

A New Way Forward for Sport in Alberta

Engagement Session: Lethbridge

January 18, 2010



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
1. ASSETS.....	4
2. OPPORTUNITIES.....	4
3. BIG IDEAS/GOALS.....	5
4. WHAT SPORT CAN DO.....	6
5. CHANGES IN OUR WORLD/YOUR ORGANIZATION.....	6
6. CHANGES IN OUR SYSTEM.....	7
7. CREATIVE RESOURCING.....	8
8. WHAT DO WE WANT TO WORK ON TOGETHER?.....	8
ANNEX II: COMPILATION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS.....	11
ASSETS.....	11
OPPORTUNITIES.....	12
ONE BIG GOAL.....	12
WHAT SPORT CAN DO.....	13
CHANGES IN YOUR WORLD / YOUR ORGANIZATION.....	14
CHANGES IN OUR SYSTEM.....	16
CREATIVE RESOURCING.....	16
WORKING TOGETHER.....	16

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 18, 2010 in Lethbridge (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 Lethbridge identified a broad range of current and potential assets that can be mobilized by the sport sector including:

- **Facilities**
 - Sport facilities
 - Strong partnerships
 - Wellness Centre
 - Football Field
 - Swimming Pool
 - Two new High Schools and Library
 - Multi-field Rugby and Soccer
 - Universities and Colleges
- **Size/Location of community**
 - Close to world class facilities
 - Proximity to major centres and to the USA
- **Volunteer base**
 - Strong volunteers and professional administrators
- **Community Engagement**
 - Lethbridge Sport Council
 - Strong sport culture
 - We produce world class athletes
 - Active community across the age span including Special Olympics and active senior population
- **Hosting**
 - Experience running games at all levels
 - Southern Alberta Games

2. Opportunities

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

- **Superb at hosting nationals in any/all sports**
 - Ready to go international/look outside the province and the country
 - Canada Summer Games would be huge driver for sport in the City
- **Neighborhood designs that nurture physical activity versus traditional designs that focus on car use**
 - Build pathways and walkways through new neighborhoods and throughout the city
 - Connecting bicycle paths to downtown and linking the bicycles and paths into a network

- **The potential to come together to push sport to the foreground of public policy**
 - Need to work together to support sport more generally
- **A focus on high performance and on community sport**
 - We need opportunities for older folks to stay involved
 - We need to keep folks in recreational sport in a way that is fun and accessible
 - Need to establish the connection early between recreational athletes and health and wellness
 - We need to work with schools and communities to make sure that this connection is established
 - The elite piece is important but you also need the sport for sport's sake as well
- **We have an opportunity to strengthen links between health and wellness and the physical activity and sport folks**
- **The Olympics will create momentum**
 - How can we duplicate it?
 - How can we keep this momentum going?
 - Through the Olympics there may be an opportunity to keep the private sector engaged and involved

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:

- **Clarify how to access sport funding that is available in the province**
 - The funding is fragmented and it is difficult to get to your specific sports funding
- **Establish a meaningful and practical sport recreation plan at the provincial and municipal level with adequate human resources and financing**
 - Clear direction and commitment from the top
- **Establish a plan to draw young people into sport**
 - We need to draw young people at the elementary level into sport
- **Culture of physical activity**
 - We need to reach 100% participation
 - To have every child register or involved in one organized sport or activity
- **Create a protective, safe and welcoming environment**
- **Universal physical literacy**
 - Looking at the development aspect as well as the performance level
- **Develop strategies to determine how do you encourage fitness in a busy lifestyle**
 - Integrate physical activity and a busy lifestyle
- **Bring all sports together in a meaningful way to give kids early experiences that are positive**
 - How do we make sure that we don't force kids to choose between sports
- **Create tie ins between sport and education**

- More of a tie in with the education system more synergy with the community sports

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:

- **Builds social inclusiveness**
 - Teaches people to be more tolerant
- **Encourages young people to make better decisions**
 - Provides important skills outside of sports like time management, leadership
 - Creates self-motivating individuals who can work to achieve goals and clear life-skills
- **Provides a sense of pride for the Province**
- **Improved health outcomes**
 - Significant health benefits from life long activity
- **Opportunities for community building**
 - Impact of the Olympic Torch
 - Impact of College sports
- **Builds social capital and helps to make connections between individuals**
- **Builds community capacity**
 - Solving problems like building an ice arena the community is not the same because they have learned to build together

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 sunseting 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**
 - The creation of the Lethbridge Sport Council

