of High-Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity and Ethics* (1999), makes the strongest case on the merits of an athlete-centred system; based on her arguments, the Canadian system is not athlete-centred. Shogan differentiates

³¹ The Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre is now the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC).

between 'real' knowledge (i.e., knowledge held by coaches, administrators and sport scientists) and procedural knowledge (i.e., the skills of the athlete to perform their sport). She identifies that within the sport system, 'real' knowledge is the only legitimate source of preparation, training and competition decisions. This aligns with Slack's (1997) definition of legitimate power as the power that is acquired solely by virtue of a person's position within an organization. Legitimate power arises from a position, not from any special qualities a person may or may not possess (p. 181). While the current sport system has become more athlete-centred because athletes are involved in the decision-making process, they still do not have control over decisions; they merely have regulated input into some of them. An athlete-centred system would include a reduction in the absolute power of the coach and administrators, and an increase in athletes' knowledge and power to critically question their roles and to make informed decisions for themselves.

Sport is socially constructed. The dominant group, the decision-makers, choose activities that best suit their own ideas of what sport is, and what it should be. Hegemony, as Gruneau (1988) explains, includes the

Whole range of processes through which dominant social groups [exert] their influence...to continually refashion institutionalized modes of practice and belief in order to win consent for the system and structure of social relations which sustain the dominant position. (p. 29)

More specifically, dominant groups (i.e., government policymakers) have the power to create situations that are favourable to the continuation of their way of knowing and acting (i.e., a sport system that supports their goals of national unity and international prestige). Athletes are subordinate to the decision-makers. The public is encouraged by the structures that exist in the sport system to assume that coaches and administrators make decisions that are favorable to both athletes and the institution of Canadian sport. I

believe that what is best for the organization - 'producing' medals - is not always best for the athletes. Shogan (1999) describes how coaches, trainers, and NSO administrators are "as implicated in the machinery of conformity as are athletes" (p. 41). Coaches and trainers conform to the general premise that they need to 'produce' athletes - through regimented training and disciplined competition - who will win medals, which will secure their national sport organization money and increase the prestige of Canada on the international field.

One of the problems with the involvement of athletes in the current decision-making structure is accommodation. Accommodation is the process whereby the dominant group provides minor changes to dominant practices in order to quell resistance from subordinate groups. Gruneau (1988) points out that accommodation, while allowing some alternatives, actively seeks "to exclude the 'full-range' of available opportunities and practices" (p. 29). A critical examination of the relationship between coaches and administrators (dominant group) and the athletes (subordinates) exposes that, while dominant groups may provide several opportunities for system change, it may only be to accommodate dissenting opinions. Jones et al. (2002) state that coaches will accommodate by only allowing their athletes to have an illusion of empowerment (p. 45). By excluding the full range of available opportunities, dominant groups maintain their prevailing status and ensure the continuation of their ways of knowing. Lowe (2006) describes this aspect of athlete-involvement as tokenism, and it is what Beal (1995) identifies as the dominant group's ability to create limits on the range of what is perceived to be acceptable and within the realm of possibility (p. 253).

Though dominant groups often accommodate the concerns of subordinates to keep them from mounting significant resistance, athletes are also guilty of actively consenting to decisions to maintain their subordinate status (Beal, 1995, p. 253). Active consent is the idea that subordinate actors will consent (through their actions) to remain in their subordinate position. It is hard to believe that people would choose to stay in a position of subordination. However, this position often carries with it the comfort of knowing what to expect and what is expected of you. Subordination is safe. Your position within the system will be guaranteed if you actively consent to maintain your status. There are many reasons why athletes would actively consent to dominant practices. In an athlete-centred system, athletes will have the power to make informed decisions about their roles and responsibilities in the sport system. While the result of this transition may be very favourable to athletes, the process to get there will neither be easy nor safe. As long as the athlete acts within the system, or resists within the framework established by the dominant group, his or her position (e.g., on the national team) is safe; his or her identity as a high-performance athlete is stable. The athlete's ability to remain financially 'safe' is also guaranteed if they act within the system. An athlete's formal income (i.e., Athlete Assistance carding) is based on achieving training and performance objectives.³² In this sense, an athlete may not be financially able to resist the system and remain an athlete due to the high costs associated with equipment, training, and competing. While subordinate participants may be fully aware of the lack of power they have in the system, the alternative - stepping outside the framework - may be even more undesirable. The more the dominant group frames the entire identity for an athlete, from training and

³² In order for an athlete to receive 'carding' from the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP), they must sign a contract with their NSO that outlines their training, competition, and behavioural responsibilities. If an athlete breaks this contract, they can be automatically removed from the AAP (Canadian Heritage 2005).

competing to financing, the more difficult it is for athletes to imagine opportunities to exist 'outside' that framed possibility. Giving athletes the opportunity to think critically about their role in the sport system is essential for creating a healthy position for athletes.

Subscribing to the values mentioned above, including the importance of athletes' empowerment and full involvement in decision-making, may not be the easiest approach currently; however there are those who believe heading in that direction is a worthwhile process. The primary organization taking this perspective is AthletesCAN.³³ Established in 1992, AthletesCAN has been the collective voice of athletes in the Canadian sport system, and is the only fully independent and inclusive athlete organization in the country. AthletesCAN provides programs of leadership, advocacy and education to ensure a fair, responsive and supportive sport system for athletes. AthletesCAN represents all of Canada's national teams, including Aboriginal, Paralympic, Olympic, Pan American and Commonwealth Games athletes, among others³⁴ (AthletesCAN, 2006). All athletes who are members of national teams, or athletes who have retired from a national team within the past eight years, are automatically members.³⁴ According to the High Performance Athlete Survey (2005), nearly all athletes are aware of AthletesCAN and half feel the organization does 'moderately well' at representing Canada's national team athletes (p. 78). The vision of AthletesCAN is to have a significant positive impact on the life of every athlete by acting as the collective voice for amateur athletes in the country. Their mission is to ensure a fair, responsive and supportive system for athletes. AthletesCAN is committed to the values of accountability, equity, inclusiveness and mutual respect. Their current goal is to motivate up-and-coming

³³ There is no special mention of non-Olympic sport athletes, for example rugby, handball or lacrosse.

³⁴ There is one AthletesCAN representative elected from each national sport organization, and they are invited to attend all forums and discussions.

athletes to become leaders in sport. This organization believes in the need to motivate athletes to become engaged in the sport system, outside of their primary roles and responsibilities in training and competition. In looking towards the Vancouver Games, they acknowledge that the direction of sport in Canada is strongly focused on winning medals, and that they need to be vigilant in making sure athletes on the fringe are not excluded and that there is opportunity and capacity for up-and-coming athletes to excel.

AthletesCAN went through the process of a corporate re-branding in 2005 (including a new logo and website) which “provided AthletesCAN with a more professional and credible look as it positions itself as a world leader in athlete representation” (AthletesCAN, 2006, pp. 2-3). Eighty-three percent of AthletesCAN’s operating budget comes from Sport Canada (p. 4). To receive funding, AthletesCAN has to apply through the Sport Funding Accountability Framework. In Ponc’s (1994) analysis of the Fitness and Amateur Sport (FAS) Branch’s Women’s Program, she found that the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport (CAAWS) was originally created along feminist lines, and a lack of funding led to dependency on the federal government. She found that “CAAWS [had] to line up their programs in accordance with an ideology approved by FAS. The more CAAWS programs implemented an ideology approved by the state, the more funding they received” (p. 82). Ponc added that the increase in resources increased the power and ability of CAAWS to alter conditions for women and sport, but it was within the existing structure (p. 82).³⁵

The introduction of AthletesCAN and their intention to include athletes in decision-making processes shows progress towards the creation of an athlete-centred

³⁵ Comparing CAAWS to AthletesCAN, it would be interesting to discover how structures within AthletesCAN changed along with the re-branding process, or if structures have changed in the past to be eligible for more Sport Canada funding.

system. However, as was published in the High Performance Athlete Survey (2005), 48 percent of those surveyed were dissatisfied with the amount of representation and influence athletes have in decision-making and policy making (Ekos, 2005, p. 74).³⁶ Arai (1997) identifies that empowerment of athletes needs to be holistic, because biological, psychological, social and economic aspects are all interconnected (p. 4). She continues that the first stage of empowerment is awareness: “The empowerment process begins with the individual developing awareness on some level of a desire for change” (p. 5).

The identified benefits of involving athletes in the decision-making process are that they will have a better life experience, there will be increased respect between athletes and coaches/administrators, they will have more ownership of their actions, and are more likely to remain in the system as an athlete (i.e., not retire prematurely), and then after retirement as a coach or volunteer.³⁷ Kidd and Eberts (1982) explain that “as Federal sports planners increased their demands on the sports governing bodies to ‘produce winners’, they abandoned the belief that sport provided developmental opportunities and intrinsic rewards for athletes” (p. 12). At the same time, Sport Canada and the COC encourage ‘production’ oriented executive directors, coaches and sports scientists to treat athletes as workers who have little or no control over their own activity (Kidd & Eberts, 1982, p. 12). Athletes play a vital role in sport. Sport would still exist without the IOC, NSOs and Sport Canada. There would be no sport without athletes.

³⁶ Only 32 percent were satisfied with athlete representation. Twenty-two percent believed their athlete representative had high involvement in NSO board, committee, and governance activities; only nineteen percent believed their athlete representative had high involvement in national team program decisions (Ekos, 2005, p. 72).

³⁷ Having athletes remain in the sport system, in a different capacity, after retirement is one factor that will increase the sustainability of the sport system. Sustainability is affected by the continued availability of financial, material and human resources.

When athletes gain understanding and exert their agency, they will be able to instigate change in the system, to promote goals in addition to 'excellence.'

Change is possible because of duality of structure. As was outlined in my assumptions, duality of structure is the process by which agents acting within a structure will actively reproduce or alter these existing structures or they will act to produce new structures. Actors, on the one hand, are bound by the existing structures, and these existing structures will often 'limit' what actors believe is possible. However, boundaries can be expanded to include new understandings of what is possible. At the same time as agents play an active role in determining the level at which ideas and actions are 'institutionalized' (i.e., understood through practical consciousness as being 'the way it is naturally'), agents can also determine the level at which ideas and actions are deinstitutionalized³⁸ (Kikulis, 2000, p. 299). The more athletes understand their position and roles within the sport system and the position and roles of others, the more likely that they will be able to envision possibilities for change.

³⁸ Deinstitutionalization occurs as a result of challenges and resistance of actors, and thus there is a "failure to reproduce" existing structures (Kikulis, 2000, p. 297).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

What approach should decision-makers take to ensure that the Canadian Sport System is athlete-centred?

To examine aspects of the general question outlined above, I explored three sub-problems. I conducted a document analysis on federal government policies and documents, as well as documents from the Canadian Olympic Association/Committee. Government documents included policy documents, annual reports, conference proceedings, and meeting minutes. Canadian Olympic Association/Committee documents included annual reports, annual technical reviews, quadrennial reports, planning documents, as well as personal communications of Canadian Olympic Association/Committee members. I augmented the information gathered in the document analysis through interviews with key decision-makers involved in Own the Podium and current Olympic athletes. My methodology follows the principles of triangulation. Triangulation is the process of using multiple qualitative methods to study the issue (Davies, 2001). Davies (2001) describes triangulation as a research design that increases the comprehensiveness of researching by cross-referencing information “both between and within the data types employed” (p. 78).

Sub-problem 1: How were selected elite sport funding decisions constructed in Canada from 1961-2004?

Analysis of Government Documents and Policies, and Documents from the Canadian Olympic Association/Committee.

I examined these documents to gain a thorough understanding of the reasons why federal government and Canadian Olympic Association/Committee policies and programs were created (see Appendix C for a list of documents). A critical analysis of these historical documents was also necessary to determine why certain programs were implemented. The analysis included exploring who was involved in the decision-making process, why certain decisions were made over others, what rules (formal or informal) governed the decisions, and what resources were employed in the creation and implementation of programs and policies.

My method of document analysis (see Appendix D and E for examples) draws from Chalip's (1995) policy analysis framework.³⁹ Though the scope of the documents I examined extends beyond policy to include meeting agendas, minutes, proceedings of conferences, and personal notes from those involved in the decision making process, this framework is still useful. Chalip identified the need to identify operative legitimations, focusing events, and problem attributions. According to Chalip, legitimations establish boundaries for decision-making. Put simply, I documented rationales provided for why the organization is looking at the problem. Chalip identifies problem attributions as "socially ascribed causes of events" (p. 5); that is, the solutions offered by the decision-makers to address the problems. Focusing events are events that Chalip describes as

³⁹ Chalip's (1995) Policy Analysis Framework contains five elements: focusing event; operative legitimization(s); problem definition; problem attribution(s); decision frame(s) (p. 5). I will be using two of the five (legitimizations and attributions) in all analyses, and identify focusing event where applicable. See Limitations and Delimitations for further explanation.

being “nationally traumatic,” which symbolize policy issues and focus the attention of policymakers (p. 5).⁴⁰ In the case of the creation of Own the Podium, the focusing event was Vancouver being awarded the right to host the 2010 Winter Games. This could be perceived as potentially traumatic if Canadian athletes are not ‘successful.’

Expanding on Chalip’s framework, I also examined the *formal* and *informal rules*, and the *financial, material* and *human resources* needed in the development of the policy/program and in its implementation. Rules cannot be understood apart from resources, and vice versa. Giddens (1984) identifies the dynamic between rules and resources as fundamental to duality of structure: “Rules cannot be conceptualized apart from resources, which refer to the modes whereby transformative relations are actually incorporated into the production and reproduction of social practices” (p. 18). *Rules* govern behaviour of actors. *Rules* can either be *formal* (e.g. written constitutions, policies and procedures), or *informal*. *Informal rules* are social norms or codes of practice that direct acceptable behaviour. I have used Ponc’s (1994) interpretation of Giddens’ (1984) semantic and regulative rules to increase my own knowledge about rules and resources.

Ponc (1994) identifies that “[informal] rules are the foundational structure that govern the action of agents. It is [informal] rules that structure how agents think about and react to [formal] rules and all three components of resources” (p. 20). Therefore, *formal rules* are the formal expression of *informal rules*, and *formal rules* assign value and access to *resources* (p. 20). Ponc states that it is critical to note that formal rules are the formal manifestation of only certain people’s internal rules. This can be understood when we consider power relations and the production of legitimate knowledge. Only

⁴⁰ I do not believe that all focusing events are necessarily traumatic. A better term to describe them is an event of national significance that requires a policy response.

people in dominant positions have the ability to create *formal rules*, and have the access to *resources*. These *formal rules* will align with their personal beliefs, and assumptions⁴¹ (*informal rules*). An example of a *formal rule* within the institution of Canadian sport is that athletes must qualify to receive funding (carding) from the Athlete Assistance Program. Another formal rule developed by the implementation of Own the Podium is that those sports that have a higher potential to win medals (based on numerous factors discussed in sub-problem 2) will receive more money than sports that have less potential for winning medals.

Ponic (1994) notes that *informal rules* are the “basis for the construction of [formal] rules and the meanings assigned to [] resources” (p. 21). An example of an *informal rule* held by most current athletes on national teams is that they follow the directives of their coach. *Resources* are also tied in to the maintenance of the Canadian sport system. If Own the Podium did not have *financial resources* they acquired from the federal government and private corporations, they would not be able to allocate funds to NSOs.⁴² The coaches themselves are *human resources*, as are the athletes. The coach also has the ability to affect the athlete’s access to resources. For example, if an athlete chooses not to obey a coach, the coach has the ability to limit the athlete’s access to training facilities (*material resource*) or to a trainer (*human resource*). A *formal rule* is produced by decision-makers to support their beliefs of what should be. For example, decision-makers within the Winter Sport Partners agreed that Canada should be number one in the medal standings in Vancouver. They then developed Own the Podium and the

⁴¹ Assumptions are normalized beliefs, values and ideas. They are what an actor assumes to be true.

⁴² This point is also expressed within the Own the Podium document. “If funding is limited, the Task Force believes base funding should be maintained for all sports; however, any additional high performance funding should be allocated using the tiering system” (p. 18).

sport review process to allocate funds (*financial resources*) based on formally established rules. The creation of Own the Podium and its corresponding *formal rules* for fund allocation reinforces and naturalizes the assumption that success is measured by number of medals won at Olympic Games.

I also documented values expressed explicitly or implicitly within the documents. As was previously discussed, values are important to consider when determining the legitimization of change (Amis et al., 2002). Values are closely linked to informal and formal rules.⁴³ Lastly, I documented the actors involved in the decision-making process, as well as in the creation and implementation of specific funding programs. The inclusion of key actors in my analysis is important. According to social construction, power relations and duality of structure, the actors involved in the decision making process will affect how problems are understood, what options exist as possible solutions, who has the access to certain resources, and who has the ability to effect change.

Analysis of the information gained through this framework helped to identify possible limitations of the proposed and/or accepted solutions. Critical document analysis will allow me to examine what Chalip refers to as “Frame Content” (i.e., what elements were considered in the document), as well as what elements were ignored, or rejected (Frame Exclusion). As Own the Podium is an emerging program, it was important to continually examine new developments throughout the thesis process in order to gain a more complete understanding of the program.

⁴³ From my literature review, and existing knowledge of legitimations in elite sport funding, “Canadian values” have frequently been included in the discussion. Though the inclusion of values in funding documents is often superficial and ambiguous, I believe it is still important to consider due to the frequency of the use of values to determine funding structures.

I consulted the National Archives and analyzed pertinent documents from the Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch/Directorate, Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Association/Committee, and the personal collection of Jack Davies.⁴⁴ I also consulted the J.C. Lynch personal collection at McGill University. McGill holds a special Olympic Collection, containing the archives of the former Olympic House in Montreal. The J.C. Lynch personal collection was consulted for Canadian Olympic Association materials including technical reports, annual reports, Game Plan planning documents and meeting minutes, and papers from the 1984-1988 quadrennial.⁴⁵ Due to the nature of some of the documents (i.e., personal notes, letters, and discussion notes), not every document contained all the information required for a full analysis based on the aforementioned framework. Their consultation was still beneficial in creating a comprehensive history of elite sport funding in Canada, by filling in gaps in my literature review.

Sub-problem 2: What approach was employed by the Winter Sport Partners in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium?

Interviews with three key players in the creation and implementation of the Own the Podium program

Interviewing key administrators of Own the Podium allowed me to probe them at length regarding their thoughts on key issues. I was thus able to gather details on the thoughts and attitudes of key actors in the decision-making process (Tansey, 2006). Kirby and McKenna (1989) believe that the process of the interview allows the researcher to interact “with those whose lives are being researched” while recording his or her own

⁴⁴ Mr. Davies was the President of the Commonwealth Games Association from 1953-1978, and he was a member of the Canadian Olympic Association. Davies was appointed Honorary Life President of the Canadian Track and Field Association, and Honorary Life Member of the Canadian Olympic Association, the British Olympic Association, and the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States.

⁴⁵ J.C. Lynch was a former technical director of the COA, and was heavily involved in the planning of Game Plan '76.

commentary (p. 66). I employed a semi-structured interview process to allow for a more interactive interview (see Appendix F for interview guide) (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

I specifically selected interview candidates based on their involvement in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium. The interviews led to greater insight about Own the Podium and the current sport system. To explore the rationale and solutions of the program, I interviewed administrators who were involved with the creation of the program.

I contacted potential interviewees initially by email, explaining the nature of the research and requesting an interview. All three interviews were conducted over the phone. With the permission of the interviewee, the interviews were tape-recorded. The interviews were then transcribed and sent back to the interviewees for review and to make additional comments or amendments. Participants were informed of their right to refuse to answer any question, or withdraw at any time during the data collection phase of the study. The interviews lasted between 32 and 75 minutes, with an average of 50 minutes.

The information collected from the sports administrators was analyzed for similarities and divergences from each other and from what was found in the document analysis. Some questions were designed to examine the attributions, legitimations, rules and resources to allow for easier comparison with the document analysis. I examined the transcribed interviews, and based on the information gathered, my advisor and I developed common themes as a method to organize the data.

Analysis of Own the Podium Documents, Canadian Olympic Committee Documents and Government Documents concerning Own the Podium

The framework used to analyze recent COC and federal government documents concerning Own the Podium was the same one employed for the analysis in Sub-problem 1 (see Appendix D). Information was collected from a variety of sources, including personal notes, program reports, and conference proceedings. Due to the sensitive nature of a lot of Own the Podium material, I was unable to access some of the pertinent information.

Sub-problem 3: What are athletes' experiences in the current Winter Olympic sport system, with respect to Own the Podium?

Interviews with eight current national-team athletes in Winter Olympic sports

An initial list of potential athlete participants was compiled by looking at team lists on NSO websites. Athletes were selected to represent a cross-section of winter sport athletes, including those who had competed at multiple Olympics, and those who are on developmental teams. I asked several of my personal contacts within the Canadian sport system to send an introduction letter to potential athlete interviewees on my behalf, explaining my research and asking them to contact me if they were interested in participating. I also asked athletes to forward the introduction letter on to any of their colleagues who might be interested in participating. In the end, I interviewed eight athletes in total. Five athletes were female, three athletes were male. I interviewed three athletes from Own the Podium Tier 1 sports, 2 athletes from Own the Podium Tier 2, and 3 athletes from Own the Podium Tier 3 sports. All interviews were conducted over the phone and lasted between 27 and 67 minutes, with an average of 38 minutes. A pilot

interview was conducted with a current elite athlete. While the content of all the questions remained the same, I re-worded several questions to improve clarity.

Participants were informed of their right to refuse to answer any question, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview. All participants were assured of confidentiality. Personal information, sport and location of interview were not included on any transcripts, notes, or in my written documents. While I had initially decided to identify athletes by gender (i.e., select a pseudonym to include in my documents), after consideration I decided not to include gender, as it could compromise confidentiality. I assigned each interviewee a letter for identification: Y, C, Q, M, F, I, K, and E. All references within my notes and documents refer solely to the assigned letter. To increase the likelihood that athletes will remain anonymous, I did not cross-reference their differing characteristics. For example, a discussion on the experience of the athlete based on their tier, will not identify the relative 'success' of the athlete. With the permission of the interviewee, the interviews were tape-recorded. The interviews were then transcribed and sent back to the interviewees for review and additional comments or amendments. The transcribed interviews were analyzed for dominant themes. (see Appendix G for Athlete Interview Guide)

Delimitations and Limitations

Taking an Athlete-Centred Approach

Success is a process not just an outcome, and can be measured in many different ways. A true athlete-centred sport system is imperative in achieving maximal benefits for athletes. By delimiting my study to an athlete-centred approach, which will privilege the experience of athletes, I limited my discussion to not including the following, among

others: an economic impact of the creation, implementation and ‘success’ of Own the Podium; the effect of Own the Podium on the National Sport Organizations (organization, development and grassroots programs), and an analysis of the changing roles of Performance Enhancement Team (PET) members.

Analyzing policies and programs developed by the federal government and the Canadian Olympic Committee to determine the rules, resources, attributions and legitimations of Own the Podium, and their effect on athlete’s experience.

By delimitating my discussion to the policies and programs developed by the federal government and the COC in order to determine the rules, resources, attributions and legitimations of Own the Podium, and their effect on athlete’s experiences, I limited my analysis in several ways. I acknowledge the importance of the following factors, but their inclusion is beyond the scope of my study:

1. My analysis is limited by not investigating the role of the media, namely television, in developing sport in Canada and the world (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990; Cantelon & Gruneau 1988; Martyn, 2003; Thibault & Babiak, 2005).
2. Another important factor is the relationship between television and sponsorship. Some sports are better suited to television production, and thus receive more airtime. Also, sports and competition sites have been modified for television coverage, and competition schedules are created to maximize viewership for the North American audience (Whitson, 1998, p. 3). Sponsors are willing to pay more for deals with sports that have greater public exposure (Allison, 2005). These television-oriented sports will have the ability to acquire more funds than other sports. Similarly, because of “Canadian Culture” (to use a term employed in the Own the Podium business plan), some sports are able to attract more

sponsorship dollars due to their perceived importance in the culture (e.g., hockey) (Macintosh et al. 1987). Whitson (1998) identified that transformations in the culture of the Olympics coincides with the movement's embrace of commercial sponsorship. He believes that without the IOC's control of commercial opportunities, the Games would no longer exist in their current form (p. 3).

3. The development of coaching and sport sciences has not only increased the number of 'experts' involved in the production of athletes, but also increased the number of individuals responsible for the performance of the athletes, and increased the number of people to whom the athlete may feel the need to be accountable.
4. The political environment of the federal government contributes to an increase or a decrease in overall federal funding. As well, the creation of a Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport has been cited as contributing to the specific growth of sport in Canada. Key political actors are also acknowledged because of their importance in determining the direction of the Canadian sport system (e.g. Iona Campagnolo and Abby Hoffman) (Macintosh et al, 1987, p. 113).

I chose to use only three of five criteria from Chalip's (1995) critical policy analysis framework.

For my document analysis (sub-problem 1 and 2) I chose to use three of five criteria from Chalip's critical policy analysis framework. I used *legitimations* (i.e., the rationale for why the 'problem' is being considered), *attributions* (i.e., the proposed solution to address the problem), and *focusing event* (i.e., what event brought the 'problem' to the attention of decision-makers). I excluded *problem definitions* and

decision frames because they are beyond the scope of my study, and would require an analysis of all planning documents involved in the creation of the ‘policy’ and interviews with decision-makers involved in the policy process. Misener and Paraschak (2005) explain that particular attention needs to be paid to the legitimations and attributions because “They are readily identifiable within the policy documents and offer meaningful information regarding specific stakeholder groups within the policy framework, [and] the use of problem definitions and decision frames would require further analysis into other supporting documents (e.g., meeting minutes), and extensive interviewing to be fully articulate” (p. 20). Chalip, in his article *Critical Policy Analysis: The illustrative case of New Zealand Sport Policy Development* (1996) focused entirely on the legitimations and attributions of this case.

Specific persons directly involved in the creation and/or implementation of Own the Podium have been chosen as interview candidates to solicit specific information.

The key creators and implementers of Own the Podium were chosen for an interview specifically based on their position of power and influence in the decision-making process, their experience within the sport system, and their availability for an interview. The exploratory nature of this study supports the use of a limited number of interviews to solicit clear, relevant opinions from those interviewed. Interviews with people involved in the creation of Own the Podium, along with those involved in its implementation, were analyzed to identify their stated attributions and legitimations. I uncovered, through coding their responses, the important values and themes that emerge in the discussion and how they compare to the literature and the policy documents.

Athletes with specific experience in the Canadian sport system have been chosen as interview candidates to increase my ability to identify experiences effectuated by Own the Podium.

It was my goal to interview a cross-section of athletes from different winter sports. Distinctions were made between those athletes who have had “success” (i.e. won medals) at the international level and those who have not. I also interviewed athletes from Tier 1 sports (i.e. flat ice sports), Tier 2 (i.e. snow sports) and Tier 3 (i.e. sliding sports and other specialized facility sports). I am not considering summer sports, or the corresponding “Road to Excellence” program.

The researcher’s personal relationship with a current winter-national team athlete allows for a unique perspective for the analysis.

I recognize that my personal relationship with a current Olympic athlete is likely to provide insider knowledge that cannot be supported in documentation. As most of this information is learned in casual conversation, and in confidence, I must be cognizant of where my knowledge on certain topics originates. Conversely, this insider knowledge will be useful in determining my direction of focus, and in developing interview questions for sport administrators and other athletes. (see Appendix H for Conceptual Baggage)

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Sub-problem 1: How were selected elite sport funding decisions constructed in Canada from 1961-2004?

To explain how selected elite sport funding decisions were constructed in Canada from 1961 – 2004, I examined selected federal government and Canadian Olympic Association/Committee documents. (see Appendix C for a list of documents analyzed). I analyzed the rationale for these decisions with regard to the creation of the program, and the solutions proposed and/or reported - in terms of the rules and/or resources required. The results are grouped into three themes: Success, Human Resources, and Financial Resources.⁴⁶

Within ‘Success’ I describe the rationale for why policies and programs were created. I also discuss how ‘success’ in sport has shifted by looking at what is presented as ‘successful’ in the documents in terms of programs, policies, and athletic performance. I have also outlined how the goals of sport, policy, and resultant programs have changed from 1961 – 2004 and how the goals that were reached demonstrated the solutions provided by decision-makers in these policy documents to address matters relating to ‘success.’

Resources are vital to the construction of elite sport funding. Human resources (i.e., decision-makers) are needed to construct the funding programs and processes. Professionals and experts implement programs, and in conjunction with athletes work to meet the goals of the sport system. An analysis of the human resources of sport in Canada helps to consider how ‘professional’ staff have brought other changes to the sport system.

⁴⁶ I have defined any document that considers funding sources or funding allocations to sport organizations, programs or athletes as a ‘funding document’.

Athletes also influence the construction of elite funding decisions. Adhering to an athlete-centred perspective, I have examined how athletes are portrayed in the documents, their involvement in decision-making processes, and what the documents reveal about how athletes are valued by decision-makers.

To document how programs have been funded, and how policy statements were made with respect to the public-private funding mix, I have looked for discussions in the documents for continued public funding, as well as the need for an increase of private funding to see growth in the system.

Rationale and solutions: The need to achieve 'success' in the sport system, in programs and with athletes.

To explore how funding decisions have been constructed historically in Canada, I analyzed documents to determine why the situation is a perceived problem and why policy/decision-makers are investigating this problem (i.e., rationale) and the proposed and implemented programs or processes to solve this problem (i.e., solution).⁴⁷

Examining these two factors allow me to understand how 'success' has been defined historically in Canada, and the processes employed to produce a successful sport system, program, and athlete. Since 1969, the aim of all federal policies related to elite sport programs that were examined has been to increase the performance of elite Canadian athletes in international competition. There has been an ongoing debate, however, between success defined as individual achievement and success defined as winning medals in international competition. Throughout this debate, proposed solutions all

⁴⁷ Chalip (1995) identified rationale as attributions, and solutions as legitimations.

addressed athlete performance, tied to the goal of meeting federal government objectives for sport.

In the *Task Force on Sport for Canadians Report* (1969), the task force⁴⁸ believed the Canadian sport system would be deemed successful if it had a 'strong showing' in international sport, and specifically increased success in hockey. The task force outlines how sport contributes to community pride, creates Canadian heroes, and forms Canadian values. They identified that the Canadian sport system was "fragmented and without fundamental unity" (p. 2). The 'problem' of sport in Canada was that there was no long-term planning and no cooperation, which was compounded by public apathy. This 'problem' coupled with the perceived crisis of Canadian identity stemming from 'poor' international hockey performances, and the ability of Canada to gain international prestige from athletic success, led the task force to decide the main solution was for the federal government to become involved in sport.

A mass of evidence, gathered both in this country and abroad, has convinced us that many of the problems facing sport in Canada can only be overcome with the assistance of the federal government. (p. 5)

The task force also believed that creating national teams in each sport would help develop elite athletes, supported by a government sport department. This department would implement structures that would facilitate cooperation between the different levels in each sport (i.e., from recreational to amateur to professional).

The Game Plan '76 program was developed by P.S. Ross & Partners (1972) for the Canadian Olympic Association. The COA noted the necessity for Canadian athletes to perform well at a home-Games. This 'need' to perform increased in significance due to

⁴⁸ The Task Force was comprised of W. Harold Rea, chairman, and Dr. Paul Wintle DesRuisseaux and Nancy Greene, members.

the 'poor' performances of Canadian athletes at the 1972 Summer Games in Munich. The goal of Game Plan was to provide extra resources to NSOs to support their athletes, and to produce as many international caliber athletes as possible (P.S. Ross & Partners, 1972). Jackson (1976) noted that improving the performance and success of athletes provided economic benefits to the sport system, and would provide social benefits to the country in terms of increased rates of sport participation. The criteria given to the consultants for developing the performance program were: (a) that the plan must complement the national development program of the NSOs and not impinge upon them or distract them, (b) the responsibility for execution of the program must remain with the sport organizations, and (c) the plan must have ongoing benefit beyond the performances of Canadian athletes at the 1976 Games (Jackson, 1976). A coordinating committee was established, which was made up of all the funding organizations. It provided the overall direction for the program and approved specific budgets for the sports involved (FAS, 1977). NSOs were accountable for the funds they received through Game Plan. Although the rationale for Game Plan was to increase performances in Montreal, winter sports were also involved in the program. While improving the performance of athletes in Montreal was a goal itself, Jackson (1976) identified that success was sought to promote sport development.

The one underlying theme of Game Plan was to accomplish a degree of success which would strongly promote and encourage sport development in this country. We wanted success because success would create promotion for sport through the media. (p. 11)

The success of the program was measured primarily by the growth in the number of Top-16 ranked athletes – from 47 in 1972 to 126 in 1976 (Jackson, 1976, p. 15). The increase in successful athlete performances (i.e., the success of the program) was

attributed to long-term planning and coordination, and cooperation between the federal government and the COA. Game Plan administrators also believed that NSOs became stronger entities because of the process of implementing Game Plan within their organizations. Other touted successes of Game Plan '76 included: the federal government now giving five percent of the revenues from Lotto Canada to sport, the creation of the Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, and the increase in the government budget for sport increased after the Games. So while the success of the program was measured by the COA and the federal government in athletic performances, administrators identified other benefits stemming from the program (Jackson, 1976).

