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ARTICLE

Organizational Changes in Canada's Sport System: Toward an Athlete-Centred Approach¹

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ABSTRACT Prompted by an examination of the sport system, a reorientation of priorities and actions around high performance sport has occurred in Canada. One of the important changes has been a shift away from the administrative aspects of sport delivery to a focus on the development of high performance athletes. This shift has meant that more resources are now invested directly in high performance athletes rather than in the administration of sport organizations. The purpose of this paper was to explore the reorientation in priorities, from the bureaucracy of sport to the athletes and their development. Using Pettigrew's contextualist approach, we examined the content, context, and process of changes that led to the introduction of athlete-centred initiatives in Canada's sport system. Evidence of the change included increased representation of athletes on decision-making committees of sport federations, increased athlete funding, the creation of training centres, and a forum for athletes to resolve disputes with coaches and sport federations. The change to a more athlete-centred system was the result of pressures originating from the external and internal environments. Key individuals also played an important role in the athlete-centred change. The application of Pettigrew's approach allowed us to discuss the nature of the changes that took place and to better understand the complexity of the change process in light of pressures originating from the context. This paper allowed us to reflect on the reorientation in Canadian sport from a focus on the structural and bureaucratic development of the system to an athlete-centred approach. We also discussed system-wide changes occurring in Canadian sport and uncovered the factors that led to greater athlete-centred programs and services.

Introduction

In the past two decades, Canada's amateur sport system has undergone a number of important changes. An in-depth evaluation of the Canadian sport

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system in the 1980s was the result of a push from the Government of the day (cf. Government of Canada, 1985; Task Force Report, 1988; Harvey, Thibault, & Rail, 1995) and the Ben Johnson drug scandal in 1988 (Dubin, 1990). In light of this evaluation, a reorientation of priorities and actions around high performance sport occurred and has been maintained through to the present (cf. Task Force Report, 1992; Mills, 1998; Sport Canada, 2002a). In his assessment of Canada's sport system, Justice Charles L. Dubin (1990) concluded that the Federal Government's increasing role in the bureaucracy of sport in the 1980s had contributed extensively to problems in the system. Dubin felt that "the day-to-day administration of sport in Canada has become a function of Government to a degree that never was intended nor, indeed, is either healthy or appropriate for sport" (Dubin, 1990, p. 529). In essence, the Government's role of funding sport extended into the business of regulating and bureaucratizing sport. As Semotiuk (1994) argued, "the political sensitivity and accountability of the Johnson incident forced the Federal Government to reassess its priorities in the area of sport" (p. 366). He further noted that the "Federal Government's responsibility for the provision of sport was not challenged: its focus, emphasis, and leadership were" (Semotiuk, 1994, p. 367).

Following recommendations from the Dubin (1990) inquiry and from subsequent Government documents (cf. Porter & Cole, 1990; Fitness and Amateur Sport, 1991; Best, 1994; Task Force Report, 1992), important changes started to occur in the Canadian sport system. One of these changes consisted of a shift in Government efforts away from the administrative and bureaucratic aspects of sport delivery to a focus on the technical development of high performance athletes—what has been coined an "athlete-centred" approach (cf. Sport Canada, 1988, 2001; Athletes CAN, 1994; Kidd, 1996). This shift toward an athlete-centred system has meant that more Government resources are now directly invested in high performance athletes rather than in the administration of national sport federations. Athlete-centred sport has been interpreted as both a concept and a process where:

... the values, programs, policies, resource allocation and priorities of sport organizations and agencies place primary emphasis on consideration of athletes' needs in a holistic sense and performance goals within that context. Those responsible for leadership and decision-making in sport must include the athlete in both defining the needs and goals and in determining how to meet them; i.e. the athlete should be the *active subject* in, not the object of, sporting programs. (Athletes CAN, 1994, p. 3)

There is evidence of a shift towards the athlete-centred focus throughout Canada's sport system. Key changes undertaken recently to illustrate this shift include: athlete representation on decision-making committees of national sport federations; the creation of national sport training centres (now called "Canadian Sport Centres") to assist in the training of high performance athletes; increased direct funding to athletes to support them in

their living and training expenses and more funding available to high performance coaches for their professional training; and a forum created to address and resolve disputes athletes may have with their coaches and/or their national sport federations (cf. Semotiuk, 1994; Mills, 1998; Sport Canada, 1998, 1999, 2001; Alternate Dispute Resolution in Sport, 2003; Athletes CAN, 2003a; Babiak, 2003). While the Federal Government and other organizations (e.g., Canadian Olympic Committee,² Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, Coaching Association of Canada) have continued to support the high performance programs of national sport federations (cf. Sport Canada, 1998, 1999), their focus has been on providing resources that will directly benefit athletes of these federations (cf. Canadian Heritage, 1998, 2002, 2003; Canadian Olympic Committee, 2004a).

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the changes that have occurred in Canada's sport system in the past 15 years in relation to the shift from the bureaucratic nature of sport to the athlete-centred focus using Pettigrew's (1987) contextualist approach. As a conceptual framework developed in organizational theory to study large scale changes in organizations, Pettigrew's contextualist approach allowed us to explore three areas related to organizational change: *what* has changed in Canada's sport system (content), *why* has the change occurred (context), and *how* has the change occurred (process).

Changes occurring in Canada's sport system have been the object of a number of studies in the past. These studies have been undertaken from a public policy perspective or from an organizational theory perspective (cf. Macintosh, Bedecki, & Franks, 1987; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b; Slack & Hinings, 1992, 1994; Macintosh, 1996; Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2002, 2004). From the public policy standpoint, Macintosh and his colleagues investigated changes that occurred in Canada's sport system as a result of the increasing involvement of the Federal Government in high performance sport (cf. Macintosh et al., 1987; Macintosh, 1988, 1996; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990). While documenting the role of the Federal Government in high performance sport and in developing sport policy, Macintosh and his colleagues proposed a new Federal sport structure which they felt "would maintain a much-needed Government presence, but would temper the disproportionately strong role the Federal Government at present plays in determining national policy" (Macintosh et al., 1987, p. 186). Even though Macintosh et al.'s work was published in 1987, many would argue that the Government has maintained a strong (too strong perhaps) presence in sport policy (cf. Dubin, 1990; Semotiuk, 1994; Thibault & Harvey, 1997; Searle & Brayley, 2000). The focus on Government involvement in sport and the resulting changes from this involvement have been documented in a number of works (cf. Kidd, 1980, 1982, 1996; Harvey, 1988; Harvey & Proulx, 1988; Semotiuk, 1994; Anderson, Broom, Pooley, Schrodt, & Brown, 1995; Barnes, 1996).

