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CENTRE FOR SPORT POLICY STUDIES

**CENTRE FOR SPORT POLICY STUDIES  
WORKING PAPER SERIES**

**TRENDS IN COMMUNITY SPORT  
PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY SPORT  
ORGANIZATIONS SINCE THE 1990s:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR WEST VANCOUVER**

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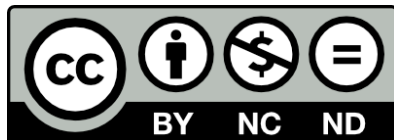
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## **CSPS WORKING PAPER NO. 3: Editor's Introduction**

In something of a departure from his previous work in media studies, and in sport and social theory, Rick Gruneau's Working Paper strays into what is often thought of as 'sport management'. However, many of the main themes of Gruneau's work on sport and theory are evident in the paper (e.g., social structure, social inequality), and there are also connections to CSPS Working Paper No. 1 (Donnelly & Harvey, 1996) in terms of his concern with the *social determinants of participation*.

Although *Trends in Community Sport Participation and Community Sport since the 1990s: Implications for West Vancouver* is a discussion paper, prepared for the West Vancouver Parks and Recreation Department and the West Vancouver Sports Forum in 2010, it also makes an important addition to the CSPS Working Paper series. The paper uses (mostly) high quality census and survey data to outline trends in sport participation in Canada over the past 20 years, contextualizing those trends in terms of the context of Canadian society (e.g., immigration, increasing income polarization, demographic changes, neoliberal governance, and so on).

Those trends are then applied to the case of community sport in West Vancouver, with important insights in terms of planning and facility use offered to the municipal government and the city's Sports Forum. However, the paper also makes an ideal model for studying community sport, and for examining community sport in context. The Centre for Sport Policy Studies plans to use Rick Gruneau's paper as a model for contextualized studies of community sport in Southern Ontario, and we hope that its appearance here will stimulate community studies of sport in other regions of Canada.

*Editor's Introduction, May 2011*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This discussion paper highlights trends that have been affecting sport and community sports clubs in Canada over the past two decades. My focus is deliberately broad and I have not undertaken detailed research on the situation in the lower mainland, nor, more specifically, in West Vancouver. Nonetheless, useful inferences can be made about local trends by considering patterns evident in national data and evaluating these patterns in the context of the specific demographic and socioeconomic composition of West Vancouver. Unfortunately, there are only limited national or regional statistical data on Canadian sport participation between 2005 and the present day so, in many instances, I have had to project inferences from five-year-old data.

In the past five years Canada has continued to undergo substantial demographic and socioeconomic changes: including the ongoing aging of the Canadian population; a boom in immigration from non-European countries; and a persisting, and in some regions growing, gap between high and low income Canadians. Inferences about local trends affecting youth sport, and community sport clubs, can be made with confidence by blending an analysis of Statistics Canada data up to 2005, with a consideration of these and other national and regional demographic and socioeconomic changes. In preparing this discussion paper I have also drawn on recent academic literature on sports organizations as well on numerous informal discussions that I had with sports administrators and coaches in the lower mainland of British Columbia in 2009.

## **2. THE POSTWAR GROWTH OF YOUTH SPORT**

### **Postwar Lives and the Organization of Childhood**

Growth in participation in organized sports in North America from the end of the Second World War through the 1980s was extraordinary. The phenomenon has been widely viewed as a combination of circumstances associated with substantial economic growth, suburban development and the postwar baby boom.

A suburban world is dependent on a need to travel substantial distances to work and school and this forced families into tightly organized family schedules. At the same time, with the rapid spread of television, many parents had growing concerns about childhood indolence, idleness, and physical fitness. These fears were often accompanied by a growth in postwar parental ambition to provide children with new opportunities for social, cultural and physical enrichment. All of these factors combined to make the organization of children's free time into a postwar growth industry.

The trend toward the formal organization of children's 'free time' took off in the 1960s and has continued to the present day. There is, of course, much more to this postwar trend than the growth of organized youth sport alone. The trend can be measured in a significant expansion of enrichment activities, including private tutoring or coaching in a school subjects such as mathematics and foreign languages, along with cultural activities such as dance and music. Still, youth sport has been unique in the scope of its growth and popularity. For example, in 1992 the Statistics Canada General Survey reported that 64% of Canadian children between the ages of 11 and 14, and just over 75% of Canadian youth between 15-19 participated in some form of established competitive sport (e.g., ice hockey, basketball, baseball) at least once a week in the previous calendar year. <sup>1</sup>

### **Attractions and Potential Benefits of Postwar Sport**

Postwar parents and their children found that sport provided a range of potential benefits that would repay the time invested in participation. The "baby boom" of the late

1940s through the early 1960s was accompanied by a “sports boom” driven by the promise of the fun of play, the challenge of competition and the good feelings that came with a strengthened sense of social connectedness. But, sports also promised children an increased degree of health and well-being, a sense of achievement, and an introduction to the importance of goal setting and teamwork. Participation in organized sport also helped many children with time organization, and promoted skills associated with decision-making and problem solving. At their best, youth sports also provided controlled outlets for children’s competitiveness while instilling habits that promoted the virtues of a physically active life style.<sup>2</sup>

Postwar youth sport extended deep roots into Canadian communities for other less immediately apparent reasons. Notably, the vast infrastructure necessary to mount organized youth sport programs on any scale became an important aspect of community building. Fast growing cities, which often seemed like a world of strangers, rapidly changing small towns, and the growth of sprawling suburban places, gave a new urgency to activities that built social networks and provided sites and spaces for community interaction and identity. In this context, volunteer sports teams and clubs, and the social sites provided by the arena and the playing field, found a niche and grew to become increasingly vital aspects of postwar community life.<sup>3</sup> Parents whose children have grown up and graduated from youth sport teams often comment on how much they miss the social connections with other parent spectators, volunteers, coaches and sports administrators that they had when their children were competing. Children’s sports have provided postwar generations with opportunities for cooperative, face-to-face, interaction with other community members that have been matched by few other activities.

### **3. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC TRENDS IN SPORTS PARTICIPATION IN CANADIAN COMMUNITIES SINCE THE 1990s**

#### **The Enduring Presence of Sport in Canadian Communities**

In the first decade of the twenty-first century sport continues to be a major feature of Canadian life. For example, a Conference Board of Canada national survey in 2004 reported that nearly 14 million Canadians -- 55% of the population -- regularly took part in sport as active participants, volunteers, or attendees at live sporting events. The same Conference Board Study reported that *Canadian households spent an estimated 16 billion dollars on sport in 2004, representing 2.2% of all consumer spending and 1.2% of Canadian GDP.*<sup>4</sup> More notably, household spending on sport grew significantly from 1996, when it was only 0.9% of GDP.

To support this level of activity, Canadian communities have built a complex web of public and private organizations devoted to the provision of various types of sporting experience. Volunteer, non-profit, sporting clubs and associations are a key element of this infrastructure, and represent a substantial portion of the entire voluntary sector in Canadian society. For example, *in 2000, sport organizations and programs represented approximately 21% of the entire voluntary sector in Canada, with 2.2 million volunteers, filling 5.3 million positions.* These volunteers in sport, mostly in youth sport organizations, contributed 273 million volunteer hours to Canadian society in the year 2000 alone.<sup>5</sup> A national survey in 2007 revealed that religious organizations and programs take up approximately 18% of the total number of annual hours contributed by Canadian volunteers. Sport organizations and programs are a close second with 17% of total Canadian volunteer hours.<sup>6</sup> Sports programs in schools have also continued to be a vital and enduring feature of community life across the country, although schools now appear to be less significant in the provision of sport in many Canadian communities than in the past.



## **Declining Participation Rates in Sport: National Data for Adults and the Upper Teen Years, 1992-2005**

While sports organizations and programs retain a strong presence in Canadian communities, the actual percentages of children and youth who report being involved once a week or more in sports has decreased noticeably since 1992, although these rates are affected by factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, place (urban versus rural), socioeconomic status and region (see sections 3.4 and 3.5 below). According to Statistics Canada, between 1992 and 2005, the overall rate of active sport participation declined for 11-14 year olds from 64% to 55%. For Canadian youth in the 15-19 year category the rate dropped from approximately 75% to 60%.<sup>7</sup>

Similar declines are evident among the Canadian adult population. Approximately 45% of adult Canadians reported “regular weekly involvement” in sport in the 1992 Canada General Survey, compared with only 28% in 2005. *Comparing data in the two Canada General Surveys reveals a 17% drop in the national adult sports participation rate over a thirteen-year span.* This drop in the rate of sports participation correlates with increasing rates of obesity among children, adolescents, and adults in Canada, prompting many commentators to point to a growing crisis in the health of Canadians.<sup>8</sup>

Still, reductions in the aggregate national average rate of “regular” sports participation, and accompanying increases in obesity in Canada, are not necessarily indicators that sport has become less important in the lives of Canadians than it was in the early postwar period. On the contrary, sport appears to be every bit as important as it was in the early 1990s and is arguably even more important today in many communities. While there has been a decline in the national average rate of sports participation since the early 1990s, comparisons between national averages often hide more than they illuminate.