Following the Montreal Games, the new Minister of State for Sport, Iona Campagnolo, wrote a policy statement for the Canadian sport system, entitled *Partners in Pursuit of Excellence: A National Policy on Amateur Sport* (1979). She identified that sport and recreation unite Canadians for all regions, and that there was a need for a clear statement on the federal government's future direction in Canadian sport. Campagnolo found that sport organizations lacked autonomy from the federal government. She believed that 'modified' federal involvement would be beneficial to the sport system, and that there was a need for organizational partnerships within the system. While the policy noted a need for 'modified' federal involvement, there was no indication what this meant. Campagnolo proposed structural change for the sport system based on the National Plan – the pursuit of excellence in amateur sport at the national and international level (p. 15).

The federal government will wish to support those sports dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in national and international competitions, especially those with a broad base and a demonstrable record of competent fiscal and technical administration and success or high prospects of achieving success. (p. 19)

However, Calgary was awarded the 1988 Games soon after, and any thoughts about increasing organizational autonomy was forgotten by federal decision-makers.

In 1981, Calgary was awarded the right to host the 1988 Olympic Winter Games. The Canadian Olympic Association again set a goal for increased athletic performance for a home-Games. Roger Jackson, at this time President of the COA, identified two rationale for wanting to implement 'Game Plan 1988.' Firstly, the COA believed that they should be the organization setting the standard of excellence for sport in Canada. Secondly, the COA felt that hosting the 1988 Olympic Winter Games provided an opportunity to improve sport development throughout Canada. Jackson determined that coordination between all concerned organizations would be of paramount importance for the success of the program, with the goal of achieving a 5th place overall ranking. Jackson also suggested that it might be necessary to prioritize resource allocations to those sports that could achieve Top-8 performances. In his program development document, Jackson provided a list of priorities:

First (1st – 3rd place)

Alpine (downhill)
Ski Jumping
Figure Skating

Second (4th – 8th place)

Hockey
Speedskating

Third priority

Biathalon
Cross-country skiing
Bobsled
Luge
Nordic combined

(Jackson, 1983b, p. 8)

Jackson also stressed the importance of continuous evaluation to monitor technical progress towards the goals.

The federal government outlined in the *Fitness and Amateur Sport 1983-1984 Annual Report*, that Best Ever 1988 was developed to assist NSOs support their athletes. Sport Canada consultants worked with each NSO to create 5-year plans for their respective organizations. The Sport Recognition System was introduced in 1985. It set out specific criteria that NSOs must meet to be eligible for funding and services. A four-level, high performance recognition system, generally based on the sport's recent world and/or Olympic rankings, was established along with a four-level, domestic development ranking system (i.e., based on participation numbers) (FAS, 1984).

The Best Ever Plan for Cross Country Canada (CCC) was entitled *Plan 88 and Beyond* (1984). The two main priorities for CCC were to achieve 'best ever' results at the 1988 Games, and to develop organizational infrastructure through the establishment of a national high performance cross country ski system by growing the Jackrabbit children's ski initiative and ensuring there was a sport legacy in place by 1988. CCC created this plan in consultation with a Sport Canada advisor. CCC staff were required to write quarterly and annual reports that were subsequently reviewed by the advisor. The annual report was reviewed by the 'Best Ever' collective at the annual spring meeting. The priorities would be met, according to Sport Canada, through a rationalization of the planning process, and the creation of realistic and achievable plans. CCC and Sport Canada planned to provide coaching staff the opportunity to review high performance programs from other nations, and to provide athletes with a full staff complement at training and competitions, including physiotherapy, masseur, doctor and team assistant.

The Sport Canada Core Support Program 1988-1989, released in 1987, supported all Best Ever initiatives. Sport Canada established priorities because resources were limited. The priorities matched resources to needs, and only funded those sports or initiatives that would help Sport Canada meet general high performance and domestic objectives for sport in Canada. In the *Core Support Program 1988-1989* document, administrators noted that the success of an athlete is based on a combination of his/her athletic talent and support from the sport system.⁴⁹ As with Game Plan '76, Best Ever '88 supported both winter and summer sports. While the federal government was concerned about meeting its objectives for sport, the Alberta government was more concerned about tourist dollars, the accountability of the host committee, and creating facility legacies for Albertans.

A search of the Alberta Hansard between 1981 (when the Games were awarded to Calgary) and 1988 found that the provincial government was only minimally concerned about the performances of Canadian athletes. The majority of the debates revolved around accountability, tourism and facilities. Discussions in 1982 were related to the accountability of the host committee. Concern was raised that there were no formal accounting procedures for provincial expenditures. Debate in 1983 identified the need for the Games to be accountable so the problems that occurred in Montreal - "the frustration, the controversy, and in a sense the lingering embarrassment that still surrounds the mismanagement of the Montreal Olympics" (Notely, 21 April, 1983, p. 687) - would not be repeated. Accountability was again addressed in 1985, when some legislative members were concerned that no one was overlooking budget spending (Buck, 3 April, 1985, p. 346). Tourism was by far the biggest discussion leading up to the Games, featuring

⁴⁹ This point was reaffirmed in *Towards 2000* (1988) and *The Business Plan for Sport in Canada* (1995).

prominently in Olympic discussions twelve times between 1982 and 1988. Factors discussed included the need to expand public transportation (Lee, 16 April, 1984, p. 497), the potential for global viewership, which will bring in millions of tourist dollars (Hyndman, March 27, 1984, p. 184), and how the *whole* province needs to benefit from tourism – not just Southern Alberta (Piquette, 6 April, 1987, p. 605). Lastly, the importance of building facilities, and how facilities would provide a legacy for all Albertans were also salient issues. In 1983, 1984, 1986, and 1988, discussions on the need to build facilities that can be used by *all* Albertans were prominent. There were only two instances where the performances of athletes were considered. One discussion concerned the desire that the men's hockey team win gold (Carter, 1 May, 1984, p. 622), and another noted the perceived benefits of Canadians watching their athletes develop their abilities and challenge the world (Stevens, 16 March, 1987, p. 153).

In 1988, the federal government released the task force report *Toward 2000: Building Canada's Sport System*⁵⁰ just prior to the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul. The Task Force believed that winning results by Canadian athletes would give younger athletes a sense of confidence that Canadian athletes can actually achieve. Through the recent successes of Canadian athletes, task force members believed that the attitude of Canadians towards high performance sport had changed. Canadians were now more interested in and supportive of elite sport in Canada. However, shortly afterwards Canadians learned about the negative outcomes that can occur when winning is understood as the only definition of success. At the 1988 Seoul Summer Games Canadian

⁵⁰ In February 1987, the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport Otto Jelinek, invited a group of "knowledgeable and experienced individuals actively involved in voluntary or professional capacities within a variety of National Sport Organizations, service agencies and Sport Canada" to form the National Sport Policy Task Force. The Task Force was co-chaired by Lyle Makosky, Assistant Deputy Minister of Fitness and Amateur Sport, and Abby Hoffman, Director General of Sport Canada (p. 19).

sprinter Ben Johnson tested positive for steroids after winning the 100m final. His medal was subsequently taken away.

Charles Dubin, in the *Commission of Inquiry Into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athlete Performance* (1990) determined that a climate had been created in Canada where only the winner of athletic competition is recognized. Dubin found that while past task force reports and government white papers acknowledged broad objectives for sport, actual government support, particularly since the mid-1970s, had been focused on winning medals in international competitions. Dubin provided as an example that the *Toward 2000* (1988) report proposed long-term government goals of funding that were related to winning medals, as well as methods of measuring success in number of medals won. He suggested that the goal of excellence in sport in Canada should be a consequence of strong, broad-based community participation, and should not be the sole objective of sport in the country.

As a society we have created a climate in sport in which the only goal is perceived to be winning...only the winner is accorded praise and financial reward without recognition of the outstanding achievement of those who also compete but do not come first. (p. 518)

Dubin believed that the elite focus on winning medals negatively affected athletes and could be partly attributed to Sport Canada's extensive involvement in funding and administering NSOs. He suggested that sport organizations form a council, similar to one in the United Kingdom, which would operate independently from the government. In such cases, sport does not necessarily have to follow government objectives (e.g., increased pride of the country).

It is increasingly difficult for athletes to hold on to a personal sense of satisfaction at doing their best when international standards are generally accepted as the only measure of success. (p. 484)

The federal government responded to both *Toward 2000* (1988) and *The Dubin Report* (1990) by forming a standing committee to examine the sport system.

The Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women considered the findings from *Toward 2000* (1988) and *The Dubin Report* (1990). The Committee's findings, published in *Amateur Sport: Future Challenges* (1990), outlined the debate that existed in the sport community between success as defined by individual achievement and success defined by winning medals at the international level.

It appeared, during the [Dubin Inquiry] hearings that there was no consensus among the sporting community about the definition of success. Testimonies from the athletes, the sport-governing bodies and the multi-sport organizations revealed two different concepts of success: the first definition relates to individual achievement, while the second relates to winning medals at the international level (being the best in the world). (p. 7)

The Standing Committee raised the issue of whether Canada wanted its athletes to compete successfully or just participate internationally. The Committee illustrated the case of stakeholders who claimed the objective of medals is better than achieving personal excellence. These stakeholders believed that winning medals was the best way to motivate athletes, since success would lead to more participation and attract sponsors. On the other hand, the report outlined the problems that arise when success is equated to medal results.

When the chief motivation is tied to successful performance, the athlete is encouraged to resort to whatever methods improve performance...emphasizing a larger number of medals goes against the idea of promoting sport for all Canadians. (p. 7)

According to the Standing Committee, NSOs believe Canada currently places much of its emphasis on achieving success at the international level. They said that this can be mainly

explained by the fact that Sport Canada has, over the years, changed its definition of success. The stakeholders criticized *Toward 2000* (1988) because it outlined a set of performance levels, related to winning medals, that high-level athletes should attain in international competitions. The debate over 'excellence' (i.e., personal achievement) versus 'winning medals' as the measure of success continued in the next several government documents.

Outlined in *Sport: The Way Ahead* (1992) is support for excellence because it is seen as a characteristic of Canadian society. The Task Force also noted that Canadian sport is influenced by international sport and international values. They stated that sport policy cannot be created without first understanding the linkages between Canadian sport and international sport.

Given the structural linkages between Canadian sport and international sport, and given the global influence on the directions and values of sport, it is evident that we cannot set Canadian sport policy and direction in isolation...we must be aware of and responsive to the global sport impact on Canadian sport. (p. 129)

However, the Task Force, chaired by J.C. Best and including Marjorie Blackhurst and Lyle Makosky as members, found that Canadians place high expectations on athletes by accepting a very narrow concept of success – usually a gold medal at international competitions. The Task Force identified the need to, on one hand, acknowledge our accomplishments, but also to broaden the concept of success. Pierre Cadieux, in *Federal Directions in Sport* (1993), qualified the pursuit of excellence as a valid goal with the words "through fair and ethical means" (p. 6). J.C. Best, in *The Report of the Core Sport Commission* (1994), indicated that the current high performance ranking system needs to be changed because it places too much emphasis on athletic performance, excluding the other significant elements of sport, such as gender equity. Best also identified that non-

Olympic sports were relegated to second class status. This statement illustrates that the government felt that its objectives for sport were best met through winning medals at the Olympics. The next important policy decisions came with the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002).

The Canadian Sport Policy (2002), signed by the federal government and all provincial/territorial governments, aims to enhance excellence, participation, capacity, and interaction of the sport system. A goal of the Policy is that by 2012 Canadian athletes will be achieving 'world-class' results.

[The goal is that by 2012] the pool of talented athletes has expanded and Canadian athletes and teams are systematically achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition through fair and ethical means. (p. 17)

In this policy, governments support world-class excellence, because excellence is a source of community pride and inspires athletes to strive towards their own personal best. Indicated in the Policy is that 'leading edge' integrated technical support services need to be in place for athletes and coaches (p. 17). Opportunities to achieve excellence should be available in all regions in Canada (p. 14). To reach these performance goals, it is indicated in the Policy that the interaction of the sport system needs to be enhanced.

It is the Goal of the Canadian Sport Policy that by 2012...the components of the sport system are more connected and coordinated as a result of the committed collaboration and communications amongst the stakeholders. (p. 19)

Based on the Policy, the federal-provincial/territorial governments need to develop collaboration within and between governments, and between the private and the public sector. Also outlined in the Policy is that NSOs and MSOs should build stronger relationships to meet the goals of the sport system. Federal-provincial/territorial governments are encouraged to establish performance targets for major Games,

accompanied by performance evaluations that will help to assess the effectiveness of the sport system (p. 19).

The Podium 2002 program was established after the 2000 Summer Olympic Games (where athlete performances were perceived as 'poor') when COA administrators determined that a funding program was needed, focused on elite athletes, with a goal of medal results. The current system was not seen as effective for producing medal performances. Funding decisions for the Podium 2002 program were structured to support athletes in achieving podium performances at the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. Canadian athletes with medal potential (determined by a Top-5 place finish in the preceding World Championships) were targeted and received financial support from the program. Morin (2002) found in his evaluation of the program that while the goals of the program were supported by the winter sports, the solutions to get there were questioned. A problem emerged when those athletes who were given money underperformed at the Games. This 'Podium Problem' will be discussed in the human resources section. Morin identified in his evaluation that the results achieved by Canadian athletes were determined by the performances of their competition. For example, the women's curling team would have reached the gold medal game had the UK team not preformed as well as they did.

Women – 3rd place finish achieved the Podium objective; a potentially better performance was impacted by the British team which was exceptional at the SLC [Salt Lake City] Games. (p. 11)

Decision-makers at the federal level have the most power to determine what is 'successful' in the sport system because they control the majority of the resources, and also have the ability to create funding rules. Prioritizing funding to the programs, sports,

and athletes who were most likely to win medals thus became a common solution for meeting federal government sport objectives of increased national pride, and international prestige. The COA also found that prioritizing funding to those athletes who would potentially win medals was necessary to achieve its objectives of becoming a leading sport nation.

Human Resources

Advent of professional administrators and 'experts' in national sport organizations

Both social construction and duality of structure explain how individuals and individual actions matter. An analysis of the human resources of sport in Canada is important to consider for understanding how decisions were made. Two main themes emerged with respect to human resources. The first theme focuses on 'who best runs sport.' The emerging pattern of who can best run sport and meet the objectives of sport in Canada is the shift from volunteers running sport, to professional staff, to the consultation of 'experts'. Experts include athletic support staff, sport scientists, and individuals in marketing. Also, there was a debate between NSOs developing their respective sport and the intervention of the federal government. The second theme is 'who can best produce medalists.' The documents analyzed demonstrated a perceived growing need for NSOs to employ professional coaches - 'first class' coaches who will be able to produce medal winning athletes.

In the report of the *Task Force on Sport for Canadians* (1969), the task force outlined the need to employ professional coaches and to develop a national coaching association. The task force also believed that it is amateur bodies and their staff who possess the central responsibility and authority for developing sport, not the government.

P.S. Ross & Partners identified in *A Synopsis of a Proposed Development Program for the Improvement of Canada's Olympic Performance* (1972) that the depth of coaching needs to be increased to support the goal of producing as many international caliber athletes as possible. Roger Jackson,⁵¹ in his evaluation of the 1976 Montreal Games, wrote that everyone involved in the sport system needed to commit more of their time to training and competitions, along with his assessment that there is an overall lack of 'first class' coaches who could 'produce' world-class athletes. Jackson also identified the conflict between volunteers and professional staff, and that these conflicts must be resolved in the future with the anticipated advent of more professional staff (Jackson, 1976).

In *Partners in Pursuit of Excellence* (1979) Iona Campagnolo, Minister of State for Sport, attributed most of the 'present levels' in sport to the work of full-time sport administrators, technical experts and coaches, but she still acknowledged the indispensable role of the volunteer. In the *Sport Canada Core Support Program 1988-1989* document, both professional staff and volunteers were seen as important resources to reach the goals of the sport system.

The Task Force on National Sport Policy in *Toward 2000: Building Canada's Sport System* (1988) recognized that sport marketing is a priority in many sports, and that marketing requires both finances and human resources. The group also acknowledged that being involved in the 1988 Olympic Winter Games helped improve the skills of administrators and NSO staff.

The overall knowledge and skill level of professional administrators and coaches has improved due to training programs and hands-on experiences afforded by

⁵¹ Roger Jackson was the Director of Sport Canada during this time frame.

increased training and competition activities stimulated by the Best Ever initiatives. (p. 26)

The *Sport: The Way Ahead* (1992) Task Force agreed that knowledge and skills were acquired during the 1988 Games.

The human resource legacy includes many Canadians who are recognized as international experts because of knowledge and skills acquired during games...Canadians are respected worldwide for our ability to host multi-sport events. (p. 116)

Jackson (1976) also identified that the skills of staff had increased because of their involvement with the Games. The *Towards 2000* (1988) Task Force suggested that as the sport system grows in magnitude and complexity, the use of volunteers will be lessened, while the importance of having professionally trained and full-time staff will increase. In the late 1980s, more sport administrators began articulating to the government the need for sport science programs, including scientific research and technology development, psychological support for athletes, and a focus on sport safety (Canada, 1988).

The Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women reiterated in *Amateur Sport: Future Challenges* (1990) that NSOs are the organizations closest to the athletes, and because they represent the athletes and their needs, they should be able to make sport programming decisions. NSOs are portrayed in this document as the key agencies for sport development. However, the Standing Committee suggested that NSOs should be afforded the opportunity to be primary agents in sport development (i.e., less dependent on government) only when they become stronger and show more leadership. The *Sport: The Way Ahead* (1992) Task Force and Pierre Cadieux in *Federal Directions in Sport* (1993) identified the need for sport and athlete support services at every level, and the need for multi-sport training centres

respectively, to enhance athletic development. The solution of providing athlete support services was strengthened with the COA's Podium 2002 program. With financial resources provided through Podium 2002, some sports were able to acquire the services of sport support staff including trainers, physiotherapists, massage therapists and sport psychologists. While professional support staff were able to effectively support athletes, Morin (2002) revealed in *Podium 2002: Program Evaluation* that the experts did not know enough about individual sports to make solid programming decisions.

The *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002) has a goal of increasing the number of qualified, fully-employed female and male coaches, to compete at the highest levels of international competition. The third pillar of the Canadian Sport Policy⁵² is to enhance the capacity of the Canadian Sport System through supporting the development of both volunteer and paid leadership "to strengthen their contribution to a healthy and ethically based, athlete/participant-centred sport system" (p. 18). The fourth pillar of the Policy is to increase interaction between all stakeholders through "committed collaboration and communication", with the aim of increasing the performance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Canadian sport system. To increase effectiveness and efficiency sport leaders must also be able to stay informed about leading-edge developments from other nations (p. 19).

Recognized in *The Sport Canada Strategic Plan 2004-2008* (2003) was the need to identify, develop and retain sport leaders. Noted in the same plan was that athlete performance and sport system targets were agreed upon by the federal, provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for sport.

⁵² The four pillars of the Canadian Sport Policy (2002) are Enhanced Participation, Enhanced Excellence, Enhanced Capacity, and Enhanced Interaction.

With the advent of professional administrative staff, the perceived importance or utility of volunteers decreased. With the growth in the sport system, and the focus on increasing the performance of elite athletes, volunteers were seen as less capable of making contributions to the sport system. At the same time, sport 'experts' were employed by the federal government to ensure that NSO administrators were effectively managing their sports. Support staff and experts in athlete preparation also gained prestige in the sport system as the goal of winning medals was strengthened.

Athletes as human resources

I believe athletes are the most important human resource in the sport system. Adhering to an athlete-centred perspective, I am examining how athletes are portrayed in the documents, their involvement in any decision-making processes, and what the documents reveal about how athletes are valued by decision-makers.

Nancy Greene, an athlete, was a member of the 1969 Task Force that recommended adequate representation of Olympic athletes on sport and organization boards. Ninety-one athletes completed a survey for the task force. One of the respondents explained the importance of athlete-involvement:

Athletes...must be made to feel part of the administration (of the sport). I don't think amateur sport in Canada...can survive as long as we adopt the attitude that all athletes must train and compete and nothing else. (p. 93)

The COA defined a high performance athlete, at their 1978 Annual General Meeting, as an athlete who has a reasonable probability of finishing in the Top-half of the field, but no lower than 16th place (COA, 1978). At the COA Congress in 1980, *A National Focus on the Canadian Athlete*, a group of eight 'top profile' athletes were invited to formulate the development of a policy as seen through the eyes of the athletes. Their

recommendations included tax incentive schemes for individuals to provide work for athletes, increasing the visibility of athletes, and access to sport facilities throughout the country. The athletes presented their thoughts to a Panel of administrators and government officials. The panelists' responses were varied:

My first reaction when I read the paper was a little negative. It just was asking a little too much, too quickly. Many areas in which we may have thought we were supporting the athletes we appear to have been falling down. My second realization was the obvious lack of communication between the athlete and the sport. (NSO Executive Director) (p. 6)

The athletes, I feel, want to be utilized, want to contribute. (Former Shooting World Champion) (p. 7)

Initially, my suggestion to the athlete would be to move to Moscow or Peking, because everything they want in this paper the athletes in Moscow and Peking have now. (Assistant Deputy Minister, Recreation, Province of Newfoundland) (p.14)

The paper thought it was a good idea to have an Athlete's Association. I don't agree! (Government Representative) (p. 15)

The athletes seem to disagree with the COA [with respect to selection criteria for Games], as they seem to be saying that the more international exposure the better. I support this position wholeheartedly as I am not in favour of the stringent standards that have been set by the COA. (Government Representative) (p. 15)

If I was a professional engineer...the CAHA [Canadian Amateur Hockey Association] is not in a position to advise an engineer, architect or anybody else how to build a stadium. (Government Representative) (p. 15)

Roger Jackson, in his *Paper on Olympic Game Plan 1988* (1983), discussed how the objectives of the 1988 Games program cannot be set unilaterally by the Canadian Olympic Association. Goals must be set by all those involved in working to reach them.

One essential component of a properly conceived goal is that the goal setter must be able to control the resources required for its achievement. In this case, the final achievement is totally in the hands of Canada's Olympic athletes supported by their coaches, NSGBs, the COA and Sport Canada. The objectives must be

endorsed by all these groups before true commitment to work toward their achievement can be expected or even sought. (p. 5)

He stated that since athletes are represented by their NSO and NSOs are members of the COA, and the COA sponsors the Athlete Advisory Council, thus the COA and Sport Canada should be the two bodies that will determine the goals and strategies for this program. The COA collectively chose to pursue excellence for Canadian teams in Olympic and Pan-American Games; this has been demonstrated by 'relatively high team selection standards' and the support for 'pursuit of excellence' in technical and administrative matters (p. 4).

The Task Force on National Sport Policy in *Toward 2000: Building Canada's Sport System* (1988) described that athletes are 'our' ambassadors to the world. The Task Force also broached the topic of athlete rights with respect to property rights, endorsement opportunities, and 'so-called natural justice' (p. 27). They identified that athlete agreements exist in many sports, and some have been developed to define rights, relationships and obligations, noting that "this subject will yield further concepts as well as potential controversy" (p. 27). In addition, the Task Force determined that the goal of the sport system is to establish structures that allow athletes to commit to sport without sacrificing other areas of life, while at the same time developing amongst athletes a sense of appreciation and responsibility.

[Sport needs] to establish a system which encourages and permits individuals to make a commitment to high performance sport without undue sacrifice of educational, cultural or life objectives. (p. 44)

In the *COA Quadrennial Report 1985-1988* (1988) the Canadian Olympic Association identified that the COA sponsored Athlete's Advisory Council (AAC) established itself as a major contributor to the Olympic Movement. Athletes had

representation on over 10 COA committees, including Team Selection, Sports Programs, Junior Olympics, Doping, Sports Medicine Council of Canada, the COA Executive Committee and the Board of Directors. Pam Gollish, the AAC Chairperson, wrote how this committee involvement means athletes are able to participate more than ever in the decision-making process, rather than simply being affected by it. In 1985, all AAC representatives were recognized as "F" members of the COA, and thus could vote with the rest of the COA's membership. The COA identified itself as the lead organization in terms of athlete-involvement and acknowledged that not all NSOs involve athletes in decision-making and that problems could arise as a result of the lack of athlete involvement.

In 1980, after a group of athletes had been assembled to discuss the Olympic Boycott, the COA made a landmark decision to establish an Athletes' Council. By doing so, it recognized contributors to the Olympic Movement. Unfortunately, this philosophy has not been accepted by all NSOs, as several still exclude athletes from participating in their decision-making process. One would hope that athletes and administrators are ultimately striving for the same goals, but with input from only one half, it may be difficult to attain them. (p. 113)

The Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women commented in *Amateur Sport: Future Challenges* (1990) on the need to increase the public visibility of athletes because athletes are marketable and could accrue financial rewards, corporate interest, and more general enthusiasm for sport. However, they noted that visibility is related to the success of the athlete.

There seems to be recognition for and greater exposure of athletes only when they have done something quite outstanding at the international level. (p. 8)

Five carded athletes appeared at an in-camera session during the development of this document. Expressed in the document was that national goals for sport must be developed at all levels, based on the athlete's needs.

The plethora of organizations, programs and funds must relate to the athlete in such a way that the whole system is organized to provide programs and services that advance the cause, the advocacy, the profile, and the endowment of the athlete. (p. 6)

However, the Committee noted that some witnesses expressed concerns about shifting towards an athlete-centred sport system. The Canadian College Athletic Association stated that making athletes the focus of the sport system would require radical change, and the Coaching Association of Canada pointed out that an athlete-centred system might result in coaches becoming neglected (p. 6). In the subsequent government document, *Sport: The Way Ahead* (1992), the task force also identified athletes as ambassadors, noting how their performance, character and behavior create impressions of Canada and Canadians.

Supported in *Sport: The Way Ahead* (1992) is the idea that a solid recreational sport base will lead to high performance sport as a natural consequence derived from the growth in skill development. The document outlined the values of involvement identified by athletes as: (a) fun/pleasure/joy of effort; (b) pursuit of excellence, achievement, winning; (b) expressing oneself physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually; (c) sportsmanship and playing fairly; (d) good fellowship; and (e) learning (p. 39). Outlined by the task force in this document was the idea that in an ideal world, the sport system would ensure the holistic development of the athlete with concern and respect for the whole person. Key elements in this system would include respect for the athletes' human, civil, legal and moral rights, and health and safety. However, athletes feel underrepresented in the decision-making process and conflicted between the demands of training and competing and the need to be involved.

Athletes, coaches and sport science experts repeatedly told the Task Force that they feel under-represented with their interests not adequately addressed in policy and strategy development. Athletes are torn between the demands of their sport and the need for direct involvement in decision-making processes. (p. 47)

This ideal sport system would ensure fair and meaningful participation in all decision making that affects the athlete. This system provides an environment that permits athletes to make thoughtful decisions concerning their choices, free from pressure to win at any cost.

In the federal response, *Federal Directions in Sport* (1993), to the Minister's Task Force (*Sport: The Way Ahead*) Pierre Cadieux reiterated the idea of an athlete-centred sport system, and also recommended the development of an athletes' association, to increase the athlete-centredness of the sport system. J.C. Best, in *The Report of the Core Sport Commissioner* (1994), identified the existence of athlete's forums sponsored by the Canadian Athletes Association.⁵³

The Canadian Athletes Association is a fledgling organization committed to a more athlete centred sport system. It can play a timely and needed role in assisting national team athletes to have a stronger voice in the operations of their respective NSGBs. For the foreseeable future at least, it would be appropriate for the government to provide some financial assistance to help this organization develop and carry out its mandate. (p. 44)

In the Sport Canada *Business Plan for Sport in Canada* (1995) recommendations suggested that the Minister establish an Athlete Advisory Committee with the desired outcome of ensuring athlete input and feedback into Sport Canada decisions.

Morin (2002) revealed in the *Podium 2002 Program Evaluation* that all athletes targeted to receive funding were involved in the development of the program, which was submitted to a panel of experts for consideration. However, the environment created by

⁵³ The Canadian Athletes Association was formed in 1992 and become AthletesCAN in 1996.

the established funding program was stressful and divisive – an environment for non-performance. Many athletes identified how this outcome (dubbed the ‘Podium Problem’) adversely affected athletic performances and relationships with their NSO. In one sport where the total funding received by the two identified athletes was more than the entire team budget for the year prior, the athletes reported infighting amongst teammates. The evaluator also indicated that specific identification of athletes for funding created undue stress on both the athlete identified and the NSO.

In some sports Olympic medals were lost because of this Program, due to conflicts, confusion, and mismanagement of the Program, and also due to the rigid criteria set by the partners for funding specific athletes as opposed to a high performance athlete group. (p. 3)

The Canadian Sport Policy (2002) aims to support athletes in their systematic and holistic development through providing access to ‘essential services’ such as coaching, sport science and medicine, adequate training and competition opportunities, and financial support, in an ethically based athlete-centred sport system (pp. 17-18). The principle of systematic development of athletes was also supported in *The Sport Canada Strategic Plan 2004-2008* (2003). According to this document, Canadian athletes should be prepared according to long term athlete development models.

The importance of involving athletes in the decision-making process is well-documented. However, aside from two COA documents, there was little discussion on how athletes should be or were involved in the decision-making process, and how they might contribute. Evident in several documents was the communication problems that existed between athletes and administrators in NSOs. Also, illustrated in one document was a resistance from some administrators and government officials to the concept of allowing athletes’ input into the development of the sport system.

Financial Resources

Public funding and accountability

All documents analyzed concerning financial resources mentioned the necessity of public funding to support the development of elite sport in Canada. Tied to the use of public funds is the accountability of the sport organizations for those funds.

In the 1985 National document *High Performance Athlete Development in Canada: A delineation of responsibilities of the federal and provincial/territorial governments*, administrators reaffirmed that athletes who represent Canada are the responsibility of the federal government and those who aspire to be are the responsibility of the provincial/territorial governments. However, while funding for major games falls under the mandate of the federal government, the report suggested that a shared responsibility between the provinces/territories and the federal government would create the best environment to meet government objectives for sport. Processes of accountability were to be employed by the federal government to ensure that the money spent met government objectives.

One concern first arising in the *1969 Task Force Report* was that public money was being given to the private sector and the government had no control or authority over how it was spent. In *Federal Directions in Sport* (1993), the 'next-steps' document following *Sport: The Way Ahead* (1992), Cadieux recommended that levels of funding would be negotiated with NSOs as part of the contract-accountability process. He also stated that while funding is currently provided on a yearly basis, multi-year funding would be more beneficial to NSOs in terms of planning and sport development.

Private funding and providing value for sponsorship

The federal government acknowledged the need to get the private sector involved in funding elite sport in Canada. They also knew that sponsors need to see value for their sponsorships.

There was an early awareness by sport administrators of the necessity for sport organizations to fundraise in the community. *The 1969 Task Force Report* members suggested that establishing tax breaks for donations would entice private citizens and corporations to make contributions to sport. Campagnolo, Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, determined in *Partners in Pursuit of Excellence: A National Policy on Amateur Sport* (1979) that federal funding is not adequate for the growing sport system. The report suggested using lottery funds to support sport and declared that national businesses must support Canadian sport. The authors of the report acknowledged the differing abilities of NSOs to acquire sponsorships, noting how hockey is much 'sexier' than shot put, and would have an easier time getting corporate sponsors. The Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women, authors of *Amateur Sport: Future Challenges* (1990), also acknowledged the disparity in the marketability of sports.

Public-private funding partnerships

Sport administrators believed the best way to acquire adequate funds for elite sport programs was to create partnerships between public and private funding sources. While sport organizations often identified the 'loss of autonomy' that resulted from public funding, they knew supporting elite programs would be impossible without government financial support. While the federal government acknowledged the need for

increased funding to support the improved performance objectives of Canadian athletes, they were relying on an increase in private funding to address this need, while keeping public levels the same.

Jackson, in *The 1976 Olympic Games: Effects on Canadian Sport and the Future* (1976) identified that funds from both the federal government and the Canadian Olympic Association's Olympic Trust supported Game Plan programs. P.S. Ross & Partners, who wrote the *A Synopsis of a Proposed Development Program for the Improvement of Canada's Olympic Performance* (1972) decided that funding allocations for each sport would be based on (a) predictive test quality from 1973 – 1976, (b) strength of the opposition in that discipline, and (c) predictive coach quality. The federal government contributed 70% of funds for Game Plan, and the COA through Olympic Trust contributed 30%. The provinces backed out of their original commitment, and funding was delayed to NSOs until new sponsors were found (Jackson, 1976). In the *Paper on Olympic Game Plan 1988* (1983) Jackson identified how the COA represents financing from the private sector, and how Sport Canada is the major contributor needed to operate a program of Olympic Excellence. He outlined that if the COA and Sport Canada could agree on the objectives of an excellence program, then it is likely that others would support them.

