



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **TIME TO LISTEN TO SURVIVORS: TAKING ACTION TOWARDS CREATING A SAFE SPORT ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL ATHLETES IN CANADA**

**Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women**

**Karen Vecchio, Chair**

**JUNE 2023  
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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Chair**

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## **NOTICE TO READER**

### **Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons**

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

has the honour to present its

## **SEVENTH REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied women and girls in sport and has agreed to report the following:





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## SUMMARY

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**Content warning: Please note that this report discusses topics that can be disturbing to some readers, including abuse, discrimination, and gender-based violence.**

Sport and physical activity should be safe activities for all Canadians, however, maltreatment in sport is an ongoing problem reported by survivors for decades. Recently, athletes in various sports have spoken out about inequalities, negative experiences, and maltreatment.

To respond to calls for culture change in sport in Canada, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women undertook a study on the experiences of women and girls in sport. Maltreatment takes different forms and can include psychological, sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and discrimination. Certain groups of athletes are more likely to experience maltreatment or need protection. This is the case for women and girls, who are more likely to report experiencing maltreatment than men and boys. During this study, many witnesses described experiences of physical, sexual, financial, and psychological violence.

Maltreatment cases can be reported to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC). OSIC is an organization operating an independent mechanism to handle complaints of abuse in sport. However, this procedure is only available to a small proportion of athletes in Canada. OSIC's authority is limited. In most cases, athletes at the provincial, municipal or club levels do not have access to this mechanism. In addition, witnesses expressed concern that OSIC's complaint mechanism is not independent from the sports system. Athletes might not report maltreatment, fearing retribution.

To help eradicate maltreatment in sports, a rethink of the sports governance system in Canada is needed. Witnesses identified several systemic changes that could be made to the Canadian sports system. These changes include:

- an oversight of sports organizations' funding use and ways they process maltreatment allegations;
- the creation of a publicly accessible national coaches registry aiming to prevent coaches subject to sanctions for maltreatment from being able to coach in another sport or to coach in a different province or territory;

- the improvement and expansion of safe sport education and training for athletes, coaches, parents, and any other individuals involved in the sports system; and
- efforts to increase women's and girls' participation as well as gender equality and inclusion in sport.

Most witnesses called for the Government of Canada to establish an independent national public inquiry into maltreatment in sports. This inquiry could shed light on how the sports system has allowed maltreatment to occur and go unpunished.

In this report, the Committee makes 24 recommendations to help eliminate maltreatment in sports in Canada. Those recommendations outline ways the Government of Canada can address this pressing issue.

# LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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*As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.*

## **Recommendation 1**

**That the Government of Canada work with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner’s Abuse-Free Sport Program to implement mechanisms to prevent coaches or other individuals in positions of authority from utilizing abusive practices to control an athlete’s weight. .... 17**

## **Recommendation 2**

**That the Government of Canada put measures in place to ban the use of non-disclosure agreements for survivors who have reported maltreatment. .... 19**

## **Recommendation 3**

**That the Government of Canada suspend the federal funding given to national sport organizations who are not Abuse-Free Sport program signatories with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner until they become signatories. .... 29**

## **Recommendation 4**

**That the Government of Canada collaborate with provincial and territorial governments as well as with Indigenous peoples to ensure sports participants have access to independent maltreatment complaint mechanisms through the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner or other independent mechanisms to ensure transparency for sexual misconduct, resources for survivors, and equal service across and within jurisdictions. .... 29**

## **Recommendation 5**

**That the Government of Canada amend the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* to grant investigators of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner the power to subpoena witnesses and compel testimony. .... 32**

**Recommendation 6**

**That the Government of Canada require signatory organizations with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner’s Abuse-Free Sport Program to implement the recommendations concerning them stemming from Sport Environment Assessments as a condition to receive federal funding..... 33**

**Recommendation 7**

**That the Government of Canada make legislative amendments to grant immunity to investigators, assessors, mediators, and arbitrators working for the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada to ensure protection of professionals involved in investigating reports of maltreatment to be able to make decisions without fear, repercussions, or being sued. .... 34**

