

Risk management pilot project - A true sport approach to organizational excellence

*Rachel Corbett, Brock University
Dina Bell-Laroche*

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Abstract 326**

The True Sport Strategy is a collaborative and coordinated undertaking to ensure values-driven sport is central to the sport experience in Canada. It flows from the London Declaration of 2001, in which 14 Federal and Provincial/Territorial Sport Ministers in Canada reached unique consensus that "Canadians share a vision that ethics and ethical behaviour are integral to Canadian sport." Following the Declaration, the Ministers directed their officials to develop a comprehensive Canadian Strategy on Ethical Conduct in Sport, which over time has come to be known as the True Sport Strategy (Sport Canada 2002).

As part of its contribution to developing the True Sport Strategy, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) commissioned a national survey of Canadian public opinion in 2002 (CCES 2002). The results of the survey revealed that while the vast majority of Canadians (92 percent) feel that sport can make a positive contribution to the development of youth and the quality of life in Canadian communities, less than one in five Canadians (19 percent) considers that sport is living up to this potential. This represents an alarming gap between the 'sport we want' and the 'sport we have'. The CCES attributes the gap to the persistence of problems such as bullying, violence, harassment, parental conduct, doping, lack of access and exclusion in amateur sport, all of which represent barriers that prevent participants in sport from enjoying a safe, welcoming and rewarding experience.

Today, the forces put into motion by the ethics strategy and the research conducted by CCES have led to the True Sport Movement, a promising national movement of individuals, organizations and communities across Canada working to build a values-driven Canadian sport system. In 2006, the partners of the movement consulted over 50 sport leaders seeking insight on how the True Sport Movement might be implemented successfully in the high performance levels of Canadian sport (Bell-Laroche 2006). At the same time national and international best practices in risk management were reviewed. The result was the creation of a risk management framework and assessment methodology to improve organizational capacity to address the above barriers. This framework defines risk broadly as 'the chance of something happening that can have an impact on the achievement of objectives', uses traditional risk assessment techniques, and results in a comprehensive planning and assessment tool to improve performance through effective governance, efficient planning, and relevant programming.

The Risk Management Pilot (RMP) is a multi-year pilot project involving eight national sport organizations (NSOs). It uses an innovative risk management methodology that builds upon the risk management standard developed by Standards Australia (Australian Standard on Risk Management AS/NZS 4360:1999), as well as incorporating other best practices from Canada and abroad (Corbett and Findlay 1998, Corbett 2002).

Each NSO participating in the RMP commits that it will:

- Assign resources to the project through creation of a working group that includes top executives,
- Participate in a two day risk assessment workshop, followed up by a further half-day session to develop a risk management plan, with expert facilitators,
- Implement and communicate the plan to members as well as integrate it with the organization's strategic plans, to ensure sustainability,
- Share results through a Canada-wide sport 'risk registry', and
- Establish benchmarks for monitoring and reporting on progress.

The NSOs participating in the pilot project include summer and winter sports as well as team and individual sports ranging from sports with a large participation base in Canada (figure skating) to small (field hockey) and from sports achieving international excellence for Canada (speed skating) to those where podium success has been elusive (swimming, athletics).

As of the date of writing this abstract, the framework has been applied to seven of the eight organizations. Initial feedback from the participants has been extremely positive: not only has the project increased awareness and understanding of risk management, but the RMP has yielded up practical strategies and techniques of risk management that are being implemented immediately, with anticipated positive effects on strategic outcomes.

The participants have also noted that their involvement in applying this framework has strengthened the case that organizational excellence can fuel podium excellence, and that international results can be linked to association management practices that

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improve the quality and safety within the overall sport experience. Furthermore, participants have noted that the RMP process encourages them to think more strategically and has provided them with an opportunity to explore trends and to assess risks associated with not capitalizing on emerging opportunities. As well, the facilitators are capturing a number of similarities in the risks facing NSOs, and more importantly are able to share risk treatment strategies so that a larger number of NSOs may benefit from this pilot project.

The purpose of our presentation to NASSM will be to explain the framework and its rationale, share findings and reactions from the participating eight NSOs, and showcase the benefits that are emerging through this project including:

- Collaboration among sports on sharing best practices to proactively manage common risks,
- The development of an accessible, sport-wide 'risk registry' available to all Canadian sport,
- Common tools, techniques and templates for managing risks useful to all sports,
- Improved internal and external communications,
- easier incorporation of risk management analysis into strategic planning and business decision-making,
- A firmer commitment to developing enhanced capacity within the sport system, particularly at the club level, and
- Increased awareness of values-based sport and risk management (and the link between the two), thus potentially leading to changes in organizational culture.

This project will continue into 2008, during which time the participating NSOs will be monitored as to whether potential risks were realized, and whether proposed risk treatment strategies were successful in mitigating and managing these risks. Further research is also planned to monitor whether participation in the RMP has influenced attitudes and promoted the practical expression (through policies and actions) of values within the leadership and membership of these organizations.

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