Through *Sport Canada's Core Support Program 1988-1989* guidelines, federal administrators confirmed that funding for sport needs to be diversified to incorporate both private and public funds (Canada, 1987). The Task Force on National Sport Policy emphasized in *Towards 2000: Building Canada's Sport System* (1988) the need for the corporate sector to play a growing role in the Canadian sport system. The Task Force

outlined that ideally NSOs should aim for a 50:50 internal (i.e., NSO generated) and external (i.e., government) funding mix. The Standing Committee, in the federal document *Amateur Sport: Future Challenges* (1990),⁵⁴ illustrated the need for success of Canadian athletes at international events as a driving force for attracting sponsors, and also how both private and public support are important for achieving high performance objectives. In *Sport: The Way Ahead* (1992) the Sport Minister's Task Force phase III response to *The Dubin Report* (1990), the Task Force outlined how public funds are needed to build sport infrastructure. The sport system then needs to seek private funds for operations. In *Federal Directions in Sport* (1993), Cadieux, Minister of State, also identified that traditional funding models are no longer adequate and that partnerships need to be established.

As cost saving and coordinated delivery become increasingly important, new ways must be found for organizing and rationalizing services to athletes and participants. (p. 5)

In the *Business Plan for Sport in Canada* (1995), written as a result of decreased federal government spending, Sport Canada bureaucrats identified that at the same time as resources from the public sector were decreasing, corporate Canada was feeling financial pressure. As a result, NSOs were finding it increasingly difficult to get sponsorship. The authors of this business plan determined that strategies must be developed to attract increased financial support from other sources including corporations, self-generated revenue by NSOs, relationships with professional teams or leagues, and revenue from television broadcasting agreements.

⁵⁴ The Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women examined both *Toward 2000: Building Canada's Sport System* (1988) and the *Dubin Inquiry* (1990) in the Federal document *Amateur Sport: Future Challenges* (1990).

For the Canadian Olympic Association's "Podium 2002" program for winter Olympic sports, 42% of the funding came from Sport Canada, 37% was allocated from the Petro-Canada Torch Scholarship Fund, the Calgary Olympic Development Association contributed 19% from its 1988 Winter Olympics legacy funds, and 2% came from LegaciesNow – the Legacy Organization established by the 2010 Vancouver Bid Committee. The money was allocated to individual athletes based on their Top-5 performance at the preceding World Championships (Morin, 2002).

The *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002) policymakers identified that increased efforts must be made to find non-traditional funding options, especially through private sector and corporate partners and sponsorship. Funding needs to be applied as effectively as possible, and funding allocations must be tied directly to policy objectives and measurable results – increasing the accountability of the sport system (p. 12).

In the current (2004-2008) *Sport Canada Strategic Plan*, Sport Canada decision-makers outlined that Sport Canada works collaboratively with other Canadian Heritage branches as well as other federal departments to ensure sound policy and program development to advance the objectives of the Canadian Sport Policy. However, also contained in the plan is the expectation that both public and private sectors support adequate resourcing of the Canadian Sport System (p. 4).

Both the government and sport organizations understand that they are dependent on each other to contribute to the overall goals of the sport system. The federal government has been the major contributor to all elite programs. The federal government was concerned about accountability; that is, implementing processes to ensure that sport organizations spent their contributions 'properly.' Desiring growth in the sport system,

the federal government has sought increasing private involvement, while attempting to keep public funding constant.

Sub-problem 2: What approach was employed by the Winter Sport Partners in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium?

To answer my second sub-problem, 'What approach was employed by the Winter Sport Partners in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium?' I have created a history using triangulation. As Own the Podium (OTP) is still evolving, many aspects of the program are in the process of being developed. Much of the information that would add depth to this story line is confidential, and thus this history will be incomplete. However, by analyzing pertinent documents and interviews with administrators involved in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium, and also including the perspective of athletes in this history, I hope to create as accurate a picture as I can, while acknowledging the aforementioned constraints.

I interviewed three administrators. Two administrators belonged to the Winter Sport Caucus. One administrator was a member of the Independent Winter Sport Task Force. Two administrators were former athletes, and one administrator has been a sport volunteer and administrator for over 30 years. Information gained from interviews with administrators will be referenced with "A" followed by 1, 2, or 3 depending on the administrator (e.g., A2). Athletes will be referenced using their corresponding letter: I, M, Q, F, C, E, K, Y.

‘Own the Podium’⁵⁵ – 2010’ is the name of the ‘sport technical’ program created by an Independent Task Force and released in September 2004. The goal of this program is to increase the potential of Canadian athletes to win medals at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games and to be number one in the medal standings. The Task Force determined that to achieve number one status, Own the Podium experts and NSO staff must increase the number of potential medalists and increase the success rate of these potential medalists⁵⁶ (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). This goal will be reached primarily by prioritizing funding to those sports and athletes who are seen to have potential to win medals. The second aspect of this program, dubbed Top Secret, is an attempt to “increase Canada’s success rate through better training and equipment, [so that] Canadian athletes will have a mental edge” (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004, p. 23). The third component of Own the Podium is recruitment. To win 35 medals in Vancouver, the Task Force determined that 51 ‘new’ athletes would need to be added to five sports, and these ‘new’ athletes would need to develop into potential medalists. In addition to increasing the success rate and increasing the number of potential medalists, there was also a focus on ensuring the strengths of all stakeholders were used.

Common themes about Own the Podium that emerged in the interviews with administrators and in the documents analyzed include cooperation, a common vision and

⁵⁵ The name Own the Podium was lent to the program by Alpine Canada, which had developed the name for its 2003-2004 Strategic Plan. “Own the Podium” is trademarked by VANOC on behalf of all the OTP partners (Daffern, 2006).

⁵⁶ The success rate can also be understood as a Medal Conversion Rate. In 2002, the medal conversion rate for Canadian Olympic Winter Athletes was 33%, in 2006 in Torino it was 37%. This can be compared to the medal conversion rate of the top nation, which was 71% in 2002 and 61% in 2006. Canada’s Winter Paralympic medal conversion rate was 50% in 2002, and 59% in 2006. If the conversion rate is increased to 50% for Olympic winter athletes ‘real improvements’ will be seen, along with increased confidence. (Allinger, T., 2006).

approach, the idea of 'partners,' independence, objective decision-making, accountability, and capacity.

While I think the success of OTP in both....I think the program that came out of it and also the funding success that it had was based on all of the sports coming together first, having a common vision and goal, and the funding partners supporting it. (A1)

It's really I think unprecedented cooperation between everyone involved in Canadian winter sport that has resulted in the Own the Podium being where it is today. (A2)

Sport is about teamwork and only through teamwork can we ensure that Canada wins gold in 2010... The federal government is not alone in this. Canada's sport system is based on partnerships and its sustainability relies upon the full support of governments at all levels, sport organizations, the private sector, communities and volunteers. (Canada Hansard, 2004 February 11, p. 1515)

One administrator noted that Own the Podium is an independent group, which needs to be objective so that funding will go towards those sports that will win medals.

It's important that [the Own the Podium group] is autonomous because there are decisions that have to be made, and the next couple of weeks there are going to be some of those very tough decisions. You need them to be objective. You need them to evaluate the program because the bottom line is winning medals. (A3)

The accountability of the sports became far greater, because [they] used to [] fill in forms at the end of the season and everything was a little more of a paper trail then it was actually sitting down and saying okay, what happened to this athlete this year, and going into detail about it, and what are we going to do next year to mitigate it. (A1)

One of the initial goals of Own the Podium is sustainability of the sport system, and all three administrators identified the need to build the capacity of the national sport organizations (NSOs). Capacity of the NSOs includes having internal human resources to support athletes, developing programs, running and marketing events, and attracting sponsorships. One athlete also identified the necessity of having people within the sport organizations who can market events to the public and to potential sponsors.

If we really want to have successful teams now and in the future the sports have to have the capacity...It is absolutely paramount to ensure that our sports have the capacity to operate programs and develop athletes. (A3)

In the following section I reconstruct the creation and implementation of Own the Podium – 2010.

Vancouver was awarded the right to host the 2010 Olympic Winter Games by the International Olympic Committee in July 2003. At a Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) meeting in November 2003, the Winter Sport Caucus⁵⁷ was approached individually by representatives from the COC, the Calgary Olympic Development Association (CODA), VANOC, LegaciesNow, and Sport Canada. Each representative informally presented what their organization could do for winter sport in Canada leading up to the 2010 Games. The members of the Winter Sport Caucus subsequently realized the opportunity to significantly change the fortunes of Winter Sport in Canada.

We did decide that we...that the winter sports should step up and be active partners in our athletes doing well in 2010 [as] winter sports are ultimately responsible for the performance [of their respective athletes] in international competition. (A2)

The Caucus immediately recognized that they needed a collective plan and a coherent focus. John Furlong of VANOC was “immediately enthusiastically in support” (A3) of a coherent plan, and in subsequent planning sessions agreed to fund, along with the COC, an independent consultant to evaluate their ideas and devise a plan. The Caucus took the lead in organizing a planning session, and decided early on that the goal of being number one in the medal standings in Vancouver⁵⁸ should be examined. The COC and Sport

⁵⁷ The Winter Sport Caucus is a group of all 13 winter sports, and it gained respect of the COC Board after conducting an effective campaign to use International Federation criteria as selection for the Winter Olympic Team (Daffern, 2006).

⁵⁸ In Bill Warren’s last year as President of the COA, he set a goal of Canada placing third in the medal standings at the 2006 Winter Games in Torino, and first at the 2010 Games (location yet to be

Canada were initially hesitant to agree to a program that was lead by the winter sports rather than their own organizations (Daffern, 2006). However, the COC and Sport Canada eventually agreed to support the proposal, and attended the planning meetings in Calgary on February 2 and 3, 2004⁵⁹ (Daffern, 2006).

Independent from the Caucus, Cathy Priestner Allinger had been asked by the COC if she would be interested in getting involved with a performance program in Canada. Priestner Allinger obliged and wrote a small piece outlining how Canada could evaluate “our potential as a country in winter sports” (A1). Priestner Allinger had previously been involved with the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) working with their ‘Podium Program’ for the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.⁶⁰ She was invited to the winter sports group February planning meeting in Calgary. At this meeting, the goal of being the number one winter sport nation was agreed to by all attendees, and the group set out clearly defined goals and a set of guiding principles. The group determined that funding for this program would need to be equivalent to \$1 per Canadian per year until 2010, from both current and new funding sources. The proposed solution would need to maximize the capabilities of each partner (Daffern, 2006).

The Caucus along with the Funding Partners⁶¹ hired Priestner Allinger to lead a team to evaluate winter sports in Canada.

determined). The Board of the COA passed a motion to accept these benchmarks as a goal. However, not much happened after that. Bill Warren was President of the COA from 1994-2001. He was also heavily involved with the 1988 Calgary Winter Games. (Daffern, 2006).

⁵⁹ It is not apparent why Sport Canada and the COC eventually agreed to attend the planning meetings.

⁶⁰ The United States Podium 2002 program was created by the USOC to provide aggressive funding for a handful of elite athletes who had been identified as having the potential to medal at the 2002 Olympic Winter Games.

⁶¹ The ‘Funding Partners’ are all the organizations involved in funding OTP. They include: Sport Canada, the Government of British Columbia, the COC, the CPC, VANOC (from corporate sponsors), CODA, and LegaciesNow.

[Cathy] brought together a small group of what [she] considered sport experts who had different experiences in high performance sport, and we set out to review sport-by-sport sort of where we were – the status of the sport, and ultimately the potential for 2010. (A1)

The members of the Task Force included Dr. Todd Allinger, Herwig Demschar, Dr.

Steven Norris, Jacques Thibault and Todd Allison (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004).

The task of the ‘independent group’ was to determine if Canada could be number one in

2010. The guiding principles created by the winter NSOs and the funding partners were:

1. A sustainable sport system.
2. Maximizing the *potential* for Canadian athletes to win medals.
3. Adhering to *performance centred* decision-making in all areas related to athletes, coaches, officials and business acumen.
4. Positioning winter NSOs as *leaders* in developing their respective sports in Canada and being *accountable* for their results.
5. Encouraging *cooperation* and open dealings amongst the NSOs and Olympic sport funding partners to *collectively advance* winter sport in Canada.
6. Supporting collaboration with the Olympic funding partners such that the winter NSOs will *mutually establish* and *monitor* an agreed upon statement of *benchmarks* and *measures* of future success and the winter NSOs will be held accountable for those measures.
7. Allowing the funding partners to *commit*, within their own funding criteria, to support the agreed upon objectives of the NSOs.
8. Assuring the winter NSOs meet on a regular basis to *collaborate* and *share* information. (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004, p. 1) [Emphasis in original]

Armed with these directives, the role of the Task Force was to predict the number of medals needed to be first in the medal standings in Vancouver, create a program that would reach this predicted medal count, conduct sport technical reviews for 2010, tier sports and create funding recommendations, and implement the programs (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004).

Sports were prioritized by the Task Force to maximize the potential for Canada to win over 35 medals in Vancouver. The Independent Task Force made “tough and targeted” decisions on how to distribute funding to NSOs: “A non-subjective attempt was

made to tier sports in the same manner the majority of Canadians would for the 2010 Games” (p. 14). Funding allocations were partly based on:

1. Canadian sport culture (pride/heroes and participation numbers)
2. Olympic success in the past three Games
3. Medal potential for 2010
4. Sustainability post 2010

Basing the analysis of “importance” on pride/heroes and participation numbers, the Task Force concluded that “Canada is primarily a flat-ice country” (p. 16). Flat-ice sports include hockey, speed skating, figure skating and curling. While participation numbers and cultural importance are high for skiing, it was rated second on the list of sports in ‘Canadian Culture’ (p. 16). The Task Force found it interesting that their ‘subjective pride rating’ and participation numbers rating were closely matched. The Task Force then equated potential medals in Vancouver with past Olympic success, since “success is an indication that a sport is well developed and organized” (p. 16).

To determine funding priorities, all sports were then ranked into three tiers based on the three previously mentioned benchmarks. The Task Force provided rationale for their funding tiers:

Tier 1 Must Win – This tier of must win medals includes sports with Canadian culture, Olympic success in the past three games, medal potential for 2010, and sustainability post 2010. By providing additional support and funding we look to almost guarantee medals for sports that are so traditionally Canadian. **Hockey, Speed Skating, Figure Skating, Curling**

Although alpine is considered a significant part of the Canadian sport culture and has had some past Olympic success, it is believed that alpine is the most difficult winter sport to medal in as a result of depth of racers in the world. For this reason and based on medal potential, alpine was placed in Tier 2.

Tier 2 High Priority – This category of high priority sports generally has a lower Olympic success rate than in tier one. These sports are on the radar screen for Canadian sport culture, however not as [prominently] as the tier one sports. Please note alpine exception above. They have a high probability of medaling in 2010

with their current talent pool and will probably be sustainable after 2010. **Alpine Skiing, Cross Country Skiing, Freestyle Skiing, Snowboarding**

Tier 3 Targeted Athletes – Unfortunately there are sports that we see as long shots for international success and few medals are expected from them in 2010. These sports are lowest on the Canadian sport culture radar. Although the sports have dedicated administration and athletes, it is likely they can produce only one or no medals based on a small talent pool and specialized facility needs. However, it is possible that these athletes can produce an unexpected medal with one phenomenal athlete. **Bobsleigh, Skeleton, Luge, Biathlon, Ski Jumping, Nordic Combined** (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004, p. 18)

The Task Force decided that if no new funding was secured to support Own the Podium initiatives, all sports would receive their pre-determined funds. Any additional money secured specifically for Own the Podium would be allocated unequally based on the ranking of sports (p. 18). The Task Force legitimized this decision by stating “Successful nations in the Olympic Games usually target a group of sports to excel in” and this is what Canada also needs to do in order to be successful (p. 19). The Task Force described that Tier 1 sports would be given top priority and thus the most funding because of their higher potential to win medals:

Top priority funding should be given to Tier one sports. These sports are almost self-sufficient and will probably be medal winners if no additional funding is provided. However, to increase and better guarantee these medals for Canada they need to be fully funded to an elite program level. (p. 19)

Sports were examined from a purely technical perspective, to make sure all the technical pieces of sport were evaluated (i.e., equipment, sport science, sport medicine⁶²), and there were enough technical experts involved in the system.

It was always meant to go in and look at the sports from a purely technical perspective, and make sure we have all the right pieces in place and that they had expertise working – the teams did – and [making sure] the coaches had everything

⁶² One administrator identified ‘technical’ as: the Performance Enhancement Team, anything equipment related, training camps, and having more athletes compete at more events. He/she also identified ‘technicians’ (e.g., video technicians, wax technicians) as falling under the ‘technical’ category (A1).

they needed to perform. It was not about setting up administration, about writing cheques. (A1)

Priestner Allinger and her group drew on successful experiences in different sport systems around the world to form their recommendations for a performance program. Two members of the evaluation team had “considerable success” implementing a ‘home-field advantage’ program with the USOC in Salt Lake. The Austrian system, especially Alpine and their coaching system, was examined to see what changes could be made in Canada. The Norwegian system was also evaluated. The group also consulted out to sport experts from other countries to “look on in and tell us what we are doing right, and what we are not doing so well” (A1). Own the Podium is a ‘performance-centred’ program. And although there was some variance of what the term ‘performance-centred’ means among the administrators, the common responses include the idea that every action in the sport system will be taken with a goal of increasing the performance of the athletes.

It’s really what we’re doing is striving for excellence. By teamwork between not only athletes and coaches, but athletes, the coaches, the technical people, the PET people, and the sport administrators. (A2)

Everything you do [is] directly related to performance, and to be a measurement against it. So if you choose to either allocate resources or bring people more into the system, [you] should be able to say this will enhance performance. (A1)

Any sport organization is more than just the athletes. The coach, the video technician, the secretary [...] the administrator...And you need to have everybody working within that [organization] in a performance-centred environment (A3).

The result of the Independent Task Force for Winter NSOs and Funding Partners’ evaluation is the *Own the Podium – 2010 Final Report* (2004).⁶³

⁶³ The Report was completed and presented to the steering committee on July 15, 2004, and was subsequently presented to the winter sports in August, 2004. (Daffern, 2006). It was publicly released on September 10, 2004.

Funding

The Task Force determined that to win 35 medals, the elite winter sport system must receive an increase in funding of \$21.1 million to reach a level of \$37.6 million per year. In total, Own the Podium requires \$110 million to successfully implement the program. The Task Force decided that NSOs need to receive \$10.1 million for operations and an additional \$11 million for recruitment (\$1 million per year). Top Secret-2010 needs \$10 million in total - \$5 million for Human Performance and \$5 million for Technology research and development. The federal government committed \$55 million to Own the Podium, \$5 million was committed by the British Columbia provincial government, and the remaining \$50 million had to be solicited from corporate sponsors (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). VANOC was instrumental in securing funding for Own the Podium. Bell Canada provided \$18 million to start the Own the Podium program in October 2004. Bell is the founding national partner of Own the Podium. The Own the Podium plan was then formally presented to the Minister of State for Sport, Stephen Owen, in October 2004. The Winter Sport Partners went together as a unified group, assuming that the government was more likely to support the program knowing that prominent Canadian sport organizations were already supporting it. The group asked Minister Owen for \$55 million from the government. John Furlong (VANOC) guaranteed that VANOC would match the government's contributions through sponsors – noting they had already raised \$18 million from Bell Canada (Daffern, 2006).

The Independent Task Force reported back to the Winter Sport Group that being number one in the medal standings was indeed possible, but first and foremost funding needed to be increased. One administrator wanted to make sure people realized that

money provided by Own the Podium is only one part of the funding mix, noting federal government and private sponsorship make up the other major parts (A3). This administrator added that corporate sponsorship has stalled since the implementation of Own the Podium, probably because corporations believe that the government is taking care of all the needs of NSOs.

We have to have an injection of funding, and it was then, from that juncture, that VANOC stepped up and said we will commit to 50% if we get the federal government to commit to the other 50%. And what has subsequently come out is that, of course, it's not quite 50-50, there is [also] a COC and a CPC portion. (A3)

One administrator identified that one of the original funding partners backed out of their financial commitment (A3). It took time to find a new sponsor, and some funding to Own the Podium programs was delayed.

One of the funding partners, I'm not going to say who, pulled out their financial contributions. And that also had an impact on how the funds flowed. The total number remained the same, but there was a bit of a hiccup, and it had to be dealt with...that then meant to ensure that the NSOs got the funding to sport they needed [] some of the money had to be diverted from some of the non-NSO funding budgets. There was reduced funding available to research and PET. (A3)

Three athletes identified that a strength of Own the Podium is that there is a substantial amount of money to work with. Athletes also provided insights on how NSOs get funding. Two athletes identified that National Sport Organizations apply for funding for specific projects. The funding provided is tied specifically to that project, so if that project does not come to fruition, the money has to be returned to Own the Podium (M). And two athletes confirmed that funding is tied to accountability.

The Sport organization is accountable to Own the Podium for the money for that project. (M)

What I've noticed, and that's really important too, is making the sport associations, like they were going to give you this money, but you have to show us results and why you're getting them, or why you're not. (C)

One athlete believed that NSOs are planning more because they have to apply for funding for each project. He/She also noted that with this funding accountability comes some assurance to the athletes that they are being treated more fairly. With another set of eyes on the organization, there is less chance of inconsistencies (E).

Funding was also identified as one of the primary contributors to the sustainability of the sport system. All three administrators mentioned the need to acquire funding post-2010 to maintain the sport system, from both the government and the private sector. One administrator identified that a result of Own the Podium is that the federal government raised the funding base of sport in Canada from \$89 million to \$140 million (A3).

And I think lastly that if we get the results we believe we can, we will have established a program that is sustainable and that we found some good remedies and there will be enough interest by the corporate sector in this country, and in the federal government to want to continue to support it, summer as well. (A1)

We are already starting to discuss what steps need to be taken to try to build sustainability so that we don't get to 2010 and have a huge fall-off [of funding]. One [step to build sustainability] is trying to encourage sponsors who are involved to stay involved. (A3)

It is impossible to sustain it without funding. So that has to be first and foremost what we have post 2010 – is the funding in place. (A1)

Organizational Structure

The first year of the program was headed by Cathy Priestner Allinger, and overseen by the steering committee appointed by the winter sports and comprised of Tony Daffern (cross-country), Ken Read (alpine), Pam Coburn (figure skating), and Wayne Russell (hockey). Although the winter sports lobbied the COA and Sport Canada to support the creation of an autonomous arms-length organization (one administrator

described it as a Crown Corporation, A2), neither body would agree to it. Currently Own the Podium is not a legal corporation; it is a loose association of 13 winter sports and the funding partners. The Canadian Olympic Committee holds the legal framework for the organization (A2). Dr. Roger Jackson is the CEO (see Appendix I for an organizational chart of OTP), and Ken Read and Tony Daffern act as the CEO Liason Committee (along with usually one representative from VANOC, one from the COC, and one from Sport Canada) (A2). Roger Jackson and his team of sport consultants work together to create funding recommendations for each sport. These recommendations are then forwarded to the funding partners for review. The novel aspect of the funding structure is that there is an understanding that the funding partners will accept the recommendations as is.

[The challenge was] getting the funding partners to acknowledge that sport funding [should] change, it should be simplified. It should be aimed at excellence, and that people like the COC really have given up quite a bit in terms of their input of how their money is spent. (A2)

Initially, each sport went through a review process to determine what their current potential was (i.e., how many of their current athletes are 'potential medalists') and to create performance benchmarks for the upcoming season. Initial funding levels were based partly on these reviews, which took into account not only past results, but also the capacity to win future medals – what has been identified as 'forward looking'⁶⁴ (A3).

The Canadian Sport Review Panel, headed by Sport Canada, was also involved in the funding allocation process. This panel was comprised of sport technical experts who assess the quality of high performance programs and the additional needs of each

⁶⁴ One administrator explained 'forward looking' as a funding process that considers how many medals a sport could possibly win. For example, Canada could win a total of two medals from hockey, but could win a possible 44 in cross-country skiing (A3). Based on forward looking, cross country would be ranked higher than hockey. However, past results and the initial tiering system is also taken into consideration (i.e., hockey has seen recent success, and is ranked higher on the 'Canadian Culture' scale than cross-country), as well as the potential of current athletes to win those medals. Although this is in theory what should happen, I was unable to acquire any actual funding figures from Own the Podium..

program. The panel provided recommendations to the federal government and other funding partners on priority areas and amount of funding. The Panel identified the sports with the greatest potential to medal at the Olympic, and Paralympic Games. The Sport Review Panel no longer exists and has been replaced by a panel under the COC's Podium Canada organization.

The Sport Canada Sport Review panel was disbanded about 18 months ago. The panel that did last year's review for the winter sports was chaired by Roger [Jackson] and convened under the auspices of Own the Podium. The panel that did this year's winter reviews was done under the auspices of Podium Canada⁶⁵ and chaired by Roger. The players are much the same, sport experts plus people from OTP, Sport Canada, Canadian Sport Centres, CPC, COC, etcetera. The review panels then make funding recommendations to the funding agencies. In the case of winter sports they are Sport Canada, COC, CPC, and VANOC. As you can see, the original idea of the Sport Canada Sport Review Committee has morphed into the current panels led by Roger and Alex [Baumann] under Podium Canada. This has taken a couple of funding cycles to get where it is now. I suspect it will evolve further in the future (A3).

The second sets of reviews are currently underway (March-April 2007). The Own the Podium staff is reviewing each sport's performance in terms of whether they have met their agreed-upon benchmarks. Funding allocations will be based partly on the 'success' of the sports in meeting their goals.

[OTP] will come forward with [] recommendations and that will also inform to some extent, basis for how funding is allocated to the various sports. Next year's sports who have met their benchmarks, and you know, those sorts of podium finishes and sufficient Top-10 placings, and so on, will probably be looking for more funding. Those that haven't been successful will probably have their number

⁶⁵ Podium Canada was created by the COC in 2006. It is a partnership between the major national funding partners for high performance sport in Canada including Sport Canada, the COC, the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) and the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC). Podium Canada will act as an advisory body, providing technical support to Canada's National Sport Federations to help them achieve podium success at upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games. Podium Canada assumes the roles and responsibilities currently held by the Canadian Sport Review Panel and will make recommendations to national funding partners for the allocation of the approximately \$40 million currently available for funding for NSF high performance programs. Both Sport Canada and the COC will provide administrative support to Podium Canada. Concern was raised by two administrators that the Podium Canada program will reduce the input that NSOs have in creating programs (Podium, Vol 4 issue 11, December 2006 – www.olympic.ca)

of athletes that are supported cut – cut in funding. It will get tighter and tighter in terms of which athletes will get funding, as we get to 2009, 2010. (A2)

Two administrators identified that the strength of the benchmark and funding review process is that it is independent.

You don't have one entity now necessarily that is making the decisions. It is an independent technical group that makes the recommendations to the funding partners. The funding partners, for the most part, accept the recommendations for the allocations, resources, funds. (A1)

Not being afraid of honest evaluation, honest thinking, honest objectives. So we brought that part of it. Let's not be afraid to say what we think we can do. And let's back it up with independent evaluation. (A3)

While the information contained in the *Own the Podium 2010 Final Report* painted a uncertain future for Paralympic Sport in Canada, one administrator revealed to me some of the progress Paralympic Sport has made in the last several years. In the *Own the Podium 2010 Final Report*, the authors stated Paralympic sport is primarily organized by volunteers, and that "Canada must decide if Paralympic sport is important, and if so, what this means in terms of resources and attention" (p. vi). The Canadian Paralympic Committee has written its own version of 'Own the Podium', which focused not only on winning medals in Vancouver, but also on developing Paralympic sport programs, and recruiting new athletes.

Around the time that the Own the Podium report had been approved by the winter sports and the funding partners, there was a decision made that \$1 million a year from the VANOC side of funding, and \$1 million a year from the Sport Canada side of the funding would go to the Paralympic group. At that time we brought on a Paralympic person onto the steering committee. That was Rob Needham and subsequently they produced their own report on Own the Podium.[] And the able-bodied report is specifically aimed at getting medals. The Paralympic one is different because there were so few Paralympic athletes that they agreed they should have two purposes. One of course was to get medals at the Paralympics with existing athletes, but the other was a good chunk of the money would be used for developing Paralympic programs and Paralympic athletes. (A2)

Program Creation

Sport Canada has always been the major financier of any elite sport initiative, and they also largely dictated the goals of sport in Canada. The winter sports agreed that increasing the capacity of NSOs – building stronger NSOs - was the key to getting the best results from athletes (A1, A2, A3). Canadian sport administrators have felt pressure from the world sporting community, especially the IOC, about improving the performances of Canadian athletes at a home-Games.

The IOC really feels, and made this point clear to the Vancouver people when they won the bid, that they [the IOC] expect the host country to do well. So, not only do we want to do well because really we haven't done that well in the previous two Olympics that were held in Canada. (A2)

IOC President Jacques Rogge said it is important that a host country put strong plans in place to ensure their athletes will attain podium success... Every past host nation in recent memory has actively promoted the success of their athletes at their winter games. Canada should be no exception. (HC Debates, 3 February, 2005, p. 1400)

I think John Furlong says it very, very well. And that is, that there are two sides to the Games for Canadians. The first one is that the people of B.C. [...] expect the Games to be well run: accountable, responsible. Because they are number one on the hook in terms of finances. [...]. What [the rest of Canada] care[s] about is how the team does. That is how they define success. And the IOC has in recent years recognized that it's their franchise. They entrust the city with the franchise and part of, and certainly a big part of it is the capability – confidence and capability – that the Games will be well run. [...] The IOC has recognized that that's an important feature of building the brand – [] having a successful team. (A3)

The Task Force identified that the Canadian sport system has been criticized as being fragmented.

There has been much criticism of the sport delivery system in Canada, citing too many processes, too many funding organizations that are not on the same page with the same ultimate vision, too much bureaucracy, and a lack of a accountability within each sport. (p. iv)

The proposed solution is an increase in resources, a unified funding approach and accountability for all.

The fact of the matter is that athletes with the best resources win medals. (BC Legislative Debates, 21 February, 2005, p. 11990).

A unified funding solution involves a single evaluation method for who ‘deserves’ funding, and one system for distributing all funds. The Task Force believes that funds can be distributed more efficiently through one system, thereby freeing NSOs from having to submit more than one evaluation/review and “free[ing] their resources to develop athletes” (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, p. iv). One administrator also mentioned that there are benefits of one funding process

To combine all the funding we are getting into one source, so that sports only have to do one set of applications to access money. (A2)

The Task Force also suggested that to increase the accountability of the sport system, all NSOs needed to create and implement an athlete development model, a recruitment strategy, a performance enhancement team, professional coaching, and “strong and stable leadership” (p. v). The Task Force recommended that NSOs be accountable for increasing the number of potential medalists and success rates. They also identified that there should be consequences associated with meeting or not meeting their responsibilities. While these consequences are not explicitly stated, one can easily assume they involve funding levels. The Task Force defined accountability in five different areas: athlete performance, athlete recruitment, coaching, performance enhancement team, and NSO leadership and administration (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004).

Athlete-Centred

All administrators were familiar with the concept of an athlete-centred sport system. One administrator associated athlete-centred with having athletes involved in the decision-making process and did not see performance-centred and athlete-centred as two competing ideas (A1). One administrator has consciously chosen not to use the term athlete-centred, but instead uses 'athlete-focused' because athlete-focused acknowledges that the sport organization is more than just the athletes, and includes the coach, the administrator, the secretary, and the video technicians in a meaningful environment (A3). All three administrators believe that in an athlete-centred/focused system, everyone is involved in supporting the athlete.

Athlete focused meaning that at the end of the day, the athlete is the day - that is our product. You are building everything to try to ensure that the athlete...has the ability to be successful. (A3)

Athlete-centred, I think, refers to the fact that athletes are not just racehorses [...] and when you're designed programs in the high performance area it really is athlete-centred. The athletes are the people who matter. They are the ones who everyone else, whether they are coaches, or wax technicians or whatever, are providing a service for. So the athlete, in fact, is this central person in this whole thing. Everyone else is subservient or providing services to the athlete. (A2)

[Athletes] put their heart and soul and their life into their sport and if by giving them [the athletes] the coaches that they need, or the sport medicine and science that they need, that will help them. I think that is athlete-centred. (A1)

Athlete-Involvement

Current athletes had minimal involvement in the creation and implementation of the program itself. Athletes were involved in the individual sport reviews, and with some research that has been undertaken through Top Secret (A1). One administrator outlined the necessity of having athletes involved in the decision-making process.

[Having the athletes involved in the reviews] is a very big part of the success of the program...we asked for the sports to talk with us and bring their reviews for 2002 and to just get a sense of what happened. One out of 14 disciplines actually had a significant debrief that was done internally by the NSO. There was huge coaching and administrator changes, and it was only the athletes who were left, so they were integral to creating a picture of what happened in the previous quadrennial. Because I wouldn't have had some of my perspective [without it]. The first thing we did was when we put the process in place we require that a coach and an athlete be at the reviews that we did. (A1)

Two administrators revealed that athletes were not directly involved in the creation and the implementation of Own the Podium, but both added that there are a number of ex-athletes and former Olympic medalists involved with Own the Podium (A2, A3).

Again it comes back to what is the definition of an athlete, you know. I still consider myself an athlete [] I just happen to have a different set of experiences than current athletes. (A3)

One administrator identified that it is the responsibility of the NSO to communicate with their athletes, but was not convinced that it was communicated well.