In this regard it is instructive to compare the 17% average drop in participation rates in sport by Canadians over the age of 15 with participation rates in sport for younger children. Statistics Canada data indicate that 57% of children between the ages of 5 and

14 regularly participated in sport on a weekly basis in 1992.<sup>9</sup> By 2005 that percentage had dropped to 51%. *The drop is statistically significant, but the 6% decrease is less than half of the decrease reported in the adult population.* Even this figure is misleading until it is broken down and subjected to closer analysis. Before conducting this closer analysis of youth sport participation, however, it is helpful to examine the factors which underlie the decreasing rate of adult sports participation.

### **Explaining Declining Adult Sports Participation**

Among the adult population the gradual decrease in sports participation from the early 1990s to the present is explainable by several factors, the most notable of which is Canada's aging population. In 1991, individuals over the age of 65 only made up 11% of the Canadian population. By 2005 the percentage of Canadians over the age of 65 had grown to 13.1 percent. In British Columbia, the 2001 census lists the percentage of residents over 65 at 14%.<sup>10</sup> Because older Canadians tend to participate in sporting activities at a lower rate than younger Canadians, the aging population partially explains the drop off in participation in sports.

There is also evidence suggesting that increasing economic pressures in the 1990s and early twentieth century have compelled people to work longer hours. For example, between 1984 and 1994 the number of families where one or more of the wage earners was involved in 'moonlighting' increased by more than 50%.<sup>11</sup> When Canadians in the 25-65 age range were asked in 2005 about factors that limit opportunities for sport participation over a third tend commented that they simply lack the time they used to have.<sup>12</sup> The economic downturn since 2008 has simply exacerbated the economic pressure faced by many Canadian families.

In addition, the rate of decline in adult sports participation revealed in the 2005 Statistics Canada General Survey is partially explainable by the questions asked in the survey. 'Non-sporting' physical activities such as recreational walking, hiking, and gardening are not included in the data and it is precisely these sorts of activities that many Canadians have turned to, as they get older. In that sense, the 2005 General Survey data, which

depict a 17% drop in sports participation in Canada, are interestingly contrasted to data collected in the Canadian Health Surveys of 1998 and 2005. *When less structured forms of physical activity are added to participation in recognized 'sports' -- activities such as walking, hiking, or gardening -- there is an increase in physical activity levels from 46% of Canadians reporting regular involvement in physical activity in 1998, to 51% in 2005.*<sup>13</sup> Participation in more traditional "sporting" activities among adults is highest in the Maritime Provinces. However, when a more expansive definition of regular "physical activity" is used, British Columbians are Canada's most physically active adult population, with 59% of British Columbians reporting physical activity levels of more than 30 minutes a day, more than 3 days of the week.

Whether you consider participation in more traditional sports, or in physically active recreation more broadly, participation rates are extremely uneven. Some groups continue to participate at levels comparable to those in the past, while participation rates among other groups have dropped more dramatically. In addition to the demographic fact that active participation in sport falls off steadily through the senior years, it is also true that adult men continue to be more likely than women to be active participants in sport. The presence of children in a household similarly increases the likelihood of sports participation, by both children and adults.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, there are dramatic socioeconomic divisions in Canada that shape adult sport participation rates. For example, the levels of an individual's education, and the level of family income, provide a significant upward skew in sports participation. *The Conference Board of Canada study in 2004 showed that 46.7% of Canadians with a University degree or certificate were likely to be active participants in sport, in contrast to only 16.7% of those Canadians who didn't finish high school.*<sup>15</sup> *Similarly, in 2004 participation in sport was more than twice as high for Canadians with family incomes in excess of \$100,000 than families with incomes below \$40,000.*<sup>16</sup> Hernandez et. al., also note a striking gap between high and low income earners in the 2005 Statistics Canada General Survey, and argue that there is "an alarming shift" in participation rates in the 15-19, and 20-24 age categories between 1998 and 2005.<sup>17</sup> In these age ranges

participation in sport for high income Canadians appears to have held steady and may even have increased since the early 1990s.

### **Changing Participation in Sport from Age Five Through the Early Teen Age Years, 1992-2005**

The 1992 and 2005 Canada General Surveys include important data on changing rates of participation in sport, from age five through the late teen-age years. A summary of these changes, by age and gender of participants is provided below in Table 1.

<b>Ages of Sports Participants</b>	<b>Boys</b>		<b>Girls</b>	
	<b>1992</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2005</b>
5-10	60%	52%	45%	43%
11-14	74%	62%	54%	48%
15-19	87%	68%	63%	51%

**Table 1: Changing National Participation Rates in Youth Sport by Age and Gender, 1992-2005**  
 Source: Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 1992 and 2005.<sup>18</sup>

Several trends are evident from the data provided in Table 1. First, at the national level, there is a significant drop in the participation rates of young boys, and of teen-age boys, in sport, at every age level between 1992 and 2005. The trend is most notable in the 15-19 year age group, where there is a drop of 19% between 1992 and 2005. Yet, the patterns of declining participation for girls are less striking, especially in the younger age ranges. *Rates of sports participation for girls in the 5-10 year old range between 1992 and 2005 stayed relatively constant, with a slight reduction that is not statistically significant.*<sup>19</sup> There is some reduction in the participation between 1992 and 2005 in the 11-15 age range, although it is much smaller than the drop for boys of similar ages. Similar to the boys, the biggest drop in participation between 1992 and 2005 -- approximately 12% -- occurs in the 15-19 age range.

## **Explaining Changes in Youth Sport Participation**

Like the data on adult participation, these national averages for children and early teens require closer analysis. The most obvious point is the extent to which national participation rates in sport for children and early teens are influenced by the flattening of youth demographic groups as part of the aging of the Canadian population. In 1992 families with children made up 20.7% of the Canadian population. By 2005 that percentage had dropped to 17.6%. This drop has been offset somewhat since 2005 by larger numbers of families with children among new Canadian immigrants. However, participation rates in sport tend to be lower than national averages among the children of new immigrants.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, and especially in the case of boys, there is evidence of a substantial increase in less traditional sport and game activities since the early 1990s that are not included in the categories of the Statistics Canada surveys. Examples of these activities include mountain biking, paint balling, in-line skating, parkour, ultimate frisbee, mixed martial arts fighting and a variety of new 'roller sports,' such as long 'street' board skating and luge boarding. At least part of the reduction of youth and teen participation in more traditional sports is due to the rise and growth of new recreational alternatives.

There has also been increased competition for the time of children and teens coming from the revolution in digital media that has swept across Canadian society since the early 1990s, and especially in the past decade. The amount of time spent television viewing has declined among Canadian youth since the early 1990s, but this had been more than offset by a striking growth in the time that children and teenagers using internet networking sites or playing video games. A national study by the World Health Organization conducted in 2001-2002 found that more than 80% of Canadian youth, in school grades 6-10, were spending in excess of two hours per day in front of a computer screen or television.<sup>21</sup> This study reported that it was not uncommon for some Canadian youth to spend as much as 4-5 hours per day in front of a television or computer screen.

However, like the national data on sports participation for adults, children's rates of participation in sport are strongly contoured by socioeconomic factors. *For example, the 2005 Canada General Survey demonstrated that children 5-14, from families with household annual incomes in excess of \$80,000, are twice as likely to participate in sport as children of similar ages from lower income families.*<sup>22</sup> The Survey also shows that the children of parents with higher levels of education are far more likely to participate in sport than children of parents with lower levels of education. These patterns reproduce trends found in the national aggregate data on sports participation by adult Canadians. Thus, it seems highly probable that sharply declining rates in sport participation among children from less affluent Canadian families contributes disproportionately to the 6% drop between 1992 and 2005 in national rates of sports participation for children in the 5-14 year age range.

