

Sport Matters Group: Media Release

LE SPORT EST IMPORTANT / SPORT MATTERS
201-359 rue Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K2P 1X9
Tel./Tél.: 613.526.2912
Fax/Télé.: 613.569.6601
www.sportmatters.ca ~ www.sportestimportant.ca

For immediate release

LANDMARK BUDGET PUTS CANADIAN SPORT ON THE ROAD TO EXCELLENCE

(Ottawa, Ontario – February 26, 2008)

In one of the most important federal budgets in Canadian sport history, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty confirmed a new, on-going, annual investment of \$24M in support of Canadian summer sport athletes, coaches, and programs.

“With this one measure, Minister Flaherty and Secretary of State (Sport) Helena Guergis have accelerated Canadian sport down the road to excellence,” said Ian Bird, Senior Leader of the Sport Matters Group. “This investment promises important returns for all Canadians because today’s sport is tomorrow’s health and prosperity.”

Budget 2008 scales up federal investment in Canada’s summer sport program with \$8M allocated in 2008, \$16M in 2009, and \$24M thereafter, on-going.

Reaction amongst national sport and physical activity leaders was resoundingly positive.

Anne Merklinger, Director General of Canoe-Kayak Canada commented, “As we prepare to reach the podium in Beijing this summer, today’s budget announcement really hits the mark. Canadian paddlers are delighted that the Government of Canada supports their ambitions to be the best in the world and to represent Canada at the highest level of sporting achievement.”

“Today’s budget will help create Canadian Paralympic champions and future role models for young Canadians, especially for those with a physical disability. Kudos to Minister Flaherty for recognizing the role of sport in promoting an inclusive Canada,” said Brian MacPherson, Chief Operating Officer of the Canadian Paralympic Committee.

“Minister Flaherty is to be congratulated for his forward looking approach to investing in sporting excellence. Today’s financial boost supports a vision of Canada as a leader in sport and in the Commonwealth of nations,” said Thomas Jones, Chief Executive Officer of Commonwealth Games Canada.

Kelly Murumets, President of ParticipACTION remarked, “With today’s budget allocation of new funds for sporting excellence in Canada, we can continue the momentum behind promoting physical activity and sport participation and getting Canadians to move more.”

“An athlete centered sport system requires a long term commitment to sporting success. The long term investment profiled in the federal budget makes that commitment to our athletes and our sporting leaders of tomorrow,” said Jasmine Northcott, executive director of AthletesCAN.

Canada’s coaching, academic, and research communities commented on what today’s announcement means.

“Coaching is the cornerstone of sporting achievement. Today’s budget puts Canada onto a competitive playing field with other nations for which the government should be congratulated,” said John Bales, Chief Executive Officer of the Coaching Association of Canada.

“Universities are key part of a strong sport system that is able to produce champions, and champion citizens. Investing in championship sport, as did Minister Flaherty today, is more than just good policy, it’s good for Canada,” said Marg McGregor, Chief Executive Officer of Canadian Interuniversity Sport.

“Leadership by coaches is a critical part of the Canadian sport enterprise,” said Wayne Parro, executive director of Coaches of Canada. “With one act of leadership today, the federal government stood up for a coach-led Canadian sport system from playground to podium.”

“It’s wonderful to see a federal government that does its research and recognizes the benefits of sport and physical activity,” commented Debra Gassewitz, President of the Sport Information Resource Centre.

More than one commentator linked today’s announcement to its impact on Canadian children and youth.

“When young Canadians dream about going to the Canada Games and representing their community, we want to be there in support of their aspirations. Today’s budget does just that, it supports the dreams of Canadian athletes and Canadians at large who know that Canada is full of champions,” said Sue Hyland, CEO of the Canada Games Council.

“Acquiring the skills to be a Canadian athlete begins in our nation’s schools where quality physical education is the standard,” said Andrea Grantham, executive director of the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. “Today’s investment in sporting excellence recognizes that a physically literate Canada is a critical part of our future health and well-being.”

Karin Lofstrom, executive director of CAAWS remarked, “We’re pleased to see the government’s investment in Canada’s summer sport programs. Continuing to create opportunities for girls and women to participate and lead in sport is an essential part of any successful action plan – in sport and in our communities.”

Of course, much of what good public policy achieves is an expression of Canadian values.

Victor Lachance, executive director of the True Sport Foundation commented on this theme, “Canadians value excellence in sport because it reflects what is best in them and in their communities. The budget tabled in the house this afternoon invests in this kind of sport, true sport, and in so doing acknowledges what sport can do for our communities.”

The Sport Matters Group is a collective of national, provincial, and community sport institutions and leaders who care about the future of sport in Canada and who collaborate on various sport policy issues. The Group has actively worked together on the Canadian Sport Policy, the Sport and Physical Activity Act, and on increasing the resources available for sport in Canada.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:
Ian Bird, Sport Matters Group
613.526.2912 or 613.447.2488