From an organizational theory standpoint, a number of studies focusing on the structural changes in Canadian sport have been led by Slack and his

colleagues. Using the Canadian amateur sport system as their research site, Slack and his colleagues (cf. Kikulis, Slack, Hinings, & Zimmermann, 1989; Kikulis et al., 1992, 1995a, 1995b; Slack & Hinings, 1992, 1994; Hinings, Thibault, Slack, & Kikulis, 1996; Amis et al., 2002, 2004) focused on various elements of organizational change within national and provincial sport organizations. For example, Slack and Hinings (1992) developed a framework to study change in sport organizations by pulling from different theoretical approaches employed in organizational theory. This framework allowed Slack and Hinings and others to explore changes in organizational structure (cf. Kikulis et al., 1989), the relationship between change and organizational values (cf. Amis et al., 2002; Hinings et al., 1996), changes in decision-making processes (cf. Kikulis et al., 1995a), institutional pressures leading to organizational change (cf. Slack & Hinings, 1994; Kikulis, 2000), pace, sequence and linearity of change (Amis et al., 2004), and a combination of these topics (cf. Amis et al., 2004; Hinings et al., 1996; Kikulis et al., 1992, 1995b; Slack & Hinings, 1994).

In addition to this research on change in Canadian sport organizations, there have been few studies where Pettigrew's conceptual framework on organizational change has been applied to the sport context. Specifically, Cousens, Babiak, and Slack (2001) investigated changes in the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the adoption of a relationship marketing approach by the league over a 17 year period. Cousens et al. (2001) explained how Pettigrew's framework allowed them to investigate the environment of the NBA along with the nature and the process of change occurring in the league. In another example of Pettigrew's work applied to the context of sport, Caza (2000) explored the introduction of innovative practices in a Canadian provincial sport organization. He specifically studied how members of this organization were receptive to the implementation of two initiatives. Caza applied one element of Pettigrew's framework (i.e., context receptivity for change) and found that it was effective in uncovering the major challenges associated with the implementation of successful and unsuccessful innovations in the non-profit sport sector.

Conceptual Framework—Pettigrew's Contextualist Approach

Pettigrew's contextualist approach was developed from longitudinal research undertaken by members of the Centre for Corporate Strategy and Change at the University of Warwick (cf. Pettigrew, 1987, 1990; Pettigrew, Ferlie, & McKee, 1992). In addition to the more than 100 private organizations studied, Pettigrew and his colleagues explored changes in the British National Health Service (NHS). They argued that public sector organizations like the NHS merit further examination because "like the private sector, [the public sector] is increasingly interested in questions of performance, the ability to manage longer-term change, the impact of the political economy on organizations and the role and nature of leadership" (Pettigrew et al., 1992, p. 2).

In Pettigrew's framework, the first element, content of change, is concerned with answering the question "what has changed"? More specifically, the content of change "refers to the particular area or areas of transformation under study" (Pettigrew et al., 1992, p. 7). The second element, context of change, refers to the environment in which the changes have taken place. Pettigrew identified two categories for context: outer and inner. "Outer context refers to the national economic, political and social context ... as well as the perception, action and interpretation of policies and events" (Pettigrew et al., 1992, p. 7) while inner context, by contrast, refers to the "ongoing strategy, structure, culture, management and political process ... which help shape the processes through which ideas for change proceed" (Pettigrew et al., 1992, p. 7). The importance of uncovering both the outer and inner context in which change occurs is fundamental to better comprehend the critical incidents, key players, and the nature of the change, in other words, the content and process of change in the Canadian sport system.

The third element of the framework is process of change. It refers "to the actions, reactions and interactions of the various interested parties as they negotiate around proposals for change" (Pettigrew et al., 1992, p. 7). The importance of key agents of change is particularly emphasized as these agents are often responsible for developing a vision, mapping out the necessary changes to achieve this vision, and implementing the changes.

In this paper, we applied the contextualist approach to the study of Canada's sport system. Focusing on change in a system rather than change in a single organization differs from the work of Pettigrew and his colleagues and previous organizational change studies in sport (cf. Caza, 2000; Cousens et al., 2001). We believe that the contextualist approach applied to a network of organizations operating in Canada's sport system has value in furthering Pettigrew's contextualist approach.³

There are a number of organizations involved in the development and delivery of amateur sport in Canada (e.g., public and non-profit sport organizations) and as a result, focusing on changes in the sport system rather than on discrete changes or events in one organization will provide us with greater insight into the context and process of change in Canadian sport (i.e., how change affects, is affected by, or is experienced by stakeholders). Pettigrew's approach advocates a holistic understanding of change based on the organizational context and the process through which the change occurs. As explained by Pettigrew and his colleagues:

... there are remarkably few studies of change that allow the change process to reveal itself in any kind of substantially temporal or contextual manner. Where the change project is treated as the unit of analysis the focus is often on a single event or a set of discrete episodes somehow separate from the immediate and more distant antecedents that give those events form, meaning and substance. Such episodic views of change ... limit themselves to snapshot rather than time series data, fail to provide data on the mechanisms and processes through which changes are created.

Studies of organizational change are, therefore, often preoccupied with the intricacies of narrow changes rather than the holistic and dynamic analysis of changing. (Pettigrew et al., 1992, p. 6)

In the following pages, we explore how Canadian sport has changed from a focus on the bureaucratic operations of the system toward an athlete-centred focus. In addition to uncovering the nature of athlete-centred changes, we discuss why and how these changes have occurred. We conclude with a discussion about the application of Pettigrew's framework to enhance our understanding of changes in Canadian sport and discuss future athlete-centred initiatives.

Application of Pettigrew's Contextualist Approach to Canadian Sport

Content of Change

Several changes provide evidence of a shift to an athlete-centred sport system. For the purposes of our discussion, we will focus specifically on four issues: (1) representation of athletes on decision-making committees of national sport federations; (2) increased direct funding to athletes; (3) creation of national sport training centres across the country; and (4) a forum for athletes to resolve disputes with coaches and/or sport organizations. Although there may have been incremental changes introduced and/or implemented that have favoured athletes in the sport system in recent years, we chose to focus our analysis on these four important changes because they represent key initiatives undertaken in Canada's sport system to favour the development of high performance athletes. These changes have been initiated, supported, and adopted by several stakeholders in Canada's sport system (e.g., Sport Canada [a unit of the Federal Government], Canadian Olympic Committee, Athletes CAN, Coaching Association of Canada, Canadian Sport Centres, national sport federations). As a result, they have been heralded as key changes towards the creation of an athlete-centred system (cf. Athletes CAN, 1994; Sport Canada, 1999; Coderre, 2000; Canadian Olympic Committee, 2004a). These changes are outlined in Table 1.

