His Worship Larry Di Ianni
Mayor
City of Hamilton
71 Main Street West
Hamilton, Ontario
L8P 4Y5

Dear Mr. Mayor:

I am writing in response to your letter addressed to the Honourable Michael Chong, Minister for Sport, regarding the establishment of a national sport and recreation infrastructure program for Canada.

Mr. Chong appreciates your advising him of your organization’s views on this subject. The Government of Canada recognizes the significance of sport and physical activity to Canadian society, as well as the benefits that they produce in terms of health, economic activity, social cohesion and quality of life. Accordingly, the Government is committed to promoting sport and physical activity in order to help Canadians to stay physically active, fit and healthy.

In the 2006 federal budget, the Government of Canada announced that it will provide a Children’s Fitness Tax Credit of up to $500 to cover eligible fees for sports and fitness programs for children under the age of 16. This tax credit will be implemented on January 1, 2007, at an estimated annual cost of $160 million. The Minister is confident that this tax incentive will encourage more young Canadians to get involved in sport and physical activity by lowering the barriers that fees present for many families.

With respect to infrastructure, the Government of Canada recognizes the important role that sport and recreation infrastructure plays in encouraging Canadians to participate in sport and physical activity, as well as in advancing athletic training and development. Please be assured that the federal government understands the priority attached to increased investment in sport and recreation infrastructure by the many stakeholders in the Canadian sport system. It should be noted that the 2006 federal budget allocated $16.5 billion over four years for infrastructure initiatives.

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At the June 2006 Meeting of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, the Ministers unanimously agreed that sport, recreation and physical activity infrastructure continues to be their top priority in support of healthy, active lifestyles and sport participation. Mr. Chong encouraged his counterparts to fully participate in the upcoming consultation process to be conducted by his colleague, the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, with respect to the design of future Infrastructure Program initiatives and committed to actively communicate their proposals to his Cabinet colleagues. If you have not already done so, I would also encourage you to contact your provincial/territorial ministers responsible for infrastructure and for sport, physical activity and recreation to advise them of your views on this subject.

As Minister for Sport, Mr. Chong is committed to working with major sport partners and stakeholders to develop a strong Canadian sport system in which Canadians of all ages and abilities can fully participate—from the playground to the podium.

I trust that this information is useful. Please accept my best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Geoffrey Dean
Chief of Staff