

5.4.3 Fitness and amateur sport

The fitness and amateur sport branch is comprised of four directorates. The two program directorates are: Fitness and Recreation Canada — concerned with physical recreation and fitness, and Sport Canada — concerned with the pursuit of excellence in amateur sport.

The two support directorates, program operations and administration and planning, research and evaluation, provide all backup services necessary for the branch's programs. The branch achieves its twin goals of fitness and recreation participation and sport excellence chiefly through financial contributions and a wide range of consultative services to national sport and recreation associations.

Sport Canada strives to upgrade the quality and improve the quantity of Canadian participation in sport by strengthening national sports governing bodies and other related national agencies. As well, the program initiates or supports specific activities to help Canadian athletes pursue national and international championships.

Game Plan, a project started in 1973, has developed programs of talent identification, athlete support, coaching and officiating development, and competition and training opportunities. This plan has set goals for Canadian athletes in national and international competition. A new athlete support program was implemented in 1978 which provides living expenses, training allowances, lost time payments, tuition fees and facility rental for top-calibre athletes.

The fitness and amateur sport branch administers a second program to support Canadian athletes. The grants-in-aid program assists athletes to continue both their educational and competitive careers by providing tuition and living expenses.

Sport Canada also funds an agency for coaching development. The Coaching Association of Canada encourages development of coaching skills through programs and services to all levels of coaches. A national coaching certification program trains thousands of volunteers to become qualified coaches; it affects almost every sport agency and government level and is Canada's first attempt to structure coaching development to standardize levels across the country. In 1977 the first step was taken in a program to train coaches to work at a national and international level by awarding grants enabling apprentice coaches to study under a master coach.

A national sport and recreation centre, funded primarily by the branch, provides accommodation and comprehensive administrative services for national sports and recreation associations. The branch also contributes toward the salaries of executive directors, technical co-ordinators and certain national coaches for these associations. As well, the associations receive funds on a project-by-project basis which allow them to conduct events such as national championships or conferences.

Sport Canada supports international sport exchanges with other countries to allow Canadian athletes to gain experience in international competition.

The Canada Games, held every second year, are the major multi-sport competition in this country. Over 2,500 athletes gathered in St. John's, Nfld. in 1977 and plans are under way for the upcoming 1979 winter games in Brandon, Man. and 1981 summer games in Thunder Bay, Ont. Sport Canada provides funds for the operating and capital costs of these games.

In 1978, the Commonwealth Games were held in Edmonton, Alta. The federal government, through the fitness and amateur sport branch, contributed to capital, operating and other indirect costs. National championships and single-sport world championships also receive support, as do the Arctic winter games and the northern games.

Fitness and Recreation Canada is mainly concerned with fitness and mass participation. It funds a variety of national agencies, which provide recreational opportunities to all Canadians. Activities focus on increasing the quantity and improving the quality of both human and physical resources, to provide recreational opportunities and increase the awareness of physical fitness. Financial contributions and consulting services are provided to groups such as the Girl Guides of Canada, the Canadian Red Cross, cycling, orienteering and a number of associations for native people and the handicapped.