**Recommendation 8**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples, and sports organizations, work to ensure that the specific needs and experiences of young athletes are taken into account in efforts to create a safe sport environment..... 40**

**Recommendation 9**

**That the Government of Canada develop and support initiatives that promote gender equity and diversity within sports organizations, especially the inclusion of more women and girls in leadership and decision-making roles. .... 40**

**Recommendation 10**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples, and sports organizations, include athletes in all bodies and all decision-making processes regarding sport in Canada..... 40**

**Recommendation 11**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories and sports organizations, commit to funding education, training and support for volunteers, with the goal of providing them the tools to better support athletes..... 41**

**Recommendation 12**

**That the Government of Canada accelerate its review of the criteria it uses to grant funding to sports organizations and that it include, in the new criteria, clauses mandating the respect of gender equity, diversity, and inclusion standards, as well as the respect of updated sports participants safeguarding standards. .... 41**

**Recommendation 13**

**That the Government of Canada make the core objectives of any new Canadian Sport Policy to be centred by the safety and well-being of sports participants as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion in sports..... 42**

**Recommendation 14**

**With the goal of shedding light on how the sports system has allowed maltreatment of athletes of all levels to occur with no action taken, that the Government of Canada establish an independent national public inquiry into maltreatment in sports in Canada; that it appoint the head of the inquiry in the same way as the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner as set out in *Parliament of Canada Act*; that it ensure the development of the Terms of Reference of the inquiry be survivor-led and trauma-informed with the participation of survivors; that it utilize the process of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls’ pre-inquiry design process in drafting the Terms of Reference; and that it commit to implementing the recommendations made by the inquiry. .... 46**

**Recommendation 15**

**That the Government of Canada work with provincial and territorial governments to create a national registry of individuals sanctioned in relation to maltreatment in sports that is publicly searchable and that, in the interim, it amend the mandate of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada so that it can maintain a public registry of imposed sanctions based on the prohibited behaviours in the *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport*..... 49**

**Recommendation 16**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, continue funding initiatives and resources that support the physical**

and emotional health and safety of women and girls in sports, including training for coaches and other professionals, mental health support, legal support and education and awareness programs. .... 52

**Recommendation 17**

That the Government of Canada work with provincial and territorial governments to implement mandatory training on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sports for all coaches, administrators, and other professionals involved in sports organizations, and that the training be based on the *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent Abuse and Maltreatment in Sport*..... 53

**Recommendation 18**

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories, and Indigenous peoples, work with organizations that fall outside the mandate of the Canadian sports system that offer training and education to sports participants (children and adults), parents, volunteers, coaches, and administrators on maltreatment in sports, including on:

- all types of maltreatment;
- grooming signs, bodily autonomy and consent;
- power dynamics in sports; and
- bystander intervention and adequate and appropriate responses to witnessing all forms of maltreatment. .... 53

**Recommendation 19**

That the Government of Canada ensure athletes receive information about their rights and available services they can access should they experience maltreatment in sports..... 53

**Recommendation 20**

That the Government of Canada specify required training and establish a national review process to assess whether a national sport organization meets



the training requirements for athletes, coaches, and support staff as a prerequisite to receive federal funding under the Sport Support Program..... 53

**Recommendation 21**

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, work to facilitate more professional sport opportunities for women and girls in Canada. .... 59

**Recommendation 22**

That the Government of Canada provide funding for greater coverage of women’s sports, including documentaries, to increase visibility of all aspects of the athlete experience. .... 59

**Recommendation 23**

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories, and Indigenous peoples, build sport pathways and career pathways for athletes from underrepresented groups including women, girls, and gender diverse individuals from Black, Indigenous and People of Colour communities, including encouraging more women to pursue leadership roles. .... 59

**Recommendation 24**

That the Government of Canada continue investing in gender equity in sports, notably in projects that reduce barriers for women and girls to participate in sports, including:

- socioeconomic conditions;
- lack of access to sports facilities, including community and municipal facilities;
- discrimination, sexism, racism and ableism;
- gender-based violence; and
- lack of health literacy. .... 59





# TIME TO LISTEN TO SURVIVORS: TAKING ACTION TOWARDS CREATING A SAFE SPORT ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL ATHLETES IN CANADA