The first change consisted of the representation of athletes on decision-making committees involving high performance sport in national sport federations.⁴ Representation on these committees allow athletes to be involved in making decisions and developing policies such as codes of conduct, team selection criteria and discipline (Athletes CAN, 1994). In fact, in 1998, Sport Canada's minimum expectations for national sport federations included the 20% Solution, which translates into all national sport federations' committees concerned with high performance issues must have 20% athlete representation (Athletes CAN, 2003a). The Government's response to the recommendations proposed in the Mills' Report⁵ (Mills, 1998) included acceptance and implementation of a recommendation to "ensure that top-level athletes have significant decision-making strength in

Table 1. Content of change

Changes	Timeline
Representation of athletes on decision-making committees of sport organizations entitled 20% Solution	Introduced formally in 1998, implemented in 2000–2001.
Increased direct funding to athletes through the Athlete Assistance Program	Occurred in 1995 and again in 2000 and 2004
Creation of national sport training centres in numerous locations across the country	Introduced as a concept in 1983; first official national training centre opened in 1994 in Calgary
Forum for athletes to resolve disputes with coaches or sport organizations through the Alternate Dispute Resolution in Sport (ADRsportRED)	Initiated in 2000 through consultation; officially launched in 2002

issues that affect them, National Sport Organizations have been required, through the process of Accountability Agreements, to develop strategies to ensure this involvement within their particular sport” (Canadian Heritage, 1999, p. 7). Even though Sport Canada initiated the 20% Solution in 1998, it was officially implemented in 2000–2001 when Sport Canada made the athlete representation mandatory through its funding program to national sport federations. In other words, national sport federations must adopt the 20% Solution as part of their committees’ structure to be eligible to receive Federal Government funding (cf. Sport Canada, 2000a). Athletes CAN, the organization representing the interest of Canada’s high performance athletes, has been involved with the Federal Government and the national sport federations in implementing this initiative (cf. Athletes CAN, 1994, 2003a). Prior to the 20% Solution, athletes were not assured a voice on the decision-making committees of sport federations. In essence, their concerns and interests were not necessarily addressed by the executives of the sport federations.

The second change involved increased funding to high performance athletes through Sport Canada’s Athlete Assistance Program (AAP). Decisions were made in 1995 to increase the level of funding athletes receive in the AAP by 25% (Canadian Heritage, 1995). This increase meant that top athletes would receive a monthly stipend of \$810 up from \$650. In 2000, more changes to Canada’s AAP were undertaken. These changes involved collapsing nine different categories of athlete funding (Mills, 1998) into two categories: senior and developmental and increasing monthly stipends to athletes (cf. Sport Canada, 2002b; Canadian Heritage, 2004a). Shortly after the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, Government officials announced further increases: \$1500/month for senior athletes and \$900/month for developmental athletes (cf. Canadian Heritage, 2004a).

In addition to increasing the level of funding to athletes, the number of athletes receiving funding also increased from 837 athletes in 1997–1998 to more than 1400 athletes in 2003–2004 (Canadian Heritage, 1998; Canadian Heritage, 2002; Canadian Heritage, 2004a, 2004b). Table 2 outlines the total contributions made by Sport Canada to the sport system as well as the level of funding invested in the AAP. A ratio of athlete funding relative to the total Sport Canada contributions is calculated. This ratio clearly shows the increasing commitment of the Federal Government to fund high performance athletes.

It is also important to note that athletes have benefited from increased funding from other sources as well. For example, through various scholarship programs, the Canadian Olympic Committee has provided increased levels of funds to high performance athletes (cf. Canadian Olympic Association, 1997–2001; Canadian Olympic Committee 2002). This

Table 2. Sport Canada Contributions to Athletes through the Athlete Assistance Program*

Year	Total Sport Canada Contributions	Portion to Athletes (Athlete Assistance Program (AAP)) in \$	Portion to Athletes (AAP) in %	Portion to Canadian Sport Centres (CSCs) (# of CSCs receiving \$)
1985–1986	\$58,102,493	\$4,984,119	8.58%	
1986–1987	\$50,558,340	\$4,983,128	9.86%	
1987–1988	\$51,145,460	\$4,817,031	9.42%	
1988–1989	\$57,200,576	\$4,573,253	8.00%	
1989–1990	\$55,580,000	\$4,588,000	8.25%	
1990–1991	\$68,776,000	\$4,633,000	6.74%	
1991–1992	\$68,255,000	\$4,950,000	7.25%	
1992–1993	\$72,162,084	\$5,079,000	7.04%	
1993–1994	\$75,801,000	\$5,090,000	6.71%	
1994–1995	\$64,219,000	\$5,375,000	8.37%	\$450,000 (1)
1995–1996	\$47,234,004	\$6,839,982	14.48%	\$450,000 (1)
1996–1997	\$51,583,915	\$6,770,000	13.12%	\$610,000 (2)
1997–1998	\$64,601,465	\$6,650,000	10.29%	\$1,000,000 (3)
1998–1999	\$57,526,127	\$8,038,879	13.97%	\$1,620,000 (6)
1999–2000	\$52,895,586	\$9,010,000	17.03%	\$1,903,000 (6)
2000–2001	\$82,060,618**	\$14,750,000	17.97%	\$3,003,000 (6)
2001–2002	\$97,553,404**	\$15,117,854	15.50%	\$3,200,000 (7)
2002–2003	\$79,522,155	\$15,108,514	19.00%	\$3,200,000 (7)
2003–2004	\$89,500,000	\$15,200,000	17.00%	\$3,400,000 (7)

Note. *Information obtained from Fitness & Amateur Sport Annual Reports and Sport Canada Annual Reports; **In 2000–2001 and 2001–2002, Sport Canada contributed \$20M (each fiscal year) to the 2001 Edmonton World Championships in Athletics. This explains the inordinate increase in Sport Canada contributions between 1999–2000 and 2000–2001. It also explains the decrease between the contributions in 2001–2002 and the ones in 2002–2003.

increasing level of funding from the Canadian Olympic Committee was made possible with more corporate sector support and fundraising initiatives (cf. Canadian Olympic Association, 1997–2001, 2002).

