

Fighting for a Fitter World

recent project, the Coaching Association of Canada introduced its National Coaching Certification Program to Singapore and Malaysia. This project will form the foundation of the training and development of coaches in a wide variety of sports disciplines and levels throughout these two countries. Michel Gagné, a sport psychologist, was also commissioned under the sport development program to work with teams and coaches in Malaysia for nine months to help the country prepare for its hosting of the Southeast Asian Games. Both projects were highly successful and are likely to be repeated in other regions.

Another example of a joint venture is the Victoria Sport-pool Project. Supported by the Victoria Games Society, the project's mandate is to gather used sports equipment and send it to targeted developing Commonwealth countries. Zomba, a city in Malawi, will be the first recipient of sports equipment, to be distributed throughout its school system.

For Canada, sport development assistance is an important part of the wider international effort to encourage health and physical fitness, particularly among the youth of the world. 

Canada leads the way in development of techniques to promote healthy lifestyles. Its community-based approach to physical activity, combined with an aggressive social marketing strategy to entrench fitness as a part of everyday life, has translated into a number of unique programs that have caught the interest of health educators around the world. Canada, as chair of an executive committee of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS), convened by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), will work with international colleagues to lay the groundwork for an international physical education week. In fact, Canada will host the 7th session of CIGEPS in October 1990, in Ottawa.

Fitness Canada works with private-sector and non-government groups and with other levels of government to

increase Canadians' motivation to adopt healthy, active lifestyles, and to make quality fitness programs more easily accessible. The federal government agency contributed \$7.4 million in 1988-89 to 47 fitness organizations; supports special initiatives aimed at children and youth, seniors, women, and the physically challenged; and promotes skill development programs for fitness management volunteers.

Its most popular program is Canada Fitweek, an annual event that inspired eight million Canadians to take part in some form of physical activity over a 10-day period last year. Fitness Canada has also drawn international acclaim as a participant in Fit Trek, a joint pilot project that has so far involved 11 communities in Canada and the U.S.S.R. in wintertime physical activities.

Canada Fitweek is a program based on community events

and community promotion, with about 14 000 events going on over 10 days, every year, across Canada. Fitness Canada staff have also been promoting a new approach to physical fitness, based on the concept of "active living": old notions of fitness were mostly physiological in base and considered fitness from the perspective of cardiovascular strength. Now it is being looked at from the broad perspective of living actively . . . of how fitness integrates into a person's life as a daily habit.

Canada may also have produced the world's most comprehensive research to date on physical fitness. The 1981 Canada Fitness Survey involved interviewing and physical testing of 15 000 Canadians, and a follow-up study checked the attitudes and behaviour of 4 000 respondents in 1988. "It's a very, very powerful piece of research to be able to track somebody over time, as opposed to just taking a snapshot of the population," says Fitness Canada's Elaine Burke. The study group was large enough that the results will be extremely valuable around the world.

Starting out from this wide range of expertise, Canadian officials are eager to share ideas and information with their counterparts in developing countries, or in industrialized nations that have had limited experience in establishing fitness programs based on mass participation. Canada was recently invited to take part in the Pan American Congress on Physical Education and Sport, specifically as an expert practitioner of social marketing, a comprehensive marketing approach to changing behaviour.

