

B. Funding of Amateur Sport

Although it varies according to the category of sport, there is generally a high cost involved with bringing an athlete on to the sports scene. In order to alleviate the financial burden of top-level athletes, the federal government provides them with financial assistance to defray day-to-day living and training expenses and enable them to succeed in their pursuit of excellence. This is done through the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) whose criteria, benefits and procedures are set up by Sport Canada. Seven different levels of funding are associated with the athlete's performance level. As of 28 February 1990, some 815 athletes were currently carded under the AAP.⁽¹⁸⁾

In its Report, the Task Force identifies matters related to the funding of top-level athletes. It recognizes that financial support, both public and private, is important for achieving high-performance objectives. It recommends increasing the number of athletes eligible for the AAP and evaluating financial support on the basis of needs and rewards. It also suggests developing a system which would enable an athlete who has benefited from public financial assistance to support, in turn, the association or system which has encouraged him or her to achieve success.

A number of high-performance athletes receive substantial financial assistance through their personal agents and sponsors. As a matter of fact, five carded athletes appearing during an *in-camera* meeting with the Sub-Committee, affirmed that athletes who have succeeded at the international level do not always need money from Sport Canada because their good performance provides them enough money from outside public funding programs. From that perspective, the Dubin Commission suggests that the athlete's means should be a factor in determining whether funding should be granted.

Athletes also discussed the criteria for determining federal funding. Some of them stated that international standards appear to be critical in their sport. Others believed that a different ranking system would be needed or that the present system could be improved. Athletes suggested that the national governing body of each sport be involved in determining what the carding criteria should be. They said they would be comfortable having their NSO, rather than Sport Canada, setting up AAP's guidelines because that would allow more flexibility in terms of making a commitment to an athlete in the long term rather than just in the short term.

⁽¹⁸⁾ According to information provided by Fitness and Amateur Sport.