- Sport Development Centre will provide an opportunity for local athletes to stay at home and participate and develop to the highest level without traveling to another community
 - Coaching and the development of coaching will be important
- **Implementation of multi-sport camps and strategies**
 - For example, if the university could link to other communities it would be efficient to do high level sports camps and have more than one community participate
 - Lethbridge Sport Council has been talking about using television to get the word out about sport in the region
- **Implementation of Hosting Strategies**
 - Sports Bid Committee works hard at bringing events to the city and helping sports organizations to help bring the best possible sports events to the city
- **Facilities Development**
 - Adding twin rink to increase hockey registrations by about 5% and putting packages together to host the Memorial Cup
 - Will lead to increased membership
 - Olympics leading to increase in hockey especially with women
 - The City and College to develop a joint use regional sport and wellness centre
 - Something that would house varsity sport on campus and the various minor sport groups around the city
 - Serve as a beacon in Southern Alberta
- **Implementation of LTAD**
 - Some challenges in implementing the cross-sport aspects of LTAD

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. In general, the answer from leaders was that although there are a number of excellent components, the system as a whole is not yet where it needs to be. The comment was made that the sport sector sometimes makes small localized decisions without looking at the bigger picture and that sport sometimes feels quite fractured.

One leader suggested that it would be very useful to have a national database of participants in sport.

There was a strong feeling of disconnect between the local and provincial and between the more rural and the larger urban sport systems. This was perceived to be in part because of a lack of clear leadership and that there are challenges in the systems around governance and connection. There was a strong feeling the high performance components of the Alberta sport system are geared primarily towards Calgary and Edmonton and that the cost per athlete for programs is much higher in the smaller centres. Smaller centres also have challenges in accessing funding and information.

Another disconnect that was highlighted was between the education and sport delivery systems. There is currently a lack of full time physical education teachers in elementary schools. There was also concern about the stovepiping of sports, separating kids by sport, age, community, gender and other factors.

Leaders suggested that it would be useful to have a plan or strategy to pull all the elements of sport together in the province. There was an interesting discussion, however, about the inherent tensions in a model that focuses on central planning and leadership and one that enables and allows local innovation and local leadership. There was agreement that there is a leadership component that is currently missing that balances these two tensions and that advocates for sport at the provincial level. The general feeling was that a collective vehicle for leadership would be welcomed and would help and that it would help to educate the leadership. The sport sector, they suggested, gives politicians an easy out by not having a single voice.

There was a sense among participants that there is a strong cultural element to sport, that we need to integrate physical activity into day to day life. There was also a sense that sport and health need to be better aligned and that there should be a line item for sport in the health budget.

Interestingly, later in the conversation a leader made the comment that sport needs to “get it done on our own”. This was followed by a conversation that culminated in the feeling that sport should not wait for the government but should take action on its own, to show leadership then the government will follow.

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**
 - Developing a base of sport for all rather than a focus on individual sports and organizations.
- **Tax Receipts**
 - Enabling charitable status for sports
- **Engaging our existing resources**
 - Volunteers
 - Partnerships
 - Financial resources

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 outcome of this conversation was the importance of partnerships

and the potential role that could be played by the Lethbridge Sport Council as a venue through which to bring together sport as a single voice. The comment was made that other voices could also be brought to this table such as the YM/YWCA. Finally, there was also a strong feeling of momentum about moving forward with the Sport Alberta engagement process.

Annex I: Participant List

Please insert participant list

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”

- U of L
- Facilities (10)
 - o New state of the art facilities (2)
 - o Partnership facilities
 - o Open space (2)
 - o Location
- Good infrastructure
- People/population (2)
- Volunteers (13)
- Coaches
- Human resources
- Hosting/events (2)
- Variety of facilities
- Economy/\$\$ (2)
- Youthful citizens
- Community/culture that values sport (2)
- Athletes
- Physical environments
- Easy access to events/variety of events
- Proximity to major centres
- Knowledge/skill base
- Passion (4)
- Two population centres
- Active population
- Lethbridge sport council
- Post secondary
- Excellent access to outdoor sports
- Community involvement (3)
- Variety of sport orgs
- Ongoing focus on development of sports at provincial and federal level
- Partnerships (3)
- Proximity to the USA
- Strong historical background on sport
- Support from the government
- Sport development
- Sport councils
- Climate (2)
- Tremendous amounts of expertise in all levels of sport and physical activity and wellness Experience (2)

