

Section 9

Conclusion

The broad and compelling evidence of sport's benefits invites communities and decision makers to recognize sport's value as a substantial public asset, one that merits our attention and intentional effort to amplify sport's positive effects across the full spectrum of opportunities outlined in this report.

Sport is a powerful means of promoting health, but an even more powerful means of building social capital, providing young people with positive adult role models and mentors and opportunities for positive development.

Delivering on these benefits, however, is not the job of sport alone. Local communities, where sport takes place and where the benefits are most tangible, have a leading role to play in both building a comprehensive and inclusive community sport system, and ensuring that the sport Canadians get is, indeed, the sport they want. This is critical to realizing the full range of benefits that values-based sport can generate. Evenly distributed opportunities to participate in sport can help narrow the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged groups, while positive sport experiences encourage participation and retention, foster positive character development in participants, and strengthen communities.

The opportunity to strengthen communities after the COVID-19 pandemic is more important than ever. Sport organizations and communities now have the opportunity to “build back better” using an intersectional lens to dismantle barriers that may have previously limited sport involvement. Building back sport that includes all Canadians will allow all stakeholders to have positive sport experiences.

Recent social advocacy for diversity and inclusion is apparent within the sport system and including everyone in sport ensures that all Canadians have the ability to receive the benefits associated with a good sport culture. As research has demonstrated, the unique positive impacts of sport on equity-deserving groups reinforce the need to reduce barriers to entry. Furthermore, involving stakeholders from these communities in sport advocacy and planning is an important component to creating positive sport environments.

The **benefits of community sport** invite communities and decision makers to recognize its value as **a substantial public asset**, and to devote attention and intentional effort to ensuring these benefits are fully realized for all of our Canadian communities.

Focusing on the desire to achieve the sport Canadians want, individuals within sport communities have the opportunity to advocate for change and strive towards a values-based system. Not only will participants receive the benefits associated with a good sport experience but their communities will also benefit from greater social capital and inclusion.

Through intentional and strategic development of accessible, values-based community sport, municipalities — together with their many community partners and stakeholders — can harness the power of sport to advance a broad cross-section of their social, economic, and environmental goals, and make a measurable contribution to improving the quality of life in their communities. School boards, service clubs, business groups, community service organizations, foundations, law enforcement agencies, health practitioners, band councils, and, of course, sport organizations themselves, all have a role to play in this process.

The benefits of community sport invite communities and decision makers to recognize its value as a substantial public asset, and to devote attention and intentional effort to ensuring these benefits are fully realized for all of our Canadian communities.

All orders of government have a role to play in helping to ensure the infrastructure necessary to enable communities to benefit from sport is available to all communities, in particular those with limited resources of their own. While community sport offers benefits to everyone, it offers the greatest benefits

to individuals, groups and communities coping with isolation or exclusion, social and economic challenges, and, in some cases, decline. Many government policies and programs aimed at helping Canadians and communities to tackle these challenges can also benefit from the strategic integration of values-based sport as a low-cost and potentially highly effective tool for advancing their goals.

Community sport's cross-cutting effects and diverse beneficiaries invite governments to move beyond traditional approaches that involve sport ministries and departments alone, to adopt more horizontal, cross-governmental approaches that engage the full range of ministries and departments interested in harnessing sport's potential.

Despite the crucial importance of these contributions, the quality and ultimate impact of community sport finally comes down to individuals — the athletes, parents, coaches, administrators and volunteers whose ideas, attitudes and behaviour determine whether the sport we have is, in fact, the sport Canadians want.

When high-performance athletes compete, they capture our attention and carry our hearts and hopes with them. They are our champions, but also beneficiaries of our support and resources, de facto ambassadors for our communities and country, and highly visible and influential role models for our young people. As such, they have a particularly important choice to make in terms of their behaviour and the messages they send publicly about sport. By reinforcing the positive power of sport and the True Sport Principles in their words and actions, on and off the playing field, they can inspire, champion and give back, closing the gap between the sport we have and the sport we want, and further increasing the power of sport to instill character, strengthen our communities, and make Canada better.

All Canadians and communities make this same choice, in one form or another. Every game we play, every match we organize, every race we run, large or small, can help build a stronger Canada for the future. By intentionally making the right choices, together we can all ensure the sport we have is the sport we want — True Sport.