The third change consisted of the creation of national training centres for high performance athletes. Originating from a 1983 concept of high performance sport centres for selected sports (Sport Canada, 1983), Sport Canada redefined its High Performance Sport Centres Policy to develop multi-sport centres catering to all high performance athletes. The Olympic Winter Games in 1988 in Calgary, and its financial and facilities legacy, provided the first national sport training centre (now referred to as Canadian Sport Centre (CSC)—Calgary). There are now eight centres in Canada (Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Toronto, Montréal and Atlantic Canada) (cf. Sport Canada, 2004a).⁶

Several principles underpinned the creation of these centres: for example, to contribute to the holistic development of athletes (performance, personal, social and career), to provide a training environment, and to increase cost effectiveness by providing programming and services on a multi-sport basis (Sport Canada, 1999; Babiak, 2003).⁷ Relying on the partnership between Sport Canada, the Coaching Association of Canada and the Canadian Olympic Committee, these centres provide numerous services to athletes to assist them in their training and their living environments. Given the locations of these centres, the decentralization of services (beyond the administrative centres of national sport federations) has meant that athletes have easier and more convenient access to these services. The level of Federal Government funding Canadian Sport Centres have received since 1995 is also outlined in Table 2.

The fourth change in the sport system consisted of the creation of a centre entitled Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (cf. www.adrspor-tred.ca). Through this centre, athletes, coaches, administrators, officials and sport federations can have their sport-related concerns and complaints heard. For athletes, concerns regarding such issues as team selection process, athlete funding, appeal of disciplinary sanctions, and harassment can be addressed through this program. Although the program is not exclusively for athletes, it does provide athletes with tools and resources to deal with conflict and with services of mediation and arbitration when disputes arise. The program's main objective is to provide key stakeholders (i.e., athletes, coaches, officials, administrators and volunteers) in the sport system with the necessary resources to prevent disputes from occurring. If and when disputes occur, then the program and its leaders provide an alternative to resolve these disputes without having to resort to the court system (*Alternate Dispute Resolution in Sport*, 2003). This forum for dispute resolution contributes to a more athlete-centred sport system in that it provides athletes with a new formal and legitimate channel to voice their concerns and have these concerns addressed outside of their national sport federations by an impartial group. In addition, the centre's board of directors must be composed of 25% of active or recently retired high performance athletes (cf. *Athletes CAN*, 2003b).

After discussing these four changes, the next step is to understand the context in which they occurred. In other words, after uncovering what has changed in the sport system to make it more athlete-centred, it is important to understand why these changes have occurred. Understanding the context will provide more insights into recent changes in Canadian sport. In the next section, we define and explain the context in which athlete-centred changes occurred in the Canadian sport system.

Context of Change

For Pettigrew (1987), context is divided into two categories: outer and inner. We begin our discussion by addressing three key aspects of the outer context which refers to the forces and pressures existing outside of the sport system that may have had an impact on organizations within the system.

The first pressure originating from the outer context was the Canadian Government's change in priorities. In 1984, the newly elected Conservative Government undertook a reorientation in operations and priorities, initiated by a program review of each Governmental department/unit. Leaders of the Conservative Government were considering decreasing expenditures and privatizing services and programs (Government of Canada, 1985). The review also included an analysis of the Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport. As noted by Harvey et al. (1995, pp. 249–250), the review “presented a number of recommendations alluding to an eventual progressive withdrawal of the Government from financially supporting amateur sport and fitness”. The major concern expressed during the review was whether or not Canadian sport could “sustain itself sufficiently well without as much direct Government involvement” (Government of Canada, 1985, p. 257). While the Federal Government never fully followed through with their reduction in financial support, this review did initiate a change in Sport Canada's funding philosophy for sport organizations. The Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) was eventually implemented under the Liberal Government in 1996 (Sport Canada, 1995) and “was introduced . . . to objectively assess NSOs [national sport organizations] on a wide range of factors and to determine which organizations were eligible to receive contributions” from the Federal Government (Sport Canada, 2004b, p. 5). In the initial implementation of the program, the SFAF involved an assessment of the organizations and their programs based largely on their high performance sport. While sport development and the organizational management of the national sport federations were considered in the assessment, the decision to fund [or not to fund] national sport federations centred on their high performance system and athlete success in international competition (Sport Canada, 1995). With a favourable assessment, national sport federations were guaranteed funding for a five-year period. The assessment process was updated in 2001 to adopt the “broad directions of the new Canadian Sport Policy” including supporting excellence, developing broader participation, building organizational capacity, and promoting collaboration among sport organizations (Sport Canada, 2004b, p. 3).

It is important to note that for most sport federations, Federal Government funding represented and continues to represent a significant portion of their annual budgets. As a result, given the SFAF's strong emphasis on high performance sport, leaders of national sport federations concerned about the future of their Government funding were invariably pressured to focus their efforts on developing systems to enhance athlete performances in international competitions. International success by athletes would ensure continued Government funding. As such, sport federations were incited to create systems, processes, and strategies conducive to (high performance) athlete-centeredness.

A second pressure from the outer context worthy of discussion was an additional restructuration of Government ministries prior to the election in 1993. This restructuration led to the elimination of the Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport. Sport Canada, a unit of the Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport was reassigned to a new department called Canadian Heritage. This department:

... is responsible for national policies and programs relating to broadcasting, cultural industries, arts, heritage, official languages, Canadian identity, Canadian symbols, exchanges, multiculturalism and sport. The department works with Canadians to strengthen our shared sense of identity while respecting the diversity that exists in Canada. (www.pch.gc.ca)

The move to a Governmental unit where Canadian identity is a priority further emphasized the relevance and importance of international sport success because medals in international sporting competitions contribute to national unity, pride, and identity (Macintosh, 1996). As such, a focus on a high performance, athlete-centred sport system which leads to success in international events is imperative in legitimizing Sport Canada's position within the Department of Canadian Heritage. Along similar lines, Pettigrew discussed the concept of legitimacy in the context of strategic change. He argued that:

... the development of strategic change in the firm takes on the character of a political learning process, a long-term conditioning and influence process designed to establish the dominating legitimacy of a different pattern of relation between strategic content, context, and process. (Pettigrew, 1987, p. 666)

One could argue that Sport Canada's new location in the Department of Canadian Heritage may have contributed to the development of a sport system where high performance athletes and their development are at the forefront.

A third pressure from the outer context is the media. An increased coverage of the plight of the underfunded Canadian athlete has also become evident in media coverage (cf. Starkman, 1994; Christie, 1995, 1999, 2003;

Canadian Press, 2001; CBC Sports Online, 2003; Cole, 2003). This increased media visibility has led to more pressure on governments, sport federations, and corporations to ensure that athletes are treated fairly (cf. Kay, 2001; Cleary, 2002). Poor results at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games (i.e., in the low number of medals won) resulted in a public (or media) outcry about how little funding was invested in amateur sport in Canada (particularly relative to other countries like Australia and the United Kingdom) (cf. Mills, 1998; Kari, 2000; Starkman, 2000). The same occurred during the Athens Olympic Games (cf. Aubry, 2004, Cole, 2004; Gordon, 2004). Conversely, Canadian athlete performances at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Games also generated a great deal of coverage. With increased focus on athletes in the media, the agenda of high performance sport and a focus on an athlete-centred system was very public. The involvement of the media and public awareness of the plight of Canadian high performance athletes may have precipitated the Federal Government and sport federations into introducing more recent changes conducive to favour high performance athletes.

