



August 12, 2009

The Honorable Roy J. Romanow
Institute of Wellbeing,
One Yonge Street, Suite 1508,
Toronto ON M5E 1E5

Dear Mr. Romanow,

We read with a much interest your recent *First Report of the Institute of Wellbeing: How are Canadians Really Doing?* We congratulate you and the Institute on a well conceived and informative document that is sure to provide leadership, indices and important references as Canadians work, collectively, to improve our quality of life and that of our communities.

While your team has either addressed, or plans to address, most of the critical elements that need to be examined, we believe the role that *sport* plays in our lives needs to be included in any discussion of wellbeing. Sport – and that is small ‘s’ sport - is imbedded in the fabric of our society, culture and history. And, while we include professional sport in our definition in this discussion, we believe the biggest role that sport plays is at the amateur level.

The Federal and Provincial/Territorial governments all support the concept of ‘Canadian Sport for Life’. The purpose of this program is to “increase sport’s contribution in Canadian society recognizing **sport as an important part of everyone’s life** by promoting each child’s healthy and logical development in a sport r physical activity”. Written and published by Canadian Sports Centres with financial support from the Canadian government, CS4L will form the basis of sport delivery programs in this country in the foreseeable future, and will provide the context by which all sports programs are assessed.

As well, sport is intrinsic to five of the eight Domains mentioned in the Report and it is a fundamental to the way people and communities feel about themselves. Its role in keeping our citizens healthy is now being recognized across the country, and its influence knows few socio-economic boundaries.

Specifically, sport fits into the Domains in the following ways:

Arts, Culture and Recreation: Recreation and sport are a continuum, logical extensions of each other with sport providing the leadership and role modeling that recreation emulates. Without sport the recreational activities which keep many of us fit and healthy would be less attractive and there would be fewer measures of success.

Community Vitality: There are few stronger measures of the “strength, activity and inclusiveness of relationships” among residents and voluntary organizations than those provided by sports. Communities across the country relate to the success of their teams, and sports practices and games provide communities of all sizes with the opportunity for interaction, engagement and pride. Further, sport provides our immigrant population with a chance to become involved in community activities while retaining their own identities.

Education: There are several reports which suggest that students who are active participants in sports attain better grades in school, stay in school longer, and are less likely to be a drain on our judicial system. Sport is a strong compliment to our education system. In helping participants build self esteem, sport helps athletes redefine goals in all areas of their lives.

Healthy Populations: In at least two provinces, amateur Sport Governing Bodies and other sports organizations at the provincial and community levels are supported and funded by Ministries of Health Promotion. As the link between sport, health and fitness becomes more apparent, governments at all levels are recognizing the important role sports plays in reducing smoking and obesity and increasing cardio-vascular health and better nutrition. Sport provides leadership as governments turn more and more to disease prevention as a way of managing burgeoning health care costs and improving our quality of life.

Living Standards: Many sports are immune to issues of income and wealth distribution. Sport is a great equalizer and provides an outlet for people of all economic backgrounds and opportunities.

We note that the word sport is not mentioned once in your *First Report of the Institute of Wellbeing: How are Canadians Really Doing* and believe sport should be factored into any definition of a Canadian Index of Wellbeing.

SPORT4ONTARIO is a not-for-profit organization that provides the collaborative environment, knowledge and resources to build capacity and drive leadership excellence in the Ontario sport community through education, advocacy, interaction, research and

innovation. We work on behalf of a wide variety of sports associations, organizations and institutions, and represent the collective voice of sport in this province on common issues.

We would be pleased to collaborate with you as the WIC continues its fact finding and ground-breaking work in the area of wellbeing. Please let us know how we can assist.

Sincerely,

Margaret Emin, Chair
SPORT4ONTARIO
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Cc: The Honourable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion (Ontario)
The Honourable Gary Lunn, Minister of State (Sport)
Martin Boillieu, Director General, Sport Canada
Angela Longo, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health Promotion
Ian Bird, Sport Matters Group
Jamie Ferguson, Canadian Council of Provincial and Territorial Sport Federations
John Craig, Co-Chair Public Affairs Committee, SPORT4ONTARIO
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