

**Written Submission to Standing Committee on Finance**  
**2013 Pre-Budget Consultation Hearing**  
**November 6, 2013**

Federal Government Funding Request

Special Olympics Canada asks the Federal Government to provide graduated, incremental funding, over a four year period, to support the growth and on-going delivery of high-impact, cost-effective, community-based programs for athletes with an intellectual disability. Request of annual incremental funding as follows: 2014-2015 - \$1,680,000

2015-2016 - \$2,800,000

2016-2017 - \$3,000,000

2017-2018 - \$3,250,000

Executive Summary

The Government of Canada supports our shared vision of 'sport for all', through its generous and ongoing financial contribution to Special Olympics in Canada. Funding, through Sport Canada, for the 2013-2014 fiscal is confirmed at \$2,875,760. This total includes a \$1 million dollar, five-year commitment that was made as part of the Federal budget announcement in 2011. This incremental \$1 million will sunset in 2015.

In 2010, as part of the Federal budget announcement, Special Olympics Canada received \$1 million of incremental funding for five years. This funding has helped to change the face of Special Olympics in Canada. The additional funding supported the development of Active Start and FUNdamentals programs for young athletes. In 2012, 3000 children, age 2 to 12 years, were enrolled in programs, which represents a 4.4% increase from 2011. Youth development remains a focus across all twelve chapters. Our Coach Education program has expanded to include on-line training courses that improve access to training and ensures more trained volunteer coaches are delivering quality programs to our athletes. The incremental funding has helped to execute a sport development plan that includes three new official sports. The addition of basketball, bocce and golf bring our total number of sports to 18 and increases the choices and opportunities available to our athletes. This increased funding has allowed us to expand our National Team Program in terms of size and scope. We were able to send our largest team to the 2013 World Winter Games in Korea who were part of expanded and improved training and sport science programs. From grassroots programs to the National Team program, the incremental \$1 million has been used to improve and expand programs across the country.

The sunsetting of the \$1 million comes at a time when there is still so much more that can, and should, be done for athletes with an intellectual disability, their families and the communities in which they live. At present, Special Olympics Canada is reaching only 5% of the potential population of individuals eligible for its programs. Choice and opportunity are freedoms most people cherish, but that people with an intellectual disability have generally been denied (*SOI, Changing Lives through Sport – A Report Card on the Impact of Special Olympics, 2005*). If Canada is to uphold its commitment to the

UN Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities, this population cannot be marginalized in Canada's commitment to sport.

The impact and benefits of sport are multi-dimensional. For athletes with an intellectual disability the impact is even more far reaching. Special Olympics develops healthier athletes with life-long physical fitness habits and instills confidence, self-esteem and other life skills. These attributes extend far beyond the field of play and establish lasting positive impacts for the individual, their families and their communities. Special Olympics contributes to social change by transforming attitudes and creating a more inclusive society that fights negative stereotypes and misperceptions. Special Olympics builds communities by bringing people together and promoting volunteerism and civic engagement. In order for these benefits to be sustained and extended, additional support is required to ensure both the quality and the growth of sport programs that contribute to personal development and result in building stronger, more inclusive Canadian communities.

The potential and the need to provide more opportunities for more people are so significant. Special Olympics is the largest organization in Canada dedicated to providing quality sport programs and competitions for people with intellectual disabilities. In order to grow and build sustainable capacities in program delivery, we need to maintain the \$1 million that will sunset in 2015, and will require additional incremental funding throughout our Strategic Plan cycle. Special Olympics uses the transformative power and joy of sport to reveal the full potential of athletes with intellectual disabilities. And in doing so, Canadian communities are strengthened and a more inclusive society is created.

#### Special Olympics Canada

Special Olympics Canada is dedicated to enriching the lives of Canadians with an intellectual disability through sport. As a national sport organization, Special Olympics Canada provides year-round community sport, training and competition opportunities to over 35,000 athletes of all ages and abilities. The organization is supported by a network of more than 16,000 volunteers, including more than 12,000 trained volunteer coaches.

Special Olympics Canada's programs reach athletes where they live. Each day of the week, from coast to coast to coast, in communities large and small, Special Olympics programs provide athletes with an intellectual disability the opportunity to experience the transformative power and joy of sport.

Incorporated in 1969, Special Olympics Canada enjoys a rich history within Canada and is viewed as a leader within the broader global movement. Working within a collaborative, federated governance model, we have a five year Pan Canadian Strategic Plan that provides a comprehensive and solid road map into the future. We have a diversified revenue strategy that includes corporate, individual, foundation and provincial/territorial government funding. Of \$26.8 million in Pan-Canadian revenue in 2012, \$2.8 million came from the federal government and approximately \$1.6 million came from provincial/territorial governments. The remaining \$22.4 million was raised through corporate sponsorships, individuals, events and foundations. Special Olympics across Canada is supported by 24 national partners. We are the charity of choice for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police through the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics, the movement's largest grassroots fundraising partnership.

