

GREETINGS:

After eight years on the board of AthletesCAN and three years as President, I am proud to submit my final report on the activities of AthletesCAN to our members and the sport community.

We are very pleased to bring the AthletesCAN Forum and KidsCAN School Day to Calgary this year for the first time since 2000. We are looking forward to hosting the most athletes at forum in over a decade, and working more closely with our winter sport members.

The goal of Forum is, as always, to empower athletes to develop and expand their skills as leaders within the Canadian sport system, to inspire athletes to find their voice and contribute to meaningful change where they live, work and play, and to build greater awareness among athletes of the role and programs of AthletesCAN and our partners.

Reflecting on the Role of AthletesCAN:

We remain resolute in our commitment to build leadership within sport by supporting athletes through effective representation both within their sport and within the broader sport landscape.

Athlete representation continues to strengthen across sport organizations with athlete councils and athlete board members at the Canadian Olympic Committee, Canadian Paralympic Committee, Commonwealth Games Canada, Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games, Canadian Sport Institutes, National Sport Organizations, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, and many National Sport Organizations.

We play the unique role of bringing together the voices of athletes across the country and across these organizations to provide responsible feedback within the sport landscape.

Achieving our purpose:

Our vision is a Canadian sport system that empowers our athletes to achieve their full potential on the field of play and beyond.

Our mission and purpose is to ensure a fair, responsive and supportive sport system, to provide valued programs and services to our members and, most importantly, develop effective athlete leaders.

Our strategic focus:

By encouraging athlete representatives to be more engaged and providing them with the tools necessary to be effective leaders, we are developing a powerful voice within the athlete community. This voice is critical to building a holistic performance-focused framework within Canadian sport.

Athlete Councils:

At last years' AthletesCAN Forum, we focused on the positive impact that an effective athlete report can have on the sport landscape. This year we will be focusing on the role of the Athlete Council and effective Athlete Agreements.

An update on our efforts within the four strategic priorities of AthletesCAN:

These strategic priorities help us to focus our efforts and resources to maximize the positive impact that we have on the athletes and the objectives of stakeholders in Canadian sport.

LEADERSHIP:

Athlete Reports – the athlete report is one of the key tools that an athlete rep can use to provide feedback to their national sport organization about its performance. Athlete reports are also a mechanism to encourage all athletes at an NSO to be engaged and provide clear, unbiased feedback. The benefit of these reports is that they can lead to changes that contribute to great performance and results. It is AthletesCAN's position that the sport landscape would be greatly enhanced if every sport had an athlete report submitted to their board of directors, coaches and membership. We have established a standard athlete report template that is available in the AthletesCAN Leadership Handbook. However, it remains the responsibility of athletes and the athlete representatives to compile and submit a responsible report in order for their voice to be heard.

Sponsorship Handbook – supported by interviews and testimonials from athletes, sports agents and experts within the field of social media, marketing and sponsorship, AthletesCAN launched a Sponsorship Handbook that provides athletes with tangible resources to develop their skills to meaningfully impact their sport and support their individual and team efforts to raise their profile, fundraise, and build a sustainable partnership base.

AthletesCAN Forum & KidsCAN School Day – these flagship events remain the largest direct engagement events with athlete representatives in Canada. Complemented by the ongoing work throughout the year to support and develop athlete leadership through direct athlete representative engagement, the Forum and KidsCAN provide an opportunity to bring the community of athlete representatives together through skills development opportunities and workshops. It also presents an opportunity for sport organizations to engage directly with a broad athlete community.

ADVOCACY:

CADP Review – this year the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) invited the sport community to comment on the draft 2015 Canadian Anti-Doping Program (CADP). Highly involved in this process, AthletesCAN has made firm recommendations that:

1. The implementation of an athlete contract that enables CCES to share athlete information with law enforcement and border agencies is a significant infringement of privacy and charter rights
2. The implementation of a National Sport Organization Adoption Fee (which is meant to cover the CCES operating deficit) will ultimately cost athletes by way of increases in fees and / or the reduction of services provided by NSOs.