Household composition and the workplace involvement of parents are further indicators of youth sport participation, although these indicators are often closely intertwined with income levels. Not surprisingly, youth sports participation is higher in two parent families than in single parent families, although the gap in participation by children from dual and single parent families tends to be less for boys' participation than for girls.<sup>23</sup> Women lead a majority of single parent families, and these families are often likely to have lower incomes. The point is typically made in a speculative fashion, but some researchers have suggested that single moms often believe sports participation is more important for their sons than for their daughters and they divide the family budget accordingly. This tendency is in direct contrast to the situation in high income, two parent families, where there is very little difference in youth sport participation rates between boys and girls.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Statistics Canada research suggests that children who live in densely populated urban areas are less likely to participate in sport than children who live in lower density suburban areas or small towns.<sup>25</sup> In addition, children are much more likely to participate in sport if their parents are also participants. In nearly 60% of families where parents are sports participants you find that children are active participants as well. In

families where parents are active as sports administrators or coaches, and as athletes, over 80% of children are regular sports participants.<sup>26</sup>

## 4. CHANGING NATIONAL PATTERNS IN CHOICES OF SPORTS PARTICIPANTS

### Late Teen and Adult Participation in Canada's Most Popular Sporting Activities

Table 2 presents a comparison between sports, based on reported weekly participation over the previous year by late teens (15+) and adults, in the 1998 and 2005 Statistics Canada Social Surveys.

Sporting Activity	1998	2005
Golf	22%	20.3%
Ice Hockey	17.9%	17.7%
Swimming	13%	10.4%
Soccer	8.7%	9.7%
Basketball	9.5%	8.6%
Baseball	16%	7.1%
Volleyball	8.1%	7%
Skiing	8.1%	6.7%*
Cycling	7.5%	6.3%
Tennis	7.9%	5.5%

**Table 2: Changes in Late Teenage (15+) and Adult Participation in Canada's Ten Most Reported Sporting Activities, 1998-2005 (Percentage of all Respondents Who Reported Sports Participation)**

Source: Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 1998, 2005<sup>27</sup>

\* The skiing participation rate is somewhat misleading because neither figure includes snowboarding, which was calculated to have a separate participation rate in 2005 of 3.7%.

Data in this table represent percentages of all respondents in the Canada General Social Surveys who reported sport involvement at least one time per week on average in season or through most of the previous year. The study makes no distinction between recreational and competitive involvement in sport, so, for instance, the data on hockey will include both recreational pick up hockey and organized competitive hockey.

Adult Canadians reported participation in over 100 different sporting activities, with many activities involving less than 2% of all active sporting participants.<sup>28</sup> Among the



*top ten most heavily reported activities, golf has the highest overall rate of participation among Canadian adults and late teens, in both years of the survey.* The next most heavily reported activities include ice hockey, swimming, soccer, basketball, baseball, volleyball and skiing. The skiing figure is slightly misleading because the data do not include snowboarding, which was calculated as a separate sport. In addition, there are significant gender and age differences in participation that make the overall averages slightly misleading. When you control for gender and age the order of popularity of sports shifts slightly. *The five sports with the highest percentage of participants among active women in 2005 were: swimming (18.5%), golf (12.2%), soccer (11.3%), volleyball (11.1%), and skiing (8.1%). The five sports with the highest rate of participation for active men were: hockey (25.9%), golf (25.2%), basketball (9.7%), soccer (8.8%) and baseball (7.7%).*<sup>29</sup> Similarly, physically demanding sports like hockey and soccer are more likely to be played by Canadian under the age of 40 whereas golf and swimming have higher participation rates among older Canadians.

From Table 2 we can see that the percentage of active Canadians playing golf dropped slightly between 1998 and 2005, although the game has remained very strong among older age groups. Hockey has stayed at a relatively steady rate of participation, whereas there is a marked drop in baseball participation rates between 1998 and 2005. *Soccer is the only sport in Canada that showed a significant growth in participation between 1998 and 2005.* Most of that increase has clearly come from growth in the participation of teenage girls. Soccer organizations also point to steady growth in adult soccer associations, leagues and teams, primarily in age ranges from the 20s through the 40s.

Changing patterns of immigration in Canada also partially explain the growth of soccer participation in Canada and may well be implicated in the drop in participation in more traditionally North American sports such as baseball and volleyball. Immigration to Canada has been higher since the mid 1990s than at any other time in the twentieth century since the First World War. While research shows that recent immigrants participate in any form of sport at a lower rate than long time Canadian residents, the

accumulating cultural preferences and tastes of immigrant groups since the 1990s has undoubtedly had some influence on the choices that Canadian make about the sports they pursue.

Prior to the 1990s, a majority of Canada's immigrants came from the United Kingdom, the United States, and European countries such as Italy, Germany, Portugal and the Netherlands. In this mix, the United States was the second largest source of immigrants to Canada after the United Kingdom. Since the early 1990s, the U.S. has slipped to Canada's 4th largest source of immigrants, behind China, India, and the Philippines, and just ahead of South Korea.<sup>30</sup> There has also been a notable recent growth in immigration to Canada from Muslim countries, such as Pakistan and Iran.

While the scope of immigrant influence on sport selection is not clear in the Canada General Social Surveys there are other indications that U.S. influences on the sport preferences of Canadians are being subtly mediated by the sporting tastes of a more 'global' citizenry. In the case of soccer, we can see this impact not only in the continued popularity of 'ethnic' soccer teams, clubs, and leagues in Canada, but also in the diffusion of the participation of comparatively recent immigrants into more mainstream soccer clubs and leagues. Indeed, since the 1990s soccer has developed a growing following in Canadian Punjabi and Persian communities. Since the 1998 World Cup, the game has also been booming in Asian countries, especially in South Korea and Japan. Thus, it seems reasonable to infer that many South Korean-Canadian families, for example, may be drawn to soccer more easily than to North American sports such as ice hockey or Canadian football. The remarkable expansion of global soccer fan culture, fed by specialty cable channels, such as Go!TV, and pay per view, plus the global marketing of merchandise for teams such as Manchester United, Chelsea, and Real Madrid, simply makes the choice of soccer seem even more natural today than it might have been in the past.

### Changes in Participation Rates in Canadian Youth Sports (Ages 5-15)

Table 3 summarizes data from the 1992 and 2005 Canada General Social Surveys on participation rates in different sports among active Canadian children, 5-14 years of age.

Only two sports-- soccer and basketball-- show an increase in participation between 1992 and 2005. However, with a striking 8% jump in participation, soccer is the only sport where the increase is statistically significant. Among youth sports, hockey's participation rate has stayed relatively constant, with a slight drop of 1% that is not statistically significant. Significant reductions in rates of reported participation are evident in swimming, baseball, and volleyball. The drop in the rate for skiing is partially explained by the large number of young children and early teens who converted to snowboarding in the late 1990s. However, recent changes in ski technology, and the introduction of new competitive events such as ski cross, appear to be undercutting some of snowboarding's initial popularity.

	<b>1992</b>	<b>2005</b>
	<b>Percentage of 5-14 year-olds regularly participating in organized sports</b>	
<b>Soccer</b>	12%	20%*
<b>Swimming</b>	17%	12%*
<b>Hockey</b>	12%	11%
<b>Basketball</b>	6%	8%
<b>Baseball</b>	13%	5%*
<b>Volleyball</b>	5%	3%*
<b>Gymnastics</b>	4%	2%
<b>Karate</b>	2% <sup>E</sup>	2%
<b>Skiing, downhill</b>	6%	2%*
<b>Track and Field – Athletics</b>	2% <sup>E</sup>	2% <sup>E</sup>
<i>E Use with caution</i>		
<i>* Statistically significant difference from 1992 (p&lt;0.05).</i>		

Table 3: Top 10 sports of 5-14 year-olds in Canada in 2005

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1992 and 2005.

