

Ottawa Journal: 2015 is the Year of the Sport

As we navigate our way to the end of a successful 2014 in Canadian Sports, following the Winter Olympics and Commonwealth Games, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, has now proclaimed 2015 to be the 'Year of Sport' in Canada.

In celebration of the role that sport plays in our country, the 'Year of Sport' will help encourage Canadians to participate in, and seek the benefits of, sport.

Indeed, 2015 coincides with Canada's hosting of several high-profile national and international sporting events. The 'Year of Sport' will focus on making the most of these events to highlight the advantages of sport to all Canadians. Next year, we will host the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) World Junior Hockey Championship, the 25th edition of the Canada Games, the FIFA Women's World Cup and the 2015 Pan American Games and Parapan American Games, amongst others.

Our Government is proud to be the largest single investor in Canada's amateur sport system, supporting participation and excellence from the playground to the podium. To inspire the benefit of sport in children, our Government delivered the Children's Fitness Tax Credit to help offset the costs of registration in sports programs. Recently, our Government doubled the maximum expense that can be claimed to \$1,000. Parents get back 15 per cent of this at tax time. We also announced the credit will be refundable starting in 2015.

Meanwhile, our investment in the Canadian sport system is at an all-time high. Through the Athlete Assistance Program, every year \$28 million in funding goes directly to approximately 1,800 athletes, giving them the help they need to pursue their world-class results. The Sport Support Program provides about \$146 million to Canadian sport organizations to strengthen our national sport system and benefit our athletes and coaches. In addition, the Hosting Program provides about \$20 million annually to assist Canadian communities who host world-class sport events.

The 'Year of Sport' will be an important opportunity to raise awareness of the health benefits that sport provides, while also showing what an important driver it is to Canada's economy. As any athlete will say, sport has the power to enhance our lives. As families, volunteers, local sports clubs and associations come together, let's celebrate 2015 as the 'Year of Sport.'

By David Tilson, MP