

AthletesCAN ensures athlete-centered Games

With sights set on the 2011 Canada Winter Games in Halifax, NS, AthletesCAN looks forward to supporting Canada's athletes through leadership programming geared to the provincial/territorial (P/T) *Training to Compete* and *Training to Win Games'* competitors.

AthletesCAN, the association of Canada's national team athletes, was the first fully independent and inclusive national athlete organization of its kind in the world. As the voice of Canadian national team athletes, AthletesCAN ensures an athlete centered sport system by developing athlete leaders who influence sport policy and, as role models, inspire a strong sport culture.

The presence of AthletesCAN at the Canada Games is unique as it focuses on the leadership development and mentorship of the P/T athletes through AthletesCAN Ambassadors - senior national team athletes seen as role models for developing athletes – there to support and guide the young athletes through tough competition and career decisions. With the likes of Olympic medalists Thomas Hall, Deidra Dionne, Heather Moyses, Jason Parker, David Calder, and local heroes Jared Connaughton (Charlottetown, PEI) and Jeane Lassen (Whitehorse, Yukon) on site, it's not hard to see the inspiration and motivation these Ambassadors are bringing to Canada Games participants!

During their time at each respective Games, in partnership with Canada Games Council and the Host Society, AthletesCAN organizes opportunities to build sport capacity and facilitate sport knowledge transfer through Athlete Forums, Focus Groups, Athlete Surveys, Team Meetings, Venue Visits, and Media Conferences. The feedback from these events are analyzed and presented to Games stakeholders each cycle to ensure an athlete-centered event is the focus of both the host societies and the P/Ts.

Looking towards 2011, AthletesCAN will be presenting their findings and recommendations necessary for a successful athlete-centered Games at the M2 meeting in September 2010. Here is a sneak peak at some of the trends from the 2009 PEI Canada Summer Games:

- Average age of the athlete survey respondent was 17.6 years and most had been competing in sport for 6.9 years
- For 90% of the athletes this was their first Canada Games
- Family was indicated as the most important aspect of the athlete's life
- 37% of the athletes cited the "Pursuit of personal excellence" as their motivation to be an athlete
- For 66% of athlete respondents, the Canada Games represented the highest level of competition that they had experienced to-date

Pending funding for the 2011 athlete leadership programming in Halifax, AthletesCAN looks forward to recruiting a group of Ambassadors made up of Canada Games alumni who have gone on to Olympics, Paralympics, Commonwealth Games and World Championships to create a strong support system for Canada's next generation of internationally renowned high performance athletes.

If you have ideas or suggestions for the 2011 Canada Winter Games AthletesCAN Ambassador team please email Ashley Kilburn at akilburn@athletescan.com.