One of the most notable features of the trends described in Table 3 is the comparative growth of youth soccer in comparison to youth hockey. Much of the disparity in growth between the two sports appears to stem from two key trends. First, while hockey undoubtedly remains a central feature of Canadian youth cultures, Canadian youth culture is a more complex and fragmented affair than it was twenty years ago, and this has implications for explaining shifting sport preferences among Canadian youth. On this point, for example, Brian Wilson has noted how the impact of globalizing fan cultures has lent itself to new intersections between such things as sport participation, musical choice and identity. Combined with changes in Canada's racial and ethnic composition, these new intersections have increased the impact of sports such as NBA basketball as a source for identity for urban youth in Canada. Youth "lifestyle" sports, such as skateboarding, provide for similar intersections between sporting activity and other identity-producing areas of Canadian youth culture.<sup>31</sup>

Even if we view these abstract sociological explanations as merely suggestive, there are other more concrete explanations for the trends in youth sport participation that are outlined in Table 3. One notable factor is the comparatively low cost of entry to the early stages of competitive play in soccer in comparison to hockey. The cost of all youth sport participation has risen noticeably since the early 1990s, but costs in soccer have remained comparatively lower in comparison to hockey, not least because of the lower costs of equipment.<sup>32</sup> Second, and more importantly, hockey has simply not been able to match soccer's extraordinary growth among young female players. The growth in soccer participation among girls is the driving force that has led to soccer becoming the most heavily played sport among Canadian children and adolescents.

## 5. THE CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT OF CANADIAN SPORT PARTICIPATION

### Community Sport and the Canadian Voluntary Sector

In 1998, 19% of Canadians (aged 15 and over) sampled in the Statistics Canada General Social Survey, reported belonging to a sports club, a local community league, or other local or regional sport association. *Between 1998 and 2005, the percentage of Canadians involved in club and/or league sport stayed relatively constant, with only a minor decrease from 19% to 18%.<sup>33</sup>* During this same time, there has been an increase in the number of 'for profit' companies and organizations that offer opportunities for sports participation in Canada and this, arguably, is one of the factors influencing the slight decline in membership in volunteer, non-profit, community clubs and organizations. Still, it is clear that the community sports club, or local volunteer sporting association, often working in partnership with municipal recreation departments, remain the bedrock of the Canadian sport system.

In an analysis of the Canadian voluntary sector Jarbala noted that between 1997 and 2000, the overall rate of volunteering in Canada declined from 31% to 27%, and the average hours per volunteer increased from 149 to 162. *There is a trend in the voluntary sector where it has become harder to get people to volunteer their time, with the result that fewer volunteers have to work harder to maintain established programs and levels of service.* According to Jarbala, in 2000 a mere 25% of volunteers in Canada were putting in 73% of the total volunteer hours in the sector and a growing number of volunteers preferred to give money more than time.<sup>34</sup>

There is no doubt that voluntary sports clubs and associations have been affected by this trend. Still, data collected in the 2005 Statistics Canada Social Survey portray a slightly different picture. *Against the trend of declining participation in the overall voluntary sector in Canada, and contrary to the national trend of declining sport participation since the 1990s, volunteering in sports organizations appears to have increased.* For example, in 2005, over 2 million Canadians volunteered their time as

administrators or helpers in sports clubs or organizations, up 18% from 1998.<sup>35</sup> This evidence suggests that many aging Canadians have remained in sport as volunteers even if fewer of them may participate as active 'players' than in the past.

Increased participation by women accounts for a substantial portion of the growth in volunteering in sports clubs and associations. This trend is especially evident in coaching. For example, the number of volunteer coaches in Canada increased 1.6% from 1998, to almost 1.8 million Canadians in 2005. Much of this growth is due to a 15% increase in the numbers of female coaches between 1998 and 2005. By 2005 there were 882,000 female coaches in Canada. With this increase, female volunteer coaches in 2005 slightly outnumbered their male counterparts. Between, 1998 and 2005 the number of male coaches in Canada dropped 9% to 874,000.<sup>36</sup> At the same time the number of adult men and women who volunteered as referees, officials or umpires decreased 15% between 1998 and 2005, from a peak of 937,000 Canadians to 800,000.<sup>37</sup> *Finding qualified referees continues to be a significant and ongoing issue for many Canadian sports clubs and associations.*

### **New Pressures and Demands Facing Community Sports Clubs**

What explains the increase in the numbers of volunteers in Canadian community sports clubs and associations, when the statistical evidence shows that the percentage of Canadians involved in club and/or league sport actually decreased slightly between 1998 and 2005? How do we explain the statistical increase in the level of volunteering in sport organizations when there has been an overall decline in participation in the Canadian voluntary sector as a whole? How do we reconcile the increased level of volunteering in sport with the fact that sports organizations themselves continue to say they are "desperate" for volunteers? According to Jarbala, just over a quarter of sports organizations sampled between 2000 and 2003 reported a net loss of volunteers, the highest reported loss of all non-profit organizations in the Canadian voluntary sector.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, 58% of Canadian voluntary sports organizations said they were having difficulty retaining volunteers and planning for the future.<sup>39</sup>

The answers to these questions are complex and require a more detailed analysis than can be provided here. Still, there is enough evidence to suggest some plausible explanations. As a first point, it is important to recognize that community sports clubs and associations typically face greater challenges today than they did in the in the early 1990s. *Many clubs operate in a climate of substantially heightened expectations, from sports participants, and parents, as well as from larger regional, provincial and national associations.* Attendant to this, most of the larger clubs and associations in Canada now run programs well beyond their traditional sporting season. Ten and eleven month long programs are increasingly common. In addition, many clubs and associations now have substantially larger budgets than in the past, requiring higher levels of professionalism and accountability. Sports clubs and associations are also subject to growing demands for higher quality coaching and facilities, at all times of the year.<sup>40</sup>

These factors tend to raise the cost of providing community programs and often add new layers of administration to clubs and associations that were comparatively easy to administer twenty years ago. For example, *the increasing attention paid by provincial and national sporting associations to long term planning, player and coach development, promotion, event management, financial and legal issues has created pressures for parallel levels of professionalism at the community level.* The implementation of a national coaching certification program in Canada in the 1980s has been an important element of these pressures toward professionalism. Clubs have sought out certified coaches, and many clubs have set certification targets that need to be met by parent volunteers. This necessitates additional record keeping as well as the organization of certification courses at the local level. In the face of all of these combined pressures a growing number of the larger sports clubs and associations in Canada are moving away from an older model of casual volunteerism toward a more formal administrative model, similar to that of small businesses or larger non-profit NGOs.<sup>41</sup>

Such changes create seemingly insatiable demands for volunteers and especially for those who have the necessary time, skills and qualifications to manage more complex

levels of program development, planning and administration. *The reported 18% increase in volunteers in Canadian sports clubs and organizations between 1998 and 2005 has simply not been enough to meet demand.* Recruitment to higher-level administrative positions, in particular, has not matched the growth seen in volunteer coaching and there are ongoing shortages of volunteer coaches with higher level coaching certification. Many sports clubs and associations still struggle to find enough volunteers of any kind to run their programs, let alone volunteers with sufficient levels of commitment, free time, or qualification.

There is considerable anecdotal evidence suggesting that much of the increase in volunteering in sport over the past decade has been limited to relatively low time commitment areas, such as coaching very young children, or coordinating part of a competitive team or league. When sports administrators claim it is more difficult than ever to recruit qualified volunteers they most often mean recruitment to the "heavy commitment" and more technically demanding coaching or administrative jobs in these organizations. Accordingly, many clubs and associations, especially the smaller ones, are forced to rely heavily on a very small core of 'super-committed' volunteers. When these volunteers finally get burned out or retire it is extremely challenging for the clubs and associations to find volunteers to replace them. In this sense, the trends in sports clubs and associations are consistent with trends affecting the voluntary sector as a whole.

This is one main reason why some sports clubs have opted to create paid positions to undertake activities once undertaken almost exclusively by volunteers. Compared to other areas of the voluntary sector, such as health and welfare organizations or religious organizations, the use of paid employees in sporting clubs and associations has been, and continues to be, comparatively small.<sup>42</sup> Still, over the past two decades, there has been an undeniable trend in community sports clubs toward hiring more employees, especially in technical areas such as coaching and athletic training. Hiring professionals in these areas, or increasing the numbers of professionals, has a tendency to further escalate expectations among the club or association membership



and elevate the professionalism brought to training and to athlete development. Paid coaches and trainers, often on part time salaries, have a vested interest in expanding existing programs, and in designing new programming, in ways that reinforce club member's perceptions of the value of the paid professional's work. In that way a part time position just might become a full time job. Since the early 1990s, Canadian universities have produced a substantial number of physical education and human kinetics graduates who have opted to pursue careers as professional trainers, and coaches, rather than moving into the public school system. The result is a growing labour market in these fields.

