



CANADIAN WEEKLY BULLETIN

INFORMATION DIVISION • DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS • OTTAWA, CANADA

Vol. 17 No. 8

February 21, 1962

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OBJECTS OF A NATIONAL FITNESS PROGRAMME

Speaking to the National Advisory Council on Fitness and Amateur Sport in Ottawa on February 5, Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker pointed out that its programme would not be devoted "solely, or even mainly, to raising levels of athletic ability". The real aims of the programme he described as follows:

"...A high degree of physical efficiency is necessary for all Canadians. All levels of government in Canada, through their support to education in our schools and universities, spend vast sums to improve the mental alertness and vigour of Canadians. The Federal Government aids and encourages the development of leadership in the arts and social sciences through the Canada Council. This new programme complements what is being done now and will provide assistance to the fitness and recreation programmes now being administered in most provinces. It will help Canadians to maintain and develop physical health, vigour and stamina. This objective can be materially aided by broad programmes of active sports and games and outdoor pursuits.

"The building up of community-based recreational opportunities across Canada that will embrace both competitive and non-competitive sport is a first responsibility.

"Participation in recreational activities that require the exercise of energies and endurance are important to all of us. You are familiar with the problems society faces - the increasing number of people engaged in sedentary occupations, the labour-saving devices that remove physical exertion in our work life, the increased leisure that technological advances make possible.

"You will make the blueprint and lay the foundations for raising the national standing of fitness through programmes of research, information services, training courses, the provision of facilities, and the wide range of services in thousands of communities across the country.

"Amateur sport forms a large segment of recreational activity, the enjoyment of which increases with proficiency, so your second objective, therefore, might well be the planning of measures to improve levels of participation.

"Canada's role in sport has been long and honourable. Canadians have invented games which have spread to all parts of the world.

CANADIAN GAMES

"Lacrosse, ice-hockey, basketball, snowshoeing, five-pin bowling had their beginnings in Canada. Modern canoeing owes much to the skills of the Canadian Indian and the *voyageur*. (We can even be said to have contributed a good deal to American football, which in turn has had a strong influence on our own game).

"Canadian sports reach far back into the history of our young country. The Montreal Curling Club was founded in 1807. In 1835 the first inter-city curling match was played between Montreal and Quebec City, with the two teams meeting, perhaps prudently, on the neutral ground of Trois Rivières. The Montreal Snowshoe Club was organized in 1840; the Canadian Wheelmen, organized in 1883, is thought to have been the first cycling club in North America.

(Over)