Additionally, we are supported by the Special Olympics Canada Foundation, which primarily raises funds through individual giving. Federal support complements these significant investments and allows Special Olympics programs to improve and grow.

### Seeking Funds to Meet Critical Needs

As the important work of providing individuals with intellectual disabilities opportunities to change their lives through sport continues, and Special Olympics Canada strives to grow and expand its reach, additional funds are required in the following critical areas:

#### **I. Athlete Growth**

##### **Increasing the Number of Registered Athletes**

Special Olympics Canada reaches 35,880 athletes, representing only 5% of the potential individuals that could be registered in its programs. Our five-year Strategic Plan sets a target for 7% growth annually, which would result in 50,000 athletes benefitting from Special Olympics programs in 2017. There is so much potential for growth and so many more individuals that could, and should, benefit from increased physical activity and the numerous benefits that come from involvement in sport. **Increased funding is required to reach more athletes in all twelve provincial / territorial chapters.**

##### **Youth Development**

In 2009, Special Olympics Canada was fortunate to benefit from pro bono work done by Bain and Company Inc. Their research identified that the biggest need for athlete growth was targeting young athletes. At present, 38% of the total registered athletes in Special Olympics Canada programs are youth (ages 2 – 21 years). Given the fact that early intervention of children developing basic motor / movement skills is a key determinant for participating in sport and physical activity later in life, young athlete recruitment and the provision of quality physical literacy programs is critical. **Increased funding is required to reach more young athletes and their families.**

##### **Diversity Strategies**

The National Household Survey (*Statistics Canada, 2011*) reveals that 19.1% of the total Canadian population identified themselves as a member of a visible minority group. As the cultural make-up of Canada grows, so too must the work of service providers in meeting the needs of Canada's diverse population. **Increased funding is required to assess current demographics and to develop a diversity strategy that identifies and reduces barriers to participation by diverse cultural groups.**

##### **Grassroots Program Delivery & Competition Opportunities**

The development and delivery of programs in new communities is vital to engaging more athletes and volunteers in grassroots programs. Costs to start new programs, especially in remote northern communities, can be a barrier to chapters. Travelling to meet with community leaders, outreach to recruit new athletes and volunteers, and costs to rent facilities and buy equipment can all impede starting new programs. These local sport training programs are the heart of Special Olympics, whether in small rural communities or large urban centres, whether on a playing field, in a pool, or at a local ice arena; it is here that athletes develop sport skills and find a place, no matter their ability level, where

they can succeed. Whether at a community, regional or provincial/territorial level, quality competition is a key component of the overall sport experience for athletes. As more athletes enter programs and focus on training in one of Special Olympics Canada's 18 official sports, increased investment will be required to provide competitive opportunities. Chapters will need to devote more human and fiscal resources to creating and implementing competitive opportunities that reflect and complement the athletes' training.

**Increased funding is required to conduct community outreach, cover grassroots program costs and provide quality competitions.**

### **National Games**

While vibrant grassroots programs and sport training are the foundation of Special Olympics, as a country we take great pride in our ability to provide athletes with valuable competitive opportunities at the provincial/territorial, national and world games levels. National games are multi-sport games (7 winter sports and 11 summer sports) and include athletes from all twelve provincial/territorial chapters and all ability levels. The Federal Government has been very generous in providing financial support for national winter and summer games. These funds have gone directly to the volunteer games organizing committees who, combined with funds they raise at events and through corporate sponsorships, ensure the successful execution of the games. The addition of new sports and the recruitment of more athletes to our overall programs has an impact on the size and scope of both summer and winter games' budgets. National games organizing committees will require increased funds to match their local fundraising efforts as they strive to meet the demand of delivering larger games to more athletes.

**Increased funding is required to support the planning and execution of larger national games.**

### **Healthy Athletes Program**

Despite severe need and higher health risks, people with intellectual disabilities have limited access to community health interventions and experience a lack of targeted health interventions and programs (*World Health Organization, 2011*). In a population that already experiences significant health disparities, the prevalence of overweight/obesity is high. A global study of children and youth with intellectual disabilities revealed that 30% were either overweight or obese (*International BMI comparison of children and youth with intellectual disabilities participating in Special Olympics, 2012*). Providing sport programs that encourage and promote physical activity is one element to solving this problem and the implementation of the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Program is equally important. The Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Program has provided more than 1.4 million free health screenings to Special Olympics athletes globally, offering health education, treatment and referrals that they would often otherwise never receive. The Healthy Athletes program includes seven disciplines: Fit Feet, FUNfitness, Health Promotion, Healthy Hearing, Opening Eyes, Med Fest, and Special Smiles. While the Healthy Athletes program has been strong globally, most chapters within Special Olympics Canada do not have the adequate resources to deliver the program. Supported by volunteer healthcare practitioners, government can become a highly effective partner in supporting this program. **Increased funding is required to implement Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Programs in communities across Canada – helping to improve health and reduce chronic health conditions for people with intellectual disabilities.**

