



## **Budget 2024 Request**

### **Increase to Athlete Assistance Program Funding**



## **Executive Summary**

The Canadian Paralympic Commission Athlete Committee, Canadian Olympic Committee Athlete Commission, and AthletesCAN kindly request an 18.8% increase in the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) funding, aligning with the inflation increase since 2017 – the last time the program saw an adjustment. Additionally, we propose indexing the AAP to inflation going forward. An increase totaling \$6.3M per year is crucial to sustain the subsidy provided to Canadian high-performance athletes to support the increased cost of living and training while representing Canada at the international level.

## **The Request**

This budget request is reflective of the economic realities of Canadian high-performance athletes (inclusive of Paralympic, Olympic, and Non-Olympic sports) and further promotes equity across all sport disciplines. The budget request specifically is the following:

- Increase AAP by 18.8%, or \$6.3M, in 2024 to match inflation increase since 2017, the last increase in the program
- Index AAP to inflation going forward similar to the Canada Child Benefit and EI

## **The Context**

The AAP was originally designed as a living and training allowance for Canadian high-performance athletes but is no longer reflective of the reality that athletes experience



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while pursuing their sports at the international level. For Canada's athletes to be competitive on the international stage, they are required to pursue sport full time.

Training demands and travel requirements make it impossible for athletes to pursue part time work opportunities to support their living and training costs. In addition, the majority of National Training Centres are in Canada's most expensive cities, including Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver/Victoria, and Calgary which have experienced a 13.1% year-to-over-year increase in average rent costs. Athletes are also experiencing rising costs associated with representing Canada on the global stage, which includes rising team fees, equipment costs, travel costs, training costs, and health and wellness. As such, athletes are increasingly burdened by the rising expenses of the cost of training and living leaving them in a financially vulnerable position.

The proposed 18.8% increase will positively impact 1,900 athletes by addressing the rising costs associated with pursuing excellence in their respective disciplines.

Additionally, a commitment to factoring in the average rise in inflation/year is essential to ensure the AAP remains a viable support system for years to come.

## **Financial Realities of Canadian High-Performance Athletes**

The majority of Canadian athletes face considerable financial stress due to limited financial support in their sport. Financial stress has created challenges to balance work, training, and competition schedules particularly with the continued increase in cost to live and train. Sport Canada published the 2019-20 Status of the High Performance Athlete survey with 846 Paralympic, Olympic, and Non-Olympic high performance athletes. Athletes in the AAP program reported an average annual income of \$28,858



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for 2018. The largest proportion of this income is derived from Federal and/or Provincial athlete assistance. The average is \$13,613 annually from Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) and \$3,689 from Provincial Assistance. Smaller proportions of athletes' incomes were derived from employment income (\$10,074 annually), sport-related sources (\$5,218), and sports awards (\$1,264). Expenses are reported as \$4,400 per month and have increased more than 15% since 2013-14, and nearly 30% since 2009. In particular, housing costs have increased considerably, as well as both living expenses and sport-related expenses, which have gone up by about 15% since 2013-14. Overall, athletes are spending over \$600 a month more in 2018 than they were in 2013-14. This picture of increasing expenses but lack of stable income leaves athletes facing a deficit of \$1,800 per month, or close to \$22,000 a year. (Sport Canada, 2019). The data that was presented is reflective of the 2019-2020 survey and there has been significant additional increased financial stresses in the Canadian context. This underscores the importance of adjusting AAP to be indexed to inflation.

## **Impact on Athlete Psychological Safety and Well-Being**

Financial stress significantly affects the mental health and long term retention of athletes. In a 2022 survey commissioned by the Canadian Olympic Committee Athlete Commission, an overwhelming 83% of athletes surveyed answered that financial health causes significant stress and contributed to the decision to leave sport prematurely and 80% cite financial stability as the key topic on their mind.

Addressing these concerns is crucial to retaining high performance athletes in sports and fostering healthy sports cultures. The precarity of athlete financial realities



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creates undue and inequitable power dynamics which may also result in increased risk of experiencing maltreatment in sport and/or reduced agency to report maltreatment in sport.

## **Contribution of Athletes to Canada**

High performance athletes play a pivotal role in connecting with communities, fostering a sense of nationalism, and reaching out to new Canadians. They serve as inspirational figures for the next generation, promoting active lifestyles in both Canadians with and without disabilities. Investing in our high-performance athletes not only supports their pursuit of excellence but also reinforces their role as ambassadors of health, well-being, and national unity. There have been exceptional stories of new immigrants to Canada having immeasurable success on the World's stage with stories including Alphonso Davies, a professional soccer player, and Marco Arop an 800m Athletics world champion. The performances of high-performance athletes with disabilities, such as Marissa Papaconstantinou, paralympic medallist in 100m T64 Athletics, showcases to Canadians that regardless of ability they have a place in sport. There are many stories of Canadian Paralympic and Olympic athletes hearing directly from new Canadians that cheering for them during their competitions made them feel connected to their new home, and feel truly Canadian for the first time.

Please note that a separate request for an increase to the federal government's core (reference level) funding for National Sport Organizations is being made by the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee. While this



request is independent from the request for National Sport Organizations, the two requests are very complimentary as properly resourced National Sport Organizations are essential to providing support and services that enable Canada's athletes to thrive on the international stage.

In conclusion, the proposed increase in AAP funding is not merely a financial adjustment but a strategic investment in the well-being and long-term retention of our athletes and the cultural fabric of our nation. We urge the federal government to consider and implement these recommendations to ensure Canada's continued success on the international sports stage and the holistic development of our athletes.

Erica Gavel, PLY  
Chair  
CPC Athletes Commission

Erin Willson  
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Rosie MacLennan, OLY  
Chair  
COC Athletes Commission



## APPENDIX A

CPC & COC Athletes Commission members and AthletesCAN Board of Directors

### **CPC Athlete Commission Members**

1. Erica Gavel, Chair - Wheelchair Basketball
2. Jeremy Hall, Vice-Chair, Rowing
3. Tyler McGregor, Para-Hockey
4. Michael Whitehead, Wheelchair Rugby
5. Abi Tripp, Swimming
6. Ina Forrest, Curling
7. Amy Burke, Goalball

### **COC Athlete Commission Members**

1. Rosie MacLennan, Chair, Trampoline
2. Inaki Gomez, Vice-Chair, Race-Walking
3. Philippe Marquis, First Officer, Freestyle Ski
4. Cynthia Appiah, Bobsled
5. Jacqueline Simoneau, Artistic Swimming
6. Joseph Polossifakis, Fencing
7. Martha McCabe, Swimming
8. Maxwell Lattimer, Rowing
9. Melissa Humana-Paredes, Volleyball
10. Mercedes Nicoll, Snowboard
11. Phil Brown, Alpine Ski
12. Quinn, Soccer
13. Rachel Nichol, Swimming
14. Seyi Smith, Athletics/Bobsled

### **AthletesCAN Board of Directors**

1. Erin Willson, President, Artistic Swimming
2. Andrea Proske, Vice-President, Rowing
3. Chris de Sousa Costa, Karate
4. Cynthia Appiah, Bobsled
5. Greg Stewart, Athletics
6. Neville Wright - Bobsled
7. Julian Smith - Nordic Skiing
8. Colin Hodgson - Curling
9. Susanne Wereley - Rowing



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## Appendix B

### Works Referenced

Sport Canada, 2019 - [PCH-SAS Final Report 3 \(Aug 31\) \(publications.gc.ca\)](#)

Canadian Olympic Committee Athlete Commission 2022 All Athletes Survey, conducted in 2022. Available upon request.