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## INTRODUCTION

**Content warning: Please note that this report discusses topics that can be disturbing to some readers, including abuse, discrimination, and gender-based violence.**

In recent years, numerous athletes and advocates have expressed concerns over the ways that reports of maltreatment of athletes were considered and acted on in Canada. Maltreatment in sports is an ongoing problem and survivors have been reporting this for decades.<sup>1</sup> Recently, athletes in various sports including gymnastics, skiing, artistic swimming, soccer, and rugby, just to name a few, have spoken out about inequalities, negative experiences and maltreatment in sports.<sup>2</sup> Groups such as Gymnasts for Change Canada, Figure Skating for Change Canada, and Scholars against Abuse in Canadian Sport have formed to advocate for cultural change in the Canadian sports system and for greater accountability from perpetrators of maltreatment and individuals who enabled such abuse.

Sport and physical activity should be safe activities for all Canadians. To respond to calls for culture change in sports in Canada, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (the Committee) undertook a study on the experiences of women and girls in sport, specifically as it relates to their physical and emotional health and safety.<sup>3</sup>

- 
- 1 Ending Violence Association of Canada, *Brief on the Impact of Sexual Violence Perpetrated Against, or By Athletes on the Participation of Women and Girls in Sport*.
  - 2 Gymnasts for Change Canada, *About G4C*; Neil Davidson, “*Rugby 7s women say they were let down by Rugby Canada’s bullying/harassment policy*,” *CBC News*, 28 April 2021; The Canadian Press, “*Former skiers reach out-of-court deal with Alpine Canada in sex assault lawsuit*,” *CBC News*, 2 July 2019; CBC News, “*Former artistic swimming athletes seek damages for alleged abuse by national team coaches*,” 9 March 2021; and Neil Davidson, “*Canadian women’s soccer players ‘outraged and deeply concerned’ over funding cuts*,” *CBC News*, 10 February 2023.
  - 3 House of Commons, Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO), *Minutes of Proceedings*, 31 October 2022.



In this report, the Committee uses the term “athletes” to refer to participants in sports. For the Committee, this term encompasses all individuals participating in organized sport in Canada, regardless of their age. Although this report focusses on women’s and girls’ experiences in sport, the Committee acknowledges that individuals of all genders can experience maltreatment. Recent news stories about the prevalent abusive culture in Canadian hockey reflect this fact.<sup>4</sup>

This report has been informed by survivors, expert witnesses, and members of the sports community. Between 21 November 2022 and 13 February 2023, the Committee heard from 43 witnesses: the Minister of Sport and representatives from the Department of Canadian Heritage, witnesses representing 19 organizations, and 15 witnesses appearing as individuals. The Committee also received 19 written briefs.

The Committee expresses its gratitude towards all individuals who contributed to this study. The Committee thanks them for having taken the time to meet with the Committee or to send a written brief. The Committee is grateful to each participant in this study for sharing their stories, expertise, insights, and recommendations to make Canadian sports safer. In particular, the Committee would like to acknowledge that by inviting survivors of maltreatment in sports to share their stories, it asked them to relive traumatic experiences, a task that can, for many, be very difficult. The Committee recognizes survivors’ strength and dedication to fostering a culture of safety within Canadian sports.

This report focusses and makes recommendations to the Government of Canada on the following main issues:

- fostering a culture of safety in Canadian sports;
- eradicating maltreatment in Canadian sports and supporting athletes;
- holding sports organizations accountable for creating safe sport environments; and
- improving the mechanisms for reporting maltreatment in sports in Canada.

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4 Rachel Ward, Linda Guerriero, Ivan Angelovski, and Bob McKeown, [“Sex and shame in Canada’s national game,” \*The Fifth Estate\*](#), 29 September 2022; and The Canadian Press, [“Quebec premier demands explanation from QMJHL on ‘disgusting’ abuse,” \*CBC News\*](#), 14 February 2023.

## MALTREATMENT IN SPORTS IN CANADA

**“I was a teenager without an escape route, with no one to talk to and no one to help me. There was rarely a training session without verbal, psychological and physical violence.”**

FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1100  
(Geneviève Jeanson, Public Speaker and Consultant, as an individual).