Tied to media visibility is the recent hosting of major international games in Canada. The 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria; the 1999 Pan American Games in Winnipeg; the 2001 World Championships in Athletics in Edmonton; the 2003 Road World Cycling Championships in Hamilton have led to more extensive coverage of high performance sport in the Canadian media. Furthermore, Canada's recent Olympic bids (Toronto 1996 and 2008 and Vancouver 2010) and Commonwealth Games bid (Hamilton 2010) have also generated greater media coverage for high performance sport (cf. Bula, 1998; Bailey, 2003; Steffenhagen, 2003). These high profile sport events and bids correspond to a new push towards hosting as a strategy to generate greater economic activity within the country as well as contribute to social and cultural benefits (cf. Sport Canada, 2000b). Hosting international sporting events in Canada may not directly contribute to an athlete-centred system⁸ but because of this focus on hosting (and on bidding for major games) and its coverage in the media, the public and politicians may have become more receptive to the concept of high performance sport and to the importance of a system where athletes are the focus (cf. Cleary, 2002; Waddell, 2002). Furthermore, Canada's successful bid for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games appears to have created an impetus for greater investments in high performance sport and athletes (cf. Cole, 2004; Scanlan, 2004; Christie, 2005; Kingston, 2005).

Along the same lines, comparisons made by the media about Canada's sport system and Canadian athlete performances in international sport events versus other countries' systems and athlete performances have raised questions about how many resources are being invested in high performance sport in Canada relative to other countries (cf. Bercusson, 2004; Dowbiggin, 2004; Schubert, 2004). As a result, politicians and sport leaders are pressured to commit more resources to enhance athletes' training environment so that they can ultimately improve their performances in international competitions.

The outer context including changes in the Federal Government's priorities, restructuration of Government's ministries, and the increased media coverage of international sport competitions held in Canada and of Canadian bids for hosting high profile sport events contributed to a climate conducive to the introduction of athlete-centred changes.

The inner context is also important in understanding why the change toward an athlete-centred sport system occurred. Inner context refers to the internal environment, that is the strategy, structure, culture and management of organizations directly involved in the sport system. Several elements merit discussion under the umbrella of the inner context. Sport Canada's strategy, the creation of Athletes CAN and the involvement of the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Coaching Association of Canada will be discussed.

In their strategic plan, Sport Canada promoted a comprehensive approach to amateur sport through four key areas: high performance athletes and coaches; sport system development, strategic positioning of sport and access and equity. Sport Canada's priority on elite athletes was particularly emphasized. As outlined in the three-year strategy (Sport Canada, 1998, p. 2), "Federal funding is focussed predominantly, but not exclusively, on high performance sport. High performance sport is characterized by programs which prepare athletes to perform at the highest levels of national and international competition". In the same document, Sport Canada enumerated its investments in amateur sport, which are primarily directed towards high performance athletes (Sport Canada, 1998).⁹ In the recent Canadian Sport Policy, the priorities for Canada's sport system have been broadened to include enhanced excellence, enhanced participation, enhanced capacity and enhanced interaction (cf. Sport Canada, 2002a). Enhanced excellence is focused on high performance sport and athletes while enhanced participation is concerned with increasing the level of participation in physical activity among Canadians and increasing access to sport development programs. For the remaining two priorities, capacity and interaction, the focus is ensuring that the structural and organizational elements as well as the interorganizational relationships are in place to achieve the goals of sporting excellence and increased physical activity (Sport Canada, 2002a).

In addition to Sport Canada's strategic plan and the new Canadian Sport Policy, inner context also includes the creation of Athletes CAN in 1992 as it contributed to an athlete-centred focus within the sport system. Athletes CAN acts "as the collective voice for [high performance] Canadian athletes within the sport system, with Government and with the media" (www.athletescan.com). Its intent is to "make the Canadian sport system better for amateur athletes" (www.athletescan.com). It was created by a small group of athletes under the leadership of Ann Peel, a race walker on Canada's athletics' team and an advocate for athletes' rights. Peel was the founding chair of Athletes CAN and remained in the position until 1996 (CTV, 1995; *The Ottawa Citizen*, 1999). As a lobby group representing high performance athletes' interests, leaders of Athletes CAN were able to exercise pressure on politicians and bureaucrats and on sport organizations (cf. CTV, 1995; *The Ottawa Citizen*, 1999).

At the same time, other national organizations were also becoming more responsive to athletes' and coaches' needs. For example, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Coaching Association of Canada collaborated with Sport Canada to develop national sport training centres. The Canadian Olympic Committee also began contributing financial support to national sport federations and to athletes through their Excellence Fund. This funding program was created in 2002 to "support the high performance objectives of achieving podium performances" (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2004b). In 2003, the Canadian Olympic Committee contributed a total of \$4.5 million to athletes, national sport federations, and Canadian Sport Centres (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2004a). As explained by Canadian Olympic Committee's chief executive officer:

... the Olympics create great passion. People get very focused on how well our teams and athletes are doing. From our perspective, what we hope to see is a recognition in Canada that results are not just a function of the few months leading up to the Games, but years of preparation. It's easy to make an athlete one of the top 20 or 25 competitors in the world, but to make them capable of reaching the podium requires a significant amount of time and money. The COC [Canadian Olympic Committee] is trying to help the various levels of Government in Canada understand the investment that will have to be made if we're going to fulfill the kind of expectations that Canadians brings to the Games. (Gatehouse, 2004, p. 32)

On the topic of the Olympic Games, leaders of the Canadian Olympic Committee recently unveiled a plan to raise more than \$100M (Canadian) over five years to assist Canadian winter sport athletes reach the podium in 2010 where the games will be held in Vancouver (cf. Christie, 2005; Kingston, 2005). This plan entitled "Own the Podium" is a concerted effort of the Canadian Olympic Committee, the 13 winter national sport federations, VANOC (Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games), the Canadian Paralympic Committee, Sport Canada, and the Calgary Olympic Development Association (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004; Christie, 2005). Own the Podium is a strategy developed with the aim of Canada "becoming the #1 nation at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver" (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004, p. 4).

In addition to the involvement of the Canadian Olympic Committee and other sport partners in Canada's high performance sport and athletes, the Coaching Association of Canada has contributed by supporting coaches in their quest for sporting excellence. Through funding programs and initiatives to assist in the professionalization of coaches, the Coaching Association of Canada is considered as part of the inner context in our investigation of athlete-centred change in Canadian sport as the development of better coaches has been undertaken to result in better athletes and improved performances in international competitions.

