

Quality Sport: Where to next?

We've come a long way, but there's further to go.

During January's LTAD Leads Day in Gatineau, long-term athlete development leaders came together to share their thoughts and recommendations on "where to next?", with a primary focus on how Sport for Life can provide service to meet the needs of national sport organizations (NSOs).

It was a fast-paced morning, with contributions from expert practitioners as well as round-table discussions and an opportunity for sport leaders to share their feedback and expertise. A "Crystal Ball" session encouraged attendees to look into the future and ask themselves: what will be the big areas of focus in the future? They identified safe sport, inclusion in sport and the need to build more capacity.

Big picture messages and common themes were articulated, including alignment, collaboration and implementation. Sport Canada, Own The Podium, Cycling Canada and Canada Games Council all shared thoughts about system alignment. They discussed creating consensus around a common definition of what alignment actually means, which will be important for working across jurisdictions, and asserted that there needs to be a focus on outcomes, not just theory.

"We need more action and movement in the system, not just talk," said one professional, "We are great at creating documents, but what are we actually accomplishing?"

According to the NSOs in attendance, it was clear that NSO leads would like more expert time to guide and advise on implementation. Having an external expert seemed to advance activation with a number of the ones who spoke. There continues to be a desire for more regular sharing of best practices among partners.

"It is interesting as NSOs do have much in common and can share but they are also in different places in terms of organizational readiness.," Sport for Life's Carolyn Trono said.

"We have to fine-tune our approach depending on who we're reaching out to: a parent, a coach, a board. Each one requires different things."

Expert Heather Ross-McManus shared her thoughts, as an expert on long-term athlete development, focusing on the role of knowledge with an eye on change and implementation. She spoke to the need to tailor knowledge to the audience, often simplifying it, for key users such as coaches, parents and athletes.

What does Sport for Life plan to do with this input? We'll be responding with action and service.

Sport for Life teams up with Own the Podium

This could be the next big breakthrough in the sports system.

If you ask quality sport expert consultant Heather Ross-McManus, the fledgling partnership between Sport for Life and Own the Podium is a sign of many good things to come. And they're already seeing results as national organizations begin to incorporate the concepts from our Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity resource.

"The thing that's exciting and interesting about this is we're beginning to walk the talk we've been talking for a long time, about collaborating and aligning ourselves and therefore working more effectively with the national sport organizations," said Ross-McManus.

"And it was really incredible at the Summit to see two NSOs that are working towards positive change."

During the 2019 LTD Leads Day in Gatineau, Ross-McManus attended a workshop with Colin Higgs and Andy Van Neutegem, the architects of the Sport for Life and Own the Podium system alignment initiative. She was thrilled to hear about the progress that's been made.

"They're both finding their niche and they talked about their overlaps, and how they made things work. Sports are really doing the best they can when they aren't being pulled in more than one direction. Part of the discussion was on creating clearer messaging," she said.

"It's important there's a shared language."

Van Neutegem also felt buoyed by the event, which for him was an exciting opportunity to share his learning with fellow professionals. His primary focus is on Gold Medal Profile and Athlete Development alignment.

"This is important work that must be done to achieve alignment and clear communication within our sport system," he said.

"Own the Podium is committed to providing the technical leadership for the development of Podium Pathways, and its role within high-performance sport, which is critical to developing more Olympic and Paralympic medal winners for Canada."

Ross-McManus noted that some of the Own the Podium's material has ended up in Sport for Life resources. However, because the primary focus has been on high level competition, she feels there's room to grow in expanding their offerings for participants at all stages of development. This move has been backed by Sport Canada to create a more aligned sport system recognizing the value of high level sport as well as all other stages of sport development

"Sport for Life is certainly on the cutting edge of sport development, while Own the Podium is on the cutting edge of high performance," she said.

"In the past we've tended to work in silos, so it's exciting to see some of the effort and success of finding common ground and modelling collaboration"

The ultimate aim is to be more collaborative.

“The idea is that we should see this all as one thing, rather than choosing between sport development or high performance. The pathway can include everyone.”

Multisport: The Actions We Can Take!

It’s going to take a team effort.

At this year’s Sport for Life Summit, sport and physical literacy professionals came together to identify ways they can mobilize multisport opportunity in communities across the country. Two sessions were held to highlight best practices and to discuss the challenges we are facing,

“No parent would ever specialize their child in one school subject only,” session leader Richard Monette said, laying out his vision for how multisport opportunities could work in the future.

Monette was joined by Andre Lachance, Angie Abdou and Carolyn Trono, who all provided perspectives on why multisport opportunities are critical for player retention as well as for performance at a high level. They discussed programs from Nova Scotia to Calgary that have been leading the way.

Representatives from those programs included Stephanie Spencer of Sport Nova Scotia, Jay Tredway of Ridley College and [Stuart Rose from the City of Calgary](#). Julie Seaborne shared her perspective as a parent. They discussed the difficulties in finding good multisport programs, and how the quiet majority supports them.

To make multisport a reality it’s going to take key leaders and coaches from local clubs, physical education teachers, municipal sport leaders as well as provincial and national sport leaders, as well as facility managers and programmers. The audience during the Summit workshop included people operating in all of those roles.

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