The NSO has all the information and we have regular, both OTP and VANOC have regular meetings with the NSOs and it is the responsibility of the NSOs to communicate to its athletes and coaches...so leading up to that point [] you'd probably have to talk to the sports about that - how they communicate it. I am guessing not really. (A1)

However, two administrators revealed that they have communicated the ideas of Own the Podium with their athletes and have received feedback on certain issues (A2, A3).

So, you know, were current athletes involved directly? Not terribly extensively. Do they have an opportunity to comment on it? Yes they do. But again it comes back to you better be making objective decisions. And some of the decisions that have to be made, you know, aren't necessarily being made with specific individuals in mind. And for specific objectives. It is... every effort is being made to try to build performance. But, you know, I'll give you an example. We had direct feedback from one of our teams that we need to add one additional staff member... And we heard that, and corrected it. We do try to get that kind of feedback as much as we can. (A3)

Recruitment

An important factor for achieving the winter sport group's goal of 35 medals is increasing the number of potential medalists. The Task Force, through consultations with sport scientists and NSOs, and by examining athlete development models, determined that five sports can recruit 'established' athletes and make them into potential medalists in less than four years. These sports are speed skating (long and short track), freestyle aerials, snowboarding and bobsleigh.

In order to be the leading nation at the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, we must ensure that a sufficient number of our best athletes are training with the NSOs. The Recruitment – 2010 program searches for individuals with superior athletic ability and skills to determine if they have medal potential in various Olympic and Paralympic sports. For example, a hockey player who is an exceptionally fast skater might excel at speed skating, and a football player might have sprinting power that makes him well suited for bobsleigh. (OTP Fact Sheet, June 2006)

Priestner Allinger and Allinger (2004) acknowledge in the *Own the Podium 2010 Final Report* that some NSOs had few available resources to implement a recruitment program. However, because athlete development models in five sports⁶⁶ still allowed room to recruit athletes, the Own the Podium group constructed special programs to develop new athletes.

We targeted the five sports and then we went at the recruitment differently depending entirely on the sport, and also the health of the organization.⁶⁷ So, where [the] NSO had the capacity to really lead the recruitment we set up a model that allowed that. Where we didn't feel the sport was quite there, we actually went in and did our own recruitment to start with and then integrat[ed] it into the NSOs appropriately. (A1)

⁶⁶ In the OTP Final Report, skeleton was not identified as a 'recruitment' sport, however through interviews it appears that skeleton was also a part of this program (A3).

⁶⁷ The health of the organization is also understood under the terms 'Organizational Readiness' or 'Capacity.' Two athletes also identified how different sports have different resources (M, Q), and thus have different capabilities. For example, an NSO who has more financial resources will be able to employ a marketing person.

One administrator revealed that the Paralympic recruitment program has been very successful. He/she also knew that one sport had recruited two strong athletes, both of whom had won medals this past winter (A2).

Top Secret

While the recruitment side of Own the Podium worked on increasing the number of potential medalists, the Top Secret side was developed to increase the success rate of those potential medalists. Top Secret is a new innovative research and development program to give Canadian athletes “the edge” in 2010 (Allinger, 2006). The Task Force claims that “Canadian athletes rarely felt they had a technological ‘edge’ over other nations and in fact, often the belief was that their equipment was inferior” (p. 22). The goal of the sport technical program, “Top Secret,” is to use a six-year development cycle to produce innovative advantages for athletes in the areas of human performance (i.e., physiology, psychology, biomechanics, and nutrition) and technology research and development (i.e., friction, data acquisitions for individuals, engineering). The Task Force decided that current elite/national team athletes would not be included in the development and testing of new training and technical methods. They claim that this approach will not disturb the training programs of the elite teams. One way Own the Podium has tried to accomplish this, is by grouping sports with common factors together. For example, all the ice sports have been brought together to exchange information and techniques.

We have experts who make hockey ice, and experts who make speed skating ice and why not have them talking to each other to find out if we might have come up with an even better solution that each of them have right now. [...] We’ve got a number of disciplines that need to understand snow. (A1)

There are different research groups working across the country to test, build, or modify equipment and to see how that equipment interacts with the environment.⁶⁸ One athlete identified how technical teams from his/her sport (i.e., technicians from the NSOs and 'research experts' contracted by OTP) have been sent to the venues in Vancouver/Whistler to do testing with engineers from Own the Podium (M).

Own the Podium – Top Secret will fund projects proposed by different experts in the sport system. Top Secret administrators will consider proposals from Performance Enhancement Team members, from 'working groups' (as mentioned above), and from targeted experts. While initially Top Secret considered accepting unsolicited proposals, as the program has developed this is no longer the case (Davis, 2007). The Budget for Top Secret in 2005-2006 was \$700,000, increasing to \$2,000,000 for the 2006-2007 season. Any Top Secret Proposal went through a 3-part review process: (a) NSO, technical review; (b) Scientific Review Panel; (c) OTP 2010 Review. Top Secret is run on a business-model, and not an educational or a grant model (Allinger, 2006).

Half (4) of the athletes interviewed identified being involved in Top Secret testing, within a wind tunnel and/or on natural surfaces. Wind tunnel testing included testing suits, equipment and body position in order to increase aerodynamics. As one athlete explained: "Body types have so much to do with aerodynamics and you can't just send one person and generalize it, you have to send the individual athlete".⁶⁹ Athletes understand the Top Secret program and its process as: looking for technological advantages (F, E) by developing new materials, new tools, and new equipment (E, C).

⁶⁸ The working groups are: (a) Air/suit aerodynamics; (b) Ice sports; (c) Snow sports; (d) Human performance (Allinger, 2006).

⁶⁹ I am not including the identity of the athlete because wind tunnel testing is specific to certain sports, and doing so could compromise confidentiality.

Top Secret is for Canadian athletes only, and no other countries will have access to the innovations (F, C).

One administrator revealed that there had been some problems getting the Top Secret program started. It proved more difficult than expected to hire the appropriate people in a timely fashion. This administrator also described how important it is to hire the 'right' people because any country can create performance programs, and so the difference will be in who is running them.

Just because of time lags in funding, implementation took a while to get the right people in place. Now we have the right people. So there has been some lags in terms of the research projects and I'd say it's really starting to get a head of steam. [] But probably in honesty it's taken a year longer than, and probably if one looked back in hindsight, probably we were too ambitious, probably too optimistic. It just takes a while to ramp it up. And find the right people. People aren't available at the drop of a hat. (A3)

Performance Enhancement Team (PET)

Building on the need to increase the number of potential medalists and the success rate of athletes, the concept of Performance Enhancement Teams was established (see Appendix J for a model of the PET program). The goal of implementing Performance Enhancement Teams is to "have a healthy, fit athlete with a solid psychological platform, on the starting line" (Meeuwisse, Smith, Amirault, Schlachter, & Henwood, 2006). The Philosophy of the PET is to be athlete-centred and coach-driven. The solution is to optimize training and technique/mechanics, by removing barriers to performance, optimizing recovery, preventing overtraining, illness and injury, and having access to care for ill and injured athletes.

Most athletes interact on a day-to-day basis with their Performance Enhancement Team (PET), both in-season and off-season. The ideas linked to PET teams are not new.

Many athletes have had access to components of the PET team through regional training centres. However, the idea of providing support, including medical, physical, emotional/psychological, and nutritional (among others) on a consistent basis has been put into practice through Own the Podium. It is a more scientific, integrated, planned approach, and it is more comprehensive than ever before. Organizational readiness also comes into play with the PET teams. Meeuwisse et al. (2006) acknowledged that NSOs needed to be ready to accept more resources. PET administrators also noted a difference in the knowledge of various NSOs. Some sports did not know what services their athletes needed, and some sports would rather incorporate PET's on their own without any help from Own the Podium (Meeuwisse et al. 2006). One administrator illustrated the importance of the PET teams.

The best way to enhance the performance of our athletes is to – one, give our athletes all the kind of support they need, especially those they maybe haven't had in the past - in particular the Performance Enhancement Team concept: the providing of the doctors, the physiotherapists, the psychologists, the whole support group plus the coaches and the sport technicians. From the people who put runners on bobsleighs, to the people who wax skis. (A2)

Many athletes identified their increased access to sport support staff through Own the Podium. Several athletes attributed their 'success' as athletes to the services provided by the Performance Enhancement Teams.

We've never had a video tech before. And we [used] to have a different physio every week, and that was terrible because every time you had to explain your injuries every week to a new person []. So now we have like a few consistent physios, which is good...[Before] the coaches would hold the video camera, or you always have to ask like, even people from the hotel, like a waitress to do video for you sometimes. (C)

With Own the Podium funding we've as a sport been able to fund things like a sport psychologist [], the physiologist that we work with, the strength trainer...I'd say without this, the team that we have – The PET Performance Enhancement

Team – I wouldn't have reached the level I have reached today, from just one head coach. (I)

They've at least doubled the staff, from what we are used to, in the Performance Enhancement Team. (E)

Funds are provided by Own the Podium to the Canadian Sport Centres to provide many of the services for their athletes.

Sport Experts

A vital component for Own the Podium, as well as in Top Secret and the Performance Enhancement Teams, which was identified by administrators and athletes alike, was the importance of hiring the 'right people' to work in the sport system, and within the Own the Podium framework.

[A strength is] they have a lot of people who are former athletes – I believe – who are working there. (F)

In order to do this [OTP] we needed extra money, but also we needed a group of sport experts that we could call on to give the NSOs advice, to help them in hiring and developing the various teams that are there to support the athletes. (A2)

We see people being brought into the country, these sport experts who I don't think a few years ago we would have considered bringing in. Because we are willing to invest and understand the value of that knowledge and experience. (A)

One administrator identified that all countries are creating programs to improve the performance of their athletes. Involving experts in Own the Podium will be the difference in success (A3).

Implementation

All three administrators identified different challenges with respect to Own the Podium program implementation. Two administrators identified the challenge faced due to the lack of capacity in certain NSOs. One administrator spoke about the lack of

infrastructure in some of the sports. So when Own the Podium enhanced funding to the NSOs, several of them did not have the necessary capacity to deal with more money.

I'll start with enhanced funding. You know there are sports that have huge potential for medals...they didn't even have the infrastructure to accept more resources. So when we evaluated [the sports] we had federations that were typing invoices still. So they needed some infrastructure in order to be able to grow and support the additional [resources] whether it was people or resources.
(A1)

This administrator also identified that NSOs had to adjust to external bodies coming in and identifying their weaknesses as an organization, and implementing steps to make improvements. Two administrators felt the biggest challenge in implementing Own the Podium was getting the funding partners to believe that sport funding should change, that the process should be simplified and it should be aimed at excellence (A2, A3). One administrator thought the biggest challenge was overcoming skepticism about the winter sport community working together (A3). Many people involved in winter sports in Canada did not think the sports could work altogether. A second challenge was the timing of the implementation of Own the Podium. Administrators understood that the program needed to be started as quickly as possible, but that it was difficult because Own the Podium did not have a strong organizational structure yet (A3). A final continuing problem identified is changing the public perception that Own the Podium is the COC's program. One administrator stressed that it is important the public understand that Own the Podium is not one single organization's program; it is the whole group working together - the winter sports and all the funding partners (A3).

Outcomes

The success of the program rests on the fact that Canada will be the number one nation in sport in Vancouver, and two administrators expressed the desire to keep that

position post-2010 (A1, A3). However, one administrator explained that it will be hard to keep that position because the next hosts of the Games may also attempt to be number one in the medal standings.

Then the problem of can we remain in the number one position. Everyone involved will go back to the government to ask for funds. However, I expect we will have a lot of difficulty to hold onto that position. The next host – be it Russia, or Austria, or Korea – will be aiming for that position as well. (A2)

Two athletes indicated that Own the Podium has brought focus to amateur sport in the country (M, Y). One athlete qualified that response, saying Own the Podium has brought attention to *some* sports (Y), while the other athlete believes that for the sport system to be sustainable it needs to become valued by Canadians.

It is almost like winter sport is not revered by Canadians, so that makes it challenging. And I think Own the Podium is great because it is working to kind of change that. And to make winter athletes a focus and a priority... Ultimately the whole point of having successful winter Olympians is just to inspire more Canadians to feel proud and to be more active in their lives, more healthy. (M)

Two administrators supported the view that success at a home-Games makes the country proud (A1, A3). They shared their experience of attending either the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney or the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake, and how the enthusiasm and excitement was palpable when the home team was winning. A 'successful' Games will also benefit grassroots sports, as was indicated by all three administrators and several athletes (A1, A2, A3, Y, I) by creating heroes and role models, and enhancing the capacity of sport organizations. One administrator added that the degree of impact on grassroots sport will depend on the success of the elite program.

I think [OTP's impact on grassroot sports] is very positive, but a lot hinges back on what is the success of the program. So, you know, we're seeing burgeoning numbers right across the country and tremendous media interest, but again we have a program that has been very, very successful in the last couple of years. So, in those instances you see very tangible results and interest generated across the

board. But it really does come back, primarily to: are your athletes doing well?
(A3)

As was previously stated, a vital component for the sustainability of the sport system will involve secured funding for the sport system exiting Vancouver. All three administrators indicated that the summer sports will also benefit from Own the Podium, because of the value placed on sport experts, support from the federal government (as the funding base for sport has been increased), and enhanced capacity for the sport system.

One administrator identified that very few Canadian athletes will come back as medalists from Vancouver, because in sending a team of 250 plus athletes, only 20-30 will win medals (A3). One administrator noted the difference he believes exists between the success of Own the Podium as a program, and the success of athletes.

Well I don't think really that OTP is entirely focused [on] medals as winning, as success. I think there is a subtle difference. When you have a program like Own the Podium – you have to have some valid measure of success (35 medals always made me uncomfortable) – measure of OTP success is number one in the medal standings. For athletes and NSOs – the measure of success is the development of elite athletes right down the chain, from the podium to athletes that will compete in 2012, 2014. Personal success for the athletes is that they are fulfilling their own ambitions. Only few will be medalists, everyone else has personal goals. (A2)

There were several possible negative outcomes identified by administrators with respect to the goals of Own the Podium. One administrator described how diversity in the sport system is lost when a country chooses to specialize in sports (A3). When asked what will happen if Canada does not rank number one in the medal standings, one administrator revealed that is a question currently being contemplated within the Own the Podium group, but he/she believes there would be stronger criticism from the media.

That's one that we are all asking ourselves. That would depend a lot on how much we missed it by. For sure there will be strong criticism in the press. But I think that the sport community...knows it's an ambitious target. So the sport community will look at how many Top-8s, Top-10s we achieved. And look

historically to see how we progressed from Salt Lake to Torino to Vancouver. Progression is important – to everyone but the media. (A2)

All administrators characterized the sport system as they envision it in 10-15 years as being unified, with partners creating the goals for the sports. One administrator mentioned that an independent organization will run sport in Canada (A2). Another administrator believes a group of core sports will still be delivering high quality, high performance programming: speed skating, figure skating, freestyle, alpine skiing, and hockey (A3). However, both of these administrators revealed concerns about the development of Podium Canada.

During 2005 and into 2006, the COC has been developing a summer sport Road to Excellence Program. Just before the last Sport Minister resigned from the government, he gave approval to an entity entitled Podium. This is a Canadian compromise in place of an independent body to govern sport which, in its present form, is unsustainable, gives little input into policy and strategy to the NSF, and has no formal governance when hard decisions have to be made. The COC sees itself as the primary partner in this enterprise. (Daffern, 2006)

The only negative aspect is not so much of OTP, this Podium concept worries me. The strength of Own the Podium is partnerships of 13 winter sports. With this Podium program they are going back to the funding partners doing the strategic planning, setting the benchmarks, with very little indication that the sports will be as involved as they were with OTP. (A2)

I think another key one, and certainly from my view and my vantage point as head of [an NSO] is that Own the Podium will remain in place as a visible, independent entity, and not be, not disappear into something called Podium. Because with all due respect, we are a winter sport nation. And I would prefer to see the summer side dealt with as summer, and the winter side as winter. I fear that if it gets pulled into one program then...that there are profound differences between summer and winter. And I don't want to get into that political morass. (A3)

The federal government released the *Sport Excellence Strategy: Achieving Podium Results at Olympic and Paralympic Games* in 2005. This strategy describes the federal government's commitment to high performance sport in Canada. The Excellence

Strategy claims that focusing on podium results is “essential in defining Canada as a leading sport nation” (p. 2). This goal of excellence is to promote internationally the Canadian values of personal excellence, creativity, diversity, achievement, and leadership. The federal government argues through the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002) that they need to initiate collaborative research, sustainable funding, and sport system performance. Because the federal government needs to be accountable for the use of public funds, success will be measured by athletes reaching pre-determined performance targets at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Own the Podium is a technical program, created in 2004, to increase the number of Canadian athletes who could potentially win medals in Vancouver 2010, and to increase the probability that these athletes will win medals. The sport system was seen by the Independent Task Force as being too fragmented, and thus unable to support medal winning performances. A collective vision among the Winter Sport Partners, including the 13 winter sport NSOs, the COC, VANOC, CODA, and Sport Canada, aimed to increase the unity of the sport system through a single funding structure, along with shared information and expertise between stakeholders. The naturalized foundation of this program is that success is only measured by ‘podium performances.’

This ‘technical’ program relies on the experience and knowledge of experts to operate programs, and to develop equipment that will increase the likelihood that Canada’s potential medalists will win medals in 2010. Resources have been prioritized to those sports and athletes who are seen by decision-makers as most likely to win medals. Through Own the Podium, NSOs will be able to develop their respective sports and athletes, and this will lead to a sustainable sport system. Administrators believe that the

benefits of Own the Podium will be support from the Canadian public, continued funding from the public and private sector, support for summer sports, and increased grassroots participation rates.

Sub-problem 3: What are athletes' experiences in the current Winter Olympic sport system, with respect to Own the Podium?

The essence of an athlete-centred sport system is hearing and responding to the voice and experience of the athlete. In keeping with this perspective, my third sub-problem explores how athletes feel about their current position in the sport system, thus giving athletes an opportunity to be heard. While I intended to interview six athletes, I eventually completed eight interviews. Seven of eight athletes had attended previous Olympic Games. Six of eight athletes are current national team members. I interviewed three athletes from Tier 1, two athletes from Tier 2, and three athletes from Tier 3.⁷⁰ Three interviewees are male, and five interviewees are female. These 'successful' athletes ranged from international medalists, to those who are ranked nationally. I have divided my results into three sections: Success, Impact of Own the Podium, and Athlete-Voice. In 'Success', I outline the goals of Own the Podium, how athletes personally define success, and factors that contribute to their success. In 'Impact of Own the Podium' I outline: feelings of pressure; expectations; how Own the Podium has affected National Team athletes, development athletes and grassroots sports; and the sustainability of the sport system. In 'Athlete-Voice', I explore the athletes' understanding of the program, their involvement with Own the Podium, their ability to affect change in the sport system, their

⁷⁰ The 'Tiers' refer to Own the Podium's ranking list of winter sports. Tier 1 – must win sports, Tier 2 – high potential sports, and Tier 3 – targeted athletes.

understanding of ‘athlete-centred’, and the outside lives of athletes. (see Appendix K for an organizational tree of the results)

Success

In this section I first outline what athletes think about the goals of Own the Podium. Athletes, who are key actors for achieving goals in the sport system, have shared their feelings about the possibility of achieving Own the Podium goals. Then, to explore if athletes’ personal definition of success matches with the Own the Podium value of *success equals medals*, I asked athletes how they personally define success. Lastly, to explore if the services and resources provided to athletes through Own the Podium are what athletes feel they need to ‘succeed’, I asked athletes what elements of the sport system contributes most to their success as an athlete – however they define success.

Goals of Own the Podium

Eight athletes discussed the goals of Own the Podium overall, and how they feel about them. Three interviewees believed that Own the Podium’s goal of being the number one winter nation in the world by ranking number one in the medal standings is a good goal (Q, I, E).

I like Own the Podium now because they’re hard, they’re tough... They don’t take the old same attitude where it is like ‘Oh well you might do it’ or ‘Oh well it’s good that you participate. They are saying we want these results and we want them now (Q⁷¹)

⁷¹ To ensure confidentiality for each athlete interviewee, his/her statements have been identified only by a randomly selected letter.

However, all eight athletes discussed their concerns about such a goal. Two athletes (F, Y) identified that sport by nature is unpredictable, and that anything can happen at the Olympics, and one athlete mentioned how athletic performance depends on the day (Q).

If they are going and counting me as a definite medal, like well I might screw up - or not...I might win zero, and there is nothing you can say or do that will...you absolutely have no idea...Maybe the greatest thing about the Olympics is how unpredictable it is. (F)

It's so hard to tell what's going to happen at the Games (Y).

One athlete identified that Canada can prepare as much for the Olympics as possible, but every other country at the same time is also preparing, and you cannot control what they are doing. This same athlete, while believing it is very important to have a strong goal and that it is fantastic to strive for excellence, questioned focusing and measuring success on being number one in Vancouver. He/she sees a problem with focusing on the outcome, because it takes away from the effort put into getting to that point:

Well, I am a little conflicted about [the goal of OTP], because on one hand, I think it is fantastic to strive for excellence and to meet their objective to be the best. And I think that is important on one hand. But on the other, I feel like there is so much pressure on outcomes, like medals and placings and on what the results standings are, that it takes away from being able to focus on the whole quality of the process. Because all that is being looked for is the result, and what influences good results are so many factors including good technical preparation, good physical preparation, mental preparation, good health – free of injuries. Those are some of the most important things, and all of those involve focusing on those aspects through the years of training, and it makes it really difficult to actually look after all those details in a totally focused manner when there is this huge desire for producing these results. (M)

One athlete, while thinking performance expectations are important, also questioned 'results' as the sole measure of success.

I do think we should have some performance expectations, absolutely...But when you are constantly hearing 'Nothing but a Gold Medal' I think there is a tension there between solid results and pushing ourselves as a nation in sport. But also valuing strong performances and the Olympic experiences. (K)

Two athletes believed Own the Podium was started too late to make a significant difference in Vancouver, highlighting that many sports – especially endurance sports – have a long development curve (C, I). One athlete worried that Own the Podium would interrupt the natural development of athletes, and may pressure athletes to peak too soon (Q). Two athletes agreed with the solution of focusing only on certain sports, seeing it as the easiest way to get medals, but they still questioned the rationale of that goal in the first place:

It's great to be number one. Every country wants to be number one. [] I guess you kind of have to choose. What's more important, participation or number one?...But it's definitely obvious, if you want to win these medals the easiest way is to focus on certain sports. But what that means to the community of sport in general, within Canada, I don't think it's that important – medals. (Y)

Two athletes questioned the importance of being number one in the medal standings, and wondered how winning more medals than was achieved in the last Olympics could not be looked at as being a 'success' by administrators (F, M).

Defining Success

To explore other opportunities for being successful in the sport system, athletes were asked how they personally define success. Since, in an athlete-centred sport system, athletes should be involved in defining both the goals of the sport system and how to achieve those goals (AthletesCAN, 1994), alternatives to the *success equals medals* ideology may prove insightful concerning how to develop goals that apply to the athlete's understanding of success. I also asked them to discuss opportunities to be successful that do not necessarily relate to athletic performance.

Most of the discussion on 'success' revolved around athletic improvement and reaching goals. Five athletes defined success as reaching their *own* goals (Q, E, I, C, Y). Two of those athletes explained how important it is to set goals in the first place, and that goals can be little or big (Q, E). Two athletes defined success as improving athletically (Q, F, Y). It is important for them to see consistent improvements in their abilities, skill and performance. One athlete's definition of success has changed over his/her career, from focusing on winning, to internalizing how he/she felt about the individual performance. Success is now intrinsic for this athlete (F). One athlete defined success as simply making it to the Olympics (Y). Two athletes noted that winning medals is a part of how they define success (C, K). Two athletes expressed how success for them can be measured in results, but also how a person's potential is important.

[Success can be] defending the world and reaching your goals...success can be personal and that you've achieved your goals and that you've achieved your highest potential to the gold medal or the podium. (I)

[Success is] maximizing the performance potential of the individual...And on that day [if] performance potential of the individual or team is at an all-time high then that's success – 100% effort, 100% quality preparation. (M)

One athlete compared personal success to how he/she believes success is viewed by other people in the sport system and the country:

I guess success right now in the Canadian sport system would be winning a medal in 2010. My guess is there is not much other success in the minds of people out there. (Q)

After encouraging the athletes to think more holistically about success, the discussion varied widely. Success to two athletes is being able to contribute to the sport community (M, C). Two athletes discussed the importance of having an overall good life after sport (E, C).

Factors contributing to success

I then asked athletes to tell me what contributes to their success as an athlete, however they defined it, in an attempt to see if the solutions given by athletes are the same as the solutions provided through Own the Podium.

Four athletes identified their coach as the most important factor that contributes to their success. Their assessment was tied to the ability of the coach to help with athletic technique (Q, C), to contribute to the enjoyment of training and competing (M), and to create a positive personal relationship with his/her athlete (F). One athlete valued his/her coach because the coach looked after his/her well-being (C). Three athletes identified personal attributes as contributing to their success, including a good work ethic (C), attitude (I), and his/her unrelenting drive (M).

Four athletes identified the importance of being financially stable. Three of these athletes identified that without personal financial support from family or corporations, they may not be able to continue in their sport (Y, Q, K) and one athlete noted how it would help his/her success as an athlete if he/she did not have to worry about finances (E)

I've questioned my involvement. I've been close to saying screw this []. I'm just going to stop. Like I'm wasting my life here because I am fighting to pay the bills. (E)

Three athletes identified working with their PET team as significantly contributing to their success as athletes (F, I, Q), noting the importance of strength training and physiotherapy in the off-season (Q), having positive interactions with his/her PET team (F) and how he/she would not have the results he/she did with help from only one coach (I). Two athletes also mentioned the importance of rest and recovery (K, F).

Rest, [...] the ability to have physical rest, but also mental rest from concerns around [the sport]. (K)

Overall, athletes defined their success more broadly than just winning medals. They are concerned with their performance, and desire to see improvements and to meet their goals. Athletes appreciate the 'strong' goals of Own the Podium; however they questioned the importance of having to be the number one winter nation.

Impact of Own the Podium

In this section I explore feelings of pressure and expectations on current athletes, how Own the Podium has affected athletes at different levels of sport in Canada, and also the sustainability of the sport system. 'Impact of Own the Podium' includes results that describe how Own the Podium has affected current National Team athletes, development athletes and grassroots sports, and the sport system as a whole.

Pressure

While pressure was one of the themes I was intending to cover, many athletes bridged this topic before I reached the question in my interview guide. This idea of increased pressure because of Own the Podium was evident in every discussion. However, while all athletes acknowledged the increased pressure they have felt, or may feel in the future because of increased expectations, their opinions were divided about the side effects of this pressure.

Three athletes correlated increased feelings of pressure to the increasing resources that are being spent on improving the athlete's ability to perform (Y, F, C).

I just hope that they [...] don't know that one person has had a million dollars spent on them and that they better not screw it up. I hope it doesn't come down to that. (Y)

Two athletes felt that there should be a lot of pressure on athletes in Vancouver because of the increased resources that are being given to the athletes through Own the Podium.

(F, C), and believed there should be no excuses from athletes (C).

There should be pressure. We should be performing. I mean, they are pouring a ton of money into this. There is a lot of expectations and in some ways that is kind of exciting...The last thing I would do is push it away, because you know, if you can't perform under pressure then you shouldn't be doing it. (F)

Three athletes identified pressure coming from the 'need' to win medals for the team to qualify for funding for the following season (M, Q, I). One of these athletes identified that the NSO is making strategic decisions based on needing to qualify for more funding through Own the Podium (M). Several (four) athletes acknowledged that there is increased pressure on winter athletes (Y, I, M, F) and three hope that athletes will have the means to be able to deal with the pressure (Y, I, M).

Four athletes believed that pressure is inevitable - that athletes are always under pressure at the Olympics (F, I, E, M). One athlete said pressure is exciting (F), while another said pressure doesn't bother him/her because he/she wants to win for him/herself (E). Two athletes mentioned that other actors (i.e., coaches, support staff, administrators) in the sport system are feeling/will also feel pressure because of Own the Podium (M, C).

Some athletes do not feel much pressure right now because they are in a discipline that is not expected to get a medal. Others felt more pressure because their discipline is expected to get one medal, so they have to make sure they get it. One athlete felt that athletes in sports with more expected medals and more potential medalists will not feel the pressure as much because it is dispersed amongst the team, while one athlete believed that pressure will be bigger in those sports that are expected to win. (K, C, Q, F, M, I)⁷².

⁷² I have chosen not to link the statements to individual athletes to ensure confidentiality.

Expectations

Many athletes felt that expectations of their performances have increased with Own the Podium. Some athletes felt that pressure came from rising expectations of the public, and were concerned about the negative side-effects of not achieving the goals of Own the Podium. One athlete anticipated that a large amount of negative attention will arise from people within the sport, the sport system, the media, and Canadians if 'expected' medals are not won (K). Two athletes suggested that there will be consequences if athletes are not able to meet the expectations of the public:

I could see it going wrong because of the amount of money that, you know, taxpayers are paying. I think it could be a big devastation on the country, like a failure. (C)

I think it maybe indirectly put a lot of pressure on the Canadian athletes as well as raise the expectations of the public, like to a point where we may never be able to meet them. (F)

Impact on National Team Athletes

Many athletes discussed the increased resources that are available to them through Own the Podium. Several athletes identified the increased training opportunities (E, Y), the ability to travel to more competitions (M), the increased access to more support staff (C, F, I), new training equipment (C), better sport specific equipment (M), and testing (F, I, Q).

We do have a lot more funding now, and I'd say it has been great. And it seems like pretty much anything we have needed we've gotten. (C)

Several athletes also identified a change within their NSO, in that Own the Podium has brought more accountability through planning (E, C) and that NSOs are now making strategic decisions based on the aim of securing more funding from Own the Podium for the following season (M). Two athletes identified problems within their NSO from a

fairness perspective (E, M) and expressed hope that the Own the Podium process of program review will help mitigate some of those concerns (E).

Impact on Development Athletes

Loss of support. Many athletes identified their concern that the development side of NSOs has been lost or neglected because the focus is on the medal contenders (I, Q, M, F). A couple of athletes (two) mentioned that when current 'successful' athletes were younger (but still on the national team) they were very low in the standings internationally, but they were supported for many years by their NSO until they eventually improved and made it to the top of the standings (F, M).

But they [administrators] seem to have forgotten that. Now they expect the other [athletes] to be at the top of the standings or not be part of the program at all. And it is fantastic that some of the Canadian athletes have achieved such high results, but it's important that the administrators and the NSOs keep in mind how that happened. Not that it just happened. And I think Own the Podium contributes to that mentality because it does reward such results. (M)

Three athletes discussed their concern about the possibility that athletes who will peak closer to the Games may be left out of the equation, because they do not have the current results needed to qualify as athletes with 'medal potential' (F, M, Q). One athlete gave an example from the 2002 Games, where the athlete who won ski jumping came from out of the blue, and had maybe finished in 16th place before (Q).

There is also the risk of losing track of some people that could be really good if maybe they got a bit more attention, that [the administrators] didn't recognize right away. (F)

Two athletes also identified a problem that could arise by cutting funding to athletes, or only supporting a couple of athletes on a whole team. They mentioned the importance of

having strong teammates to make the team strong (M, I). They believe teammates are needed to push the top athletes - those athletes with 'medal potential' - to the next level.

A unique perspective provided by a developing athlete is how Own the Podium has expanded a gap between national team athletes and those striving for positions on the team. Only national team athletes have access to the technological advances and expertise that have been incorporated into the national team system by Own the Podium programs and processes. He/she identified that while Own the Podium is definitely an advantage on the international circuit, it makes it even more difficult to make that jump to the national team (M).

Recruitment. Several (three) athletes commented on Own the Podium's 'Recruitment' or 'Talent ID' program.⁷³ There was some uncertainty surrounding the aim of the recruitment, as the athletes did not think that a new athlete could be developed in three to five years. Two athletes identified negative feelings, from their colleagues and from developing athletes within the affected sports, towards not only the program but also the recruited athletes, including feelings of jealousy and resentment. These athletes also questioned the rationale behind funding the recruited athletes instead of athletes who are already in the system, and expressed feelings of skepticism that the Talent ID program will produce a medal.

They've [] started this talent ID program where they've brought in [new athletes] and tried to develop them into [potential medalists]. And you know, I think it's actually created a sense of resentment among a lot of younger developing [athletes] because these kids that are coming in, they are getting testing and funding. They get free [equipment]...and they can barely [do skill]. A lot of people are kind of annoyed because they've been [involved] for 10 or 15 years and they are just about to, you know, make that jump, [and] they're living on nothing.

⁷³ To ensure confidentiality, the athletes who made these statements will not be identified.

Impact on grassroots sports. Three athletes (E, Q, F) did not feel Own the Podium has had any impact on lower level grassroots sports. After contemplating the effects of Own the Podium on grassroots sports, two athletes identified that either indirectly or in the long term, people may go into a sport or put their children into a sport where there has been 'success' at the Olympics (I, Y).

I think maybe indirectly by achieving good results you indirectly begin the process of bringing more people into the sports [] and into the clubs. (I)

As discussed in the previous sub-problem (i.e., history of OTP), two athletes did think that Own the Podium has brought more attention or focus to some sports and/or to amateur sport in general (Y, M). One athlete believed that Own the Podium is limiting the choices of sport for children.

