

A New Way Forward for Sport in Alberta

Engagement Session: Grande Prairie

January 20, 2010



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Introduction

Sport Alberta is engaging sport leaders in Alberta to discuss a clear direction and **New Way Forward for Sport** in Alberta. The purpose of this engagement process is to ensure that we, as a province and as a sector, build the sport system that we want and need for the next 10 years and beyond.

An important component of this engagement process were a number of sessions conducted across the province starting on January 18 in Lethbridge and ending on January 20 in Grande Prairie. The following *Outcomes Report* provides a summary of the discussion that took place in the evening of January 20, 2010 in Grande Prairie (a list of participants is included as **Annex I** to this report). It is not a verbatim record of what was said, but rather, a summary of the key points that were raised.

As part of the conversation, participants were encouraged to provide written comments on the following eight (8) questions:

1. **Assets** - *“Please list the (priority) assets – here in our community and across Alberta – that we can draw on for the coming decade”*
2. **Opportunities** - *“Please list the big opportunities – here in our community & across Alberta – that we can focus on during the coming decade”*
3. **One Big Goal** - *“Is there one big goal that would excite you to work on for Alberta sport? For Alberta?”*
4. **What Sport Can Do** - *“Sport makes a difference beyond the playing field. What does Sport do for Alberta? What more could it do?”*
5. **Changes in Our World / Your Organization** - *“What are they? The difference they will make for sport in Alberta and for Alberta?”*
6. **Changes in Our System** - *“Do we have what we want? If not, what are the ones we want? Design, structure, governance, accountability?”*
7. **Creative Resourcing** - *“Do we have the resources we need to make this all come about?”*
8. **Working Together** - *“What from today gets you excited about working together to make things happen? How can you see yourself contributing?”*

The aggregation of these comments is included as **Annex II** to this report. The key learnings from these comments are integrated into the body of the report.

1. Assets

Sport leaders in Grande Prairie identified a broad range of current and potential assets that can be mobilized by the sport sector including:

- **Facilities**
 - Sport facilities
 - Every local town has a gym and many have arenas
 - Three ski hills
 - New swimming pools and community gyms
 - World class gymnastics centre
 - Sport Development Centre
 - College sport facilities
 - First zone regional development centre in hockey
- **Size/Location of community**
 - Communities of 50-75k produce the strongest sport systems
 - Grande Prairie is a major centre and that attracts folks from the outlying area
 - GP is a complete region up to the highest level of sport
 - Youthful demographic
- **Volunteer base**
 - Knowledge base in terms of key sports in hockey, baseball, volleyball, football
 - Great knowledge across the spectrum
 - Large number of highly skilled officials
- **Community Engagement**
 - Strong base of corporate sponsorship
 - Oil money
- **Hosting**
 - Canada Winter Games (1995)
 - Arctic Winter Games (2010)

2. Opportunities

Sport leaders also identified a broad range of opportunities both in Edmonton and across the region and province including:

- **Youthful demographic**
 - Large number of young families with children
- **Size of city/Geographic isolation**
 - Large enough city to have a significant population base but far enough from other centres to be a center for high performance sport

- **Introduction/education around LTAD/CS4L**
 - Physical literacy
 - Increasing awareness of the value of activity and sport in increasing quality of life and improving health
- **New/Expanding Organizations**
 - Potential to create a Grande Prairie Sport Council
 - Passionate sporting community
- **Increased interest in sport**
 - Results out of Olympics Vancouver 2010
 - Challenge is that many sports are at the end of the season when there will be an upswing of interest following the Olympics
 - Do we have the programs in place to bring these new participants in to the sport, even if only for a few weeks?
 - Legacy of Arctic Winter Games

What is the impact if sport doesn't exist in this community?

- **Keeping young people out of trouble**
 - Not a lot of opportunity in Peace River and smaller facilities
 - Negative behaviors start younger
 - Drugs and alcohol would be a big challenge
- **A lot of community leaders are former sport leaders**
 - A lot of leaders learn their skills in sport
 - Between 70 and 80 percent of high school principals came through sport backgrounds
 - Of all the MLAs and CEOs in Alberta, a high percentage (70+ percent) came through high school sport
 - Number of kids who were hockey players are now aldermen and the mayor

3. Big Ideas/Goals

Sport leaders were asked to identify the one big goal or idea that would excite them about working on sport in Alberta:

- **Sport is going to take on turning the runaway healthcare spending on its head**
 - Provide physical activity opportunities for all Albertans that will lead to a healthy, happier more connected and productive society in Alberta – start in the schools
- **Linking sport and Educational achievement**
- **Implement LTAD at the regional level**
- **Sport for all**
- **Sport leaders are world leaders**