Different terms are used to describe violence athletes may experience in sports: non-accidental violence, harassment, abuse, maltreatment, etc. Generally, these terms all refer to behaviours that harm athletes and negatively impact their health and wellbeing. In the Canadian context, the term “maltreatment” is often used to describe this reality. The *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (UCCMS) defines maltreatment as “volitional act and/or omission ... that results in harm or has the potential for physical or psychological harm.”<sup>5</sup> It includes the following forms of maltreatment:

- psychological, physical and sexual maltreatment;
- neglect;
- grooming;
- boundary transgressions;
- discrimination;
- subjecting a participant to the risk of maltreatment;
- aiding and abetting;
- failure to report or intentionally reporting a false allegation;
- interference with or manipulation of process; and

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5 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 2022 (6.0)*, Appendix I: Definitions.



- retaliation.<sup>6</sup>

Many witnesses framed maltreatment in sport a violation of children’s rights and indicated that responses to prevent it should be developed with this fact in mind.<sup>7</sup>

## Maltreatment in Canadian Sports

Some groups of athletes, including women and girls, are more likely to experience maltreatment or need particular protections.<sup>8</sup> Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, Chief Executive Officer of Canadian Women and Sport, noted that “women and girls who experience overlapping systems of oppression” include those who are Indigenous, transgender or live with disabilities.<sup>9</sup> She added that the world of sports:

... remains a male-dominated space in which patriarchy, misogyny and hegemonic masculinity are institutionalized and expressed culturally at every level of sport. Women and girls are systematically devalued, creating conditions that put them at risk of harm due to maltreatment or gender-based violence.<sup>10</sup>

Maltreatment can be experienced at any level of sports, beginner to elite.<sup>11</sup> However, in its consensus statement on non-accidental violence in sport published in 2016, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) noted that research shows “the risk of experiencing psychological, physical and sexual violence rises as the athlete progresses up the talent ladder and performance pathway.”<sup>12</sup>

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6 Ibid., ss. 5.2 to 5.14.

7 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1120 (Amelia Cline, Lawyer and Co-Founder, Gymnasts for Change Canada); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1100 (Rob Koehler, Director General, Global Athlete).

8 Gretchen Kerr et A. Battaglia, [Using Gender Equity as a Tool to Combat Gender-based Violence in Sport](#), Infographic, 2021.

9 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1220 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Women and Sport).

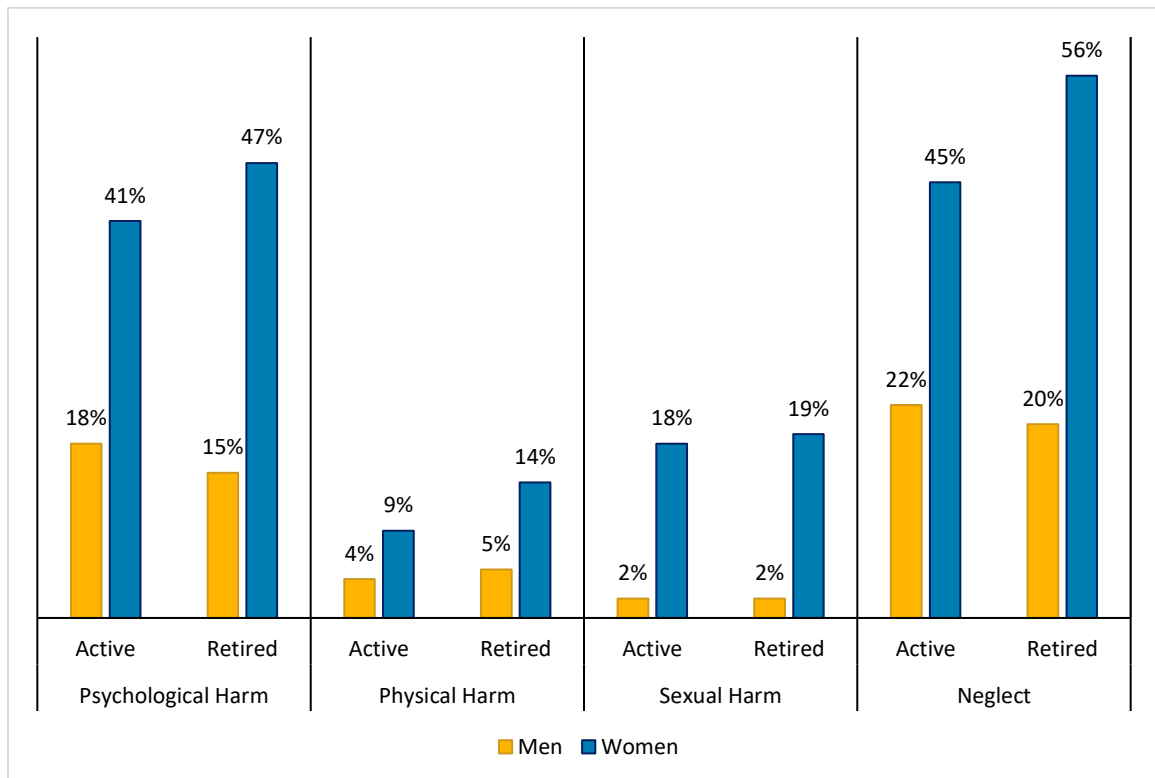
10 Ibid.