Just having Olympians in every sport would be better for the sport community. You know, everyone likes their choice and their freedom to do what they want to do. I think we are limiting their choice. (Y)

Sustainability

One point that came across very strongly in some interviews is athlete uncertainty about what is going to happen to winter sport in the future.

Their vision is too narrow I believe. And I wonder what's going to happen after 2010. I know they speak of goals of medals in 2012 and this and that, but I am thinking long-term. (Y)

And it also begs the question, what about in 2011 if all the funding is going towards technical advantages for the present...They don't really look at the long term picture in terms of 2014 or 2012, or afterwards. (M)

I think in the future if we want to have sport programs after 2010, which I think is even more important, [then] this type of program should be funding grassroots. After 2010 I am guessing there is going to be a mass exodus of athletes [], and how can we sustain it if there is not going to be any development? (Q)

I don't know what is going to happen after 2010. (I)

Athletes appreciate the increased access to resources through Own the Podium, but also acknowledged the increased pressure they feel because of these 'new' resources. Athletes identified how it seems that development athletes have been forgotten, and will be left behind because of Own the Podium, and how this will not create a sustainable sport system.

Athlete Voice

'Athlete Voice' explores the athletes' understanding of the program, their involvement with Own the Podium, their ability to affect change in the sport system, their understanding of 'athlete-centred', and the impact of the sport system on their outside lives. I focused on these questions because I believe, in keeping with duality of structure, that athletes need to understand their role and position in the sport system before they can affect change.

Understanding

In the literature (e.g., Shogan, 1999), the first step towards athletes being able to affect change in the system and make decisions is that they must have a solid understanding of the system and their role within it. To explore athletes' understandings of Own the Podium, I asked several questions that would test their basic knowledge.

No athletes correctly identified the role of the Winter Sports in the creation of the Own the Podium program. Two athletes (F, Y) thought it was created by the Canadian Olympic Committee (but they were both unsure). One athlete (K) thought it may have been initiated by VANOC, two athletes thought it was an initiative of Sport Canada (Q, M), one believed it was either Sport Canada or VANOC who started Own the Podium (E), and two athletes did not know who created Own the Podium (I, C).

Their knowledge about funding was slightly better. One athlete believed the funding comes from Canadian Heritage – but had to ask his/her roommate (I), two athletes said that Own the Podium is funded by Sport Canada or the federal government (Q, C), one athlete believed Own the Podium receives financial backing from the federal government and the British Columbia Provincial Government (K), one athlete thought most of the funding comes from VANOC (E), and three athletes correctly identified the combination of private and public funds – from VANOC and Sport Canada (Y, M, F).

All athletes were able to provide some information about the main rationale and solutions of Own the Podium. Their answers included: Own the Podium was created to fund sport in Canada and also to generate medal potential in 2010 (F); Own the Podium is aimed at increasing the amount of medals won in 2010 (K); Own the Podium sets out to get a certain amount of medals in 2010 – more than ever before (M); Own the Podium was created to win medals in Vancouver (C); Own the Podium was established to ‘own the podium’ in 2010 (I, E), and Own the Podium aims to ensure that Canada is ranked number one in the medal standings (Q). One athlete had never heard of the Top Secret program (K) and one only learned about it recently: “I just heard of it last week” (C).

One athlete believed a weakness of Own the Podium is that he/she does not understand the program. But, the athlete then stated that maybe he/she does not need to know about it, or does not care.

I would also say a weakness [] between athletes and Own the Podium is that athletes really don’t know anything about it...Like I don’t even know what they do. Maybe I do, but I don’t even care. (F)

*Athlete Involvement with Own the Podium*⁷⁴

Several athletes have been involved in Own the Podium sport reviews and Top Secret research. A number of athletes identified that they have been involved in wind tunnel testing. One described how it is important that individual athletes are involved in Top Secret testing because the athlete's body is so important when testing for aerodynamics. Another athlete explained how his/her team has had opportunities to discuss aspects of home-field advantage with Own the Podium administrators.

It's given us a few opportunities. I know one of my teammates went and was involved in discussions about maintaining home[field] advantage... That's really powerful, that's really good. We feel really positive that [the teammate] had a voice to talk about [homefield advantage].

One athlete had the opportunity to be involved with the Own the Podium sport reviews, along with his/her coach and sport director, but was unsure about the impact of his/her involvement.

I laid a lot of this stuff out on the table. A lot of this stuff I am telling you actually, about what I think is wrong with Own the Podium... They are pretty receptive, but I don't think it really made a difference.

This athlete also explained how he/she thinks there is a strong disconnect between what is actually happening within the sports, and what Own the Podium administrators think is happening.

So I think that sometimes they don't really understand or know what the athletes need. And you know, they say they ask us and they say they want to know and are doing everything they can to help, but I mostly feel like [there is a] disconnect between reality and their own perceptions of what is happening, from an athletes' perspective.

⁷⁴ I have chosen not to link the statements to the athletes to ensure confidentiality. For example, as wind tunnel testing is specific to certain sports, identifying which athletes were involved might lead to identification. Or since only one athlete per sport was involved with the OTP reviews, identifying the athlete who made the statement could lead to identification.

Three athletes explained how they did not think the administrators really know what athletes need because no one has bothered to ask the athletes. Referring to Top Secret, one athlete expressed to me that only the top athlete in his/her sport is involved with Top Secret. He/she believed the administrators are not using all the resources they have available, because for example he/she has a lot of knowledge about technology in the specific sport, but no one has asked him/her anything.

I've never been asked by anyone from Own the Podium or Top Secret [about] what I need. It's always through the NSO and okay, it's fine that [it's through] the NSO, [but] ours [] never talk to the athletes.

A weakness of Own the Podium identified by one of the athletes is that they haven't gone directly to the athletes.

I think they haven't gone to the athletes directly...I feel like the people who make decisions are twice removed from us [the athletes]. And I don't feel like we've been asked.

One athlete explained to me how he/she believes athlete input is crucial, but that his/her sport has no formalized process for athlete input. This person added that the one athlete representative for the NSO was not actually elected, but appointed somehow. One athlete did not understand the rationale behind the recruitment program, stating that he/she heard through rumours that Own the Podium wanted to bring in newer and younger athletes; he/she did not understand why these new athletes were getting funding.

Ability to affect change

I explored athletes' feelings on their ability to effect change to see if athletes believe that if they did not agree with something either within their own sport, or within the greater sport system, they could institute some kind of change.

Three athletes believed that they would be able to affect change within their sport (M, F, Q). They attributed this ability to their unique position in their sport as either having been 'successful', having a position of leadership, or as not being on the national team. However, all three athletes question their ability to affect change in the greater sport system. Two of the three athletes who thought they would be able to institute change identified that they have not exercised their ability. One athlete believed the only way to affect change in the system is through involvement with AthletesCAN. He/she believes AthletesCAN is starting to grow and gain respect and has begun to build working relationships with Sport Canada and other multi-sport organizations. He/she believed that athletes must work as a group to affect change (Y).

I think that because of the fact that I've had [some] success in international competition [] that my voice carries more weight. (F)

Outside the sport, I don't think I have the results or kind of, the whatever. I am not like a Clara Hughes where she says something and they listen. Within my sport I could say something and some people might listen. But outside [the sport] itself I don't really feel like I have that much power. (Q)

Four athletes do not believe they would be able to affect change in the system.

I don't think that I have the power or the ability to change it. [] First of all, one voice seems too small. Even when we stick together as athletes I feel they don't listen to us... So I feel like anything that's mentioned or said is kind of brushed off, even if we go in as a team and say something. (C)

Two athletes believe that negative repercussions will come from challenging administrators in their sport. One athlete described it as 'biting the hand that feeds you' (M); the other explained it as making a fuss when you don't agree with something, thus angering the administrators, which in the end means you are going to lose more than if you just kept quiet about the issue (E).

Two athletes believed that it has become more difficult to influence change in their sport recently, one attributing the change to Own the Podium.

I wouldn't say dramatic change, no. No, especially with the way, say, Own the Podium is directioning. (Q)

It's a hard question because I am the athlete-rep and I thought I had a decent amount of influence, and it's all come down to dollar signs and so I feel like I really don't have much influence anymore. (C)

Athlete-Centred

Since I am framing my thesis around the principle of the sport system being athlete-centred, I decided to ask the athletes what they believe the term 'athlete-centred' means. Several athletes had not heard the term before, but did provide me with solid examples of what they thought an athlete-centred system is, or what it should be. Although many were not able to pinpoint exactly what it means, they did provide many examples throughout the interviews that illustrate their desire for changes that would facilitate the development of a more athlete-centred sport system.

Many athletes described the idea of balance, which will be discussed in the next section on 'Outside Life'. One athlete identified an athlete-centred system as being where athletes become full people (Q). One athlete defined athlete-centred as:

Athletes taking control of their destiny and having a voice in the sport system. Making sure it's accountable, and responsible...For the athlete's voice to be respected, and athletes [being] treated fairly. (Y)

Another athlete explained the sport system as:

To be truly successful and performance oriented in generating the best performances possible, it actually needs to be athlete-centred. (M)

*Outside Life*⁷⁵

Personal life. Three athletes talked about the importance of balance. They talked about needing balance right now between sport and their personal or outside life, so that when they retire from athletics it's not such a huge jump into a new world, along with the idea of developing as a person, not just as an athlete (Y, Q). One athlete wished he/she could find a way to balance work and competition (K). Two athletes identified being successful in life as being important (C, E). Three athletes mentioned the importance of getting an education (C, E, Y) with two wishing they had an opportunity to complete post-secondary education (C, Y).

[Success] would be having a good life. Not being completely broke and hav[ing] nothing except your sport, and then when you are done sport you have to start off at zero. I mean, that's another part of life that we kind of forget. Like career options, being educated. [] Outside of sport, just being okay in life...Making sure I have something else beside sport. So when I am done I feel like I have something to do. Just that feeling is good for sport...You gotta have something besides sport to say to yourself 'Well, if I lose today I can go home and my family loves me, and I have something else to do.' (E)

Community involvement. All eight athletes mentioned either currently being involved in service to the community, or wanting to be involved in the future. Six athletes discussed their experience going into community schools and speaking. One athlete would like to be able to afford more time to be involved in the community, working with marginalized groups. However, he/she identified that it is hard to balance community involvement with training camps and competitions (M). Six athletes believed there were adequate programs in place to support their involvement in the community (M, F, I, K, E, Y). Five athletes mentioned being involved with the same program for speaking in

⁷⁵ The term outside life describes all aspects of an athlete's life that does not have to do with his/her sport. Aspects of 'outside life' can include education, career, and personal relationships, among others.

schools (F, I, K, E, Y). Two athletes did not think there were enough programs for athletes to get involved in the community (Q, C). One of them suggested that he/she is not as 'successful' as athletes that are getting these opportunities (C).

But maybe I haven't done well enough for anyone to ask me to do anything. (C)
Another athlete proposed that since he/she has reached "this level" (i.e, an Olympian) as an athlete and yet had not been exposed to the programs, then the programs may not be good enough (Q).

Three athletes mentioned they believe it is important for athletes to be involved in the community to get kids active, and that their involvement could help increase the number of children participating in physical activity (Y, F, M).

Sport system. Seven athletes talked about their intention to be involved in the sport system in some capacity after they retire as athletes. All seven want to be involved at the participation level, coaching kids. A common perspective is that these athletes believe it's important to give back to their sport. Two athletes talked about how the entire sport system should be connected, from grassroots to elite, with one describing her desire to institute the circle of community into his/her sport (M, K). One athlete was not convinced that he/she will be involved in the sport system.

Not a whole lot I don't think. No, I got other plans...I don't think so. Well, I'll help, but to an extent. (E)

Two athletes, while stating they would like to be involved at the participation level, talked about not wanting to be involved at the elite level.

I don't see myself currently, never say never, see myself pursuing a career in high performance sport...I think I've seen enough of high performance that I know I don't really want to be a part of it. But you know what, I can't say that with any certainty, but in some fashion I probably will try to give back and be involved. (F)

I'm not sure if I want to get too involved in the politics, because it's so much work, and so much effort and I don't know how much positive change can be exacted. So I am kind of undecided on that. I would certainly like to be involved in the participation level. (M)

In summary, athletes do not have an adequate understanding of Own the Podium, or their role within the program. Athlete involvement with Own the Podium is limited to a select few, and many do not feel that Own the Podium is meeting their needs because they have not been asked what they need, and/or they have not been involved in any decisions. Most athletes do not feel they have the ability to affect change in the sport system, and the ones that do, attribute their ability to their unique position in the sport system as 'successful' or as not being on the national team. Athletes want to give back to the sport system, and are also interested in being involved in the community. However, they acknowledged that they often do not have the opportunity to focus on their 'outside-life'.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS

Within each sub-problem, the analysis is divided into five sub-sections. They are: Athlete-Focused, The Value of Experts, International Influence on the Canadian Sport System, Partnerships and Cooperation, and Success. The first and third sub-problems are discussed in combination with relevant literature. As Own the Podium is a new program, the second sub-problem, addressing its creation and implementation, is discussed in relation to the literature on two previous performance programs – Game Plan '76 and Best Ever '88.

Sub-problem 1: How were selected elite sport funding decisions constructed in Canada from 1961 – 2004?

To answer the sub-problem 'how were selected elite sport funding decisions constructed in Canada from 1961 – 2004?' the results have been divided into the five sub-sections mentioned above. I have analyzed the results and discussed them in relation to relevant literature.

Athlete-Focused

I have chosen to use the term athlete-focused because I believe it describes the current environment for elite athletes in the Canadian sport system. Through funding decisions, and the resources acquired with those funds, athletes are the focus; that is, the performance of athletes is the focus. The status of the elite athlete in the Canadian sport system since the 1970s has shifted dramatically, from part-time athletes being supported only during the Olympic Games, to full-time, year-round athletes training and competing

and receiving a monthly stipend. The value placed on athletes by administrators has also shifted.

When the sport system was in its 'kitchen table' era (according to Kikulis et al.'s 1995 archetypes), sport organizations fulfilled the needs of their members – the athletes and participants. Although the organizations were all volunteer-run, the volunteers' actions focused on supporting athletes' needs (Kikulis et al., 1995). As the federal government began intervening in sport organizations, through funding and policy direction, the 'needs' of the athlete took second place to the 'needs' of meeting the federal government's goals for elite sport. As the government increasingly perceived the benefits of international sporting competition to include increasing national unity, national pride, and international prestige, the output of the athlete quickly became of utmost importance. This was illustrated by the definition of the high performance athlete, in 1980, as being in the Top-16 in the world (and no lower than the top half). There was no consideration of the commitment, time and sacrifice of the athlete (i.e., the input of 'elite' athletes); only the output of performances and the translation into world rankings mattered (COA, 1978).

Although administrators in several documents (Jackson, 1983b; *Toward 2000*, 1988, p. 32; *Federal Directons*, 1993, p. 5) outlined the importance of athlete input in creating the goals of the sport system, there is little evidence to support that this occurred. There was a belief, as stated in *A Paper on Olympic Game Plan* (1983) that NSOs represent their athletes, and because NSOs are all members of the Canadian Olympic Association, the COA is in a position to make decisions on behalf on the athletes (Jackson, 1983). While this may be logical in theory, communication problems between

athletes and NSOs have also been noted. The 1969 Task Force reported that there was poor internal communication within NSOs, as did another administrator during the COA 1980 Congress. As well, if athletes are not seen as having 'real' knowledge (Shogan, 1999), it is unlikely that any athlete-involvement that took place was considered meaningful. Shogan identified that 'real' knowledge is perceived by decision-makers as the only legitimate source of decision-making knowledge, and is gained by professionals through formalized education and experience in the professional field. For example, the panel responses from administrators and government officials during the 1980 Congress illustrated strong objections to athletes being involved in any planning, either because they were asking for too much, or because they were not seen as 'experts' and as such they were in no position to advise administrators on how to build the sport system. In contrast to this, in several instances the COA claimed they were the lead organization with respect to athlete involvement, establishing an athlete's council in 1980 and giving the council members voting status at COA meetings. At the same time, the COA pointed out that many NSOs did not allow athletes to be involved with decision-making committees. Not having athletes involved in decision making contradicts the efforts of the sport system, as expressed in several documents (*Towards 2000*, 1988; *Amateur Sport: Future Challenges*, 1990; *Sport: The Way Ahead*, 1992; *The Canadian Sport Policy*, 2002) to develop the 'whole person' or to base national goals for sport on athletes' needs.

Creating an athlete's association to increase the athlete-centredness of the sport system was proposed in *Federal Directions in Sport* (1993). While an athlete's association might help athletes come together to influence the direction of the sport system, we can question the effectiveness of such an association when the structures of

the sport system strongly value the opinions of experts. With the advent of more and more 'experts' in decision-making positions, the value of the athletes' voice decreased. Accompanying the professionalization of staff in the sport system, was a shift in values to a more 'business' orientation. This supported the shift to a 'results' or 'outcome' oriented approach for the whole sport system. This supports Kikulis et al.'s (1995) archetype of the 'boardroom', which places a greater emphasis on nurturing elite athletes to improve their skills through increased competition, increased technical expertise, and an increase in administrative efficiency.

Athletes were not only seen as helping the government reach their goals for the sport system; they were also seen as ambassadors for the country, and as marketing tools. With increased international exposure through competitions, and increased televising of sporting events, Canadian athletes were more visible to Canadians and to the world. This aligned with the belief that Canadian athletes are ambassadors for the country, which appeared in task force and policy discussions (*Towards 2000*, 1988; *Sport: The Way Ahead*, 1992). Along with the idea of athletes as ambassadors was a perceived need to control the behaviour of athletes through athlete agreements, which outlined both their rights and responsibilities (*Towards 2000*, 1988).

In *Amateur Sport: Future Challenges* (1990), the Standing Committee pointed out that athletes themselves are marketable, and there is a need to increase their visibility for financial benefits and benefits of increased levels of participation. However, the Committee noted that it seemed that athletes were only visible when they did something extraordinary in international competition. This realization was explored further by Dubin (1990) in the inquiry into doping in sport; he noted that only those athletes who win

medals are recognized and rewarded. This process – of recognizing only those athletes who win medals – devalues the experience and the effort of those athletes who still compete, but do not win medals.

What was not examined in the literature, and what I was not able to find in my document analysis, was any indication of how the specific performance programs and the influx of funds changed the experience of athletes. This absence reaffirms my assumption that most decisions were made without considering the athletes outside of their ‘ability to perform.’ The focus on the performance of the athlete intensified from 1961 – 2004. However, in the 1980s a dialogue existed on the need to increase the athlete’s involvement in the decision-making process.

The Value of Experts

One point that remained constant in all discussions of Canadian sport examined between 1961 and 2004 is the importance of having ‘experts’ in decision-making positions. This included coaches and support staff. With the shift in the sport system towards professionalization, the importance of employing professional experts similarly increased. Professionals and experts are considered the purveyors of ‘legitimate knowledge’ with respect to training, competing, and administering sport (as discussed by Shogan, 1999 & Slack, 1997).

The advent of professionals lessened the ‘need’ and ‘utility’ of volunteers. This also diminished the likelihood or opportunity for athletes to influence decisions, because the gap between volunteer knowledge and the ‘real knowledge’ of educated, experienced administrators grew larger. Professional administrators were seen as necessary to increase the performances of Canadian athletes. As professional administrators became

legitimized in the sport system through full-time paid jobs, the value of volunteers' work was diminished. The volunteers were not as valued because they did not have formalized training (e.g., education), and because paid positions were seen as more valued than non-paid positions. So, at the same time as the government and the COA were beginning to fund sport and create programs based on achieving outcomes that would support their goals, professionals were being hired into the sport system who shared 'outcome' oriented business values (Whitson & Macintosh, 1988). These events, occurring simultaneously, further distanced both volunteers and athletes from the decision-making process.

Hosting the Olympic Games was also seen as having increased the skill, experience and knowledge of sport staff, and was thus viewed as an important factor in the development of the sport system (Jackson, 1976; *Towards 2000*, 1988; *Sport: The Way Ahead*, 1992). After the success of the 1976 Games, the Minister of State for Sport credited the 'present levels' of success in Canadian sport to the efforts of the professional staff, while acknowledging the vital work of the volunteer (*Partners in Pursuit of Excellence*, 1979). The COA did not agree, documenting in 1980 that "the financial and administrative requirements have surpassed the ability of the volunteer to cope effectively" (COA, 1980, p. 6). Following the 1988 Calgary Games, the government too thought the use of volunteers would be lessened. The Task Force in *Partners in Pursuit of Excellence* (1988) noted that as the sport system grows in magnitude and complexity, the use of volunteers will be lessened while the importance of having professionally trained and full-time staff will increase. However, moving forward to 2002 and the *Canadian*

Sport Policy, the value of the volunteer was again noted; it was pointed out that the sport system needs to support the development of volunteers as well as paid leadership.⁷⁶

Professional administrators, 'experts' in administering their sport, were trumped by 'sport experts' from the federal government. As a part of the quadrennial planning process, NSO administrators were required to work with Sport Canada consultants to develop their respective sport plans. Funding through 'Best Ever' was administered by Sport Canada depending on these quadrennial plans. Alternatively, NSOs were lobbying the federal government for unconditional grants because they considered themselves to be experts in their sport, and thus could best meet the needs of their athletes. However, Sport Canada controlled the resources (i.e., funding) and the rules to access these funds (i.e., the quadrennial planning process), so Sport Canada had the power to determine the direction of individual NSOs.

In the *Task Force Report* (1969) and the P.S. Ross & Partners Game Plan development document (1972), decision-makers were professing that NSOs are the only organizations with the ability to develop sport and thus they are responsible for their athletes' results. However, funding programs that were being created (e.g., the quadrennial planning process), required outside consultancy with Sport Canada. In a subsequent document (*Amateur Sport: Future Challenges*, 1990) the Standing Committee acknowledged that NSOs are the closest organizations to athletes, but they added that only when NSOs have increased capacity should they become the primary agents in the development of their sport. More recently, a criticism of the COC's Podium 2002

⁷⁶ The 1998 Mills Report on the sport industry in Canada identified the number of volunteers and their unpaid hours that contribute to the sport system. There are about 1.8 million volunteer jobs in sport and recreation in Canada, totally over 172 million hours. This represents approximately 83,000 full-time, full-year jobs. If these jobs had paid \$5 per hour they would have generated a payroll of \$16.6 million a week or \$864 million per year (Mills, 1998).

program was that the 'sport experts' who created the sport and athlete-specific plans did not know enough about the individual sports to make solid programming decisions. This once again highlighted the conflict between sport experts within particular sports, and sport experts within the greater sport system.

A discussion of experts would not be complete without tracing the involvement of 'experts' over time. Interestingly, P.S. Ross & Partners were commissioned on several occasions to evaluate the sport system. Theories of social construction assume that reports conducted by the same people would yield similar conclusions. In the case of P.S. Ross & Partners, their evaluation following the release of the *Task Force Report* (1969) (which was criticized because of its focus on elite sport) supported the Task Force's consideration of the importance of increasing elite performances to contribute to national unity and international prestige. P.S. Ross & Partners was also commissioned to develop the Game Plan '76 program. While it would be impossible to make any conclusions about this without specifically analyzing both documents for congruencies, it is important to trace similarities, and acknowledge the links. The same can be said for Roger Jackson's involvement with both Game Plan '76 (as Director of Sport Canada) and Best Ever '88 (as President of the COA). The COA's initial Game Plan '88 document built on the original Game Plan '76 framework. The subsequent commandeering of this program by Sport Canada into Best Ever and the QPP changed the program significantly. It is likely that people are selected into these positions over and over again because they are seen as the 'experts'. Delving deeper into the programs might illustrate how certain people's involvements shape the direction of sport in particular ways. The more the government

tied professionalization into its policy discussions and funding programs, the more valuable professionals and 'experts' became in the sport system.

Not only were professional administrators wanted; so too were administrators and coaches from other countries. If the experts themselves were not accessible to the sport system, their knowledge was sought after. The 'Best Ever' cross country ski plan, for example, outlined the need for current Canadian coaches to be able to review high performance programs from other countries.

International Influence on the Canadian Sport System

The international community had a large bearing on how sport and sport policy has developed in Canada. Ultimately, in international competition the idea is to beat the opposition - the other country. Although we could 'naturally' attribute the development of sport in Canada to the desire to win medals at competitions, there are several other factors that have led to an internationally driven sport system.

In the literature, several authors attribute the rise in 'results conscious' thinking to the intensification of the Cold War and Canada's place relative to the Eastern Bloc countries. There was definitely an 'Us' vs. 'Them' mentality in international sports. The 1969 Task Force believed that winning in sport is clearly linked to international prestige, specifically that international success is 'proof' of the superior merit of the winner's social and political structure. This idea was effectively illustrated by the 1972 Soviet-Canadian Hockey Summit Series. The Task Force claimed there was a crisis of Canadian identity because of the poor performances of the Canadian National Hockey Team. The Task Force also felt there was a need to strengthen Canadian identity and culture through

sport because of the large cultural influence from the “strong, populous, wealthy, and self-confident United States” (p. 7).

Hosting the Olympic Games adds another dimension to the influence of the international community on Canada and Canadian sport. Hosting the Games seems to provide additional rationale for ‘needing’ successful performances by Canadian athletes. Canada (more specifically the COA or the host committee) believed that there would be greater social and economic benefits if Canadian athletes performed well (Jackson, 1976).⁷⁷ Pressure is also exerted by the international community as they subscribe to the belief that the host nation should perform successfully. The IOC exerts its influence on the host committee to have the “best games ever”, and that reaffirms the desire of the host country to perform well (Hobson, 1988). There was no indication of why the IOC expects host countries to ‘perform well.’ International influence is not only felt during times of crisis (e.g., the Cold War), or during Olympic years, but as the *Sport: They Way Ahead* (1992) Task Force noted, that global sport structures influence how sport is understood in Canada. They acknowledged that Canadian sport policy cannot be created without first understanding the linkages between Canadian sport and international sport.

Several documents (COA, 1979; Canada, 1987; *Towards 2000*, 1988; Canada, 1995) concluded that the results of Canadian athletes are based on (a) the ability of the athletes themselves, and (b) the system that is supporting them. However, there was only one instance where the results of Canadian athletes were identified as being based on their abilities, the sport system, as well as the performances of other nations (Morin, 2002).

⁷⁷ The assertion that the more ‘successful’ Canadian athletes are, the more benefits Canada will see was also found in *Towards 2000* (1988), *Amateur Sport: Future Challenges* (1990), and *Sport: They Way Ahead* (1992).

Tied into this idea of the international influence on Canadian sport is the perception that some 'other countries' will have more experienced administrators and coaches, and that their knowledge is valuable to the Canadian system. For example, in the Cross Country Canada 'Best Ever' plan (*Plan 88 & Beyond*, 1984), decision-makers noted it was important that coaches had access to high performance programs from other countries to improve their own programs. The *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002) identified the need to strengthen international strategies including being aware of what other countries are doing, by keeping abreast of leading-edge developments from abroad. Canadian sport has not developed in a vacuum. The international sporting community has influenced how Canadians understand sport, create policies and funding programs, and interpret the results of Canadian athletes.

Partnerships and Cooperation

Both the federal government and multi-sport organizations realized early on in the 1970s that they could not sustain 'successful' international performances on their own. While initial partnerships were constructed as a public-private funding agreement, they evolved to include the creation of a common vision among numerous stakeholders, and cooperation in reaching those goals.

The 1969 Task Force criticized the COA because it did not have enough financial resources to support growth in the sport system, or a formal means to acquire more funding. The COA responded to the criticisms and created the Olympic Trust, so they could solicit funds more effectively from the private sector. As Macintosh et al. (1987) stated, Game Plan was an attempt to bring together all key agencies to coordinate and finance the effort for improved international performances. Although the federal

government did not commit to the program until 1973, the COA did acknowledge the importance of government funding. In spite of this, the COA felt they did not receive adequate recognition from the public, despite taking the lead in the project. However, in defense of the COA, they did claim that it was the coordinated, cooperative, and financial efforts of both the government and the COA that produced the major contribution to Game Plan, and to the development of high performance athletes (Jackson, 1976).

For the Best Ever '88 program, the COA viewed the federal government (through Sport Canada) as a partner with the role of supplying resources and expertise to NSOs. It was noted by Jackson (1983), in *A Paper on Olympic Game Plan 1988*, that if the COA and Sport Canada could work together and have the same objectives for the '88 Games, then it was likely that others (i.e., private sponsors and national sport organizations) would support their objectives as well. At a time when the federal government had identified the need for increased funding for the sport system to achieve its desired growth (*Partners in Pursuit of Excellence*, 1979; *Towards 2000*, 1988), government officials called for national businesses to step up and support sport. The federal government also announced that their funding levels would remain the same. This was a time of spending 'rationalization', when governments and the corporate sector were feeling the financial pinch. The onus for supporting sport was placed on NSOs who were to explore new funding opportunities, and form partnerships with the corporate sector and professional teams and leagues (*Business Plan for Sport in Canada*, 1995). By cooperating with the government, NSOs were more successful in getting funds, as was evidenced in Best Ever. Amis et al. (2002) outlined how sports changed their structures and processes to cooperate with Sport Canada in order to receive funds through the

quadrennial planning process. However, after the completion of the funding programs, many NSOs reverted back to their 'old ways' of operating. This illustrates how NSOs will change their priorities and their touted 'values' in order to receive funding. It is also evident that the power the funding organizations have over NSOs discourages the NSOs from challenging the processes they disagree with and may otherwise seek to change. Indeed, sport organizations will jump through the necessary funding hoops to ensure their survival (i.e., survival relating to their continued operation through sustained funding).

The government was initially concerned about the use of public funds by private entities, explaining that it was undesirable for the government to lose control over their resources (Canada, 1969). In the eyes of the government, the best way to ensure their funds were properly spent was to tie conditions of accountability to the funding. Organizations that receive funding from the government (i.e., receive 'core' funding) were first determined as 'eligible' based on certain characteristics, and were then ranked based on domestic and international markers. The higher the rankings, the more money they received (Canada, 1987). 'Partnerships' were established between the government and NSOs. In exchange for funding, NSOs had to ensure that the objectives of the government were being met.

The Game Plan Coordinating Committee's role was to decide which sports and what initiatives would be funded by each financial partner (i.e., the COA, Olympic Trust and the federal government). With Podium 2002, the majority of funds acquired to finance the program came from the private sector, which was the first time a high performance program was not funded primarily by the federal government. The federal government, in keeping with *The Canadian Sport Policy* (2002), reaffirmed through its

fourth pillar 'Interaction', the need for collaboration and communication between all stakeholders in the Canadian sport system. Partnerships were initially established to fund programs. What eventually developed in the sport system was cooperation between stakeholders to not only fund programs, but to also create common plans and coordinate all resources to reach goals.

Independence

While partnerships and cooperation were valued in the sport system, there was also an emphasis placed on independence. Sport organizations knew that they could not operate 'successfully' without the funding provided by the federal government; however, they still wanted to remain as autonomous as possible. For example, the creation of Olympic Trust allowed the COA to rely less on and to remain at arms-length from the federal government. However, remaining independent was not easy. It became increasingly difficult with the additional funding provided by the government and with the increasing emphasis on 'cooperation' and partnerships. Game Plan 1988 was originally a COA program, but, as stated previously, Sport Canada took control and implemented the quadrennial planning process. Although it was not clear in the literature or the documents, I would assume that since Sport Canada financed a large part of the performance program, they could create the processes used to reach the 'common' vision of a 'best ever' performance in Calgary. This case again echoes the idea that those who are in control of the resources are also in control of setting and evaluating the goals. In this example, the goal of a 'best ever' performance was desirable for both the COA and Sport Canada, but through QPP Sport Canada could ensure that its sport objectives were being met. *The Canadian Sport Policy* (2002) clearly outlines this priority of Sport

Canada. It notes that while the sport system needs new funds (i.e., from the private sector), funding allocations need to be effective and must be tied directly to policy objectives and measurable results (i.e., to ensure accountability). Thus, while partnerships were established to pool resources and meet goals, there was a desire by NSOs to be autonomous from the federal government in creating goals and evaluating these goals.

Success

The definition of 'success' in the Canadian sport system, along with what is believed to contribute to this 'success', has shifted over time. Sport has always been a competition with an end goal of declaring a winner and a loser – the winner having been 'successful'. However, this is only *one* option for defining success in the sport system. With the onset of 'professionalization', which valued a results-oriented approach, as well as rationalization, which ensured limited resources were spent wisely, success was measured in terms of competitions won, supporting Macintosh's (1988) claim that success in high performance sport is easily verified in quantitative terms.

It appears that the 'easy' way of measuring success by the number of medals won overcame any negatives associated with this method. There was no lack of evidence (e.g., *The Dubin Report*, 1990; *The Best Report*, 1992) promoting a shift away from focusing on the medal performances of elite athletes in Canada. Perhaps the government perceives that it is more important to be accountable to the public for the money they spend than the values they support. The focus of success on medals in international competition supports the outcome over the process. While many critics identified doping as a side-effect of such a system, decision-makers chose to put the blame on individual athletes who took performance enhancing substances. They did not question a system that benefits from the

continuation of particular ways of understanding (i.e., federal government goals of national unity and international prestige – and their economic spin-offs – are best met when Olympic level athletes win medals).