We believe these are not effective measures to deter athletes from doping and see serious risk that the drastic shift in policy and the proposed financial implications are poised to significantly disrupt the Canadian sport system and athletes

Athlete Agreement Review – under the leadership and guidance of AthletesCAN, an Athlete Agreement Working Group has undertaken a research project to assess the current state of the *Athlete Agreement* in the Canadian Sport System.

The objective of this review is to establish best practices to build a stronger Athlete Agreement framework. One of the key takeaways is that Athletes do not have an effective mechanism to negotiate on these contracts. We strongly recommend that athlete agreements be reviewed and approved by an athlete council so that athletes do not enter into the agreement without review or that individual athletes are not negotiating athlete agreements from a disadvantaged position relative to their NSO.

From our experience in managing hundreds of disputes between athletes and NSOs, we feel that an effective athlete agreement is crucial in avoiding conflicting and preserving the strength of relationship between athletes and their NSOs.

Updated Standards for Athlete Councils – a key area of effective athlete representation is a strong Athlete's Council. To encourage the formation of new councils as well as make existing councils more effective, we have put a greater emphasis on establishing an effective set of standards that is now included in the Athlete Leadership Handbook.

Leadership Role on Diversity – at the AthletesCAN Forum in 2013, AthletesCAN held a panel on Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Intersex, and Queer (LGTBIQ) diversity within sport. This panel included athletes and experts, who helped to raise greater awareness and facilitated open dialogue. At the Forum, there was a motion to bring forward a policy to the sport community on diversity that we would seek to have adopted by all NSO and sport organizations in Canada. This remains a policy priority that we are committed to in order to ensure a sport environment that is safe, respectful, and welcoming to all.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:

Governance – bylaws were rewritten in order to meet the requirements of the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, effective on October 14, 2014. See Succession and Organizational Change below for more details on AthletesCAN's changes.

Budget – AthletesCAN ran a positive fiscal balance for the first time in six years in 2013-2014. Buoyed by a one-time sponsorship contribution in 2013-2014, the organization remains in a deficit position with respect to the operating budget. Significant measures have been taken to reduce costs including establishing a virtual office structure. Over the long-term AthletesCAN must find additional sources of revenue for the organization to be sustainable and effective. We feel strongly that there are areas of service provided to athletes – such as in sport dispute resolution (Sport Solution) – that are underfunded. It is our responsibility to raise awareness of the services provided by AthletesCAN that contribute to the objectives of other stakeholders within Canadian Sport. It is also our responsibility to seek additional funding from these stakeholders in order to continue to provide these services to athletes in support of the Sport Communities common objectives.

Memorandum of Understanding with SDRCC and BC Athlete Voice – in an effort to align stakeholders' outcomes AthletesCAN continues to build relationships with other representative groups. In the past years we have established Memorandums of Understanding with the SDRCC and BC Athlete Voice

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

CIBC Team Next (new program) – launched in partnership with CIBC in 2013, the CIBC Team Next program is a \$2 million investment to assist 67 young athletes. The program provides athletes with: a \$5,000 annual grant for the next three years (\$15,000 total); mentorship from prominent Canadian athletes; workshops and advice on personal finances, post-secondary and career planning, social media training and public speaking; exclusive access to the CIBC Team Next idea sharing forum; community support and networking opportunities through the local CIBC branches and employees in their home community; and additional valued services.

Investors Group (legacy program) – continues to be a key supporter of athletes through the Team Investors Group Amateur Athlete Fund. In its 15th year of partnership with AthletesCAN, the Team Investors Group Amateur Athletes Fund has provided more than \$1,400,000 to Canadian athletes.

Sport Solution – a key service of AthletesCAN, the Sport Solution works to ensure a fair, responsive and supportive sport system by offering athletes access to resources to assist them with navigating disputes within sport. Through greater awareness and enhanced resources, AthletesCAN was able to provide support to a record number of athletes – affecting approximately 10% of the athlete community in 2013 – facing challenges in areas including AAP, team selection, and athlete agreement disputes.