11 Jennifer Fraser, [Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study of the Women and Girls in Sport](#).

12 Margo Mountjoy, Celia Brackenridge, Malia Arrington, et al., “[The IOC Consensus Statement: harassment and abuse \(non-accidental violence\) in sport](#),” *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, Vol. 50, No. 17, 26 April 2016, pp. 1019–1029.

Results from a 2019 survey of over 1,000 current and retired Canadian national team athletes<sup>13</sup> show that a significantly larger percentage of women than men reported having experienced at least one type of maltreatment, a finding that held for all types of maltreatment included in the survey, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1—Proportion of Respondents Who Reported Experiencing at Least One Form of Maltreatment, by Status and Gender**



Note: One survey respondent who reported having experienced at least one type of harm declared a gender identity other than “man” or “woman.”

Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data from Gretchen Kerr, Erin Willson and Ashley Stirling, *Prevalence of Maltreatment Among Current and Former National Team Athletes*, 30 April 2019, p. 13.

Gretchen Kerr, a professor who appeared as an individual, indicated that the findings from the 2019 Canadian survey “have been replicated in other westernized countries,

13 Among respondents who indicated their gender identities, 583 respondents identified as women, 364 identified as men, and one identified as another gender identity.



which is important because it points to common denominators across the culture of sport and confirms athletes' accounts of their experiences."<sup>14</sup>

The Committee heard from whistleblowers reporting incidents and from athletes who experienced maltreatment during their careers. These individuals described experiences of physical, sexual, and psychological violence (including grooming as well as coercive and controlling behaviours), along with experiences of financial violence.<sup>15</sup>

Andrea Proske, Vice-President of AthletesCAN, described a training environment she experienced in this way:

Physical punishments were meted out for perceived indiscretions, teammates were seen as rivals to be beaten, selection race results were kept secret and booking time with a physiotherapist considered a sign of weakness. [The coach] controlled the minutia of my life, restricting me from seeing health care professionals, mental health professionals and talking to my support network.<sup>16</sup>

Abusive coaching and the associated climate in training centres made some athletes fear they would sustain injuries.<sup>17</sup> Witnesses also shared details about the pressure they faced to “stay thin” and limit the amount of food they were eating; the anxiety that can come from being weighed consistently and publicly or having their appearance discussed, for example.<sup>18</sup> Some witnesses described suffering from body dysmorphic disorders because of their training environments, sometimes resulting in eating disorders.<sup>19</sup>

The Committee was also told that to receive funding, national team athletes in some sports must move to the national or main training centre. This forces them to leave

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14 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1100 (Gretchen Kerr, Professor, as an individual).