A common method purported to increase the ‘success’ of athletes (i.e., success understood as winning medals) is to increase the abilities of the national sport organizations to develop their respective athletes. This is known as the capacity of the organization. Macintosh (1987) describes the capacity of the NSO as needing to have people in positions of influence with administrative and organizational skills, and leadership necessary to enhance the ‘production’ of elite athletes. However, tying this conversation back to ‘experts’, it would seem that having Sport Canada consultants working with NSOs on every step of the Quadrennial Planning Process does little to increase the capacity within NSOs, especially if NSOs are just paying lip service to Sport Canada, and then reverting back to their ‘old ways’ (Amis et al., 2002). While I could see how administrators in NSOs could learn from their sport consultants’ ways of organizing and thus become more effective as leaders in their organization, there is little indication that this happened. Furthermore, government funding dropped right off after 1988, so it is unlikely that NSOs were concerned about their ‘effectiveness’ as leaders once they were struggling to survive.

NSOs valued the process of QPP because it showed what support is needed for athletes to win medals (Amis et al., 2002; Cavanaugh, 1988; Whitson & Macintosh, 1988). However, many NSOs believed the single focus of this mandate and the single criterion for success was inappropriate. They questioned the sustainability of a system where all efforts and funds are geared towards a single event – the 1988 Olympics

(Macintosh & Whitson, 1990). While the QPP was helpful in clarifying what was needed to 'succeed' from the government's perspective, there was concern from NSOs that additional goals were not even considered. NSOs therefore had no input into determining the ultimate goal and little say in how that goal was to be reached. This approach contrasts with documents that touted the importance of involving all people in the creation of goals they play a role in reaching, suggesting that if this is not done, then all parties will not be fully committed to reaching the goal.

Conclusion

Winning medals was perceived as the 'easiest' way to measure success in the sport system. With the onset of 'professionalization', which valued a results-oriented approach, as well as rationalization, which ensured the limited resources were spent wisely, the *success as medals* mentality was strengthened.

Sub-problem 2: What approach was employed by the Winter Sport Partners in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium?

To answer the sub-problem 'what approach was employed by the Winter Sport Partners⁷⁸ in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium?' the findings have been divided into five sub-sections: 'athlete-focused', the value of experts, international influence on the Canadian sport system, partnerships and cooperation, and success. Since there is no literature on Own the Podium specifically because it is a new program, I have

⁷⁸ Winter Sport Partners refers to all the stakeholders who were involved in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium, including 13 winter sport NSOs, the COC, the CPC, VANOC, CODA, Sport Canada, and the Independent Winter Sport Task Force.

analyzed the results and discussed them in relation to with the two previous Olympic Games performance programs – Game Plan '76 and Best Ever '88.

Athlete-Focused

The term athlete-focused first arose in an interview with one of the administrators A3). This administrator consciously chooses not to use the term athlete-centred, and instead uses the term athlete-focused. This administrator agrees that at the end of the day the national sport organization is about the athlete; what the term athlete-centred fails to do is include all other integral members of a sport organization including coaches, administrators, office staff and technical support staff. He/she sees the athlete as the product of the coach, the NSO, and the Canadian sport system. Everyone in the sport organization is working towards providing for the athlete in an attempt to 'improve' the performance of the athlete. An important consideration, that I think is often ignored, is the use of the term 'production' when talking about athlete development. When I hear the term 'producing athletes' or 'athlete production' I understand it to mean focusing attention and resources on only the athletic ability of the athlete, not the holistic development of the person. Production also implies that the athlete is the product. In a business sense, the product is what makes the company money. In the athletic sense (which we have already established as being based in business values) the 'product' will (a) acquire funds for the NSO, and (b) create a stronger Canada - socially, economically and in the international arena. The concept of 'product' does not facilitate athletes being active participants in the decision-making process or encourage anyone else to think of athletes outside of their performances. To explore opportunities for athletes to become

actively engaged in the creation and development of the sport system, we first need to understand how they are viewed by current decision-makers.

Athlete-centred is understood by all three administrators as providing the support (i.e., human, financial and material resources) needed for athletes to compete successfully in international competitions (A1, A2, A3). What Own the Podium has done is fulfilled this understanding of athlete-centred. Own the Podium has: increased athletes' access to support staff (i.e., human resource) such physiotherapists, sports medicine, equipment technicians; provided athletes with advanced equipment to increase their success rate at the Games (i.e., material resource); and provided more funds to their sport organization to increase the effectiveness of their program delivery (i.e., financial resource). Within this understanding of athlete-centred, Own the Podium is absolutely supporting an athlete-centred system.

Many structures seen in Own the Podium are not new. Providing support for the athletes to increase their performance has been a priority since the 1970s. Methods included in Own the Podium to increase athlete performances can also be found in Game Plan '76 (P.S. Ross & Partners, 1972). P.S. Ross & Partners determined that to improve Canada's Olympic performance, there was a need to incorporate sport science and medical support, and to increase athlete's exposure to international competitions (p. 3). Planning structures established in Best Ever to increase the performance of Canadian athletes at the 1988 Olympics also exist in Own the Podium. For Best Ever, NSOs created four-year plans with Sport Canada consultants. Their progress towards these goals was monitored and funding was based on these quadrennial plans. With Own the Podium, NSOs were required to create their own plans. These plans were reviewed by the Sport

Review Panel, and funding allocations are based partly on these plans (A2). Efforts to increase the 'production' of athletes, while prominent in Own the Podium documents and the administrator interviews, was not the only aspect of athlete-centred discussed by the administrators.

One administrator acknowledged the necessity of athlete involvement in the decision making process, and specifically the importance of having athletes involved in the initial Own the Podium program reviews, as part of creating an athlete-centred system (A1). Why all administrators do not identify athlete involvement in decision-making as a characteristic of an athlete-centred sport system may be attributed to several factors. In keeping with Shogan (1999), administrators have been involved in a system that values the knowledge and actions of 'experts.' These 'experts' have experience in technical and/or administrative positions, as well as experience in other 'successful' national sport systems. In keeping with practical consciousness,⁷⁹ it is hard to break away from the belief that 'experts' are the only people who should be making decisions. Current administrators have all been in prior administrative positions, and know first-hand how much time and effort it takes to make decisions, and how prior administrative experience helps the process. I think a problem emerges when administrators think that involving athletes in decision-making processes is too time consuming, and that for athletes to be successful in the current system they need to be able to spend all their available time on training and competing. In many ways this is 'true'. The structure of the current sport system enforces the belief that success is equated to winning medals, and winning medals has been broken down into a more or less scientific equation of training hours, body

⁷⁹ Giddens (1984) describes practical consciousness as people generally acting in accordance with a set of understandings about social life. Practical consciousness is what is taken for granted; it is what is 'naturally' believed to be true.

composition, and experience in competition. In keeping with this line of thinking, any action that supports or contributes to the athletes reaching the goal of winning a medal would be constructive.

Leading up to the 1976 Montreal Games, there was no discussion surrounding athletes' involvement in decision-making. However, the major advancement that occurred for athletes' rights was the implementation of broken-time payments. When the International Olympic Committee changed its amateur status regulations in 1974, Canadian athletes took the lead in lobbying the federal government and the COA to implement a program that would allow athletes to be paid for the time they took off from work in order to train and compete (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990). This is one of only two developments ever noted in the literature about athletes joining together to lobby decision-makers. The second instance of an athlete-led movement, which resulted in the creation of the COA athlete's council, was the athlete protests surrounding the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Summer Games (COA Quadrennial Report, 1988). Aside from the creation of AthletesCAN in 1996, athlete activism has been scarce since the 1980s. I think that with increased resources being provided for athletes, and more funding being given directly to athletes (i.e., carding), athletes believe they have more to lose, and would rather maintain their current position than challenge the decisions or decision-makers. The apolitical nature of elite athletes could also be attributed to the formation and formalization of AthletesCAN. Athletes may believe that AthletesCAN will address any 'important' issues.

Athletes have been involved in the decision-making process to a degree. One administrator explained that feedback from athletes is readily accepted (A3). Another

administrator expressed to me the necessity of having athletes involved in the initial Own the Podium sport reviews because there was little administrator or coach continuity after the 2002 Salt Lake Games (A1). Conversely, two administrators discussed in the interviews that building capacity within the NSOs will lead to a sustainable sport system (A2, A3). However, increasing the capacity of NSOs in the 1998-2002 quadrennial would have done little following Salt Lake because of the turnover of staff. There appears to be a focus on including ex-athletes in the current sport system, and through Own the Podium. One administrator I interviewed explained how Own the Podium includes ex-athletes, and explained that ex-athletes are similar to current athletes – they just have different experiences. I would argue it is because current athletes have different experiences that it is important that current athletes are involved. Including ex-athletes, while beneficial for many reasons, is not sufficient to achieve an athlete-centred system. Current athletes need input on decisions, and few people apart from them will understand their position. There is a noticeable difference between administrators' stances on involving athletes in decision-making. However, all administrators agree that Own the Podium was created to help the athletes.

The Value of Experts

The success of Own the Podium will be based on the experts involved in the creation and implementation of the program (A3). While this principle was verbally expressed in one of the administrator interviews, the importance of experts to the program can also be seen in the program itself. Own the Podium is a technical program. Generally, 'technical' can be understood as solving a problem through applied science. In the case of Own the Podium, I understand technical to mean using skills and knowledge

from science, sport science, and health science to improve the performance of Canada's elite athletes. Science becomes useful when people understand the perceived problems, work towards a solution, and implement the solution. Experts have been involved with Own the Podium at each of these three levels. There are administrative experts who analyze the current situation, develop the base of programs, and hire 'technical' experts to provide innovative solutions. Administrative experts involved in Own the Podium are considered experts because of their involvement in the Canadian sport system. This usually includes having held administrative positions at previous Olympic Games, experience specifically with previous 'performance programs', and in many cases experience as a former elite athlete. Technical experts are persons possessing specialized knowledge relating to an aspect of either science, sport science, or health science. Technical experts have been professionally trained through education, and have experience with specific 'problems' identified by the administrative experts.⁸⁰ Technical experts currently involved with Own the Podium are: (a) members of the Performance Enhancement Team – including strength trainers, physiologists, physiotherapists, psychologists, doctors, nutritionists, equipment technicians, video/computer technicians; and (b) engineers and biomechanists involved with Top Secret.

The administrative experts initially concluded that the current sport system was not adequately prepared to create and implement a technical program that would increase the number of potential medalists and increase their success rate at the 2010 Olympic Games. The Own the Podium group needed adequate financial resources to bring the necessary experts into the Canadian elite Olympic sport system. One administrator

⁸⁰ These 'problems' include how the athlete and equipment interact with the environment (i.e., air, snow, and ice) (Allinger, 2006).

identified that it took administrators longer than anticipated to implement the Top Secret program because of the difficulty in hiring the 'right' people (A3). This insight illustrates that without 'experts', administrators believe that programs of Own the Podium are ineffective. However, one fault identified in the Podium 2002 program evaluation was that the 'sport experts' involved did not have enough experience or understanding with specific sports (Morin, 2002). So while they had knowledge about the sport system in general, they were not able to make effective program decisions. With Game Plan '76, NSOs were seen as the experts in their sport; thus it was important for NSOs to deliver the program. With Best Ever, Sport Canada 'consultants' were involved in the creation of QPP and in reviewing the progress of the sports towards their agreed-upon goals. During that program, NSOs still felt they were the experts on their sport; many resisted the intervention of the federal government into their daily operations (Kikulis et al., 1995). Currently, with Own the Podium, NSOs have 'outside' experts coming into their sport and making programming decisions. While NSOs are experts in their own sports, 'outside' experts often have more authority and more power to make technical and administrative decisions. This can be related back to the difference between volunteers and 'professionals' in the 1980s. Professionals were educated and thus were seen as better suited to achieving the goals of the sport system. With Own the Podium, another layer has been created between 'experts' and the 'professional' sport administrators that run NSOs. In many cases the 'outside' experts that have been brought into the Canadian sport system have previous experience in foreign sport systems.

Experts are valued in the current sport system. Administrative experts with experience in high performance sport in Canada and in other countries created the

program. The administrative experts hired technical experts to implement Own the Podium. Technical experts are essential to the full implementation of the program. As Own the Podium exists today, without technical experts developing initiatives, or experts at the front line implementing programs with the athletes, Own the Podium could not succeed.

International Influence on the Canadian Sport System

Processes and programs in the Canadian sport system have been influenced by the international sport community. One of the rationales for the creation of Own the Podium is that the IOC expects the host country to do well. One administrator explained it this way: the Olympics is the brand of the IOC, and the IOC believes that the 'successful' performance of the host country will increase the value of its brand (A3). The host country feels pressure from the IOC to perform. In Canada's case there was also perceived pressure to perform in Vancouver because of the 'poor' performance of athletes in Montreal in 1976 and Calgary in 1988 – where no gold medals were won (A2). Sport administrators thus created a program to increase the success of the home-athletes. International influence is also apparent with the appearance of increasingly more international experts within the sport system.

A large component of Own the Podium involved examining each sport individually to determine 'what works' and 'what does not work'. International experts with knowledge about their respective sport were consulted by Own the Podium to examine the Canadian method of delivering sport. Having an 'outside' expert looking in was seen as valuable to the program, because if other countries have had success in their sport, then they have knowledge and expertise to contribute to the Canadian system. The

utility of foreign knowledge was also acknowledged in Best Ever. NSOs were encouraged by their Sport Canada consultants to seek-out foreign development programs, with the intent of incorporating the best practices from around the world into the Canadian sport system (Cross Country Canada, 1984). Once again, we see that 'professionals' trump volunteers, experts trump professionals, and international experts are the ultimate sources of knowledge and experience.

The Canadian sport community feels pressure from the international sporting community to have athletes who will win medals in Vancouver. One Own the Podium solution to increase the medal count is to consult international experts. The involvement of experts who have had 'success' in international sport systems, or who are from 'successful' programs, is thus seen to be vital to the success of the Canadian sport system.

Partnerships and Cooperation

Own the Podium is a partnership between 13 winter sports, the Canadian Olympic Committee, Sport Canada, VANOC, CODA, and private corporations. Cooperation is the core of the successful implementation of this program. All elements of Own the Podium are highlighted by the need to develop effective working relationships between 'partners'. The PET team, Top Secret, and Recruitment all require cooperation between NSOs, administrators and technical experts.

Initially the 13 winter sports NSOs came together and believed they needed a common vision to improve Canadian sport performance at the 2010 Vancouver Games. The winter sports, as primary agents in the development of Canadian athletes, believed they could take the lead in developing a program to increase the medal performances of Canadian athletes. The winter sports were backed by the COC and VANOC when they

approached the federal government for support. Expressed in one document was the perceived importance of going to the Minister of State for Sport together as a unified group, because it was more likely that the Government would support Own the Podium knowing that prominent Canadian sport organizations are already supporting the initiative (Daffern, 2006). This occurred as well during the 1980s with Best Ever. Sport Canada and the COA believed it would be much easier to gain support (probably from the private sector, although it was never explicitly identified) if they were seen as a unified front (Jackson, 1983b). A guiding value of Best Ever was a commitment to view the federal government as a partner in the sport delivery process, who would supply resources and expertise to NSOs (Amis et al., 2002).

Due to the large scale of performance programs, administrators realized that funding the programs would be the first challenge. With Game Plan '76, the overwhelming majority of funding came from the federal government. The COA, through Olympic Trust, also provided financial support to that program. Best Ever was essentially a federal program, and again the majority of funding came from the federal government. With Own the Podium, while the decision-makers focus on the critical/innovative support of the program by the private sector, the federal government is still bankrolling half of the \$110 million budget. In all three programs, partnerships between the funding bodies were vital to the 'success' of the program.

A second important feature of 'partnerships' and cooperation with Own the Podium is the principle that all partner-organizations have committed to the goals of the program, even though some members will clearly benefit more from the programs and funding allocations (A3). Funding partners have also agreed to accept the funding

recommendations provided by the review committee (A2). One of the administrators noted that there is a representative from each funding partner involved with the review committee (A2). So while funding partners will accept the funding recommendations, they were actually involved in creating the recommendations in the first place. I thus question the assertion that the review panel is independent. Who are they independent from? The only organizations that do not have representation on the review panel are the NSOs and notably their athletes. So although NSOs are still seen as the leaders in sport development, the ultimate decisions on funding allocations are out of their hands.

Own the Podium was based on the premise that a common vision and cooperation is essential in creating a program to increase the performance of athletes. Partnerships were needed to fund the program, as no one organization has the means to supply all the necessary financial resources. Cooperation between athlete support staff and NSOs are needed to effectively plan and implement programs for athletes. Overall, involvement of all the organizations validates the goals of Own the Podium.

Success

The goal of Own the Podium is for Canada to rank number one in the medal standings at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver by winning 35 or more medals. Own the Podium only applies to winter Olympic sports. One administrator said that the aim of the program was to rank number one in the medal standings and to create a sustainable sport system (A2). This principle was confirmed in the *Own the Podium - 2010 Final Report* (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). However, the guiding principles given to the independent task force were first to create a sustainable sport system, then to maximize the potential for Canadian athletes to win medals. When the independent task

force created the Own the Podium Tiers, sustainability of the sport past 2010 had dropped to fourth place behind ability to medal, past results, and Canadian culture; this could indicate a shift in perception of the principles of Own the Podium.

Own the Podium administrators have prioritized sports based on the potential for each sport's respective athletes to medal in Vancouver. Those sports that have the greatest likelihood of winning the most medals are provided more resources. The more resources an NSO has, the more capacity it has. Own the Podium administrators believe that increasing the capacity of NSOs will lead to a sustainable sport system (A2, A3). However, NSOs have different capacities from the start. Those NSOs who have adequate resources are able to build capacity within their organization through purchasing equipment, and hiring administrators and support staff. NSOs that do not have adequate resources rely on Own the Podium to provide the necessary resources to implement new programs including PET teams, and equipment testing and development. When the program is over, the resource-poor NSOs will not be able to deliver elite programs at the same capacity as they are leading up to Vancouver.

Looking historically, Own the Podium administrators believe athlete 'success' is an indication that a sport is well organized (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). There is a high probability that these 'successful' sports have been 'fully' funded in the past. Comparing Own the Podium tiers to the ranking suggested by Roger Jackson for Best Ever reveals that four of five third priority sports (i.e., biathlon, bobsleigh, luge, Nordic combined) are still third priority with Own the Podium. This suggests that past programs have affected how sports are currently viewed. High Own the Podium ranked sports have been historically fully funded through Sport Canada core funding, and as well have

success acquiring funds from the private sector. Due to the marketability of sports, certain NSOs have more of an ability to get sponsorships. The more visible the sport, the more likely a corporate partner will become involved.⁸¹ All 'Tier 1' sports are highly visible in Canada. What, in effect, Own the Podium has done is increased the gap between the 'have' sports and the 'have-not' sports. When most of the funding equation is tied to the success of the sport and the success of sports is more and more being seen only in terms of winning medals in Vancouver, then the ability of 'non-winning' sports to receive money is weakened.

The Canadian sport system has been criticized by administrators as being too fragmented, with too many processes and too many funding bodies (Priestner Allinger, Allinger, 2004). Knight, MacNeill and Donnelly (2005) noted that narratives of disappointment following the 2000 Summer Games and the 1998 Winter Games, blamed the federal government for organization problems in the sport system. The developed solution is partnerships between all organizations, and a unified approach to administering and funding sport. However a 'fragmented' system allows for different processes and different understandings of sport to co-exist. The unified funding approach of Own the Podium requires NSOs to only fill out one set of applications, and to be subject to one evaluation method. While one application process may indeed cut down on the workload of NSOs (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004), we need to examine what is lost in the system by having only one definition of what is 'deserving' of funding. Unified funding, in a cooperative system, limits NSOs that operate differently than the one requisite model. To receive funding, NSOs must create programs that will support

⁸¹ For example, the marketability of hockey is much greater than the marketability of ski jumping because of the visibility of the sport to the public.

their elite potential medalists winning medals in Vancouver. The way that current season results are tied to next year's NSO funding also creates a situation where focusing on elite sport and the athletes who have the potential to win medals is the only option. A similar situation occurred with Best Ever. Macintosh and Whitson (1990) found that many NSOs had difficulty creating their four-year plans because of the conflicting needs of elite sport and mass participation programs. However, NSOs in the 1980s had no choice but to focus on elite sports when their government funding was tied to the quadrennial planning process, which aimed to fulfill the objectives of the government (i.e., winning medals to increase national unity and international prestige). Best Ever effectively meant that NSOs had little choice but to prioritize elite sport. Cavanaugh (1988) found that the QPP, through Best Ever, also forced NSOs to think more systematically about 'producing' successful athletes. Own the Podium effectively means that NSOs have little choice but to prioritize elite sport over developmental sport – and, within elite sport, prioritize resources towards those athletes who will medal.

Own the Podium has strengthened the belief that success in the Canadian sport system is dependent on athletes winning medals. Due to this naturalized belief, there is a development gap between NSOs. Those NSOs that have had successful athletes are more likely to be fully funded by all funding bodies, and to have the ability to acquire funds as well through private sponsors. In Own the Podium's effort to increase the unity of the sport system through unified funding processes, any other understanding of success in sport is pushed to the side.

Conclusion

The Winter Sport Partners created Own the Podium to increase the likelihood that Canadian athletes will win medals at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games. Own the Podium 'experts' established processes to increase the number of potential medalists in the Canadian sport system, and to increase the success rate of these athletes. Through prioritized funding to those NSOs who have the most potential to medal, and by creating technological innovations with equipment, Own the Podium hopes to win 35 medals or more in Vancouver.

Sports receiving the most support through Own the Podium are those sports that already have access to the greatest amount of resources – from the federal government and from private sponsors. Own the Podium strengthens the *success equals medals* belief, which makes it harder for those NSOs who are not 'successful' to acquire funding.

The sustainability of the sport system was also a consideration of decision-makers. The administrators believe that by increasing the capacity of the NSOs, they will create a sustainable sport system. Capacity is strengthened by increasing the ability of NSOs to create programs and develop athletes, and by limiting their reliance on outside support. However, while sustainability is a consideration, it is far from the driving force of the program. The primary goal of Own the Podium is to 'produce' athletes who will win medals in Vancouver.

Sub-problem 3: What are athletes' experiences in the current Winter Olympic sport system, with respect to Own the Podium?

To understand how sport policies and funding programs affect the sport system, the experience of the athletes – those on the front line – must be explored. The athletes

are the products of these decisions. But it should not just be their performances that dictate the 'success' of a program. In an athlete-centred system, policies, funding programs and all decisions should take into consideration how decisions affect the athlete as a person, not solely how it affects their athletic ability. When athletes are supported in an athlete-centred system, all athletes will be directly involved in making decisions that affect them concerning their athletic and their outside lives. Exploring how athletes are currently experiencing the Canadian sport system provides insight into what they think about the system, particularly Own the Podium, and what they would like to see changed.

Athlete-Focused

Thibault and Babiak (2003) identified that an athlete-centred shift has occurred in the sport system. This shift has been towards a focus on the technical development of high performance athletes, where resources are directly invested in the athlete rather than in the administration of national sport organizations. They illustrated this shift by referencing athlete representation in decision-making, the creation of Canadian Sport Centres, increased direct funding to athletes for training and living, and the creation of Alternative Dispute Resolution structures for athletes. Thibault and Babiak thus identify an athlete-centred system as one where financial investments are made in athletes. While I believe this is definitely one aspect of an athlete-centred system, it is only a small part. Investment does acknowledge the role that athletes play in the sport system. Just as employees are compensated with pay for their work, the increase in investment in athletes illustrates a changing belief about athletes' importance. Providing athletes, through carding, with a training and living stipend, opens the doors for more athletes to consider a 'career' as an elite athlete. Following from funding decisions and policy objectives made

in the past, being an elite athlete in Canada means committing to training and competing full-time, involving months at a time on the road, thus limiting their ability to focus on aspects of their 'outside' life (E, C, M, Y).

With the advent of Own the Podium, where all resources are tied to and directed towards 'success' (i.e., winning medals), there are few processes that support an athlete-centred perspective. More than ever, an athlete's life is directed by those around him or her – by the coach, trainer, physiotherapist, psychologist, and administrator. The argument that the sport system is athlete-centred simply because resources are invested in the athlete, or because athletes are involved in some capacity on decision-making committees (Thiabault & Babiak, 2003), is not sufficient for achieving an athlete-centred system (AthletesCAN, 1994).

AthletesCAN identifies athlete-centred as a concept and a process where the values, programs, policies, resource allocations and priorities are based on athletes' needs in a holistic sense. Administrators involve athletes in defining the needs and goals of the sport system, and in determining how to meet them. Athletes are active subjects in, not the object of, sporting programs (AthletesCAN, 1994). Achieving an athlete-centred system is a process. Responsibility for creating an athlete-centred system falls to current decision-makers. They are in positions of power. In keeping with power relations, when involving athletes does not support the continuation of decision-makers way of knowing and understanding sport, then it is unlikely that athlete involvement will be meaningful; rather it will be superficial, or as Gruneau (1988) describes, accommodating.⁸² Although

⁸² Gruneau (1988) describes accommodation as the process whereby the dominant group provides minor changes to dominant practices in order to quell resistance from subordinate groups. He notes that accommodation, while allowing some alternatives, actively seeks "to exclude the 'full-range' of available opportunities and practices" (p. 29).

striving towards the vision of AthletesCAN will increase the athlete-centredness of the sport system, that organization only represents athletes who are on the national team, leaving developing athletes without an official support network. Akin to other sport organizations, AthletesCAN needs resources to operate. AthletesCAN receives the majority of its funding from the federal government. It recently went through the process of corporate re-branding, to give the organization a more professional and credible look.⁸³ Although my study did not cover the functioning of AthletesCAN, this re-branding by the organization towards a more 'professional' structure should be examined to find what was gained and what was lost in athlete advocacy when this change occurred. Has AthletesCAN made strides in increasing the power of athletes?

As Jones et al. (2002) identify, coaches accommodate different opinions by only allowing their athletes to have an illusion of empowerment. However, as was revealed in the athlete interviews, most athletes do not even have an illusion of empowerment. Their experience within the sport system has 'proven' to them that their ideas are not even being considered. For the three athletes who believe they have the ability to influence decisions within their organization, this empowerment may indeed be an illusion, as two athletes stated that they have never tried to influence change.⁸⁴ Hand-in-hand with accommodation is athletes actively consenting to the system and to their subordinate status (Beal, 1995, p. 253), because of the possible negative repercussions that could arise by challenging those in power. In addition to fear about negative side-effects from

⁸³ The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sports (CAAWS) also went through an organizational change to align better with the federal government. Ponc (1994) found that the increased contribution from the federal government following the re-alignment increased the ability of CAAWS to alter conditions for women in sport, but because funding was allocated in a contractual agreement, any change that occurred was within the existing structure.

⁸⁴ These athletes will not be identified to maintain confidentiality

challenging the system (M, E), the literature identifies that athletes are not likely to challenge the system until they fully understand their position and role within it (Shogan, 1999).

No athletes were able to specifically identify who created and who is implementing Own the Podium. Arai (1997) explains how athlete empowerment needs to first start with athletes developing an awareness for a desire for change. Shogan (1999) believes that it is only after athletes have a solid understanding that they can begin the process of assessing their experiences and making decisions on what aspects of the sport system they agree with and what aspects conflict with their personal values and their athletic and personal goals. Several of the athletes expressed that they would like to have the opportunity to get a post-secondary education, but that it conflicts with their training (Y, C). Athletes also expressed their difficulty in having a career currently, or perceived difficulty in the future) (E, K, C). One athlete noted that his/her career as an athlete conflicts with his/her personal relationships (C). In an athlete-centred sport system, athletes would be able to meet their personal goals (i.e., education) as well as their athletic goals.

Some people may argue that knowing who created Own the Podium is trivial. If I were an athlete and I knew that my coach or my high performance director had input into this program, I would either be upset that my coach or administrator did not seek my input or include me in the process, or feel a bit more empowered because the initial decision-makers are only once removed from me.⁸⁵ But, having one athlete identify that a weakness of Own the Podium is that he/she knows nothing about it, then stating that

⁸⁵ One athlete felt that a problem with OTP is that decision-makers are twice removed from athletes. Coaches are once-removed from athletes. Administrators are once-removed from coaches, thus twice removed from athletes.

maybe he/she does not care (F), is worrying. Athletes have become so intertwined in the production of sport, or naturalized themselves as the object of decision-making, that there is complacency generated towards a program as large and influential as Own the Podium. Understanding their role is the primary consideration for change. If athletes do not know what system they exist in, they will never be able to envision opportunities for enhancement and/or change.

While there has been an increase in the number of athletes involved in organizations and committees (e.g., VANOC, WADA, COC, IOC) it is usually only those athletes who have been 'successful' in the system that are selected to these decision-making bodies. In contrast to this approach, those athletes who have struggled in the system may provide the greatest insights for change. Beckie Scott, former Canadian cross-country ski medalist, sits on many different executive boards including the IOC athlete's commission, the COC athlete's council, WADA athletes' commission, and VANOC executive board. People may argue that her involvement on many of these committees is because of her outspoken advocacy against doping in sport. While this may be true, I do not think she would be in this position had she not won the gold medal⁸⁶ at the 2002 Salt Lake Games. Only athletes who have medaled in the Olympic Games are given the opportunity to be involved in these organizations. All members of the IOC's athlete's commission have been past medal winners.⁸⁷ Even opportunities that have little to do with the Canadian sport system involve only medal winners. All Canadian athlete

⁸⁶ Beckie Scott initially won the bronze medal in the 5km-Pursuit, but was awarded the gold medal after two of her competitors were disqualified due to doping infractions.

⁸⁷ The IOC has recently implemented a process whereby current Olympic athletes vote on the next commission members. Athletes are still voting in medal winners. This could be due to the visibility of medal winners, or the naturalized belief that medal winners have the 'best' experience, and ability to represent all athletes. See : http://www.olympic.org/uk/organization/commissions/athletes/members_uk.asp for a list of athlete commission members – past and present.

ambassadors with “Right to Play” are past medal winners.⁸⁸ I have not researched why this is the case, but from my results I can speculate that either these medal winners are the only ones approached by the organization to be involved, or that non-medal athletes do not feel they have the ability to contribute.⁸⁹

The opinions of athletes are rarely considered by administrators when making decisions. Athletes’ outside lives are in conflict with their athletic lives. Due to the structure of the Canadian sport system, where athletes must commit full-time year-round to training and competing, athletes are neglecting their outside lives in favour of their athletic lives. In an athlete-centred system *all* athletes would be actively engaged in the decision-making process, and would be able to create athletic conditions that are favourable to both their athletic and outside experiences.

Success

Own the Podium is providing many resources that will help improve the performances of elite winter athletes. While acknowledging this increase in resources, athletes are concerned about the future of sport in Canada because of the perceived impact of Own the Podium. Athletes view success more broadly than decision-makers in the Canadian sport system, but in many cases still link their ‘success’ to their performance.

When questioned about Own the Podium’s goal of being number one in the medal standings in Vancouver, many athletes revealed that they think it is important to have a

⁸⁸ Right to Play is an international humanitarian organization that uses sport and play as a tool for development. A further analysis of the athletes involved in Right to Play reveals five athletes are/were speed skaters, six play(ed) hockey, one was an alpine skier, three are/were freestyle skiers, one athlete was a cross-country skier, two athletes were figure skaters, and one is a skeleton athlete. Comparing these sports to the OTP tiers, three sports are ranked in Tier 1, three sports in Tier 2, and only one sport is ranked in Tier 3. See: http://www.righttoplay.com/site/PageServer?pagename=athletes_map

⁸⁹ This is supported by one athlete who indicated that he/she does not think he/she should be involved in community programs because he/she has not medaled (Identity not revealed to maintain confidentiality).

strong goal. Athletes value strong goals. They know the importance of setting goals and working to meet those goals (Q, E, I, C, Y). It is through goal-setting that they have seen their abilities and performances improve – which several athletes identified as integral to their ‘success’ (Q, F, Y) While valuing a strong goal, athletes questioned the goal itself. Several athletes believe that the strategies implemented through Own the Podium are likely to produce medals, but still questioned the ‘benefits’ of reaching such a goal, and what the impact will be on the sport system.

All eight athletes expressed their concern about the future of sport in Canada. They all raised concerns about the sustainability of Own the Podium. Several athletes also wondered why a goal such as winning more medals than ever before was not seen as appropriate (F, M). They were concerned that Canadian athletes are being set up for failure, because along with goals of greater performances comes greater expectations from the public (K, C, F). Winning a medal is not the only important consideration for athletes.

