

CHAPTER ONE

THE STRUCTURE OF CANADA'S SPORTS SYSTEM

Canada's sports system is characterized by its complexity and the remarkable diversity of opinions held by those involved. This diversity results mainly from differences in the philosophies of the numerous participants in the sports community. For some, sport leads to excellence through the encouragement of a sports élite. Others consider sport as a means of improving health and fitness and favour mass participation in sports and recreational activities by the population as a whole. Still others look for personal prestige and pride and for national unity, through sports success. Finally, some see sport as a source of personal profit.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments have a responsibility to sport through various overlapping sports organizations. Six major groups participate in the sports system: the federal government, national sports organizations (NSOs), national multi-sport service and franchise-holding agencies, provincial governments, provincial sports associations, and provincial multi-sport service agencies.

The National Sport Organization (NSO) is the pivotal agency in each category of sport. In Canada, there are currently 65 NSOs, which are incorporated non-profit national agencies recognized by the federal government. This means that they are eligible for federal financing through Fitness and Amateur Sport. An NSO is generally made up of provincial sport organizations (PSOs) and various regional and local clubs and organizations, which are affiliated to the national body through the provincial body. Their mandate is tripartite: at the national level, it is derived from its members; another mandate is given by the relevant International Sport Federation; finally, they must promote, encourage and develop their sport in Canada. The NSOs have a national office based at the Canadian Sport and Fitness Administration Centre.

The key responsibilities of the NSOs are: to develop national policies and programs for the provinces and the provincial sport bodies; to run national and international sports events; to select, develop and manage the national team (both at an individual and at a team level); to be the single agency representing Canada at the International Federation; and to establish standards or certification criteria for officials.