15 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1205 (Allison Forsyth, Chief Operating Officer, ITP Sport and Recreation Inc.); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1620 (Randall Gumbley, Consultant, World Association of Icehockey Players Unions); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1100 (Geneviève Jeanson, Public Speaker and Consultant, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1540 (Myriam Da Silva Rondeau, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1655 (Andrea Proske, Vice-President, AthletesCAN); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1540 (Lanni Marchant, Olympian, Athlete Advocate, as an individual).

16 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1655 (Andrea Proske).

17 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1110 (Kim Shore, Co-Founder, Gymnasts for Change Canada).

18 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1540 (Lanni Marchant).

19 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1110 (Kim Shore).



behind their support systems, training team, and employment.<sup>20</sup>

Myriam Da Silva Rondeau, who appeared as an individual, had to face this situation. She told the Committee:

To be honest, I really would've preferred to continue my lifestyle, which allowed me to train in the mornings before work, then to go and teach and then train after work with a trusted coach and a team that supported me. When you're an athlete, it's not the workload that scares you; it's the people around you. When our resources are taken away, we become vulnerable to the people around us.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, according to the World Association of Icehockey Players Unions, amateur athletes in Canada are not covered by labour laws, which can put them at risk of experiencing maltreatment, including financial violence. Randall Gumbley, Consultant for the World Association of Icehockey Players Unions, stated:

The system as it stands today has a power imbalance in favour of the NSOs [National Sports Organizations]. This has dramatically affected competition and has put athletes in a vulnerable position. Canadians and this government need an inquiry to fully understand how we got to this point. Why did the Competition Bureau of Canada take four years to act on the complaint? Why are minors subject to a \$500,000 release fee if they choose to leave the Canadian Hockey League and offer their services to another organization?<sup>22</sup>

He added: "Justice Perell, in one of the court cases, stated that abuse comes in many forms and that financial abuse is one of them. These players within the [Canadian Hockey League] are definitely financially abused. Every province across Canada turned a blind eye."<sup>23</sup>

Survivors may feel ashamed for what they experienced, even though maltreatment is not their fault. It might take time for athletes to be able to talk and be open about the abuse they suffered.<sup>24</sup> Geneviève Jeanson, a Public Speaker and Consultant who appeared as an individual, explained:

I was desperately trying to find a way out of the sport to leave [my coach]. I could not just stop, because I was earning money for him to live. He made sure to remind me of that ... I could not share my story with my national or international federation, because

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20 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1540 (Myriam Da Silva Rondeau).

21 Ibid., 1610.

22 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1600 (Gumbley).

23 Ibid., 1620.

24 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1100 (Geneviève Jeanson).



in revealing everything, I would have been accused of cheating. I would have lost my whole career, my life and my name.<sup>25</sup>

Maltreatment experienced during their sports career can have long-lasting and serious consequences for athletes. Survivors shared with the Committee some of the physical and mental health troubles they faced, which included living with chronic pain, having low self-esteem, suffering from disassociation, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, and having suicidal ideations.<sup>26</sup> To that effect, Lanni Marchant, an Olympian and Athlete Advocate who appeared as an individual, stated: “To pursue a sport and represent Canada should not mean a decision between risking our physical, mental and emotional health to achieve our goals, or the alternative, which is to walk away completely because the system is broken.”<sup>27</sup> The consequences of experiencing abuse as a child can also manifest later in life through addictions, self-harming, suicidal ideations or suicide, mental illnesses, chronic pain, and interactions with the criminal justice system, for example.<sup>28</sup> Further, in a written brief, Jennifer Fraser asserted that experiencing abuse causes long-lasting damage to brains.<sup>29</sup>

The Committee was also told that knowing abusive coaches are still actively coaching, despite reports and complaints being made, takes a toll on survivors and whistleblowers. Some of them indicated having been retaliated against for reporting maltreatment.<sup>30</sup> Ciara McCormack, who appeared as an individual, said: “How does one move on when one knows there's a predator having access to young girls? How does one go about feeling mentally okay, living in a world where leaders are actively allowing this to happen?”<sup>31</sup> As well, Andrea Proske stated: “Too many times I had to choose between my moral compass and my Olympic dreams.”<sup>32</sup>

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25 Ibid.

26 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1110 (Kim Shore); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1545 (Ciara McCormack, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1205 (Allison Forsyth).

