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EDITORIAL

No funding for Canadian NSOs, athletes an oversight

We Canadians love sports, but there's a problem.

As winter approaches and the latest federal budget has recently been announced, Canadian athletes have been, as it's said, left out in the cold.

No funds in the 2025 budget were earmarked for athletes or for core funding in national sports organizations (NSOs), which pay for operations, coaches and support staff.

When it comes to supporting Olympians, Paralympians and other athletes, the country is significantly underfunded and would seem that the cat and mouse game of lobbying the government for a share in the funds will be ongoing for the foreseeable future.

We are now less than 100 days from the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milano-Cortina, Italy, and it's disappointing, if not wrong, that our athletes, who will wear the Maple Leaf and represent our nation, have to worry about their next paycheck, rent and other living expenses.

"Everyone is struggling" is a phrase often associated with NSOs, of which there are more than 60, with some of them cutting back on financials and supporting fewer athletes on national teams. This isn't an unknown issue, as NSOs, the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) and Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) have persistently been pushing for increased funding in recent years.

After requesting a \$144 million annual increase on behalf of NSOs to the sport system funding last December, the COC and CPC issued a joint statement last week after the budget came out that was modestly worded.

They noted the government's planned capital investment in infrastructure and said it was an oppor-

tunity to address the national sport's infrastructure deficit – one that has been increasingly vocalized in recent years and has been called "urgently needed," with the situation becoming "increasingly dire."

Through the latest budget under Prime Minister Mark Carney, the feds said their plan is to "build, protect and empower Canada."

However, leaving our athletes out of the picture, especially when uplifting a nation in need of Canucks to get behind, was an oversight.

Sports like hockey, especially in the 4 Nations Face-Off, and baseball have drawn big viewing numbers across the nation this year. It was reported that almost half of Canada watched the Toronto Blue Jays play in Game 7 of the World Series earlier this month.

If you think the numbers are there because it is pro players playing in pro sports, think again. Our Olympians and Paralympians are getting love, too.

During the Paris 2024 Olympics, CBC/Radio-Canada reported that seven out of 10 Canadians tuned in, which would have included cheering on local rugby star Krissy Scurfield and the women's sevens team's silver medal performance. The national public broadcaster added streams on its digital platforms came to 24.3 million hours, an increase of 121 per cent over Beijing 2022.

The Bow Valley is a breeding ground for athletes of all levels. Each Winter Olympics cycle, dozens of athletes living full-time or part-time in the area try to make their dreams a reality, and they have been excelling despite the odds.

As Canadians, we take great pride when our hometown heroes doing big things on the big stage. But how much longer can NSOs and athletes hold out when the weight of financial shortcomings trips up their steps along the way?

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