Once a club or association begins down the road toward professionalism in coaching and training, it is unlikely to turn back. This growth has promoted a sea change in parent expectations, especially at the higher competitive levels of community sport. Long time coaches frequently note how, over the past decade, many parents of young athletes have come to expect greater knowledge from youth sport coaches than in the past.<sup>43</sup> These pressures are felt most strongly at the competitive community 'rep' level where parents expect that certified coaches would have at least a rudimentary knowledge of seasonal planning, how to periodize training, and how to conduct proper warm-ups for injury prevention. Parents have also come to expect high level youth coaches to have an understanding of some of the principles of sport physiology, biomechanics and sport psychology, in addition to the know how to teach sport skills. Parents who become volunteer sports administrators often carry these expectations with them into the boardroom.

Increased expectations among club and association members for good training and coaching, promotes the emergence of new "needs" in sporting associations. Examples include: more access to facilities, for longer periods in the year; a continued push to raise the level of qualification of coaches and trainers; a desire for higher quality training and competition facilities (e.g., for outdoor artificial turf; indoor venues offering winter training for summer sports; venues offering summer training for winter sports, etc.); and a desire for greater professionalism in programs, even at the recreational level.

The growth of these new needs, in an atmosphere where committed and qualified volunteers are often hard to find can create additional pressure on a club's administrative resources. Programs such as holiday and spring break camps, additional specialized skills training, off-season training, tournament hosting, or regional development competitions, increase the workload. The result is a small, but growing, trend toward paid contract positions in areas such as registration, scheduling, public relations and sponsorship, website design and maintenance. *These two trends, the hiring of paid coaches and the contracting out of formerly volunteer administrative activities, are developing unevenly in different sports and in different regions across the country, but their impact is subtly reshaping the way many of the larger community sports clubs and associations operate.*

Given these developments the size of community sport clubs and association has become more critical. In the past a community might have, say, three or four small clubs or associations, in the same sport, each with its own members and volunteers, and each running its own programs. But, in an increasing number of cases, many sports clubs and associations are finding that the pressures of elevated expectations, and a push for greater professionalism from coaching through to administration, create conditions that discriminate against smaller organizations.

This parallels the situation in the broader voluntary sector, where the larger the organization the greater the likelihood of lobbying politically for government funding or for community subsidies of various types.<sup>44</sup> In the history of Canadian voluntary associations, the largest and best-funded organizations tend to grow and "get richer" while smaller organizations continue to struggle. Across Canada the voluntary sport sector remains largely composed of a multitude of highly diverse organizations with no professional staff or only a few professional employees. But, *there are signs of change, with smaller clubs and associations forming cooperative ventures with larger organizations, or in some instances, merging with them to create new 'super clubs' or powerful regional associations.* The idea is to create organizations able to find

administrative efficiencies, fundraise more effectively, and strengthen the organization's clout in the community. In the lower mainland of British Columbia, these dynamics explain why West Vancouver Girls Softball recently merged with North Shore Girls Fast Pitch to form a single larger club, and why three long-standing North Vancouver boys soccer clubs -- the North Vancouver Lion's Gate Club, the Lynn Valley Soccer Club, and the Mount Seymour Soccer Club -- voted in January 2010 to amalgamate into a new 'super club' with more than 3,500 members.

### **Community Sport and the Growth of the Cultural Economy**

Over the past 40 years, western societies have gone through a dramatic transition in the organization of economic, social and political life. A destabilizing global deflation in 1973-75, matched with high levels of public debt in virtually all of the western nations, raised widespread doubt about the ability of older postwar economic and political programs to meet the challenges of new times. At the same historical moment, emerging digital technologies were opening up unprecedented opportunities for innovation in a wide range of fields including computing, software development, media production, security, design and advertising. These technologies created new areas for economic growth and promised more "flexible" alternatives to the rigidities of centralized industrial workplaces.<sup>45</sup>

The drive for flexibility in production was accompanied by a belief among conservative groups that solutions to the economic problems of the early 1980s could be solved by clearing away obstacles for economic growth, not only on a regional and national scale, but internationally as well. The result was a sustained push from business-friendly political parties to decrease levels of political regulation in economic life to reduce the cost of doing business and to open up new markets. This push for deregulation was often accompanied by intense lobbying for cutbacks in government expenditures matched with tax reductions to create an impetus for increased consumer spending. One of the most significant areas of deregulation lay in the media industries, where new technical innovations associated with satellite transmission and digitization were proving to be revolutionary.

These events created conditions for an extraordinary expansion in the 1980s and 1990s of "cultural industries." Deregulation provided new markets for niche cable and satellite television channels, while digital technology was revolutionizing the film, television, music and advertising industries, and on a near global scale. Meanwhile, in the developed Northern Nations of the world, a combination of innovations in computerization and robotics, mixed with a new ability to manufacture and to market goods in a more global economy, played an important role in further accelerating the commercialization of cultural goods and productions. The scale of this transition was breathtaking. In Canada, for example, between 1971 and 2001, the "cultural sector labour force" grew by 160%, compared to a growth of 81% in the overall labour force.<sup>46</sup>

During the late 1980s, the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, and the later North American Free Trade Agreement, precipitated an economic shift that saw many traditional industrial and manufacturing jobs leave the country for other parts of the world. This accompanied a reduction in stable large scale employment in manufacturing industries due to new approaches to flexible production now made possible by computerization and robotics, and necessitated by a need to produce goods for a more segmented and discriminating consumer market. In this context, as traditional industrial employment rates eroded, cities and communities across the country were forced to turn to less traditional forms of economic production. *For many cities and communities, the production of "events" emerged as an area of economic activity that began to rival the more traditional making of things.*<sup>47</sup>

By the late 1990s the cultural economy was seen by many communities as a necessary and significant growth area. Communities whose industrial base appeared to be collapsing were desperate to find new sources of economic growth and identity. Montreal, for example, began to market itself as the "City of Festivals" and there has been a headlong scramble since the 1980s for cities to host a handful of so-called "World Class" events.<sup>48</sup> This kind of "event-driven," tourist and service-oriented, approach to economic development has rippled from the largest cities down to

Canada's regional cities, smaller towns and municipalities. We have seen the effects of this in many communities in British Columbia. Two of the best-known examples are evident in the way Chemainus struggled to reinvent itself as a tourist destination famed for its murals and other arts activities, or in the way Kamloops has worked to redefine itself as "the tournament capital of Canada."

Kamloops is a clear example of the way the sport in the past two decades has become a larger part of community economic development through an attempt to grow the cultural industries. There used to be clear institutional lines between different aspects of culture in Canadian communities: for example, between art, theatre, film, dance and sport. But, since the 1990s these lines have often become blurred as diverse areas of cultural practice are drawn into the event-driven economies of urban places. In sport, so-called "world class" events such as the Olympics are in short supply and carry immense financial risks. There is also research suggesting that such mega-events can deform or undermine local governance to the detriment of host communities.<sup>49</sup> Even prominent second tier events such as Commonwealth or Pan American Games, are far beyond the financial means of small communities. However, there are still many inexpensive regional and national events, such as national youth sport championships, or big international youth tournaments, that can bring in tourists, help to fill local hotels and keep cash flowing to local retailers and restaurant owners.

In such circumstances civic boosters have an interest in promoting such events heavily, often to a point of inflating their significance. At the same time, many sports organizations, desperate for funds, have become reliant on big club events (such as tournaments) as a source of revenue. Some of these tournaments, such as the well-known Quebec International Pee Wee Hockey tournament, have been in existence for many years. But, the trend, in nearly all sports is for the growth of more and bigger amateur sporting events, including events at the adult and Masters levels. These trends partially explain why the numbers of active Canadians participating in tournament competitions grew from 36% in 1998 to 39% in 2005.<sup>50</sup> It is also telling that the number of adult Canadians who reported being spectators at live (amateur) sporting events

reached 9.2 million in 2005-- 20.3% higher than reported in 1998. In 1992, only 5 million Canadians reported being involved in community amateur sport as spectators.<sup>51</sup>

Community sports clubs and associations have long played important roles in Canadian communities both as a source of community pride and as a site for community interaction and association. However, in the past ten to 15 years, larger non profit sports clubs and associations in some communities have also emerged as more visible aspects of community economic life. Paid positions in community sports are now arguably as much a part of Canada's growing cultural labour force as positions in arts organizations, and even the non-profit sport sector has been increasingly drawn into the local economies of communities across the country.