27 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1545 (Lanni Marchant).

28 Jennifer Fraser, [Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study of the Women and Girls in Sport](#).

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1545 (Lanni Marchant); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1555 (Andrea Neil, Former Canadian Women's National Soccer Team Player and Coach, as an individual).

31 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1545 (Ciara McCormack).

32 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1655 (Andrea Proske).

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### Recommendation 1

**That the Government of Canada work with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner’s Abuse-Free Sport Program to implement mechanisms to prevent coaches or other individuals in positions of authority from utilizing abusive practices to control an athlete’s weight.**

### Maltreatment and the Culture in Canadian Sports

**“[W]hat haunts [survivors] the most is not having been protected by the adults who had the power to do something, and who instead chose to protect their friends and the brand.”**

FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1115  
(Kim Shore, Co-Founder, Gymnasts for Change Canada).

When individuals in positions of power, such as high-performance sports directors or coaches, do not stop or report abusive behaviours, they legitimize these types of practices in the eyes of sports participants.<sup>33</sup> Andrea Neil, Former Canadian Women’s National Soccer Team Player and Coach, who appeared as an individual, explained:

Unfortunately, a pervasive, toxic and unhealthy leadership paradigm in our culture today harms many people who participate and work in sports. It is a paradigm that uses as its compass points the accumulation of power, prestige and money, not the development, support and safety of those they are meant to nurture and build.<sup>34</sup>

The following sections focus on the normalization of maltreatment, the culture of silencing survivors, and the lack of accountability and oversight in sports in Canada.

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33 Jennifer Fraser, *Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study of the Women and Girls in Sport*.

34 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1550 (Andrea Neil).



## Normalizing Maltreatment

The Committee was told that maltreatment of athletes is normalized in Canadian sports and can be accepted as a legitimate means to train successful athletes.<sup>35</sup> Witnesses explained that upholding a sports culture and mentality wherein winning at all costs is the goal perpetuates the belief that maltreatment is justified. Geneviève Jeanson shared with the Committee how one of her coaches used maltreatment as a training tool:

I was told that it was to make me a better, tougher athlete. He compared the world of competition to living in the jungle. In the jungle, only the strongest survive. I was taught to welcome assault and to trust that physical violence was a normal part of training, that it was actually good for me.<sup>36</sup>

Kim Shore, Co-Founder of Gymnasts for Change Canada, told the Committee that in gymnastics:

What we also are dealing with are hundreds of coaches who are indoctrinated with the mentality that to produce an athlete, you must use harsh techniques, you must shame them, you must guilt them and you must physically manipulate their bodies into positions, despite the pain or injury it causes.<sup>37</sup>

This situation puts athletes' health and wellbeing at risk.<sup>38</sup> Even when officials or the athletes' entourage suspect maltreatment, they can decide against reporting or addressing their suspicions because they might fear doing so will negatively affect sports organizations and the athletes' sports career and success.<sup>39</sup>

## Silencing Survivors

The Committee heard that a "culture of fear and silence" was created over time in competitive sports in Canada, stopping survivors from speaking up and reporting

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35 Jennifer Fraser, *Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study of the Women and Girls in Sport*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1205 (Allison Forsyth); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1540 and 1610 (Lanni Marchant); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1100 (Geneviève Jeanson).

36 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1100 (Geneviève Jeanson).

37 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1150 (Kim Shore).

38 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1210 (Teresa Fowler, Assistant Professor, Concordia University of Edmonton, as an individual).

39 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1145 (Geneviève Jeanson).

maltreatment.<sup>40</sup> Many witnesses described a culture in which sports organizations choose to protect perpetrators of maltreatment and to silence athletes,<sup>41</sup> partly because it's a small field of work and people can decide to protect their own interests, their friends or acquaintances over the needs of survivors.<sup>42</sup> Léa Clermont-Dion, Documentary Filmmaker and Postdoctoral Fellow at Centre for the Study of Learning Performance at Concordia University, noted that blaming victims of maltreatment has been part of the culture in sports organizations.<sup>43</sup> During her testimony, Ciara McCormack stated: "We were gaslit and harmed repeatedly, telling our traumatizing story to people in a system we were told we could trust, but instead was designed to silence us."<sup>44</sup>