The inner context, including Sport Canada's strategic plan and the creation of the new Canadian Sport Policy, the formation of Athletes CAN, and the contribution of the Canadian Olympic Committee, other sport partners, and the Coaching Association of Canada collectively served to create a climate where receptivity to change in favour of an athlete-centred approach existed. More specifically, government and sport federations appeared to be supportive of greater investments and actions toward a more athlete-centred approach. Government and sport federations introduced different programs, strategies, and management processes to favour athletes' development and competitiveness on the world stage. Table 3 summarizes the outer and inner context and the timelines in which this change occurred.

The following section highlights the third component of Pettigrew's contextualist approach: the process of change. In the following paragraphs, we will explain how athlete-centred changes occurred in the Canadian sport system.

Process of Change

Pettigrew's process of change refers to the actions, reactions, and interactions of the various interested parties as they negotiate around proposals for change. There are several elements to discuss with respect to process of change. The first relates to two key agents who were instrumental in the implementation of change toward a more athlete-centred sport system. The role played by these two individuals, Abby Hoffman and Denis Coderre, will be explained. The second point relates to the actions, reactions, and interactions that took place (or are taking place) among individuals and organizations in Canada's sport system to favour an athlete-centred approach.

Two key sport leaders, Abby Hoffman and Denis Coderre, played an important role, in contributing to the shift in thinking that put athletes at the centre of the system. Although many would argue that Abby Hoffman, Director of Sport Canada from 1981 until 1991 was responsible for much of the bureaucracy in Canadian sport (i.e., introduction of increased specialization and formalization within national sport federations, introduction of long term planning process (i.e., Quadrennial Planning Program), increased involvement of paid staff in all operations of the national sport federations), she did require national sport federations to consider athlete development models in the formation of their strategic plans (cf. Macintosh et al., 1987; Sport Canada, 1988; Macintosh, 1988; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990). The premise for Sport Canada's Quadrennial Planning Program was to lead national sport federations to ultimately create a better "athlete development model" (Sport Canada, 1988). As Macintosh (1996, p. 54) noted, the four-year planning initiative from Sport Canada was designed "to improve their [national sport federations] technical and administrative capacities to produce better high-performance athletes". In addition to athlete development models in long term plans, Hoffman is also credited with the

Table 3. Context of change

Outer context	Timelines
New Conservative Government—change in priorities—decrease government expenditures; review of funding to national sport federations	Introduced in 1984; led to the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework in 1995
Task force report outlining devolution of Government responsibility to sport funding	1988: Quadrennial planning and evaluation guide 1988–1992
Restructuration of government. Elimination of the Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport. Sport Canada is reassigned to Canadian Heritage—promotion of national identity	Undertaken in 1993 by Prime Minister-elect, Kim Campbell
Coverage in the media of hosting major events	
Commonwealth Games in Victoria	1994
Pan American Games in Winnipeg	1999
World Championships in Athletics in Edmonton	2001
Road World Cycling Championships in Hamilton	2003
Coverage in the media of bids to host major events	
Toronto 1996 Olympic Summer Games	Late 1980s
Toronto 2008 Olympic Summer Games	Late 1990s, early 2000s
Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games	Late 1990s, early 2000s
Hamilton 2010 Commonwealth Games	Early 2000s
Coverage in the media of athletes' performances at the Olympic Games	2000 2002 2004
Inner context	Timelines
Creation of Athletes CAN	1992
Canadian Olympic Committee, Coaching Association of Canada and Sport Canada collaborate to establish Canadian Sport Centres	1992–ongoing
Sport Canada's strategic plan emphasizing elite athlete federal funding focus	1998
Canadian sport policy is developed; priorities include: enhanced excellence, enhanced participation, enhanced capacity, enhanced interaction	2002

Table 3 (Continued)

Inner context	Timelines
Canadian Olympic Committee establishes Excellence Fund to support high performance objectives of achieving podium performance	2002
Canadian Olympic Committee spearheads Own the Podium program to support winter sport athletes reach the podium at the Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver in 2010	2004

development of the concept of regional high performance training centres, the precursor to the current model of national training sport centres (i.e., Canadian Sport Centres).

The other key agent of change was Denis Coderre, a Liberal Member of Parliament. In his role as Secretary of State for Amateur Sport from 1999 until 2001, Coderre consistently emphasized the importance of athletes in Canadian sport. In fact, during his tenure, athlete-centeredness became a fundamental value of Canada's sport system. In his first speech as Secretary, he stated "high performance athletes are Canadian heroes. . . . And that's why the Government of Canada as a whole is working to encourage the kind of climate in high performance sport that will help achieve that goal" (Coderre, 1999). In one of his endeavours, Coderre was instrumental in increasing the level of funding to high performance athletes. Coderre was credited with increasing monthly allocations to carded athletes in 2000. He also assisted in the formalization and organization of the Alternate Dispute Resolution program in sport, and added to the existing national training centres for high performance athletes. In yet another endeavour, he undertook an extensive pan-Canadian consultative process which eventually led to the National Summit on Sport in April 2001. Athletes were represented at the summit and were able to voice their concerns about the lack of attention invested in their needs (Athletes CAN, 2001). The consultation process confirmed and reinforced several points that had been raised by Athletes CAN, most importantly the lack of funding for high performance athletes. Coderre was viewed as a champion for athletes largely because he made a number of decisions in favour of the athletes. For example, in a press conference prior to the Sydney Olympic Games, he stated:

Canadian athletes are ambassadors of their country on the international sport scene. They are a source of pride for all Canadians and a source of inspiration for the up- and -coming athletes who dream of following in their footsteps. I have said it many times before and I will repeat it again: athletes are our priority. That's why this past spring I increased the financing granted to athletes through the Athlete Assistance Program.

That's also why I have provided additional funds for the coaches, the people who help our athletes to reach their dreams and to become champions. (Coderre, 2000)

Hoffman and Coderre represent what Pettigrew et al. (1992, p. 278) refers to as "key people in critical posts leading change". These individuals, according to Pettigrew et al. (1992), do not necessarily have to be in top positions within the organization as their personalities and personal skills for implementing and managing the change are more important for the process of change. Hoffman was a respected athlete with a strong vision for the development of high performance sport in the Canadian context while Coderre, as a new politician with a portfolio, quickly understood the complexity of sport in Canada and its many stakeholders including the critical role athletes could play in improving the system.