## II. Volunteer Growth

### Increasing the Number of Volunteers

Volunteerism and civic engagement are part of the Canadian fabric and a source for Canadian pride. Special Olympics Canada is fortunate to have over 12,000 trained volunteer coaches and 16,000 total volunteers who are the driving force behind each and every program and competition that takes place across Canada. As the organization strives to include more athletes, it is imperative that equal emphasis be placed on recruiting more volunteers. Our Pan-Canadian Strategic Plan has outlined growth targets of 6% annually for coaches, which would result in 16,000 trained coaches providing quality grassroots programs.

At present, Special Olympics Canada is proud to have a 3:1 athlete to coach ratio. An increase in the number of athletes would put an increased demand on the current volunteers who already contribute to their capacity. More volunteers will be required to maintain this standard and best serve our athletes. As new volunteers come into the organization, the need for expanding on-boarding practices and offering more training courses will also be needed. Communities will require additional support to ensure the delivery of volunteer programs that create an experience that is both effective and rewarding. Quality volunteers result in quality programs, which in turn result in quality athlete experiences. **Increased funding is required to recruit more volunteers and ensure quality volunteer training.**

## III. Sustainable Capabilities

### Research

Ask anyone who is involved with Special Olympics and they will be able to share numerous stories about the difference the organizations makes in the lives of athletes, volunteers, families and the communities in which they live. These stories are powerful and inspiring, however there is a need to examine and demonstrate the impact of programs and competitions in more measurable ways. Focused efforts to monitor and evaluate multiple aspects of the organization and the programs delivered can assist in identifying barriers to participation and better defining and delivering impactful and transformative programs. This information will also help to better tell our story and increase our accountability to our funding partners and constituents. **Increased funding is required to undertake research that can provide quantitative and qualitative facts and figures that confirm Special Olympics' impact on athletes, their families and communities.**

### Public education

As Special Olympics Canada strives to achieve its strategic goals, public education around its mission and its programs is critical. Many Canadians are aware of Special Olympics, but only 19% (*COMPAS Inc., 2009*), about one in five Canadians, have an accurate appreciation for Special Olympics Canada's role. Lack of awareness of programs was cited as one of the main barriers to participation. This same study revealed a consistent confusion between the role of Special Olympics and the Paralympics. In light of this confusion about who we are and what we do, it is difficult to stand out in a very competitive charitable landscape. This poses challenges to fundraising efforts and the recruitment of athletes and volunteers. **Increased funding is required to implement a public education initiative that increases awareness which ultimately leads to achieving athlete, volunteer and revenue growth targets.**

## **Organizational Capacity**

To create the platform for scale needed to continue to transform the organization as well as the lives of people with an intellectual disability, Special Olympics Canada needs to invest in core operations. Investments are required to build administrative processes, leadership, management teams, and integrated technology systems. While new opportunities exist, limited resources are impeding our ability to scale. Updated technology is a large part of improvements that are needed in order for the organization to be more effective and efficient. Tools that can connect and streamline communications with stakeholders and constituents are essential. Additionally, increased human resources at both the chapter and national level are vital to achieving our Pan Canadian growth goals. Current staff are at capacity and without more people, the ability to raise more funds, enlist new sponsors, recruit more athletes and volunteers, and deliver new programs is an uphill climb. Investing in core capabilities, systems and processes will help us create opportunities to replicate our successful programs. **Increased funding is required to amplify and strengthen organizational capacity. Improvements in technological capabilities and increased manpower are imperative to Special Olympics Canada being able to provide more opportunities to more people with intellectual disabilities.**

## **Our Aspirations**

In 2012 Special Olympics Canada completed the development of a Pan Canadian Strategic Plan that serves as the road map to guide and direct the organization through to 2017. While sustaining high quality program standards remains a focus, the Strategic Plan is ultimately a growth plan. Within a five pillar framework, the plan identifies twelve strategic initiatives that all support three key growth targets: increasing athletes, volunteers and revenue. With targets set and initiatives for action in place, the plan articulates the organization's aspirations over the next five years.

- Special Olympics reaching a far greater portion of Canadians with an intellectual disability;
- Programs extended to specific target markets: youth, diverse cultures;
- More trained coaches and volunteers to support "best in class" programs and increased numbers of athletes;
- More sport programs and competitions that promote and encourage a physically active and healthy lifestyle;
- Financial growth and stability across all 12 provincial/territorial chapters;
- Collaborative, innovative and high-performing culture across Boards, national and chapter staff;
- Special Olympics brand well known and understood by all Canadians; and
- Special Olympics widely regarded as a strong leader in delivering sport opportunities that contribute to social change.