Larger sports clubs and associations contribute to the local economy in two significant ways: first, by providing a large pool of unpaid labour necessary for the provision of a popular social service and for the production of sporting events; and secondly, through a growing tendency toward paid employment for coaches and trainers, as well as through the contracting out some of the club's administrative work. In Canadian communities today, larger non-profit sports clubs and associations can have an economic impact on par with many small businesses.

### **Increasing Costs of Community Sport Participation**

Trends toward professionalism and paid employment, along with an accompanying development of programming, almost always increase the need for revenues. Sports clubs and associations in Canada have a long history of underfunding. But, in recent years, funding issues have become more challenging than ever. Beyond the cost of joining, club members now often pay additional fees for such things as tournaments, 'development' camps, and off-season programs. At the same time, sporting equipment has become more expensive and fees for registrations have steadily risen. In 2004, the average 'active' Canadian family paid \$1,963 dollars per year in sport-related expenses.<sup>52</sup> There seems little doubt that these costs have increased in the past 6 years. Indeed, informal discussions with West Vancouver parents whose children ski, or

compete in track and field, ice hockey and soccer, indicate annual family expenditures on sports participation more likely to be in the \$3,000-\$6,000 range. Families of ski racers typically spend well in excess of \$10,000 per year on the sport.

The "affluence bias" in sports participation tends to be repeated in the case of volunteering. The growing need for credentials in coaching, or for professional skills in administration, matched with extraordinary time commitments, have made it more difficult than ever for lower income Canadians to volunteer. In 2004, Canadians in the \$40,000-\$60,000 per year bracket were more than three times more likely to volunteer in sporting organizations than people in the \$20,000 per year bracket. Canadians earning \$100,000 per year or more were five times more likely to volunteer in sports clubs and associations than low income Canadians.<sup>53</sup>

Cost increases in sport have also been influenced by a set of political changes both beyond the trends affecting sports clubs and associations, and the increasing costs of sports equipment. Over the past 40 years Canadians have seen a progressive erosion of school sports in communities, along with rising costs of social service provision across the whole non-profit sector. For example, municipalities have long committed to offer affordable recreational sport programs of different types, but municipalities have seen more and more costs offloaded onto them by Provincial governments in the past 20 years. This has made revenue generation a greater area of concern for municipalities than ever, making it more difficult for local sport and recreation departments to justify the scale of subsidies necessary to make sport participation available to less affluent Canadian families.

*The demand for higher quality, and higher use, facilities, such as 'wave pools, tennis bubbles, and artificial turf, has also contributed to an escalating spiral of costs for community sport participation.* In the early post war era there was a massive public investment in Canada in 'War Memorial' pools and arenas, as well as new courts, baseball diamonds, and grass playing fields. In the mid 1960s there was another boom leading to construction of numerous publicly subsidized "Centennial" pools and arenas,

and to another round of growth in the construction of playing fields. Municipalities today still subsidize the cost of arenas, baseball diamonds, tennis courts and playing fields. However, the price tag for newer 'higher end' or 'value added' facilities has taken off at the very moment that municipal budgets have reached a crisis point. In many communities, spending large amounts of public money on sports facilities challenges the will of municipal politicians like never before, unless the expenditures can be justified as part of a broader logic of community economic development.

To meet the high cost of upgraded pool and arena facilities, or of artificial turf playing fields, there has been a noticeable trend in many communities toward increased 'user pay' approaches to facility construction. There has also been a push for new types of partnerships between municipal governments, voluntary sports clubs and associations, and, sometimes, private sector providers. *The successes of these partnerships vary widely, but in many communities they are now viewed as the only way that expensive new facility developments can move forward.* Such partnerships typically commit community clubs and associations to substantial fundraising and often to substantial debt. The result is a trend toward increasing quality in sporting facilities, accompanied by greater opportunities to stage sporting events. But, high costs for individual participation continue to be a significant social side effect.



## **6. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE TRENDS FOR COMMUNITY SPORT IN WEST VANCOUVER**

### **The Significant Role of Sport in West Vancouver**

It is widely known that West Vancouver is an aging community. In 2006 nearly a quarter of West Vancouver residents (23.1%) were over the age of 65, with the fastest growing sector among seniors in the 80 plus group.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, at 39.4% of the population, middle-aged adults, from 40-64, were the largest demographic segment in West Vancouver. In the past four years, approximately 7% of these middle-aged adults have hit retirement age, adding to the District's post-retirement population. Demographic projections reveal that the municipality's aging trend will continue. Accompanying this trend, in the past five years, has been a gradual reduction in the number of younger school age children. Just under 5% of West Vancouver's population in 2006 was made up of children aged 5-9, but the numbers of very young children, birth to aged 4, was just over 3%. As those 5-9 year olds have moved through the school system, there are smaller numbers of children to take their place.

It is logical to conclude that the trends toward an aging population, and the reduction in the numbers of entry-level elementary school children, will be reflected in a gradual decline in sports participation. This conclusion would be in line with trends apparent in national data.

Yet, on closer inspection, the conclusion does not stand up to the evidence. For one thing, it fails to account for the amount of migration into the district of people with families of school age children and by increasing numbers of international students entering the West Vancouver public school system. There was a 4.6% increase in immigration to West Vancouver between 2001 and 2006, including many families with school age children, and this trend appears to be ongoing. *Indeed, in 2006 there were still more families in West Vancouver with children living at home (54%) than those without children.* More significantly, between 2001 and 2006, West Vancouver witnessed a dramatic 19% increase in citizens with university certificates or bachelor's

degrees. During this time the median family income in the municipality also increased from \$94,986 to \$105,448. House prices and other living costs also grew during these years, yet the evidence definitely shows a strong upward socioeconomic trend among the majority of the income earning population.

These are relevant factors because of the disproportionately high levels of sports participation shown at the national level among upper level socioeconomic groups. Assuming West Vancouver's highly educated and affluent population follows the national trend, we should expect to find continuingly high rates of sport participation in the municipality despite its greying population. We can add to this general point that West Vancouver has a long history of well-established private clubs and voluntary associations in sport and a deep tradition of youth sport participation going back to the earliest years of the Municipality.

This tradition continues to be a significant aspect of life in the community. At present, there are more than 30 different private and public sports clubs or sporting associations of different types operating in the District, offering a wide range of programs, some restricted to West Vancouver alone and others involving participants from across the North Shore. This past year, ice hockey, baseball, field hockey, and soccer had combined registrations of nearly 5,000 of West Vancouver's (approximately 8,000) school-aged residents.<sup>55</sup> In keeping with national trends, the West Vancouver soccer club, with over 1,900 members, has the largest registration of children who live in the district. In recent years, it has been common for between 25-30% of school aged children in West Vancouver to play soccer. West Vancouver is also home to two thriving ice hockey associations, who often cannot meet the demand for spots on teams and turn players away, as well as two popular minor league baseball associations, and Canada's most successful field hockey club, which runs programs for residents across the North Shore.

None of this includes adult participants, nor does it include the large numbers of youthful golfers, tennis players and skiers in the municipality. There is every reason to

believe that a sports participation rate in excess of 60% of the district's youthful residents will stay steady or increase in the immediate future. At the same time, many of the District's sports clubs and associations run Masters programs, or sponsor adult teams. *As the population ages, we can expect that many former teen and young adult participants will continue to be involved in their favourite sports. Adult sports participation promises to be a growth area in the community over the next decade.*

West Vancouver also has a very high level of community participation in the sporting voluntary sector. Soccer, ice hockey, baseball, rugby and field hockey, for example, together fielded more than 400 teams in 2009-2010 and there were many other teams in other sports.<sup>56</sup> Each of these teams typically depends on three or four volunteer coaches and managers, and the associations that sponsor them continue to depend heavily on volunteers for the vast majority of their activities. Similarly, many school sports teams are also dependent on volunteer parent coaches or managers. There is no doubt that some sports clubs and associations are have trouble recruiting the volunteers they need, but it is also clear that volunteering in sport continues to be a vital aspect of West Vancouver's community culture. There is considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that many aging former sports participants have simply replaced their active sports participation with active participation in the community's sports organizations. *When you consider combined levels of participation and volunteering in sport in West Vancouver you get a picture of a dynamic, physically active, and sport-oriented, population with participation rates beyond national averages.* This dynamic image flies in the face of the stereotype of West Vancouver as an aging community, where sport is no longer as important as it once was.