Coderre's National Summit on Sport led to an extensive consultation process involving all the major sport stakeholders (e.g., athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators, leaders representing special interest groups such as women, First Nations people, people with disabilities, media, health and education) in order to develop the new Canadian sport policy. To emphasize the relevance of this process and the importance of sport to the Canadian Government, the summit even included the participation of the Prime Minister of Canada (Sport Canada, 2001). The consultative process and the participation of all stakeholders in the National Summit on Sport facilitated the implementation of change in Canada's sport system in favour of Canadian high performance athletes. The process used by Coderre resulted in increased level of commitment from all stakeholders, including athletes, toward the implementation of change in the sport system because their views and concerns were represented. The summit would eventually culminate in the development of the Canadian Sport Policy (Sport Canada, 2002a); a policy, as previously discussed, which included athlete-centeredness as one of its priorities.

The National Summit on Sport was not the only consultative process that had taken place in Canadian sport. Several consultations (task forces, forums and inquiry) occurred in the years preceding the National Summit on Sport. These consultations have all contributed in varying degrees to increased actions and interactions in high performance sport and in a greater athlete-centred focus. For example, a 17-member task force on national sport policy produced a report, *Toward 2000: Building Canada's sport system* (Government of Canada, 1988), which focused on the development of a better sport system in Canada.

Another example of consultation in sport is the Dubin Inquiry which took place from 1988 until 1990. Although Dubin and his colleagues focused on the use of drugs in high performance sport to enhance athlete performances, the report did uncover issues and pressures leading high performance athletes to consider sporting excellence at all costs. Dubin provided numerous recommendations to improve athletes' situation (e.g., funding, services, training and competitive opportunities) in Canada's

sport system (cf. Dubin, 1990; Semotiuk, 1994). Shortly after the publication of the Dubin Inquiry, stakeholders from sport federations came together in three different Sport Forums (i.e., Sport Forum I, May 1991; Sport Forum II November 1991; Sport Forum III, November 1992) to discuss strategies to improve high performance sport and sport development. Unlike the National Summit on Sport, these forums were not initiated by the Federal Government; they were organized by the now defunct Canadian Sport Council (formerly known as the Sport Federation of Canada) (cf. Sport Forum I, 1991; Sport Forum II, 1991; Sport Forum III, 1992; Semotiuk, 1994). As part of their mandate, the members of the Sport Forums created an athlete development model where athletes and sport participants were considered to be the core of Canada's sport system. This model corresponded to recommendations presented in the Dubin inquiry regarding the need to create a system more conducive to meeting athletes' needs (Dubin, 1990; Semotiuk, 1994; Macintosh, 1996).

This focus on athletes' needs would also be evident in yet another Federal Government-sponsored task force report. Shortly before Sport Forum III took place, the Government of Canada released a task force report (Task Force Report, 1992). This report presented "a completely new direction for high-performance sports" with a more subdued profile for the Federal Government and increased responsibilities by national sport federations to guide policy-making in sport (Macintosh, 1996, p. 60).

The Mills Report published in 1998 also took into account the central role of the athlete in Canada's sport system. Although it did not exclusively focus on high performance athletes, it did acknowledge the contribution they make to raise the profile of the country within and outside of Canada (Mills, 1998). The Mills Report was the culmination of consultation involving politicians, Government bureaucrats, and various stakeholders involved in Canada's amateur and professional sport (Mills, 1998).

Using Pettigrew's framework, these task forces, forums and inquiry would fall under the process of change because they all represent actions, reactions, and/or interactions among stakeholders involved in Canada's sport system. The process of negotiation that occurs in these debates allow stakeholders, including Abby Hoffman and Denis Coderre, to introduce and implement change in the sport system—changes that have been beneficial to high performance athletes. In most task forces, forums, and inquiry, the stakeholders involved have represented different types of organizations (e.g., Federal Government, national sport federations) and different roles and interests (e.g., athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators, representatives from marginalized groups). They have had to consult, negotiate, and agree upon outcomes and strategies outlined in the reports of these task forces, forums and inquiry. In Table 4, we have summarized the major elements of the process that have contributed to the changes in Canada's sport system.

Table 4. Process of change

Process	Contributions
Abby Hoffman, Director of Sport Canada (1981–1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created the template for national sport federations' athlete development models • Created the concept of high performance training centres
Denis Coderre, Secretary of State for Amateur Sport (1999–2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasized importance of athletes in Canada's sport system; concept of athlete-centredness becomes fundamental during his tenure as Secretary of State • Increased levels of funding to high performance athletes • Spearheaded pan-Canadian consultation (2000–2001) which led to the National Summit on Sport (April, 2001) • The National Summit on Sport eventually led to the creation and adoption of the Canadian Sport Policy in May 2002 (Sport Canada, 2002a)
Task Force Report (1988)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 member task force on national sport policy focused on development of a better sport system in Canada
Dubin Inquiry (1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resulted from investigation into use of performance enhancement drugs in Canada's sport system • Report uncovered issues and pressures leading high performance athletes to consider sporting excellence at all costs
Sport Forum I, II and III (1991–1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of strategies to improve high performance sport and sport development • Created athlete development model where athletes and sport participants were considered to be core of Canada's sport system
Task Force Report (1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presented new direction for high performance sports with more subdued profile for Federal Government and increased responsibilities by national sport federations to guide policy-making in sport
Mills Report (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined the social, cultural, and economic significance of sport in Canadian society and addressed the Federal Government's involvement in sport (Mills, 1998) • The role and the importance of high performance athletes are identified

Conclusion

The application of Pettigrew's contextualist approach allowed us to better understand the athlete-centred changes that occurred in Canada's sport system. Four major changes favouring the athlete-centred approach were identified: athlete representation on decision-making committees of national sport federations, increased funding to athletes, the creation of training centres for athletes, and a forum where disputes between athletes, coaches, and/or national sport federations are addressed and resolved. With respect to context, we discussed the outer context focusing on the Canadian Government change in priorities, the restructuring of the Government, and the increasing media coverage of Canadian athletes and their performances in international sporting events. For inner context, we noted Sport Canada's strategy, the new Canadian Sport Policy, the creation of Athletes CAN, and the receptivity of some national organizations (e.g., Canadian Olympic Committee and Coaching Association of Canada) to adopt changes that favour athletes. With respect to process, two key agents were identified as key figures in leading athlete-centred change. In addition, the extensive consultation process undertaken through the Dubin Inquiry, the Sport Forums, the Task Forces, and the National Summit on Sport were discussed in light of their strategic direction toward athlete-centred change.

By using Pettigrew's approach we examined change as part of a long term progression where we uncovered how contextual pressures within and outside of organizations, the role of key agents, and the values, structures, and strategies of organizations had an impact on this change. During our examination of the Canadian sport system, we were able to explore what changed, why the changes occurred and how they occurred. The role of external factors (outer context) and internal characteristics of organizations involved in Canada's sport system (inner context) as well as the impact of key individuals in facilitating change and the actions and interactions of these individuals and stakeholders involved in sport (process) provided us with a better understanding of the changes that did occur.

