



# Effective Athlete Advocacy

Athletes CAN Forum 2003





# Why Advocate?

- To ensure that your concerns are addressed
- To influence policy making and implementation
- To be part of the decision-making process, rather than having to merely accept the outcome





# Our Approach to Advocacy

- Choose our issues
- Define specific goals
- Research the issues
- Develop an advocacy strategy
- Mobilize public support
- Lobby decision-makers

(Courtesy of Tilson Consulting)





# A Framework for the Issues

## Athlete Declaration 2003

We call on...

- Canadian athletes to be effective leaders in Canadian sport and society;
- The Government of Canada to invest in a comprehensive sport development program;
- The Government of Canada to establish a Minister of Sport and Physical Activity;
- Provincial and Territorial governments to increase sport and physical education in Canadian schools;
- The Government of Canada to lead the creation of a national infrastructure program for sport and recreation;
- The sport community, governments, and the corporate sector to affirm a commitment to excellence and athlete-centered sport.





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Example:

Declaration: *The Government of Canada to invest in a comprehensive sport development program*

Choose an issue:

*Inadequate funding of Canadian athletes and sport*





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Define a specific goal:

*Sustained athlete funding, within a global annual sport budget of \$150 million*

Why?

- Direction from Canadian athletes
- Doubling of current federal sport budget
- Based on comparative funding from other nations
- Affordable to government (1% of Health Budget)





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Research the Issues

- Social policy developed:
  - Canadian sport policy, pending Physical Activity and Sport Act, Healthy Living Strategy
- Fiscal policy not developed
- Vancouver 2010 and Hamilton 2010 bids supported by Governments
- Child Obesity/Inactivity Crisis
- Government priorities: Health care, National security, Kyoto-Environment Agenda





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Develop an Advocacy Strategy

### Our Targets:

#### Direct:

Prime Minister, Finance Minister, Secretary of State (Amateur Sport), Heritage Minister, Health Minister, Finance Committee, Other cabinet and caucus supporters, Opposition members

#### Indirect:

Media

Coalition of Supporters

General Public







# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Develop an Advocacy Strategy

### Our Case:

- Investment in sport=investment in health
- National pride and harmony
- Comparative investments with other nations
- Statistics from other “like sectors”: Art & Culture, Percentage of Health Budget
- Meets Government needs and direction: Linked to Speech from the Throne, Romanow Commission
- Supported by Decima Polling and Globe & Mail Polling





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Develop an Advocacy Strategy

### Our Tools:

#### Low Profile:

- Mail-outs of Athlete Declaration
- Pre-budget meetings with MPs and Government officials
- Submissions to Parliamentary and Senate Sub-Committees
- Athlete “Call to Action”
- Athlete in Federal Budget “Lock-up”





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Develop an Advocacy Strategy

### Our Tools:

#### High Profile:

- Athlete Blitz team pre-budget, January 2003
- Meetings with Prime Minister, Ministers, Cabinet, Finance Committee Chair, and Opposition
- Presentations to Media and Interviews on Parliament Hill





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Develop an Advocacy Strategy

### Mobilizing support:

- Working from the start with the Sport Matters Group and Olympic, Paralympic, and Commonwealth Associations
- Preparing athletes across the country to respond to budget decision
- **Collective response to “Contingent Funding clause” for an additional \$10 million investment based upon Vancouver 2010 success**





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Lobby decision-makers

- Athletes outraged:
  - Media relations kicks into high gear
  - Letters to editors, Globe and Mail polling
  - Direct communications to Secretary of State (Amateur Sport), Minister of Finance and Prime Minister
  - Meeting with Ministers of Sport at the Canada Games





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Result

- Intervention by the Secretary of State, Finance Minister, and Prime Minister
- Unprecedented budget turnaround
- Budget for sport increased to support high performance
- Sustained excellence funding confirmed for a 5 year window
- **From contingent \$10 million over 2yr to confirmed \$25 million over 5yr**





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Lessons Learned

- Athlete voices do influence change
- Public support for athletes and excellence can be acquired
- Value of a “wedge issue” for action
- Sustained, planned, and professional approach required
- Advocating beyond our own interests builds credibility and makes links to other priority objectives
- Need for policy platform: Athlete Declaration as framework





# Athletes CAN Advocacy 2003

## Lessons Learned

*GOAL: Sustained high performance funding, within a global annual sport budget of \$150 million*

*OUTCOME: Sustained high performance funding, within a global annual sport budget of \$90 million*







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