It is necessary to add a *caveat* here: in 2001, nearly a third of West Vancouverites made incomes of less than \$30,000. While the growth and ongoing gentrification of the municipality has made low income earners less visible, low-income residents in West Vancouver have not disappeared. Nearly a third of West Vancouver seniors lived alone in 2006 and many of today's seniors live on income assistance. Similarly, between 2001 and 2006 there was an increase in single parent families, to just over 12% of families in

the district. Most often women tend to be the heads of these households and their incomes tend to be less than half that of other households in West Vancouver. With rising costs for sports participation across the district, especially for extra programs or higher-level teams or competitions, there are a sizeable number of people in the district for whom the high costs of sports participation are prohibitive.

### **Implications of Broader Trends for Local Facilities and Sport Services**

In addition to a socioeconomic profile that correlates strongly with sport participation, many of the broad organizational factors described earlier are placing increasing demands on West Vancouver's sport delivery services. One notable example is the growth of multiple seasonal competitive fixtures, year long development programs, skill camps, and 'travel' teams in several sports. *While the trend is not found in every club or association in West Vancouver there is no doubt that the era of predictable 'seasonal' sport is passing quickly. As sports extend their programs beyond their traditional season, there is greater demand for scarce resources and increasing potential for conflicts over scheduling.* At the same time, as newer sports arise and gain in popularity--ultimate frisbee is an example--there is added potential for conflicts over facility access.

New levels of professionalism in coaching and training create other pressures on facility use. For example, in the lower mainland of British Columbia, training times on municipal sports fields have traditionally been allocated in one hour blocks. Yet, across North America and Europe, 90 minute sessions in field sports are now widely regarded as the 'best practice' time period for youth athletic training. This shift is based on comparatively new information about the importance of a proper dynamic warm-up, technical instruction on basic movement patterns, and agility and strength training, that lasts 20-25 minutes, prior to participation in strenuous athletic activity. For example, the growing number of young girls competing in higher levels of sport in recent years has been accompanied by a notable increase in anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) damage. Sport science research shows that a careful program of dynamic stretching, technical instruction on movement, strengthening and agility can substantially reduce the

incidence of knee injuries in young athletes.<sup>57</sup> But, if this kind of program is followed, a single hour training time block only allows 30-35 more minutes for technical or tactical instruction in the actual sport. In field sports in particular, new knowledge is leading coaches to push for 90 minute, rather than 60 minute, training times.

The trend toward increasing professionalism in sports organizations is also manifest in West Vancouver in an urgent demand for the construction of higher quality, training and match facilities. As the municipality grows, it will become necessary for the municipality, and for community sports clubs, to create mechanisms for negotiating new arrangements for sharing time and facilities as well as for the development and cost of new fields, arenas, courts or pools. There will be additional challenges raised due to technological advancements in artificial playing surfaces. Higher level teams increasingly want to play on more specialized 'sport specific' surfaces, and will lobby for these surfaces. In some instances (field hockey is arguably the best example) it has become more difficult to meet a specific sport's needs with a traditional multi-sport artificial playing surface.

*The important point here is to note that increasing demand for facility time in the future is likely to be driven as much by intra-organizational trends than by numbers of sports participants alone.* Higher expectations in respect to the quality and quantity of training times and facilities; year long programs; more 'academy' camps and programs beyond regular registrations; increased adult participation; and a stronger desire to fundraise through hosting competitive 'events' are all trends that put a strain on existing resources.

The solutions to these strains will be varied and will likely include some combination of the following options for municipal governments:

- *continued development of artificial turf playing surfaces in outdoor field sports, to expand the range of uses of municipal fields;*

- *long range planning of potential facility needs in future, including evaluation of needs for new facilities, and of how existing facilities can be better used to meet growing demand;*
- *development of new types of partnerships with schools, and with local sports clubs and associations, to develop future facilities;*
- *more precise record keeping of types of users to facilitate long term planning; development of a priority plan for evaluating the municipality's commitment to programs primarily directed at local residents, versus programs that primarily serve a pan-North Shore membership.*

As an example of this last point, consider the different types of sports clubs and associations that currently run programs in West Vancouver and the various constituencies that they serve. Six different types of organizations currently offer sports programs in West Vancouver:

- a. *'Spatially-Restricted' West Vancouver Sports Clubs*—where inter club agreements on the North Shore divide recruiting territories and limit a sport's ability to draw on athletes outside of a clearly defined area, and where the club has limited or no access to facilities outside of the municipality. These are sports where less than 10% of the club membership comes from outside the municipality, or, in some cases, part of a municipality. Cypress Park Little League, West Van Minor Hockey Association and West Vancouver (youth) Soccer Club are examples of this type of organization.
- b. *North Shore Sports Clubs who operate out of West Vancouver*—clubs whose principal organizers may be located in West Vancouver but who have more than 40-50% of their membership from across the North shore, or further afield, and may have access to facilities outside the District. Examples of this type of club include the Capilano Rugby Club, the Capilano Blues Volleyball Club, West Van FC men's soccer, and the West Vancouver Field Hockey Club.

- c. *North Shore Clubs who operate out of North Vancouver but who have a significant number of active members or registrants from West Vancouver.*  
Examples of this type of club would be the Gordon Sturridge Football League, and the North Shore Women's Hockey Association.
  
- d. *Private West Vancouver Sports Clubs and Schools*—The Hollyburn Country Club, with competitive programs in many sports, including swimming ice hockey, figure skating, curling and tennis, and the Capilano Golf and Country Club, are examples. However, Mulgrave and Collingwood private schools also maintain sports facilities for their students.
  
- e. *Public School Athletic Programs*—While school programs do not have the profile in many communities in Canada that they once had, West Vancouver has three public high schools that offer a wide range of sports programs for students. With the absence of space elsewhere in the municipality it will be likely that future field development in West Vancouver will necessarily involve closer partnerships with the West Vancouver School Board.
  
- f. *Drop in or Casual Recreational Users*—West Vancouver Parks and Social Services run many programs that offer recreational sporting opportunities, or sports camps, of various types to drop in or casual users. These programs are important and hold potential for the delivery of lower cost services than those offered by private organizations and even programs offered by the non-profit voluntary sector.

In the past, the District of West Vancouver has been unwilling to differentiate between clubs and associations in the a) and b) categories above, and if time is available, West Vancouver has usually tried to accommodate requests from organizations in category c) as well. It may be necessary in the long term, however, in conditions of escalating and competing demands, to develop some sort of 'triage' or priority principles upon which to allocate facilities in cases where there are conflicting requests for facility use.

Finally, trends toward rising costs in sport participation seem inexorable and may well require some innovative remedial thinking both at the level of the clubs and at the municipal level. One idea to consider in long term planning might be to create a needs based 'bursary program' for striving athletes who lack the financial means to participate. Perhaps Parks and Social Services could hold a small percentage of field user fees aside in a fund that is adjudicated either by the clubs or some sort of third party group, such as the West Vancouver Sports Forum. Similarly, local clubs and associations should consider running similar bursary programs from within their own organizations.

### **Conclusion: Sport and Community Development in West Vancouver**

Ambleside Park has been home to several annual community events in recent years, the most ambitious of which was a large scale outdoor music concert in 2009. But, collectively, community sports clubs and associations have run league and low level tournament events in West Vancouver's arenas, pool, courts and playing fields for many years. A typical seasonal weekend of soccer, baseball, or field hockey, for example, might feature as many as 20-30 games, mostly at Ambleside, but in many cases, on fields and diamonds across the municipality. Add to this the numbers of visitors for youth hockey games, tennis matches or other youth competitions and the numbers grow even larger. On typical weekends throughout the year there can be as many as 300-400 visitors to West Vancouver from outside the municipality. *Over approximately 40 weekends of the year this potentially adds up to more than 10,000 visitors to West Vancouver annually.* Add to this the numbers of visitors to the District's beaches, ski areas and golf courses and the numbers of 'sport-related' visitors to West Vancouver soars. Without focused research on the topic it is impossible to make definitive conclusions but we can assume that local retailers and restaurants in the Ambleside area and Park Royal, especially, derive a benefit from this routine influx of visitors. Viewed in cumulative terms, year after year, community sport contributes modestly to the local economy.