This is a key program that is provided to athletes. This program is operated with a minimal budget and has not seen an increase in funding in over a decade. This is a key area of focus for the organization and an area that we will be actively seeking additional resources in order to support an equitable sport dispute resolution system for Canadian athletes.

SUCCESSION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE:

Successful board and staff succession is key to an organization's long-term success. Our board terms were changed from two years to three years in 2008 to allow for greater continuity. Also, for greater governance and succession the President Elect role was created in 2010. This year we are making our second transition of President Elect to President, with Josh Vander Vies stepping into the role of President at the close of our Annual General Meeting. Josh has worked very closely throughout the year with our staff and myself in preparation for his upcoming role and has all of the knowledge, passion, and commitment to help lead the organization.

The new Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act has required governance changes for all Federally incorporated not for profit organizations. To meet the requirements of the act, we have had to redefine our membership to one able-bodied athlete and one athlete with a disability athlete representative from each National Sport Organization. Additionally our board of directors has been restructured from seven elected and four appointed athletes, to seven elected athletes. While making these changes we have also expanded the criteria of board members, which were previously limited to athletes retired within eight years, to allow for two board members to be retired for more than eight years. The purpose of this is to be able to recruit athletes who may have significant experience that may be able to contribute as board members.

In addition to these changes in our membership and board structure, for this year only all board members are required to be elected under the new bylaws of the organization. As a result, we will be holding elections for all seven positions on the board at this year's Annual General Meeting (Sunday at Forum).

LOOKING FORWARD:

The mechanism and role of a strong, independent, and responsible national team athletes' association – AthletesCAN - is absolutely critical in a healthy Canadian Sport system.

AthletesCAN is critical in the role that we, as athletes, play in building a responsible athlete voice; no organization brings together athletes from across all of the Sport Canada recognized sports, para and able bodied, to learn from each other, to provide leadership tools, to build effective representation, and to support the common goals of a performance driven culture both on and off the field of play.

The athlete voice is a powerful and fundamental tool in harnessing the ultimate potential of the sport system. A responsible athlete voice is a feedback mechanism that is absolutely necessary to help coaches, administrators, and sport leaders to help navigate the pathway of current and future performance. Only by harnessing and supporting effective leadership at all levels of sport – including leadership among the athlete community – can Canadian sport reach its highest level of performance and impact on Canadian society.

As an organization, we have been managing our budget in an environment of increasing scrutiny and reduced support. However, our critical services, including Sport Solution are drastically underfunded compared to what we deliver to the athlete community as a mechanism of equitable representation.

We must continue to raise awareness among both athletes and the Sport community of the role that is being played by AthletesCAN in supporting the athletes and efforts of all stakeholders in the Canadian sport community.

PERSONAL NOTE:

Thank you to our current board members who have all contributed with their unique perspectives and skill sets – Craig Buntin, Alec Denys, Tom Hall, Jennifer Joyce, Jeane Lassen, Josh Vander Vies, and Suzanne Weckend-Dill.

A special thanks to Alec Denys who is stepping off of the board after more than a decade of volunteer commitment to AthletesCAN; Alec has always brought a highly balanced perspective and carried great consideration in all of his remarks.

To all future board members, you have a tremendous growth opportunity in front of you and you have generations of past board alumni that you can reach out to for perspective. You have a phenomenal opportunity to translate your approach to excellence to help your fellow teammates and future generations of athletes to achieve their greatest potential on and off the field of play.

It has been a great privilege to learn from fellow board members, past and present, and the staff of AthletesCAN. It has been an inspiration to get to know the stories of athletes from across the country and a variety of sports. And it has been an incredibly meaningful journey to build relationships that I expect will last a lifetime, based on common values and objectives.

Yours in sport,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Petursson".

Erik Petursson
President, Board of Directors
AthletesCAN