4. What sport can do

An important area of discussion amongst leaders was the difference that sport can make for Alberta beyond the playing field. Some of the ideas that were discussed included:

- **Benefits for Children**
 - Keeps kids active
 - Keeps families active
 - Teaches children to focus/teaches discipline
- **Growing Leaders**
 - Development of “better people”
 - Leadership in the province and the country
 - Role models for young people
- **Health Impacts**
 - Helps lower healthcare costs
- **Builds Stronger Communities**
 - Creates better citizens
 - Encourages community building/increases sense of belonging
- **Promotes Local and Provincial Pride**

5. Changes in Our World/Your Organization

As a province and as a country we are entering a time of change and transition. Moving post-Vancouver 2010 there will be a shift in the attention and resources dedicated to sport. Similarly, in a post-recession environment of structural deficits there will be very few additional resources available for new programs and there may be cuts to existing funding programs at both the provincial and federal level. In Alberta, the Alberta Sport Policy is sunsetting and there are other changes at the provincial level that are impacting on sport organizations and leaders.

In this context, sport leaders were asked about the changes that their organizations are undertaking and the possible impact of these changes for the sport sector in Alberta and, more broadly, for the province as a whole.

Some of the key ideas that emerged included:

- **Implementation of new organizations to support high level athletes in the community**
 - Sport Development Centres
 - Zone one regional development centre for hockey
- **Implementation of multi-sport camps and strategies**
 - For instance, including gymnastics as part of hockey camps in the summer
 - “Bring a friend” concept to try and encourage cross-sport/multi-sport interaction

6. Changes in Our System

For the last part of the conversation, Sport leaders were asked to put aside their individual and/or organizational affiliations and think about the sport sector in Alberta more broadly. In this context they were asked to think about whether Alberta has the sport system that we want. As in other sessions the general consensus was that Canada, as a whole, and Alberta, in particular, are missing something in terms of sport development – that we are behind other parts of the world in terms of the implementation of LTAD. Similarly, there was a feeling that although individual components of the sport system function well that there is a lack of integration and coordination

One interesting outcome of this discussion was the realization that there could be an important role to play for a sport council in Grande Prairie to work with sport organizations and help to implement the principles of LTAD. There was a feeling the Grande Prairie has the opportunity to become a leader in the implementation of LTAD in Alberta.

7. Creative Resourcing

One of the ideas that leaders explored were potential resources that could be mobilized to support the sport sector and the outcomes that it would like to achieve. Some of the interesting ideas that were discussed included:

- **Shared Resources across sports**
 - There was agreement that the current system of sport in Grande Prairie does a lot to separate sport from the community, kids from sport and sports from each other
 - There is a real opportunity to begin to create a more integrated system based on the LTAD model
 - One example of this might be to develop multi-sport camps in the Summer, for instance.
- **Planning**
 - Another opportunity for creative resourcing was seen in the coordination of facility planning amongst sports

8. What do we want to work on together?

The final part of the conversation with sport leaders focused on the things that we want to work on together moving forward. The key outcomes of this conversation was to re-state the groups support for the creation of a local sport council that can serve as a larger voice of sport both with the city and with the province.

Annex I: Participant List

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Annex II: Compilation of Written Comments

Assets

“Please list the (priority) assets – here in our community and across Alberta – that we can draw on for the coming decade”

- Facilities (more / all sports/multi use) (8)
 - o Quality facilities
 - o Infrastructure
 - o Long term
 - Volunteer base (all sports) (5)
 - o Volunteer legacy from the Games
 - o Multi-sport volunteers
 - Knowledge base (2)
 - Programs – AB sport development/Power Plus/Edge coming
 - Willing personnel
 - Attentive athletes
 - ASDC – Alberta Sport Development Centres (5)
 - o GPRC (2)
 - Money from large corporations
 - o Good sponsors
 - o Oil money
 - Large drawing area
 - 50 – 70000 people (greater system)
 - Dedicated and knowledgeable sport administration
 - Wide variety of Sports
 - Community Sport (2)
 - o Tight knit community
 - o Young families
 - College sport/ storm Hockey (?)
 - Forum/Central hub
 - All of the officials
 - Regional centers (Hockey) (3)
 - o First zone 1 Development centre (Hockey)
 - o Research (to see the scope of hockey in the North (www.allpeacehockey.com – encompasses Zone 1 in Alberta/ www.gphockey.com – links to all of our leagues)
 - Strong club sport programs
 - Canada Winter Games (1995)
 - Arctic Winter Games (2010)
 - Alberta Cup (2006)
 - Creativity / Innovation
 - o Distance learning (innovation) [Ian]
 - o Innovation in GP [Ian] (Volleyball)
- Strategic Partnerships with BC