Athletes have a broader understanding of what they think is successful than the decision-makers. Five athletes defined success as reaching their own goals (Q, E, I, C, Y). Two athletes identified contributing to the sport community as ‘successful’ (M, C). Two athletes defined success as having a ‘good life’ after sport (E, C). Two athletes based their definition of success partly on winning medals (C, K). Perhaps athletes need to have a sense of success that is not tied solely to winning. As athlete F described, he/she needed to develop a new understanding of success that was not linked to winning medals. He/she has now internalized success. At the 2006 Winter Olympics, only 32%⁹⁰ of winter

⁹⁰ Approximately 64 athletes won 24 medals at the 2006 Winter Olympics, with a team of approximately 200 athletes.

national team athletes won medals. If athletes benefit from having successes in their athletic careers, then this could be a reason why several athletes interviewed defined success as making improvements and reaching goals. Own the Podium does not support athletes outside of sport, or support their different definitions of success. Regardless of how athletes personally define success, all athletes are affected by Own the Podium – where success equals medals.

Athletes did mention that resources from Own the Podium have contributed, or are contributing to their success as athletes. However, with the increasing resource allocation from Own the Podium there is increased pressure and expectations on the performances of athletes. While many athletes indicated there was increased pressure to succeed because of Own the Podium (Y, F, C, M, Q, I), they also mentioned that there is pressure to win medals regardless of Own the Podium, that there is pressure at every Olympics (F, I, E, M). But the impact of Own the Podium stretches far beyond the national team athletes who are given resources.

Athletes understand the sustainability of the sport system as having a continuation of athletes who will compete internationally. Some athletes noted that because of the goals of Own the Podium, and the processes implemented to reach this goal – funding only current national team athletes with specific attention to ‘potential medalists’ – a gap will be created in the natural development of athletes in Canada (I, Q, M, F). In contrast to the goals of having the best athletes at the Games, the technological gap being created by Top Secret could mean that a more skilled athlete cannot qualify for the national team. Only national team athletes are receiving technological advantages from Top Secret, making it more difficult for those who are not on the national team to challenge for a spot

(M). Also, due to prioritized funding, athletes who peak closer to the Games may not receive the resources they would need to help them succeed (F, M, Q). Several athletes also identified that athletes need strong teammates to push each other to work harder (M, I). In many cases, Own the Podium is supporting only the targeted athlete, and not the teams. So the depth of the program is not considered important to the development of 'potential medalists.'

Athletes recognize the benefits of increased access to resources for their athletic performances. At the same time, prioritized funding, and advances in technology may mean that the best athletes will not be competing in Vancouver. Own the Podium is focused on improving the performance of athletes. Athletes are questioning the goals of Own the Podium and the impact that this program will have on the future of sport in Canada.

International influence on Canadian sport

The performance of an athlete and the outcome of his/her performance, is always linked to the performances of the competitors. Athletes explained how in international competitions they compete against other countries. No matter how decision-makers and experts prepare their athletes for the Olympics, their result is based in large part on the performance of their competitors. Two athletes describes how unpredictable sport is (F, Y), and another explained how other countries will be preparing as much for the Games as Canada is, because every country wants to be number one (M).

[Faint, illegible text, possibly a signature or stamp]

Partnerships and Cooperation

There was little discussion in the athlete interviews specifically about 'partnerships' or 'cooperation. However, if the terms were not explicitly stated, they did describe scenarios where cooperation exists in the Canadian sport system.

Many athletes identified that the Performance Enhancement Team is important to their success (F, I, Q). The basis of the PET program is that these support staff are working collectively to increase the performances of athletes. Factors identified that contribute to the performances of athletes were often a combination of coaching and support from their PET team (I, Q). Athletes also identified that their NSO must work *with* Own the Podium to create training and competition programs (M, E).

Thus, while not specifically identifying the presence of partnerships or cooperation in the sport system, athletes revealed in their discussions that cooperation and collective work is important to the athletes and to their 'successes'.

The value of experts in the Canadian sport system

Athletes are not considered experts. They have little power in the Canadian sport system. As stated previously, power (i.e., the ability to make decisions and institute change) is acquired through access to resources and being a part of a system where the rules are favourable to the continuation of one's way of understanding sport. Slack (1997) explains that 'legitimate power' is acquired solely by virtue of a person's position within an organization – not from any special qualities that a person may or may not possess. Alternatively, an athlete who may have special qualities, or advanced knowledge on a certain subject, will not be seen as having 'legitimate' knowledge or power because of

his/her position in the sport system.⁹¹ This idea is also supported by Shogan (1999) when she identified that 'real' knowledge, held by administrators, coaches, and sport scientists, is the only legitimate source of information for preparation, training, and competition decisions.

However, there are *some* athletes who have *some* power in the sport system. Because the sport system is structured to 'produce' medalists, medalists are seen as the prime example of what the Canadian sport system is about. As medalists, rules are more likely to be in their favour. Athletes also gain status by winning a medal, which gives them a *degree* of power. This is illustrated in the interviews where one athlete believed his/her success gives more 'weight' to his/her voice⁹².

So while the overwhelming majority of Canadian athletes competing at the Olympic level do not have the ability to make decisions because they are not seen as 'experts', those athletes who do win medals have a slight degree more power; strengthening the argument that it is only the experiences of athletes who win medals that are seen as 'valuable.'

Conclusion

Athletes are currently the product of the sport system. Decisions made to increase the performances of athletes, which affects all areas of their lives. Athletes have been provided resources through Own the Podium that will help them become better athletes. Cooperation within the sport system will also help the performances of athletes. However, with these increased resources, specifically financial, athletes feel there is increased pressure on them to win medals in international competition. There is also

⁹¹ This is supported by one athlete who said "I have knowledge, but no one has ever asked me" (E).

⁹² This athlete will not be identified to maintain confidentiality.

increased pressure because athletes understand that their current performances will impact the level of funding received by their NSO for the following season. But athletes have little ability, outside of their performances, to influence decisions in the sport system.

Athletes are not seen as 'experts' in the sport system. They do not have legitimate knowledge or legitimate power. Legitimate power is gained by virtue of a person's position in the sport system. Legitimate power is held by 'experts' who currently make decisions. Athletes are also not seen to possess legitimate knowledge. Legitimate knowledge is gained through formal education and/or experience in administrative positions in the sport system. Since athletes are not experts, they have little to no influence in the decision-making process. Athletes who have *some* influence are those who have won medals. Because the sport system is structured to 'produce' medals, athletes who win medals are afforded a degree of power because they are seen as successful. However, as Gruneau (1988) describes, even if these athletes have the opportunity to speak, they may be merely accommodated by decision-makers and thus have no real influence in the decision-making process.

Inter-problem Analysis

To help answer the general question, 'what approach should decision-makers take to ensure that the Canadian sport system is athlete-centred?' I have reflected on the findings across all sub-problems. To facilitate this discussion, I have grouped my analysis into three sections: athlete-centred, development of Own the Podium, and sustainability.

Athlete-Centred

In an athlete-centred sport system, athletes are fully supported in making decisions that affect them (AthletesCAN, 1994). They are able to develop as athletes and as people more broadly. Consideration would include aspects from their 'athletic life' and 'outside life' (Shogan, 1999). Athletes interviewed are not satisfied with their involvement in decision-making process. They noted that they often feel that their opinions are not considered by decision-makers.⁹³

Along with a dissatisfaction by athletes regarding the amount of representation and influence they have in the decision-making process, there has been a discernable movement away from the goal of an athlete-centred sport system. There is no mention of athlete-centredness in the Own the Podium document. What *is* mentioned is the need for the program and all stakeholders to be 'performance-centred'. There needs to be a distinction made between providing for the athlete, and providing for the *performance* of the athlete. I believe there is a common belief that athlete-centred and performance-centred labels both mean the same thing (as described by Thibault & Babiak, 2005). As the forces of production strengthen, the athletes must be given the means, the opportunity, and the agency to understand their position and role in the sport system, and ultimately to have influence in the decision-making process. Chelladurai and Turner (2006) identify that an athlete's participation in decision making "enhances the rationality of the decision insofar as there is more information available in a group to generate and evaluate alternate pathways to a goal" (p. 142). Chelladurai and Turner and Jones, Armour and Potrac (2002) believe that involving athletes will lead to increased ownership and commitment to the goals.

⁹³ The identity of the athlete has been omitted to maintain confidentiality.

There are processes in the sport system that include athlete involvement in the decision-making process. Two administrators identified that athletes have the opportunity to give feedback on Own the Podium (A2, A3). But to be athlete-centred, according to AthletesCAN (1994), athletes must be involved in both the creation of the goals and the solutions to meet those goals. While feedback is important in an effective system, one athlete identified that if athletes were involved in the creation of the programs, then there would be less need for 'corrections' because everyone who is affected would be consulted in the first place (M). However, there is a difference between seeking out the opinions of athletes through formalized channels where athletes know they will be supported, versus athletes telling administrators what they think (i.e., feedback). The results from athlete interviews illustrate that even when athletes approach the NSOs as a team, they are brushed-off (C). With the current structures in place, it will take an individual who is currently in a position of power to make the initial step to include athletes. Sport Canada, through the SFAF, required all NSOs to involve an athlete-representative in the decision-making process. The athletes' involvement will never be meaningful as long as they are only valued for their athletic skill. One 'successful' athlete who was interviewed believed that despite attending the review session where the reviewers were receptive to his/her opinions, he/she did not think it made any difference.⁹⁴ So while the Own the Podium review process involves athletes, as long as athletes are not seen as 'experts' they will not be meaningfully engaged in the decision-making process. In keeping with power relations, people who control resources and who are favoured by the rules will make decisions in the sport system that will support the continuation of their way of understanding sport. If involving athletes in the decision-

⁹⁴ To maintain confidentiality the identity of the speaker has been omitted.

making process does not support their way of knowing, it is unlikely that decision-makers will change. Decision-makers may also not think that athletes should be involved if they have never experienced it themselves (as explained through social construction) (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). However, duality of structure explains that each action in the sport system will either strengthen the existing structures or alter the existing structures, or create new ones (Ponic, 1994). Thus if athletes or administrators would like to promote athlete involvement, then steps they take in the sport system can alter or change the structures, to where involving athletes is the normal practice.

Both administrators and athletes were positive about the involvement of ex-athletes in Own the Podium. I suspect that current athletes value the presence of ex-athletes in part because if they personally cannot be involved in the decision-making process, then at least someone who was once an athlete might be more cognizant of their needs. Why are the opinions and experiences of ex-athletes valued, but not current athletes? Time may be one factor, as illustrated in *Sport: The Way Ahead* (1992):

“athletes are torn between the demands of their sport and the need for direct involvement in decision-making processes” (p. 47). With the focus on improving performances to win medals, administrators and athletes themselves may not believe athletes have the time to spare to be involved in the decision-making process. It is also likely that ex-athletes who are involved with Own the Podium have previously been in administrative positions within NSOs, filling the requirement of having ‘real knowledge’ gained through previous administrative experience (Shogan, 1999).

The Own the Podium recruitment program was criticized by athletes. Current athletes are extremely skeptical that the idea of recruiting new talent will actually result

in finding an athlete who could potentially medal in Vancouver.⁹⁵ It is difficult to believe that athletes who have trained for years, understand their respective sport, and recognize what it takes to be elite, can be replicated in the short time left before the Vancouver Olympics. Feelings of jealousy and resentment were discussed by current athletes with respect to recruited athletes.⁹⁶ Not only that, but the Own the Podium approach of looking for new and younger athletes might make current athletes feel unsupported, not valued, and a lack confidence in their ability. The recruitment program reinforces that athletes are only valued for their performances. The recruited athletes are brought in to the sport, coached, and tested. They must meet performance benchmarks, and if not then they are automatically dropped from the program. The athletes noted that it appears the effort and resources spent trying to recruit the one remarkable athlete, who may have a long-shot at an Olympic podium performance, would be better focused on providing the current athletes with enhanced support.⁹⁷

While current athletes are not involved in a decision-making capacity, there is the opportunity for change. In keeping with practical consciousness and duality of structure, if one 'expert' fully includes an athlete in the discussion, and the interaction is seen as valuable, then it is more likely that additional administrators may feel encouraged to do the same (Giddens, 1984). Also, the misconception that athletes do not have the time to participate in decision-making will be changed when the process of involving athletes is valued. Currently athletes are valued only for their performances because success is understood as winning a medal. If the understanding of success is broadened, athletes will be valued for their abilities outside of their athletic skill as well.

⁹⁵ To maintain confidentiality the identity of the speaker has been omitted.

⁹⁶ To maintain confidentiality the identity of the speaker has been omitted.

⁹⁷ To maintain confidentiality the identity of the speaker has been omitted.

Development of Own the Podium

Own the Podium was created to consider only top-level elite winter sport athletes in Canada, but the impact of the program reaches all sports and all levels of development. Since funding is tied to the success of sports in winning medals, a cycle is started where all efforts will be focused on 'producing' medals in order to secure more funding. Focusing on success as medals and incorporating funding processes into that equation limits the ability of people to understand sport differently.

Own the Podium has impacted all sports throughout all levels in Canada. We have already seen this with the development of the Federal Government Sport Excellence Strategy (2005), which is a stronger policy document supporting winning Olympic medals in sport. Several athletes commented that NSOs are ignoring development teams (I, Q, M, F). Even if Own the Podium is only one part of the funding mix (as was identified by one administrator) (A3), NSOs know that to secure Own the Podium funding for the next year, they have to have the results this year (athlete M; Bell, 2006a). Nothing is stopping NSOs from putting all their money (i.e., from Sport Canada, from private sponsorships) into their high performance athletes to secure funding for next year. Amis et al. (2002) found that with Best Ever and the QPP, NSOs changed their priorities and their touted 'values' in order to receive funding. So, instead of challenging the processes they disagreed with (i.e., the singular focus on success, lack of autonomy) they chose to work within structures laid out by Sport Canada in order to ensure their survival as an organization. The same decisions are being made by athletes. Athletes are accepting their subordinate position and not challenging decision-makers to remain an elite athlete in the current sport system. One athlete explained how he/she has learned not to "make a

fuss” to keep peace with administrators (E). Athletes and NSO staff are both actively consenting to their subordinate status to remain viable in the sport system.

Whitson and Macintosh (1990) identified that Best Ever decision-makers had only discussed how high performance sport could be accomplished more effectively. They had not really considered options that start from premises differing from this “presupposed system goal” (p. 91). It was revealed in the athlete interviews, with respect to Own the Podium, that this is the case. Processes of Own the Podium are ‘perfect’ to meet the goal of being the number one nation in Vancouver (Y), but many athletes questioned the goal itself. With Own the Podium, as with Best Ever, other understandings of sport are pushed to the sidelines. As Kidd and Eberts (1982) explained, when sport planners increased their demand on NSOs to ‘produce’ winners, they abandoned the belief that sport provided other opportunities and intrinsic rewards for athletes. Own the Podium does not support other ideas of success - for example success as a process rather than solely an outcome (M). Dubin (1990) also concluded that “it is increasingly difficult for athletes to hold on to a personal sense of satisfaction at doing their best when international standards are generally accepted as the only measure of success” (p. 484).

Current administrators praise Own the Podium because it was a winter sport initiative. This is the first time NSOs have come together to create a program. The 1992 Best Report outlined that the government needed to relinquish its hold on the sport system, and then NSOs would have the opportunity to create their own procedures and programs. The Best Report task force concluded that only when NSOs create programs will there be a truly national sport plan that would address elite sport and mass participation, and increase the accessibility of programs to minorities. Thinking about

Own the Podium, NSOs came together, but their focus remained on elite sport. It could be that the winter sports knew that in order to have adequate resources, they would need support from all funding organizations, and funding organizations would be more likely to support a program that fit with the government's and the COC's ideas for elite sport. Also, what was not considered by the Best Report task force is what happens when another organization steps in and takes over the role of the government. In this case, I would argue that the COC has now taken that lead. Dubin (1990) suggested that sport organizations form a council, similar to one in the United Kingdom, which operates independently from the government. Within that structure, sport does not always have to follow government objectives (e.g., increase the pride of the country). While current Own the Podium administrators argued that COC has played a small role in Own the Podium, what they did reveal is the progression of Own the Podium into Podium Canada.⁹⁸ With Podium Canada the COC will have control, and NSOs will be pushed to the sidelines in terms of creating the goals for the sport system, and being active in the implementation of the processes to meet these goals (A2, A3). So while the government has historically intervened in sport to meet its objectives (i.e., national unity, international prestige), the COC has its own rationale. My results support the assertion that success (i.e., winning medals) is imperative to the sustainability of the sport system because the ability to acquire financial resources from both the government and the private sector are dependent on meeting the objective of the program (A1).

⁹⁸ Podium Canada was created by the COC in 2006. It is a partnership between the major national funding partners for high performance sport in Canada including Sport Canada, the COC, the CPC, and VANOC. Podium Canada will act as an advisory body, providing technical support to Canada's National Sport Federations – both winter and summer.

Own the Podium was initiated by the winter sports, and is strengthening the *success equals medals* mentality of decision-makers in the Canadian sport system. Understanding success as winning medals and incorporating funding into this equation limits the ability of athletes, NSOs, and all Canadians to understand sport differently; that is, as a process, or as an activity providing intrinsic rewards to participants and administrators.

Sustainability

A sustainable sport system is one where the desired results are achievable today without diminishing the possibility for all future sports to achieve their goals.⁹⁹ Creating a sustainable sport system is understood differently by athletes and administrators. Athletes see sustainability as always having athletes who can participate and compete in sport. Administrators want to build a sustainable sport system by increasing the capacity of NSOs to create and run their own programs.

Athletes align the sustainability of the sport system with the continual development of athletes. Administrators interviewed did not link sustainability to athletes. They believe the capacity of NSOs will ensure sustainability of the sport system. As well, continued funding is needed from both the government and the private sector. With Best Ever, a large component of QPP plans was processes to ensure the development of respective sports in Canada. In the one plan I analyzed (from Cross-Country Canada - Plan 88 and Beyond), the second priority after having 'best ever' performances in Calgary was growing the sport in Canada. For cross-country skiing, this was illustrated by a focus on developing the Jackrabbit children's learn-to-ski program, as

⁹⁹ Sustainable sport is described by 2010 LegaciesNow as ensuring that investments are made in programs that will increase the long-term social and economic viability of sport. (see: <http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/content/home.asp>)

well as the creation of a national cross-country race league. In contrast to this, Own the Podium is focusing specifically on the Vancouver Games (A1), with few planning decisions linked to the post-Vancouver sport system. Own the Podium funding decisions strengthen the principle that sustainability post-2010 is in the form of added capacity within NSOs and continued financial support. Current planning and programs supporting the development of athletes who will be in elite positions in 2014, 2018, or 2022 are not linked to, or rewarded by Own the Podium decisions.

Through past funding decisions and policy programs, Olympic sports have clearly been valued more than non-Olympic sports in Canada because they better met the objectives of the primary financier – the federal government. Now, strengthened by Own the Podium, a division has also been created within Olympic sports. The sport system is valuing Olympic sports with ‘medal potential’ over others. This has the potential to further alienate non-Olympic sports. By prioritizing sports, Canada is losing diversity (A3). What will happen in fifteen years when the number of Canadians healthy enough to participate in sport is so small that there is no way to sustain elite programs? If there is a relationship between winning medals and participation (as was suggested in the results) what will happen when only five core sports are delivering high quality programming in 15 or 20 years (A3)? At a time when Canada’s population and diversity is growing, what will be the impact of reducing the choices available to participate in sport? And what if those five sports can only be practiced in two or three provinces in Canada (e.g., skiing), or are notably expensive to participate in, even at a recreational level (e.g., hockey and figure skating)? As one athlete noted, the sport system should not be reducing the choices of sports (Y).

As explained in the literature the NSOs valued the process of the QPP because it showed what support is needed for athletes to win medals (Amis et al., 2002, Cavanaugh, 1988). However, many NSOs felt the single focus of the QPP on success based on athlete performances was inappropriate (Macintosh & Whitson, 1990). They questioned the sustainability of a system when all efforts and funds are geared towards a single event (i.e., 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics). From my results, the athletes feel uncertain about the future of winter sport in Canada. They are questioning the appropriateness of the goal of being number one in the medal standings, and what affect that will have on developing athletes and the sustainability of the sport system.

Athletes do not believe the current sport system is sustainable because all the focus and the resources are being allocated to elite athletes who seem likely to medal in Vancouver. Own the Podium administrators noted that increasing the ability of NSOs to develop their sport will create a sustainable sport system. However, the ability to provide sporting opportunities is largely dependent on resources. The more 'technical' the program, the more 'experts' are needed to run it, and the more financial resources are required. The current sport system, including Own the Podium, is not sustainable without continued high levels of funding from the public and the private sector. Own the Podium administrators acknowledged that the biggest challenge will be to secure funding post-Vancouver (A1). If funding is not secured, then sustainability of the sport system cannot be guaranteed: "It is impossible to sustain [] without funding. So that has to be first and foremost what we have post 2010, is the funding in place" (A1).

Conclusion

Athletes are not satisfied with their involvement in making decisions in the sport system (Ekos, 2005). Athletes have 'technical knowledge' about how to perform their sport, but they also have knowledge about the programs and processes that need to be in place to support themselves in athletics and in life outside sport. If athletes are not valued as sources of knowledge in the sport system, processes implemented to increase their role in decision-making will be fruitless. Expanding the understanding of success to include factors and processes beyond simply winning a medal will require the input of athletes. Currently, NSOs are unable to make autonomous decisions because they do not control resources. The majority of funding for programs and for operating budgets still comes from the federal government. Although private funding is increasing, there is an expectation that in exchange for money, private companies will be able to market their product. Private companies will support sports that will give visibility to their company. Successful sports are more visible in Canada because the media chooses to report on winning athletes and sports.

Changes are possible in the sport system. A broadening of what 'success' means will allow more people to participate in sport, and will allow more athletes and sports to be seen as 'successful.' If visibility is tied to success, increasing what constitutes success will mean more sports will be visible in the sport system, and can acquire funding from the private sector. Other understandings of success include: focusing on the process of being an athlete, not just the outcome; highlighting how athletes are involved in the community; encouraging youth involvement in sports; and using physical activity as a method for combating obesity.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

In this thesis, I explore how elite sport has been funded in Canada, the Own the Podium program, and how elite winter athletes are currently experiencing sport, in order to reflect on the processes that can be employed to create an athlete-centred sport system. The following sub-problems were explored: (1) How were selected elite sport funding decisions constructed in Canada from 1961-2004?, (2) What approach was employed by the Winter Sport Partners in the creation and implementation of Own the Podium?, and (3) What are athletes' experiences in the current Winter Olympic sport system, with respect to Own the Podium?

To gain a thorough understanding of the rationale and processes of elite sport funding in Canada, I analyzed selected government and Canadian Olympic Association/Committee documents. The analysis drew from Chalip's (1995) critical policy analysis framework (i.e., using legitimations, attributions, and focusing events) and also examined the relevant rules and resources involved in making decisions and implementing programs. Government documents analyzed include policies, funding programs, and annual reports. Canadian Olympic Association/Committee documents analyzed include programs, planning documents, annual reports, and meeting minutes. I specifically looked at documents between 1961 (i.e., the beginning of federal government involvement in sport) and 2004. The rationale for creating Games-specific performance programs, and the programs themselves were also examined. Lastly, the documents were analyzed to explore in what capacity athletes have been involved in making decisions that

affect them, and to see if the principle of 'athlete-centred' is supported in any policy discussions.

To explore the creation and implementation of Own the Podium, I analyzed relevant documents and interviewed three administrators involved with the program. The document analysis followed the same framework as in sub-problem 1. Interviews probed the rationale for creating Own the Podium, the agents involved in its creation and implementation, and the processes identified to meet the goals of the program (i.e., the solutions). In keeping with the principle of an athlete-centred sport system, the voices of athletes were also included in the history. Triangulation was used to create a history of Own the Podium. The history contains information from interviews with administrators and athletes, as well as insights gained from Own the Podium documents.

To explore how athletes are experiencing Own the Podium and to include the voice of the athlete in this history of elite sport funding in Canada, I interviewed eight current winter sport athletes. Athletes were asked to discuss their understanding of the Own the Podium program, and their experiences with the different elements of it. In an attempt to determine if the goals of Own the Podium parallel the goals of athletes, athletes were asked how they personally define success, and what factors contribute most to their success – however they choose to define it. Lastly, athletes discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the sport system, and what they would like to change. All interviews were transcribed and then analyzed and coded in keeping with the themes that emerged. These results were further analyzed in conjunction with relevant literature.

CONCLUSION

Athlete-Centred

The experience of athletes – the athlete's voice – has been neglected for the most part from the history of sport in Canada. While the focus on athlete performance has continually intensified, there has been little improvement around the involvement of athletes in the decision-making process. There has been dialogue, starting in the 1980s, of the perceived need to increase the ability of athletes to be involved in making decisions that affect them. However, the perceived value of 'experts', combined with the amplified commitment of administrators, coaches, and athletes to achieve medal performances, has decreased the opportunities for athletes to make decisions.

Due to the structure of the Canadian sport system, whereby athletes *must* commit to a full-time regime of year-round training and competition, athletes are neglecting their outside lives in favour of their athletic endeavors. This contradicts an athlete-centred system in which *all* athletes are actively engaged in the decision-making process, and therefore are able to create athletic structures that are favourable to their athletic and 'outside' experiences.

Athletes appreciate the resources that are being provided to them through Own the Podium. Through Own the Podium they finally have access to testing that other countries have been utilizing for years (e.g., wind tunnel testing). They truly believe that Own the Podium is improving the potential to succeed in Vancouver. However, along with the increased resources comes increased pressure to perform, which was sometimes perceived as negative. Pressure is not, however, the only potentially negative outcome of Own the Podium. Athletes are concerned about the sustainability of the sport system.

They see how funding and resources are going only to the top-elite athletes, and this results in developing athletes being forgotten.

Discussions with the athletes revealed several aspects they would like to change about their experience in the sport system. Athletes expressed their disdain for the lack of communication between administrators and themselves. They desire meaningful input into decision-making, to be consulted, and to be comfortable approaching decision-makers and making suggestions without fear of reprisals. Lastly, the athletes identified that they have prioritized their athletic career over other areas in their lives, but desire a balance between being an athlete and having an outside life. They noted that this balance would likely improve their performances in sport. Athletes wondered what I was going to do with the results, and hoped that I would pass them along to decision-makers.

Development of Own the Podium

Own the Podium was created specifically to improve the performances of Canadian athletes and produce medals at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games. With such an ambitious goal, experts were deemed a necessary component, given their value in the current sport system. The program was created by Canadian and foreign administrative experts who possessed experience in managing elite level sport. The administrative experts hired technical experts to implement Own the Podium. Technical experts are essential to the full implementation of the program. Without technical experts developing initiatives, or experts at the front line implementing programs with the athletes, Own the Podium could not succeed.

The Canadian sport community felt pressure from the international sporting community to produce athletes who will win medals in Vancouver. One solution Own the

Podium creators used was to consult international experts. Experts who have had 'success' in international sport systems, or who are from 'successful' programs, are seen as vital to the success of the Canadian sport system.

Own the Podium was based on the premise that a common vision and cooperation is essential in creating a program to increase the performance of athletes. Partnerships were needed to fund the program, as no one organization has the means to supply all the necessary financial resources. Cooperation between athlete support staff and NSOs are needed to effectively plan and implement programs for athletes.

Own the Podium has strengthened the belief that success in the Canadian sport system is dependent on athletes winning medals. Due to this naturalized belief, there is a development gap between NSOs. Those NSOs that have had successful athletes are more likely to be fully funded by all funding bodies, and also to have the ability to acquire funds through private sponsors. In this effort to increase the unity of the sport system through a unified funding process, any other understanding of success in sport has been pushed to the side.

Sustainability

Administrators and athletes are concerned about the sustainability of the sport system. Athletes understand a sustainable sport system as one where there will always be athletes competing at the international level. Administrators understand the sustainability of the sport system as NSOs having the capacity to deliver high-quality programming. Administrators also identified that the sustainability of the sport system is entirely dependent on achieving the goal of being the number one nation in the Vancouver

Olympic medal count. 'Success' is only understood as winning medals; any performance other than the 'best' will be seen as a failure.

However, as duality of structure explains, change is possible in the sport system. Every action in the system will reproduce the existing structure, alter the existing structure, or change the structure. Achieving an athlete-centred sport system is a process that must start with increased understanding and increased levels of communication. When athletes understand their role in the sport system, they will be better able to envision possibilities for change. The more athletes understand the structures and the processes in the sport system, the more they will be able to make concerted efforts to change aspects with which they do not agree.

What is understood as 'successful' needs to be broadened within the sport system. The more opportunities created for athlete success, the more valued the athletes will be for accomplishments other than final results. Only a very small percentage of athletes in the Canadian sport system will have the opportunity to compete at the Olympic Games. An even smaller percentage will win medals. Although those who win medals should be recognized, so should those who compete but do not win (Dubin, 1990). Their experience *should not be* less important than those who win medals. Athletes should have the opportunity to speak, and to be heard. All athletes should have the ability to develop all areas of their lives, not just their athletic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Theoretical Recommendations

This study raised several lines of questioning that can serve as the basis for further examination and exploration of athlete involvement in decision-making, and how the definition of success as medals is strengthened by funding programs.

Future investigations into elite sport funding in Canada could examine all dimensions of the funding equation – who is providing, allocating, and receiving the funds. This is necessary to gain more detailed information and insight into the interaction and exchange procedures among all stakeholders, and their perspectives on the different rationales for funding.

In addition to dimensions of the funding equation, the concept of athlete involvement in decision making could be explored. To fully understand how athletes have been involved, consultation with past athletes regarding their experiences in the sport system is crucial. Identifying the forms of athlete involvement that have existed, and the types of relationships athletes shared with their coaches and administrators would provide valuable insights into why increased athlete involvement has not developed in the Canadian sport system despite policy documents supporting it. Furthermore, examining what past athletes believed the strengths and weaknesses of the sport system were, and what they wish they could have changed, would contribute to the history of the athlete-voice in Canada.

Administrators in sport are in the position of being able to initiate and facilitate the development of an athlete-centred foundation for the sport system. This foundation could enable athletes to voice their opinions on current structures and to be accepted as

key contributors in decisions affecting elite Canadian sport. However, researchers should first question current athlete representatives, to critically evaluate the athlete representation processes. To further dissect the issue of athlete involvement in decision making, it is imperative to develop a full understanding of how athletes elect their representatives, and how athletes communicate with each other. For an athlete-centred foundation to function in sport, formalized channels of communication need to be established where athletes can bring issues to their representatives and subsequently those issues can be verbalized to and addressed by administrators.

I believe people in positions of power (decision-makers/administrators) need to be involved in encouraging the development of an athlete-centred system. Current administrators, at NSO and MSO levels, should be approached to discuss their views on athlete-involvement. Determining why athletes are/are not involved in decision-making from the administrators' perspectives would provide valuable insights into the role they can play in supporting this principle. My assumption is that if the administrator does not see value in involving athletes, then he/she will not encourage the process. Athletes need to understand more about their role in the sport system in order to initiate change. In a similar vein, administrators also must understand their current role. This would enable them to recognize possibilities for change, a necessary step before they will be able to positively influence the process of achieving an athlete-centred sport system. Also, from a research/programming perspective, understanding why administrators choose not to involve athletes (e.g., they believe it is too time consuming) is important in creating solutions. Assessing the current structures is necessary before attempting to develop a new system.

To further explore Own the Podium and its impact on the Canadian sport system, interviews with more stakeholders should be conducted. Exploring the perspectives of the NSOs would immensely add to this history of how the program has been implemented, and in what ways Own the Podium has influenced the development of the respective sports. Examining how Own the Podium funds were spent, and how the funding from other sources were utilized would test out my assumption, along with the belief of interviewed athletes, that development teams have been ignored since the implementation of Own the Podium.

Finally, including the experience of the funding partners (i.e., Sport Canada, the COC, VANOC, CODA, and private companies) and understanding their motivations for involvement is important. This may provide valuable information for seeking out funding and private sponsorships in the future.

Practical Recommendations

Steps can be taken immediately to increase formal communication between athletes and administrators at both the NSO and MSO levels. From a programming perspective, I believe Own the Podium would be much more effective if athletes first understood the program, including the rationale and how administrators believe it will increase the sustainability of the sport system. Additionally, seeking out the opinions of the athletes instead of waiting for the athletes to approach administrators (i.e., feedback) would facilitate better program implementation. As was evident in my results, most athletes will not approach administrators either because they have had no 'success' in the past, or because they are afraid of negative repercussions. Communication must be open and formalized between athletes and administrators within NSOs.

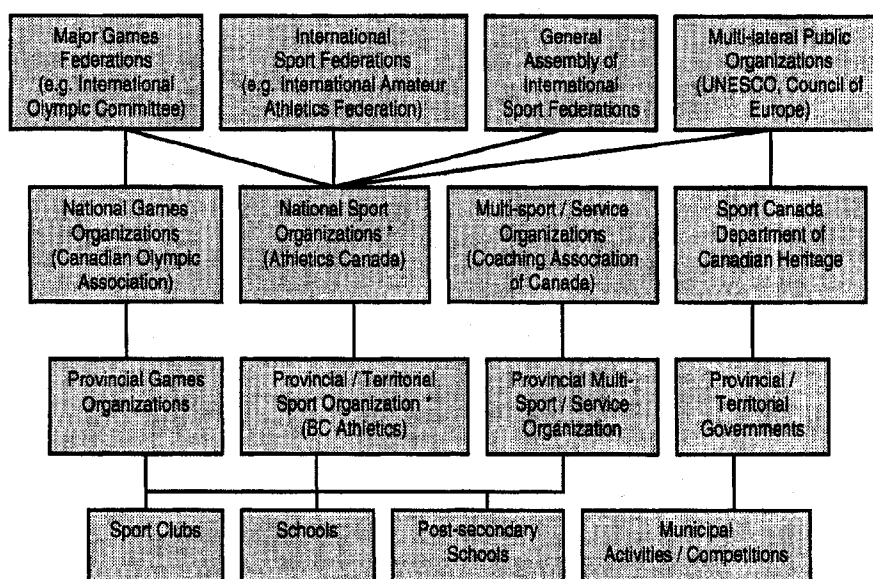
My results suggest that athletes believe community involvement is very important. However, I also found that there are few opportunities for athletes to get involved in programs to support the community. Athletes explained that they find it difficult to be involved because of training commitments. To create community programs that will meet the needs of the athletes, athletes should be involved in the creation of programs from the beginning.

