

CHAPTER TWO

THE ATHLETE

A. Central Role of Athlete

The athletes have a relationship with most of the organizations and agencies of the sports community. As a young athlete advances through the system, he or she is first likely to learn basic skills in a school or a local recreational centre. If the athlete wishes to compete, he or she will become a member of a team and be involved in advanced skills and competitions. This will be generally done through the school system or the local clubs. An athlete beginning to take part in competitions within the province but outside the local community may decide to become a member of the provincial sport body and thus have access to services provided by the PSO and the provincial government. After competing within the province, the athlete may participate in a provincial championship. In general, when an athlete becomes member of a PSO, he or she also becomes a member of the respective national sport body. The athlete is thus eligible to participate in national championships and may be selected to go to the Canada Games as a representative of the province, as a member of the provincial team. Having made the national championship, the athlete may go on to compete at the international level.

The athletes are the true beneficiaries of the sports associations' network and Sport Canada's program. Accordingly, the Task Force Report suggests that national goals for sport must be developed at all levels — local, provincial, national — and be based on the athlete and the athlete's needs. The majority of witnesses endorsed this recommendation. As stated by the Canadian Ski Association, "... perhaps the most important point in the [Task Force] Report is the explicit recognition that the sports system should be based around the athlete and what is required to develop his or her full potential. This may be seem obvious and simplistic, but it needs to be remembered when the current collection of sports organizations is considered."⁽¹⁾ The Coaching Association of Canada also argued in favour of an athlete-centred system; its brief suggested that it is important "... to

⁽¹⁾ Canadian Ski Association, Brief, p. 2.