Opportunities

“Please list the big opportunities – here in our community & across Alberta – that we can focus on during the coming decade”

- Young Demographic (Ian Bird) (3)
 - o Youthful demographic
- GP as “hothouse” (Ian Bird)
- Room for advancement in Sport
- A more physically fit population
- Legacy for the Arctic Winter Games
- New Multi-use facility
 - o More facilities
- Developing more elite – national athletes
- Aggressive plan of GPRC over next 20 years, potential for further expansion of facilities and programs
- Increasing awareness of values of physical activity and sport on reducing illness and increasing quality of life (Can use that to increase sport opportunities and facilities)
- Passionate sporting community
- Staffing for large companies, police, government, etc...
- Caliber of athletes (b/c of programs & leagues) will attract opportunity – colleges in all regions

One Big Goal

“Is there one big goal that would excite you to work on for Alberta sport? For Alberta?”

- Sport wants to reduce health care budget
 - Flat-line spending or decrease 5% = what would it take
 - Align National Sport Centres with Regional development
 - Implement LTAD at a regional level (3)
 - o PSO’s (& NSO’s) to work together to implement LTAD (Each seems to be working independently now)
 - More facilities
 - Standardize coach, etc... clinics, certifications over all Sport
 - Sport for all
 - Healthier Albertans
 - o Reduce Healthcare
 - Sport = higher academic achievement discipline
 - Sport leaders = World leaders
- Innovate athletes – innovate people

What Sport Can Do

“Sport makes a difference beyond the playing field. What does Sport do for Alberta? What more could it do?”

- Keeps kids active
- Keeps everyone active and fit
- Helps lower healthcare as people are more fit (3)

- Better quality of life (as you age)
 - Creates a healthier province
- Develops “better people” (does) (2)
- Motivates (does)
- Get more kids involved (do)
- Build more facilities (do)
- Creates leaders
- Better school marks by disciplined kids
- Needs to have more involved – financial challenges – single parents – needs to be accessible to all
- Creates better citizens (role models) (2)
- Improves life skills
- Community unity

Changes in Your World / Your Organization

“What are they? The difference they will make for sport in Alberta and for Alberta?”

- Spring camps throughout our organization especially Peewee/Bantam. To introduce more players (earlier) to understand the elite stream. Both for parents and players. This will eliminate a lot of confusion and issues that we have to deal with in the first years of the elite stream. Setting out expectations.
- Not all for the elite athlete (do not forget the recreational player)
- More athletes
- Regionalizing (Getting into smaller communities = skill development + better coaching)
- Miranda’s multi-sport idea = “bring a friend”
- Therefore = physical literate GP increase 5%
- 4 streams of hockey (Competitive, Recreation, Elite, Academy – increase to 2 levels – organized – pond hockey)
- More kids in hockey
- Educations of college admin to further develop success of our teams and programs
- Impact: more success @ college will mean higher enrollments in youth club programs
- Professionalization of coaches and some volunteers – we need to pay to attract and retain those people
- Impact – increase in fees for participants
- ASDC NW getting more exposure due to Olympics, Arctic Games etc... will result in increased demand for our resources
- Need to be ahead of the games + increase staff to help facilitate this demand. If funding follows (increase from Government) we will be able to have a huge impact on implementing LTAD, sport science services etc... into the community and region.
- Power Plus – focus on fitness/nutrition/not just hockey – makes for healthier community
- Storm – leader/character athletes – more scholarships – more young athletes seeing benefit of being leader/character

Changes in Our System

“Do we have what we want? If not, what are the ones we want? Design, structure, governance, accountability?”

- No, more focus on winning than development
- 4 or 5 sports a year under 12 years old
- No: missing re sport development
- Not so much serving the big goal
- Re. – structure, operating, local implication, integration, Ole
- LTAD – do their ting?
- Competing for athletes
- No

Creative Resourcing

“Do we have the resources we need to make this all come about?”

- Practical facility planning
- Financial for above
- Money works – people – volunteers
- Money
- Sport Councils/task force (3)
 - o Formation of a local sport council
- Co-operations – reach out to each other
- Be positive
- Yes
- \$140K – Bantam Hockey – How?

Working Together

“What from today gets you excited about working together to make things happen? How can you see yourself contributing?”

- Formation of a local sport council (3)
 - o Help set up and meet with the formation of a council
 - o Being a member (2)
 - o Grand Prairie Sport Council
 - o Continuing to sot on contributing boards or councils within the sport community
- Building better people
- Integrating other sports into our camps
- Lots of new info
- Being positive that a multi sport approach would work – work on convincing others to try
- As a larger group becoming larger voice in the city and perhaps the Province
- ASDC continuing to bring in resources to help facilitate learning