If increasing the participation rate of children in sport is a solution to various social and health issues, then programs need to be created that specifically address this issue. Currently a purported side effect of winning medals is increasing the participation rate of sport in Canada. Instead of saying that participation will increase when Canadian athletes win medals, we should be capitalizing on hosting the Games by creating programs that encourage participation in all sports, and physical activity in general, rather than tying increases in participation rates to whether or not Canadian athletes win medals in Vancouver in 2010.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Canadian Sport Community

Sport Community

* Also includes associations with athletes with disabilities (e.g. Canadian Blind Sport Association)
 Note: items within parentheses are examples

Sport Canada Website, 2005

APPENDIX B

Structural Change in National Sport Organization – Archetypes

Table I. Institutionally specific design archetypes for NSOs

	<i>Kitchen Table</i>	<i>Boardroom</i>	<i>Executive Office</i>
<i>Institutional values</i>			
Orientation	Private, volunteer non-profit (membership and fund raising)	Private, volunteer non-profit (public and private funds)	Public, volunteer non-profit (government and corporate funds)
Domain	Broad: mass/high performance sport	Competitive sport opportunities	Narrow: high performance sport
Principles of organizing	Minimal co-ordination; decision-making by volunteer executives	Volunteer hierarchy; professionally assisted	Formal planning; professionally led and volunteer assisted
Criteria of effectiveness	Membership preferences; quality service	Administrative efficiency and effectiveness	International success
<i>Organizational structure</i>			
Specialization	Roles based on interest and loyalty	Specialized roles and committees	Professional technical and administrative expertise
Standardization	Few rules; little planning	Formal roles, rules and programmes	Formal roles, rules and programmes
Centralization	Decisions made by a few volunteers	Decisions made by the volunteer board	Decisions decentralized to the professional staff

(Kikulis et al., 1995, p. 77)

APPENDIX C

List of Documents Analyzed

Year	Document Name	Created by:
1969	Department of National Health & Welfare. Task Force on Sports for Canadians. Report	Task Force
1972	A Synopsis of a Proposed Development Program for the Improvement of Canada's Olympic Performance	P.S. Ross & Partners
1973	COA Annual General Meeting - Communication Report	COA
1977	The Fitness and Amateur Sport 1976-1977 Annual Report	FAS
1977	The 1976 Olympic Games: Effects on Canadian Sport and the Future	Roger Jackson
1978	COA Annual General Meeting - Technical Report	COA
1979	Preliminary Discussions for Technical Performance Analysis	COA – Antoft & Bielz
1979	The 1979 National Policy on Amateur Sport: Partners in Pursuit of Excellence	Iona Campagnolo
1980	1980 COA Congress Proceedings - A National Focus on the Canadian Athlete	COA
1983	Game Plan 1983-1988 Second Draft	Roger Jackson
1983	A Paper on Olympic Game Plan 1988	Roger Jackson
1984	Cross Country Canada Plan 88 & Beyond	Cross Country Canada
1985	Fitness and Amateur Sport Annual Report 83-84	FAS
1985	High Performance Athlete Development in Canada: A delineation of responsibilities of the federal-provincial/territorial governments	Sport Canada
1987	Sport Canada: Core Support Program 1988-1989	Sport Canada
1988	Fitness and Amateur Sport Annual Report 86-87	FAS
1988	Towards 2000: Building Canada's Sport System. The Report of the Task Force on National Sport Policy	Task Force
1989	COA Quadrennial Report 1985-1988	COA
1990	Report of the Commission of Inquiry Into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athlete Performance	Charles Dubin
1990	Amateur Sport: Future Challenges Second Report of the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women	Standing Committee
1992	Sport: The Way Ahead - Minister's Task Force on Federal Sport Policy	Task Force

1993	Federal Directions in Sport: Responses to the Minister's Task Force on Federal Sport Policy	Pierre H. Cadieux
1994	Report of the Core Sport Commissioner	J.C. Best
1995	Business Plan for Sport in Canada: Strategies for Continued Growth and Self-Sufficiency	Sport Canada
2002	The Canadian Sport Policy	Federal and provincial/territorial governments
2002	Podium 2002: Program Evaluation	COA
2003	Sport Canada Strategic Plan 2004-2008	Sport Canada

APPENDIX D

Document Analysis Framework

Document Name:	
Date Created:	
FOCUSING EVENTS	
KEY ACTORS	
FORMAL RULES	
INFORMAL RULES	
EXPLICIT OR IMPLICIT VALUES	
FINANCIAL RESOURCE	
HUMAN RESOURCE	
MATERIAL RESOURCE	
LEGITIMATION	
ATTRIBUTION	
"SUCCESS" DEFINED AS/IDENTIFIED AS	
ATHLETE INVOLVEMENT	

APPENDIX E

Analysis of Own the Podium Final Report

Document Name: Own the Podium – 2010 Final Report	
Date Created: 2004	
FOCUSING EVENTS	Vancouver being awarded the right to host the 2010 Winter Olympics
KEY ACTORS	Cathy Priestner Allinger (former Canadian speed skater, worked with Salt Lake Olympics, current President of VANOC, Dr. Steve Norris - sport scientist, Todd Allinger, & others
FORMAL RULES	Funding allocated to NSOs is based on their future potential to win medals. Predict medal count = success rate X # potential medalists. Sports are ranked into three tiers, based on objective and subjective measurements of "Canadian Culture," participation number, past medal performances
INFORMAL RULES	winning medals equals a successful 2010 Games, winning medals creates heroes, increases national unity and international prestige, NSOs will be successful only when they have: 1. athlete development model; 2. recruitment strategy; 3. PET; 4. Professional coaching; 5. "Strong & Stable Leadership"
EXPLICIT OR IMPLICIT VALUES	need for clear & long-term vision for the Canadian Sport System, financial accountability, performance-centred decision-making, collaboration/unity of the sport system, success over participation
FINANCIAL RESOURCE	\$210 millions is required for full implementation \$55 million from the federal government, remaining from private sponsors, B.C. government, CODA, LegaciesNow
HUMAN RESOURCE	Athletes. Task Force members: "Small task force of experts with over 100 years of experience", Performance Enhancement Team members, NSO administration, professional coaches, sport science research and development
MATERIAL RESOURCE	documents, reports from: COC, CPC, Sport Canada, CODA, NSOs, sport technical reviews from NSOs, development of sport equipment (Top Secret)
LEGITIMATION	Canada needs to be first in the medal rankings in Vancouver, to make the Vancouver 2010 Games a success, if funding is not increased, and remains at \$16.5 million per year, the Task Force Predicts Canada will win only 16 medals in 2010. The sport system is viewed as being fragmented, with too many funding bodies and a lack of accountability.
ATTRIBUTION	Increase the number of potential medalists (from 160 to 211). Increase the success rate of athletes from 27% to 50%. The numbers can be increased by increasing funding to NSOs, and through the development of "Top Secret" initiatives. Creating a unified funding approach will enhance the sport delivery system

APPENDIX F

Own the Podium Administrator's Interview Guide

History of Own the Podium**1) What was your role in the creation and/or implementation of Own the Podium?**

Position of actor is likely to determine how much power they had in the decision-making process.

2) What knowledge/experience did you bring to the creation/implementation of Own the Podium?

Investigate the legitimate knowledge of the principle decision-makers. Why they believe they are good candidates. Human resource.

3) What is your current position in the Canadian sport system?

Most people involved in the task force were already employed in the elite sport field. See if their positions have changed, or if they are incorporating the values of Own the Podium into their current positions. This may also provide me with information about where power is located currently, or who was more 'powerful' in the Own the Podium decision-making process.

4) What was the rationale behind creating Own the Podium?

To determine what reasons are given by the actors as to why such a program is needed, compare to rationale from Game Plan and Best Ever. I am looking for unique rationale, more than "increasing national pride and international prestige," as well as the continuation of rationale from the past programs (part of duality of structure is looking at how things stay the same i.e., Social maintenance).

5) How is the "success" of the Vancouver Olympics tied to the number of medals won?

Investigate the relationship between the legitimations of the goal of Own the Podium, and the operations of the Vancouver Games as a whole.

6) What documents/policies were used in the creation of Own the Podium?

Link to sub-question 1 – historical documents, link to any federal policies/programs.

7) What ideas came from other nations?

Discover whether the ideas are novel, or if they have been 'proven' in other sport systems.

8) In what ways has the implementation of Own the Podium differed from the Own the Podium final report? Why have these differences arisen?

To look at the ongoing shaping of Own the Podium, and to better understand the factors shaping these changes (duality of structure).

9) What have been the biggest challenges in implementing Own the Podium?

Program changes and the challenges revealed by administrators may illustrate flaws in the program, or responses to changing conditions (changes in the broader environment that required changes in the program), and factors they did not account for in its creation.

Athlete-Centred Sport System

1) A- How would you define performance-centered?

B- How would you define athlete-centred?

C- How are they the same? How do they differ?

To gauge how those with power view an athlete-centred sport system. The Own the Podium document is based on the foundation of a performance-centred system. I would like to find out if they think it is compatible with athlete-centred.

2) How have athletes been involved in the creation and/or implementation of Own the Podium?

Own the Podium document did not identify that athletes were involved in either the consultation or creation of the Own the Podium program, even though we're supposed to have an athlete-centred sport system in Canada.

3) Are current elite athletes (potential medalists) being used in the development and testing of Top Secret initiatives?

To determine if a rationale exists beyond not wanting to interrupt the training of potential medalists. Question the benefit. Look at involvement of athletes as producers, not merely recipients of decisions/programs.

Requirements for full Own the Podium implementation

1) Have 51 athletes been recruited into the specified sports?

Own the Podium report claimed that they would not reach their goal of 35 medals without recruiting 51 athletes into the sport system. The 'success' of Own the Podium is directly linked to athlete recruitment. Human Resource.

2) Did Own the Podium secure all of the funding it needed?

Task Force reported that Own the Podium needed \$110 million to successfully implement the program. Also important because Podium 2002 initiatives had to be scaled back due to 9/11 and an overall lack of funds due to the downturn in the economy. Financial Resource.

3) What strides/advancements in technology has Top Secret made? (I do not need the specifics) In what areas?

The Top Secret program is touted as being essential to increasing the success rates of athletes. Material Resource.

Own the Podium in the Canadian Sport System

1) How have athletes reacted to Own the Podium?

Compare what the administrators believe, to what athletes believe (from athlete interviews).

2) How have NSOs reacted to Own the Podium? (Those who have received funding versus those who have not).

Effects of Own the Podium on those who are privileged by receiving resources versus those who have not received funding.

3) How will Own the Podium benefit the Canadian Sport system? Canada as a country?

To explore the rationale for the program and compare it to the rationale when it was created.

4) What do you believe are the effects of Own the Podium on grassroots sport/development sport?’

Sustainability of the sport system.

Values

1) What do you value in Own the Podium? In the sport system? What was important to you to consider in the creation/implementation of Own the Podium?

Investigate the values of the decision-makers, and analyze how those are tied to the values of Own the Podium.

2) What other opportunities exist for Canadian athletes to be successful?

Determine other possibilities for being successful, possibility of developing programs to address these opportunities. Recommendations.

3) How does Canada decide if Paralympic sport is important?

The Task Force stated that they will only fund Paralympic sports when Canadians decided if Paralympic sport is important. Looking for a relationship between ‘importance’ and television viewership, private sponsorship, participation numbers (high participation numbers = cultural importance).

Program Outcomes

16) What will happen when Canada wins 35 medals?

What the desired outcomes of the program are.

17) What will happen when Canada wins 33 medals?

What the outcomes will be if Own the Podium is ‘unsuccessful’.

18) How does Own the Podium help the maintenance of a sustainable sport system?

Sustainability of the sport system – reverse these two points – first ask how it helps maintain, then if there are any negative effects to focus on the positives first.

19) What are the negative side effects of Own the Podium for the sport system?

Investigate whether they will acknowledge any problems, if they believe there are any.

APPENDIX G

Winter Athlete's Interview Guide

Athlete's Understanding of & Experience with Own the Podium**1) What is Own the Podium? –Who created it? Who funds it?***Importance of athletes understanding the sport system and their position within it.***2) Can you identify specific experiences you've had in the sport system since the implementation of Own the Podium that you can attribute to the program?***Sub-problem 3 – impact of new boundaries/formal rule/resources on their lives.***3) In what ways has your experience in the sport system changed since the creation of Own the Podium?***Sub-problem 3 - impact of new boundaries/formal rules/resources on their lives.***4) How has your experience within your NSO changed since the creation of Own the Podium?***Sub-problem 3 – impact of new boundaries/formal rules on older boundaries.***5) Have you personally received financial support through an Own the Podium program/partner?***Has the athlete personally benefited by receiving financial, material or human (skills from a work-placement program) resources?**- if yes, what are your requirements in order to obtain funds?**Marketing rights, selling products etc. How the athlete feels about their marketing duties.***6) What do you know about the Top Secret Program?***Athlete's understanding of the sport system.***7) Have you been involved in Top Secret? Would you like to/would you rather not be involved?***The Own the Podium document stated that current elite athletes would not be involved in any testing/training related to Top Secret. This question will determine if this is actually the case, and how the athlete feels about being included or not in testing.***8) What do you think about Own the Podium's ultimate goal of winning 35 medals?***As primary actors in the sport system, they will have insider knowledge about the possibility of achieving this goal. This question will also probe athlete's feelings about the basis of the entire program.***9) How have you seen Own the Podium effect developmental/grassroots programs within your sport?***Question the sustainability of Own the Podium.***10) What do you believe are the strengths of Own the Podium?***Recommendations for continued support of various aspects of program.***11) What do you believe are the weaknesses of Own the Podium?***Recommendations for change.***12) What are the roles of the PET (Performance Enhancement Team)?***Understanding their position in the sports system.*

Athlete Agency & Values

1) What is an athlete-centred sport system? A performance-centred system?

Importance of athletes understanding the sport system and their position within it.

2) Do you feel you have the power to effect change in the system?

To identify the agency of athletes; if they feel like they do not have power to effect change, they will not.

3) How do you define success?

To identify if athletes agree with the Own the Podium value of success = medals.

4) What are other options for being successful?

Success is ultimately defined by the athlete. The aim of this question is to get the athletes to think about the various possibilities for success.

5) Do you agree with the COC's effort to predict which athletes will win medals in Vancouver?

To compare the athletes' approach towards success with those running/creating the program – will highlight informal rules underlying the program.

Personal Development -

1) Of all elements of the sport system you experience in a typical day, what do you think is most important to your success as an athlete (success being however the athlete defines it)

To determine whether the services that the sport system has provided through Own the Podium are what matters most to athletes.

2) Of all elements not directly related to the sport system, what do you think is the most important to your success as an athlete?

Linked to Shogan's (1999) focus on the development of the whole person, not just the athlete.

3) How does your sport experience contribute to your personal growth?

Looks at informal rules underlying sport involvement.

4) How would you like your sport experience to contribute to your personal growth?

Looks at informal rules underlying sport involvement.

How has or how might Own the Podium affect the Athlete?

1) Do you feel pressure/what pressure do you feel to win a medal in Vancouver? Where does this pressure come from?

Looks at informal rules underlying sport involvement.

2) How do you deal with this pressure?

Own the Podium has stressed the importance of giving athletes the tools they need to win medals.

3) Do you think there will be any negative outcomes from mounting pressure on athletes? On coaches? On administrators?

Recommendations.

4) Do you plan on being involved in the sport system when you retire? In what capacity?

Sustainability of the sport system.

5) Do you have a sporting role model?

Role-models are often one rationale given to fund elite sport. It will be interesting to see if these elite athletes had role models.

6) Do you have a non-sporting role model?

Importance of non-sport support.

7) How do you want to use your status as an Olympic athlete?

I know that many Olympians enjoy discussing their experiences with children. If this is important, there might need to be a specific program developed where every athlete has this opportunity. Recommendations.

APPENDIX H

Conceptual Baggage

Kirby and McKenna (1989) explain that conceptual baggage is the record of the experience and reflections of the researcher that relates to their research. Thinking about social construction, I understand events based on my past experiences. My understanding of an event will be different than someone else, because of my past experiences. To acknowledge my experience, my 'conceptual baggage,' I have written a record of my experiences with sport, and my feelings about the current Canadian sport system. As Kirby and McKenna explain "Since all research is done by someone, it is essential that that 'someone' is identified in some way and accounted for in the research" (p. 49).

As a child, I never dreamt about going to the Olympics. I suppose I was quite content to live in the moment of running across a field, or skating towards the net. I remember sitting at the closing banquet of Ringette Nationals one year, and the guest speaker was talking about how she was sure that we would one day be playing ringette in the Olympics. However, that same year women's hockey made its debut in the Olympic Games in Nagano, and the dreams of other girls wanting to play ringette in the Olympics were pushed aside. I had many friends who switched to hockey. I did not. I remember watching a women's national game (hockey) in Calgary in the late 1990s, and thinking, "This is a terrible game – dump and chase, dump and chase - and these girls can't skate!" On several occasions, after I quit ringette, I thought of the possibility of playing hockey and getting a "full-ride" scholarship to the States. But those thoughts usually faded quickly as I was far too busy with everything else in my schedule. I played every sport offered at my high school except soccer. This is not to say that I played all of them well.

You can ask anyone I swam with in grade 12, and he/she will tell you several embarrassing stories about my attempts to master the front crawl. With my past sporting history, I can't understand why everyone was so surprised when I joined the rugby team in my first year of university. I think my parents still wonder why I play such a "stupid" game.

Coming home from one of my first rugby practices sporting a rather large (but beautiful) contusion on my knee, all my dad could say was: "You better not show your mother." But I couldn't resist. This was my first, of many, war wounds proudly shown to my family and friends. My bruises were always impressive. Rugby brings the freedom of running full-out across the field, while at the same time knowing that if my teammates don't hurry up, I am going to be brought down meters shy of the try-line. I think I like rugby so much because of the physicality of it - knowing that I am using every muscle I have and feeling it the next day. I am hard pressed to remember the score from any game I have ever played, and I couldn't tell you what my best season's win-loss record was. I never played sports to win. I enjoy it when it happens, but I am never sour after a loss. I always worked hard. I never cut corners at training or at practice, and always did one more sit-up or push-up than was required; that extra crunch might be what I need to beat the defense across the blue-line. What I do remember is every one of the girls I ever played with. It was their friendships and the experiences of sweating, of working and laughing together, that stays with me.

I have recently been sharing my life with a great person. He also happens to be an Olympian, though when I met him his Olympic days were long gone. That was until he decided to return to his sport, to challenge the national team to compete in Vancouver. I

loved hearing all his stories, the good, and the bad. And there were lots of bad. However, now back as an elite athlete, his stories give more meaning to the elite sport system in Canada than I could have ever hoped to learn elsewhere. One thing that strikes me is the infrequency with which I hear “I had fun at training today.” And when I do, it is often attributed to a pick-up game of volleyball or floor hockey. I used to tell him how lucky he was to get to travel the world competing in small European villages on the sides of mountains. What I have learnt, however, is that it is no where near as glamorous as I had envisioned. Being on the road for months at a time, moving every week is not ‘fun’. What got me the most, though, was hearing him tell me that he wished he was at home instead of in Torino for the Olympics. The Olympics! The goal of every developing athlete, and he wanted to come home. It was long days spent traveling between Torino and their village, relying on McDonald’s to provide them with sustenance, and the continual construction at the village and venue that wore him down. I had previously heard that McDonald’s provided free food in athlete villages, but I somehow figured that athletes wouldn’t eat there. The more I’ve learned about the Olympics, though, the more I understood why athletes are eating at McDonalds, and it’s not because it’s healthy or that it necessarily tastes good. Something is wrong. And it doesn’t stop with the ubiquitous presence of unhealthy food choices in the athlete villages. I was probably more excited than anyone about his trip to the Olympics, but when all was said and done, I was extremely disappointed. My insider knowledge will never again let me be blissfully unaware of the realities of elite sport.

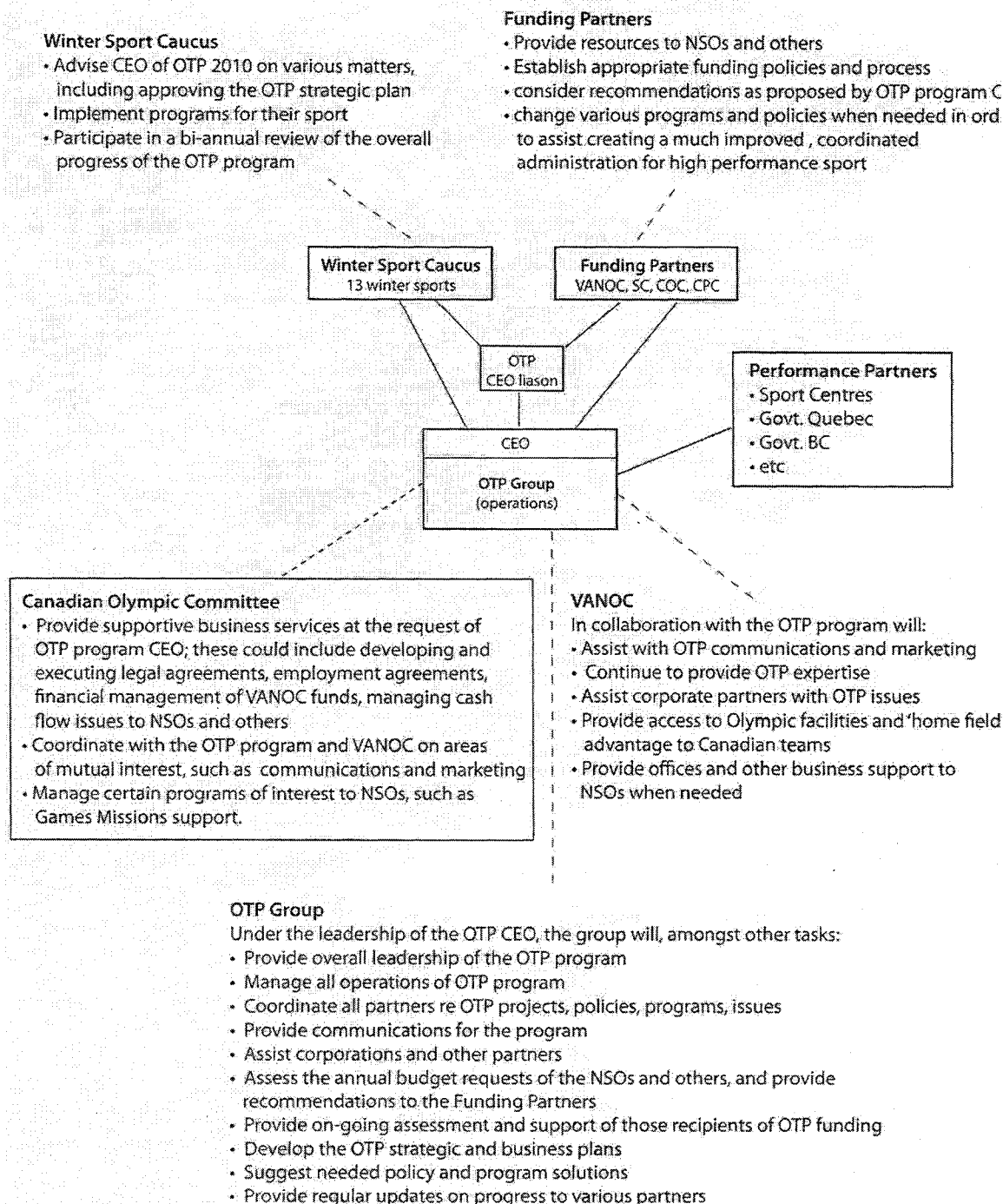
When I heard that the men’s hockey team showed up the day before their first game, missing all Olympic-related festivities, I was not at all surprised. But when I found

out that the gold-medal winning women's hockey team was told they had to purchase their game jerseys for \$100, I got angry. I also learnt that there was a team of Canadian athletes competing at the Games who didn't have a coach. These were not the stories that Canadians were being told. Entering the quadrennial period of the Vancouver Games, where millions of dollars have been invested to guarantee the 'success' of the Games, it is unlikely that these stories will ever be heard. To decision-makers in the Canadian sport system, Cindy Klassen's five medals is the 'proof' they needed to show the country, and the world, that what they are doing is 'right.' How did sport, and the joy of using one's body in a game, become relegated to simply winning medals? Many people will criticize me for thinking any differently of sport, because, "Of course, sport is about winning." But sport can be so much more. Why are we content to stop at winning medals?

APPENDIX I

Organizational Structure of Own the Podium

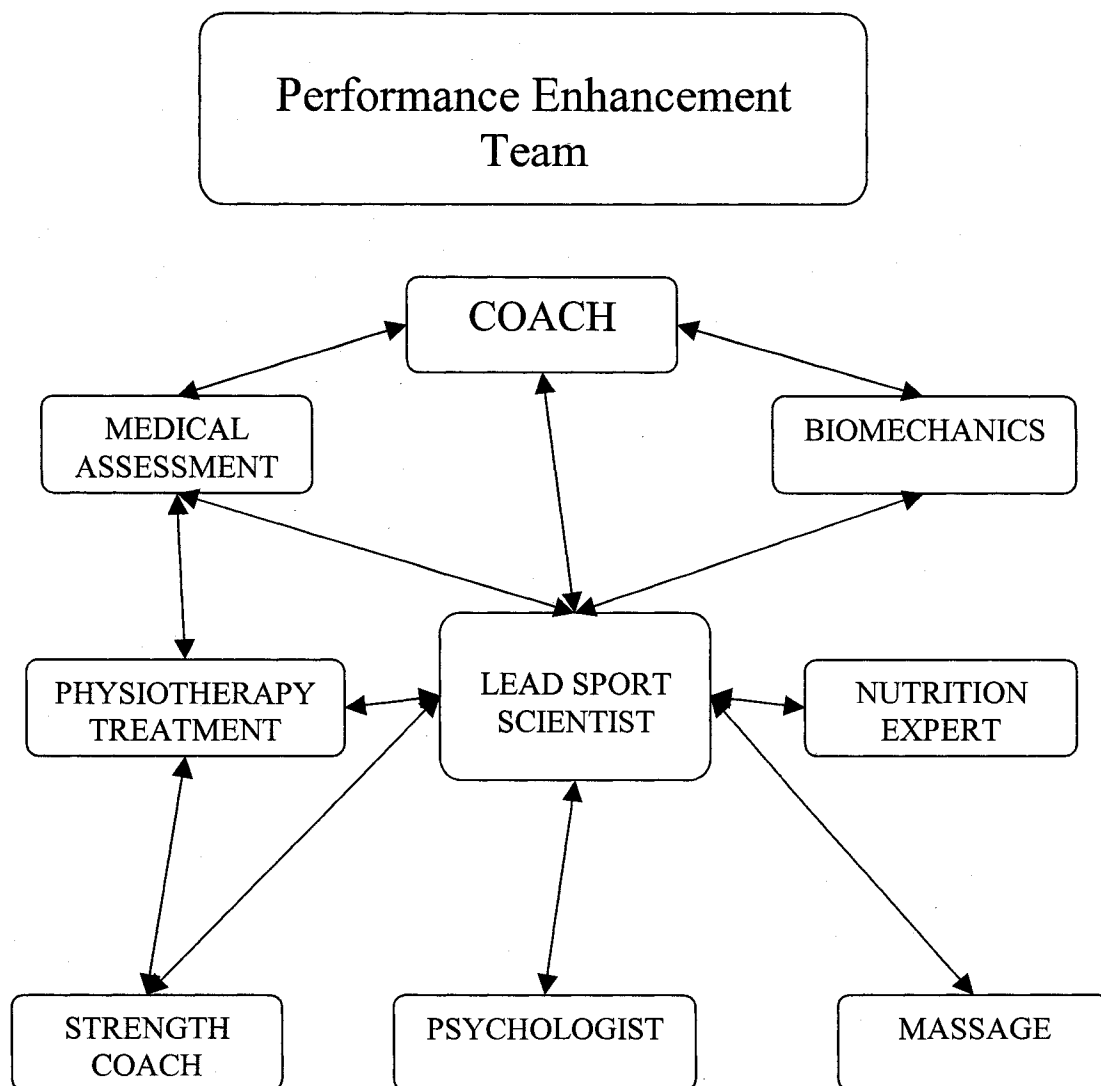
Own The Podium 2010 Organizational Plan



(Daffern, 2006, n.p.)

APPENDIX J

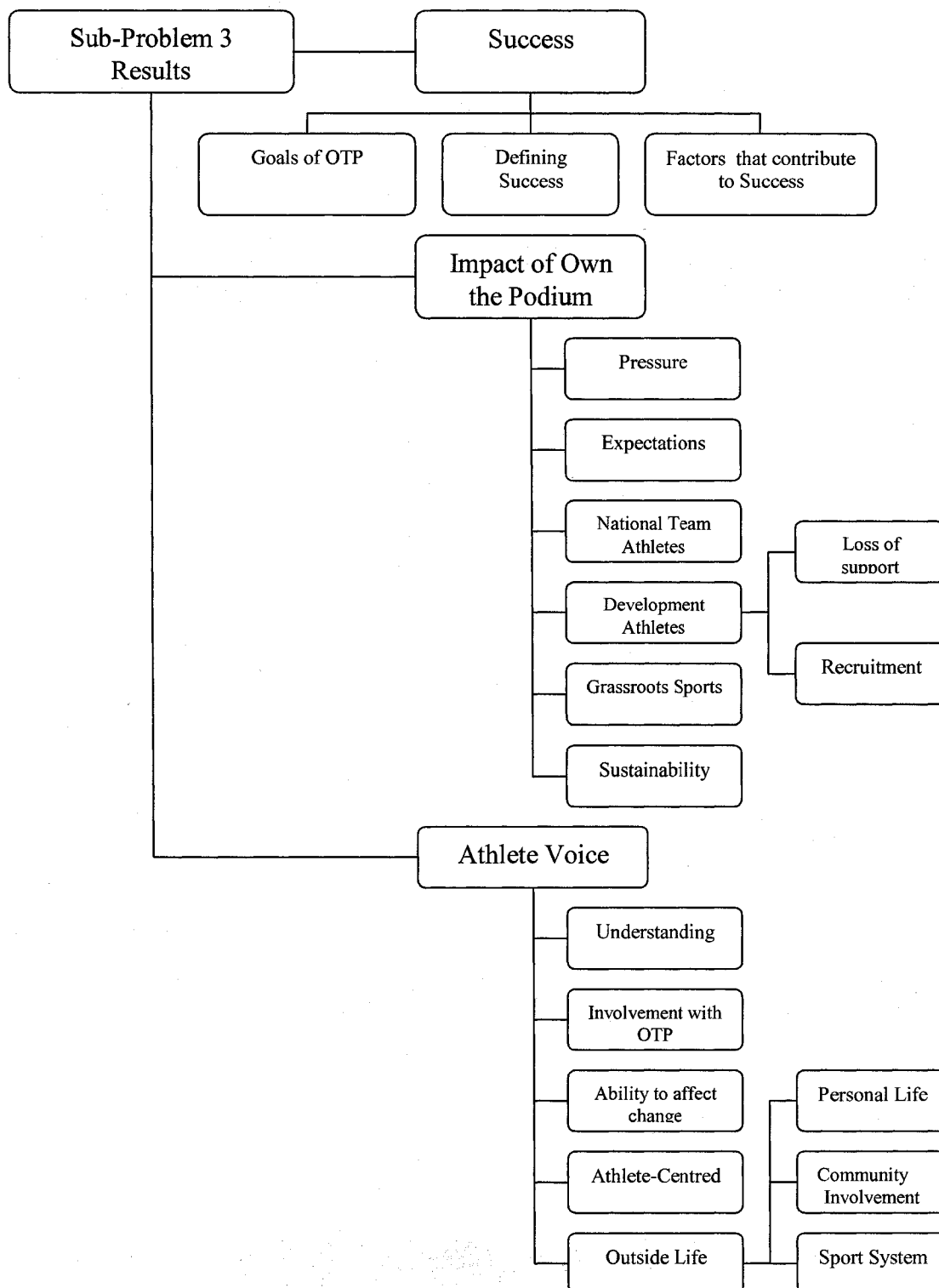
Performance Enhancement Team Model



(Meeuwisse et al., 2006)

APPENDIX K

Sub-Problem 3: Results Tree



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