The administration/bureaucracy associated with amateur sport may have been the preoccupation of Canadian sport leaders in the 1970s, 1980s and the early 1990s; the preoccupation now appears to be on the athletes. However, to call Canada's sport system fully or exclusively athlete-centred would be misleading. Even though recent changes in our sport system have been favourable for high performance athletes, these athletes continue to express concerns about the financial support they receive, about the increasing expectations with respect to training and competition in order to meet the international and Canadian Olympic Committee standards, about their access to services from their own national sport federations and other organizations in the system.

Pettigrew et al. (1992) accounted for receptivity and non-receptivity to change. In this study, we have focused on the receptivity to change; that is "features of context (and also management action) that seem to be favourably associated with forward movement" (Pettigrew et al., 1992,

p. 268). However, as outlined in the following paragraphs, there are a number of elements in Canada's sport system that "may be associated with blocks on change" (Pettigrew et al., 1992, p. 268). Considering the non-receptive elements for change are important as they may impede the implementation of an athlete-centred system. For example, as part of the pressures that may limit athlete-centred change, the Canadian Sport Policy (Sport Canada, 2002a) outlines a renewed emphasis on enhancing the level of participation in sport for all Canadians. This emphasis is of great interest to those who advocate for a healthier more active Canadian population. Thus, there now appears to be a push for more balanced initiatives between excellence in high performance sport and active participation in sport and physical activities (cf. Sport Canada, 2002a). Although the overall goal of international sporting excellence is still imperative for government, national sport federations, and multi-sport organizations, there is acknowledgement of the benefits of a more physically active population.

Many athletes and leaders in sport federations are calling for increased resources invested in high performance sport (cf. Athletes CAN, 1994; Starkman, 2000; Scanlan, 2003), however, with pressure from the public, politicians and bureaucrats have had difficulty justifying more public spending in sport (particularly high performance sport) when faced with financial shortfalls in health care, education, and other social programs. Furthermore, there remains important power struggles and competition for funding between different stakeholders involved in Canadian sport (cf. Macintosh, 1996; Green, 2004). These struggles and their eventual resolution will likely result in greater changes in sport in the future. Collectively, Canada's renewed focus on both sport participation and excellence, the push for public funds being invested in health and education instead of high performance sport and struggles between different stakeholders in the sport system challenge the introduction and implementation of some of the athlete-centred changes, particularly in light of criticisms about an over-emphasis on high performance sport (cf. Macintosh, 1996; Green, 2004). Macintosh (1996, p. 64) argued that "the Federal Government involvement in high-performance sport in Canada, these outcomes [national unity, international stature and motivation toward sport participation] have to be placed in the perspective of other social needs in Canada".

Pettigrew's framework applied in the study of change within Canada's sport system allowed us to discuss the changes that occurred and explain what precipitated these changes and how they occurred. Pettigrew studied change in a number of organizations (e.g., most notably Imperial Chemical Industries and the UK's National Health Service). Although the framework was developed specifically to study long term changes in organizations, we were able to apply it to examine changes in a system (i.e., a collective of organizations). Our use of the framework highlighted the challenges of the change process in a context where several organizations have a stake in its success. As Canada's sport system continues to face pressures and challenges to address athletes' and participants' needs, more changes are anticipated. Understanding the context in which change occurs as well as the processual

elements in place to implement the change, sport leaders and researchers will be in a better position to understand the nature of system-wide changes in Canadian sport.

The relevance of systematic change in this case and how the framework allows for a more complete picture of the variables involved in organizational change is realized by using Pettigrew's framework. From a theoretical perspective, the framework helped us better understand what changed, why it changed, and how it changed within the context of the Canadian sport system. As evident from our discussion, change in a system where there are many stakeholders with different values, interests, and objectives is complex.

From a practitioner's point of view, Pettigrew's framework underscores the importance of what people can do to manage change. In particular, there are a number of specific considerations practitioners should take into account when facing change: for example, the nature and scope of the changes that are being introduced; the external and internal pressures leading organizations to change and the importance to monitor these pressures in order to respond with the appropriate changes; and the importance of change agents and the role they play in the change as well as the level of receptivity conducive to the introduction of change. It is important for practitioners facing change to monitor both outer and inner contexts and to envision and clearly articulate the potential implications of the change for all stakeholders.

Notes

1. This paper was presented at a workshop organized by the Research Centre for Sport in Canadian Society at the University of Ottawa in December 2003. We have benefited from the comments and feedback of the workshop participants, in particular Drs Jean Harvey and Joanne Kay.
2. In April 2002, the Canadian Olympic Association changed its name to the Canadian Olympic Committee (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2002).
3. Pettigrew, Ferlie, and McKee's (1992) investigation of the National Health Service offers some parallels with Canada's sport system. The NHS, like Canada's sport system operates predominantly within the public and non-profit sectors. The NHS fulfills its mandate with the assistance of several health-related organizations and interest groups (e.g., hospitals, community health council, mental handicap services). In the Canadian sport context, the Federal Government through Sport Canada meets its objectives of delivering sport to the population by collaborating with several non-profit national sport federations, multi-sport and multi-service organizations.
4. National sport federations are also referred to as national sport organizations in sport documents.
5. The Mills Report represents the deliberations of a Federal Government sub-committee report on the study of sport in Canada. Members of the sub-committee included politicians from all political parties and sought input from every stakeholder in the sport sector. The sub-committee's mandate centred on the social, cultural, and economic significance of sport in Canadian society and addressed the Federal Government's involvement in this sector. The document is often referred to the 'Mills' Report' because Dennis Mills, Member of Parliament was the Chair of the sub-committee (cf. Mills, 1998).

6. The Canadian Sport Centre located in Victoria (British Columbia) is included as part of the network of centres, however, the funding for this centre originates from the Canada Commonwealth Legacy Fund (i.e., legacy from the hosting of the 1994 Commonwealth Games) (cf. Pacific Sport, 2005).
7. Other principles of the Canadian Sport Centres include the development and training of top level coaches, the promotion of the coaching profession, and the coordination of the professional preparation of coaches with the training of high performance athletes (Sport Canada, 1999). As well, the promotion of sport development and the creation of economies of scale through the coordination of programs and resources among sport partners were also identified as principles of the Canadian Sport Centres.
8. Hosting high profile sport events may actually divert funds away from high performance athletes and lead to expenditures that may have little relevance to enhancing Canada's sport system (e.g., building infrastructure, road and transportation improvements and security).
9. For example, out of a budget of more than \$56M in 1998–1999, Sport Canada invested 60% in high performance sport (i.e., funding of elite athletes, high performance programming in national sport federations, National Sport Centres and hosting of international games and world championships).

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