The trend noted earlier about increased professionalism in sports clubs and associations, and their growing incorporation into the "cultural industries" also has implications in West Vancouver. Some of the larger clubs and associations are in the midst of a transition where they are becoming much more deeply integrated into the local economy, even as non-profit organizations. For example, the West Vancouver soccer club now has two full time paid coaches, and contracts out some of its registration and secretarial functions. The club also has more than 10 other coaches working on part time contracts and in 2009 offered more than 30 summer coaching jobs to youth in the community. Many other clubs, such as the West Van Otters Swim Club, the West Vancouver Field Hockey Club, the West Vancouver Track and Field Club, and the private Hollyburn Country Club also employ professional coaches on contract. There is no systematic study of the numbers of paid positions involved in community sport in West Vancouver, but, counting, casual municipal contracts for courses, professional coaches in private and community clubs, and part-time contract coaching in the clubs, the numbers of positions are not insignificant and involve millions of dollars in salaries. *National trends suggest that we can expect slow, but continued, growth of sport-related positions as part of West Vancouver's cultural industries.*

Of course, to return to a theme raised at the outset of this report, the most important contribution that sport makes to any community is its role as a vital source of shared family activity and social interaction. Participation in sport, or volunteering in community sports clubs and associations, help to forge the vital interpersonal connections that sustain the life of any community. In West Vancouver the new community centre is proving its worth as a hub of social activity for residents of all ages. But, the pool, playing fields, arenas, courts, diamonds and golf courses in the community have been doing this for many years. It is impossible to put a value on the opportunities for cooperative, face-to-face, interaction with other community members that sports have provided to generations of residents. The trends identified in this report will necessarily provide challenges that require new thinking and better planning for the future. But all indications point to sustained and continued growth in this popular area of West Vancouver's community life.

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## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Tony Hernandez, Ida Berger, Christy Brisette, Norman O'Reilly, Milena Parent and Benoit Seguin, "Sport Participation in Canada: A Longitudinal Analysis." Presented at the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada Annual Conference, Halifax, 2008. Also see Fidelis Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Educational Statistics, Feb. 2008. The definition of sport used in the Statistics Canada research evaluated in these studies does not include many 'recreational' activities such as hiking, Frisbee throwing, or skateboarding. So, if anything, it understates rates of participation in physically active lifestyles among Canadian youth.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Clark, "Kid's Sports." Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Trends, June 3, 2008. A more detailed summary of widely claimed benefits of youth sport can be found in M Bloom, M Grant, and D. Watt. ***Strengthening Canada: The Socioeconomic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada***. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, Education and Learning, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> A more detailed discussion of these trends can be found in Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, ***Hockey Night in Canada: Sports, Identities and Cultural Politics***. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993 (especially Chapter 9 on "Communities, Civic Boosterism and Fans").

<sup>4</sup> M Bloom, M Grant, and D. Watt. ***Strengthening Canada: The Socioeconomic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada***. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, Education and Learning, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Jerbala, "Sport, the Voluntary Sector and Canadian Identity." Discussion paper prepared for the ***Sport Matters*** Group, December 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Hall, David Lasby, Steven Ayer, and William David Gibbons. ***Caring Canada; Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating***. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, June 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Data cited in Warren Clark, "Kid's Sports." Statistics Canada, 2008 and in Fidelis Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Culture, Tourism, and the Centre for Educational Statistics Division, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> M. Shields, ***Overweight Canadian Children and Adolescents***. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Warren Clark, "Kid's Sports." Statistics Canada, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Henry Pold, ***Families and Moonlighting***, Ottawa: Statistics Canada Perspectives, Summer 1995.

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- <sup>12</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>13</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>14</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>15</sup> M Bloom, M Grant, and D. Watt. ***Strengthening Canada: The Socioeconomic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada***. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, Education and Learning, 2005, p. 10.
- <sup>16</sup> Bloom et. al., ***Strengthening Canada***, 2005, p. 11.
- <sup>17</sup> Tony Hernandez, Ida Berger, Christy Brisette, Norman O'Reilly, Milena Parent and Benoit Seguin, "Sport Participation in Canada: A Longitudinal Analysis." Presented at the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada Annual Conference, Halifax, 2008, p. 61.
- <sup>18</sup> Data are summarized and combined from Warren Clark, "Kid's Sports." Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2008 and Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>19</sup> Warren Clark, "Kid's Sports." Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>20</sup> Clark, "Kid's Sports." Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>21</sup> Amy Mark, William Boyce and Ian Janssen, "Television Viewing, Computer Use and Total Screen Time in Canadian Youth." ***Pediatric Child Health***, 11 (9), November, 2006.
- <sup>22</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>23</sup> Clark, "Kids Sports," 2008.
- <sup>24</sup> Clark, "Kids Sports," 2008.
- <sup>25</sup> Clark, "Kids Sports," 2008.
- <sup>26</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>27</sup> Adapted from Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>28</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>29</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.
- <sup>30</sup> ***Trends In Immigration***. Canadian Labour Bureau of Canada.  
[http://www.clbc.ca/files/Reports/IHB\\_section\\_a.pdf](http://www.clbc.ca/files/Reports/IHB_section_a.pdf).

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<sup>31</sup> Brian Wilson, "Selective Memory in a Global Culture: Reconsidering Links between Youth, Hockey and Canadian Identity." In David Whitson and Richard Gruneau (eds.), ***Artificial Ice: Hockey, Culture and Commerce***. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> High entry costs of participation in hockey have been noted as a problem by hockey parents for nearly two decades. See, for example, Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, ***Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities and Cultural Politics***. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993.

<sup>33</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Jerbala, "Sport, the Voluntary Sector and Canadian Identity." Discussion paper prepared for the ***Sport Matters*** Group, December 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada, 2005***. Statistics Canada, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Jerbala, "Sport, the Voluntary Sector and Canadian Identity." Discussion paper prepared for the ***Sport Matters*** Group, December 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Jerbala, "Sport, the Voluntary Sector and Canadian Identity."

<sup>40</sup> Some of these themes are noted in Terri Byers, "Research on Voluntary Sport Organizations: Established Themes and Emerging Opportunities." ***International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing***, 6(2) 2009.

<sup>41</sup> The challenge of increasing professionalism is widely noted in the literature on sports organizations. A summary of this literature is available in Sandalio Gomez, Magdalena Opazo, and Carlos Marti, "Structural Characteristics of Sport Organizations: Main Trends in the Academic Literature." ***Barcelona: IESE Business School Working Paper***, #730, February 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Jerbala, "Sport, the Voluntary Sector and Canadian Identity."

<sup>43</sup> This observation comes from informal discussions held over the past three years with more than 20 different coaches in ice hockey, track and field and soccer.

<sup>44</sup> Jerbala, "Sport, the Voluntary Sector and Canadian Identity."

<sup>45</sup> Michael Piore and Charles Sabel, ***The Second Industrial Divide***. New York: Basic Books, 1984; W. Halal, ***The New Capitalism: How Cutting Edge Companies Will Manage the Future***. New York: John Wiley, 1986; Institute of Personnel Management, ***Flexible Patterns of Work***. London, 1986.

<sup>46</sup> ***Canada's Cultural Labour Force***. Ottawa: Cultural Human Resources Council,

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Government of Canada, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> A useful summary discussion of this point can be found in Timothy Gibson, ***Securing the Spectacular City: The Politics of Revitalization and Homelessness in Downtown Seattle***. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004.

<sup>48</sup> See the discussion in Mark Lowes, ***Indy Dreams and Urban Nightmares: Speed Merchants, Spectacle, and the Struggle Over Public Space in the World Class City***. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see Greg Androvitch, Matthew Burbank, and Charles Burbank, "Olympic Cities: Lessons Learned from Mega-Event Politics." ***Journal of Urban Affairs***, Vol. 23 (2), 2001.

<sup>50</sup> Fidelis Ifedi, ***Sport Participation in Canada***, 2005. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Culture, Tourism, and the Centre for Educational Statistics Division, Feb. 2008

<sup>51</sup> M Bloom, M Grant, and D. Watt. ***Strengthening Canada: The Socioeconomic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada***. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, Education and Learning, 2005

<sup>52</sup> M Bloom, et. al., ***Strengthening Canada***, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> M Bloom, et. al., ***Strengthening Canada***, 2005

<sup>54</sup> Unless noted otherwise the demographic and socioeconomic data in this section are taken from ***BC Stats***, [www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca) or from ***West Vancouver Community Profile***, District of West Vancouver Planning Department, Document # 231706v1.

<sup>55</sup> Based on information provided directly by the clubs and/or from calculations derived by analyzing the numbers of club teams.

<sup>56</sup> Numbers of teams are calculated by figures submitted from the clubs or from an examination of club websites.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, the PEP program developed by the Santa Monica Orthopaedic Group, at [www.aclprevent.com/pepprogram.htm](http://www.aclprevent.com/pepprogram.htm).