Opportunities

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

- Keep all levels of Gov aware of the benefits of sport
- Synergies with schools/clubs/PSO/post-secondary
- Focus on physical activity/wellness/to reduce childhood obesity/diabetes – tax benefits
- Heightened awareness of the value of sport brought about by the success of Vancouver 2010
- National events
- National training
- Become leader in sport/rec in southern Alberta (3)
- Provide strong sport delivery system
- Host more multi-sport events
- Increased communication and partnership between SportsMatters upgrade aging facilities
- Continue to build sport venues
- Educational training
- Canada summer games
- Western Canada Games
- Major curling championships – international
- CS4L
- Coming together to support sport
- Sport development centers
- Hosting international sporting events
- Recreational sports
- High performance training camps
- Canada Games
- Pan Am Games
- Building neighborhoods with design features that nurture physical activity
- Use school and community resources to nurture healthy lifestyles
- Making sport more affordable, get more kids involved
- Funding ie. Donations/sponsorships
- Multi-use facilities (2)
- Multi-sport facility that includes ice and turn both and serves many different sports groups – not exclusive
- Continued public awareness campaigns that encourage involvement in sport
- Focus on positive sport
- Host major events (2)
- Attract athletes with potential to our area
- To change the health of our province through early intro to sports
- Economic renewal

One Big Goal

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

- Clear access to dollars that are available for sports in AB. As it is it seems fragmented
- Strong AB sport development
- Funding

- Positive participation for all Albertans
- Active for life
- Reduce barriers
- Improve physical literacy (2)
- Universal participation – 100% participation (3)
- Widespread culture of physical lifestyles
- We need to reach Albertans/people early and keep them late (4)
- Create involvement by facilitating fun!
- Get involved!!!
- Follow your passions
- Sport culture that focuses on both high level athlete development and participation in sport in general for recreation and healthy lifestyles
- Organize to bring about the use of sport in the development of the citizens at all levels
- Bring the sporting community together
- To make an impact at the school board level such that more sports are integrated at the early level
- Integration
- To have every child register or involved in one organized sport or activity
- Meaningful and practical Gov. of AB sport plan
- To create a system that somehow amalgamates from school/clubs/PSO/post-secondary
- Make sports accessible and affordable to all
- To have AB be the leading sport province in athlete development and competition
- More sport councils
- Plan for sport
- Universal access to sports

What Sport Can Do

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

- Provide recreation for all
- Better citizens
- Improves health
- Sport could
 - o Connect communities
 - o Connect families
 - o Improve standard of living
- Provides participants with additional skills that are values of sport
- Encourage a more healthy population which should reduce health care costs
- Economic generator = sport tourism
- Sport tourism
- Facilities
- Community awareness
- Community pride especially at the high performance level
- Sport involvement contributes to physical health and social health
- Promote the benefits of sport more openly to the public so they have a better understanding of the importance of the initial costs

- Produces a healthy engaged goal oriented populace
 - o Doing this better is a goal worth striving for
- Positive vehicle in the development of individuals, groups and communities
- Facilitate healthy lifestyle
- Lower medical costs
- Improved productivity (work)
- Creates better citizens
- Creates jobs
- Provides a more meaningful lifestyle
- Opportunity to develop in sport
- Confidence/self esteem
- Mental and physical health
- Support family participation by reducing costs
- Health benefits of lifelong activity
- Social inclusiveness
- Community building
- Self motivating people
- Can radically improve the health of all people
- Sport creates lessons in life for all parties involved
- Need to focus on developing all those involved in how to work with each other giving them skills
- Encourages an active and healthy lifestyle – reducing health issues
- Generational effect
- Encourages volunteerism and community involvement

Changes in Your World / Your Organization

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

- Trying to build a new “regional sport and wellness center” - centre would be a partnership with the college, city local sport groups and government
- Varsity women’s hockey program (2-5 years)
- Lethbridge sport council - a new org which will coordinate and unite sport in Lethbridge – sport in Lethbridge will grow and evolve
- AB sport development centre southwest – another new entity in SW Alberta which will benefit emerging elite athletes
 - o Allows elite level athletes to stay in this community and receive the support they require without having to move to Calgary/Edmonton (and reduces travel)
- Adding two ice facilities
- Larger membership – costs will increase
- Smaller centres closing – membership moving away
- Aging of facilities – replacement costs?
- Provide another sport (tennis) that children can participate in and enjoy throughout their life by making tennis more accessible and enjoyable
- For Alberta it would make it easier for those children/adults to assimilate into a community by identifying/joining that sport in another (____) (if they moved)
- A high performance athlete would give Albertans a sense of pride/accomplishment
- Develop a community surrounding sport and sporting culture

- Having a community that supports local sports and takes pride in their participation in the local sporting community
- Our sport (from national to local level) has adopted the LTAD model and is slowly introducing components. Some aspects will be positive overall, but some may deter the recreational athlete – very high performance oriented
- Our club has introduced “office” as an LTAD component – mixed reviews so far
- Our club has streamlined (as much as possible) the proportion of ice dedicated to each level
- Development and marketing of a sport council
- Increased collaboration, communication, discussion and partnerships among community sport orgs
- Increase in communication between provincial, national and local orgs
- Bring more sport events to town
- Economic benefits
- Video conferencing workshops
- More sport orgs in town
- Increase potential for a sport co-location (sport agencies in one facility – one stop shop)
- Basketball
 - o Integrate sport provincially with the national body
 - o Help produce more funds and success at the nation/international level
- Lethbridge sport council brings together sport orgs to provide a voice for those participating in sport – organize sports – sport partnerships
- Sport development centre will provide a place at this local level for athletes to develop to the highest level they would like
- Sport bid committees bring events to Lethbridge
- Technology will allow for high level training camps at different sites at the same time
- Developing the sport for life program thru coaching and athlete development
- Physically fit youth and community youth development in life
- I am getting older – fast – and Alberta does nothing for me that I don’t pay for. There is no entry level programming for people who are not kids – unless we pay big bucks for it – which leaves a lot of people out
- More people will do more activities to a high enough level to be enjoyable
- Break stereotypes and shift to new paradigm
- Young people attracted to non-traditional SportsMatters need to develop strategies and infrastructure to match changing tastes, rather than ignoring generational trends
- Dragon boating
 - o Including more youth and participation across generations
 - o Fairly low cost at entry level
 - o Focus on skill development as well as being a “good participant” – my/our belief / belief of community coaching
 - o Would like to see entry/trying of sports/activities for older participants, otherwise activity is expensive and not often entry level
 - o Would like to see improvement of spectator behaviour and increase coaches capacity
- More structured junior program - will yield more participants
- Change: promote increased safe and sustainable participation in sport through education about safety and benefits
- Results: overall improvement in health within the community
- Implementing the LTAD program
- More unified skill development for all athletes

- Encourage more kids to join/play
- Gives the coaches/volunteers a clearer path to progress
- LTAD adopted throughout Alberta/Canada focus on skill development at each age level to keep more kids involved longer
- Working with local communities i.e., Claresholm, Taber to get lacrosse started, more inclusive (we partner with them)
- Respect in sport program implemented encourage proper behaviors in coaches and volunteers
- Striving to move to higher level of lacrosse at the Junior level i.e., Tier 1 tier 2... to ensure athlete retention in our own community
- Will bring more profile to the sport of lacrosse at our local level and if other communities have the same goal – will bring more profile to the sport of lacrosse (in AB) at the provincial level
- Will hopefully encourage younger athletes to participate in lacrosse

Changes in Our System

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

Creative Resourcing

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

- Tax receipting for sport
- We could be better off if individual sport associations were less selfish. We can't all be #1 – but we can be better
- If our base was sport for all we could have a stronger system across the board

Working Together

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

- People want to see change
- I am an active member of groups that work to examine sport and make changes for the better – especially for girls and women
- Lethbridge sports council
 - o Getting more involved with Lethbridge sport council
- Learning more about Lethbridge Sport council and Alberta sport council
- The group wants to see change
- Cont'd to be active in groups that promote activities and integration of physical activity and active living and sports
- As a political and community leader, try to build sport partnerships in the community. Some of these have proven successful
 - o i.e., City/university infrastructure partnerships
 - o i.e., Various sport communities working together on shared infrastructure
 - o i.e., Joint use agreements between city and school boards

- Potential for more cooperation throughout the community
- The concept of sports collaborating as approved to working solo
- Enjoy hearing
 - o The historical pieces shared
 - o The desire to collaborate
 - o The variety of voices
 - o Researching the possibility of creating a local sport council in my city
 - o Look to have a shared practice of all AB sport councils
- Diverse sport group took the time to gather
- Lethbridge Sport council can build on the momentum of this meeting and continue
- Support the efforts of sport Alberta to unite sport and create that unified voice that's missing
- Synergy
- I've always wanted to contribute