Other witnesses talked about being asked to sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) after reporting cases of maltreatment. NDAs can play a significant part in silencing survivors, protecting perpetrators of maltreatment, and covering-up issues within sport.<sup>45</sup> In a written brief, the Canadian Women's Foundation stated that NDAs "have become the default solution for organizations, corporations, individuals, and the public sector to cover up sexual misconduct. NDAs allow organizations to protect their reputations and perpetrators to conceal their abusive history from future employers."<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

## Recommendation 2

**That the Government of Canada put measures in place to ban the use of non-disclosure agreements for survivors who have reported maltreatment.**

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- 40 Canadian Federation of University Women, *Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO) for its study on the Participation of Women & Girls in Sports*; and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1100 (Rob Koehler).
- 41 Québec contre les violences sexuelles, *Evidence—Women and Girls in Sport*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1550 (Andrea Neil); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1125 (Kim Shore); Jennifer Fraser, *Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study of the Women and Girls in Sport*; and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1140 (Rob Koehler).
- 42 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1145 (Rob Koehler).
- 43 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1115 (Léa Clermont-Dion, Documentary Filmmaker and Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre for the Study of Learning Performance, Concordia University, as an individual).
- 44 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1545 (Ciara McCormack).
- 45 Ibid., 1625.
- 46 Canadian Women's Foundation, *Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO) for its study on the Participation of Women & Girls in Sport*.



## Lack of Accountability and Oversight

**“When athletes say there's no system to protect them, they aren't referring to the number of resources or programs because there are a lot of them. They mean there's no authority to hold people accountable for their actions or to impose consequences, something that's completely nonexistent in the sport system in Canada.”**

FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1540  
(Myriam Da Silva Rondeau, as an individual).

The Committee heard that perpetrators of maltreatment in the Canadian sports system, as well as those who enable such maltreatment to go unpunished, need to be held accountable for their actions.<sup>47</sup> Witnesses also explained that sports organizations have been able to operate without oversight,<sup>48</sup> allowing the culture of maltreatment stay in place and perpetrators to assume no consequences will result from their actions.<sup>49</sup> Jennifer Fraser, Author and Educational Consultant, who appeared as an individual, stated: “The failure of sport governing bodies to treat the problem of abuse more seriously to effectively detect and deter abuse has contributed to the extent of it. If perpetrators think they can get away with it, they will do more of it.”<sup>50</sup>

In the past, some perpetrators of maltreatment were allowed to quietly step down from their positions, therefore not facing allegations against them and/or suffering no consequences from documented cases of maltreatment.<sup>51</sup> This situation has allowed them to find employment in other sports organizations in Canada or internationally, putting other athletes at risk.<sup>52</sup> To change and improve the experiences of athletes in

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47 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1100 (Rob Koehler); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1200 (Amelia Cline).

48 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1105 (Rob Koehler).

49 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1155 (Amelia Cline).

50 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1110 (Jennifer Fraser, Author and Educational Consultant, as an individual).

51 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1545 (Ciara McCormack); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1550 (Andrea Neil).

52 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1545 (Lanni Marchant); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1655 (Andrea Proske).

sports in Canada, witnesses indicated that there needs to be a culture shift.<sup>53</sup> Examples of how this could be done are given in following sections of this report.

## The McLaren Report to Gymnastics Canada

The Committee heard from many witnesses from the gymnastics community. Some of the elements that they shared with the Committee regarded the McLaren Report to Gymnastics Canada. The Committee heard that Gymnastics Canada was planning a review of the organization’s culture. Gymnastics Canada tasked McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc. with developing a framework guiding the review as well as determining if Gymnastics Canada’s safe sport policies meet international standards.<sup>54</sup> The resulting report was released in January 2023.<sup>55</sup>

The McLaren report noted that “toxic examples of abuse and maltreatment persist at all levels” in gymnastics.<sup>56</sup> During his appearance, Richard H. McLaren, Chief Executive Officer at McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc. and Professor of Law, explained that one of the recommendations put forward in the report proposed that a “cultural review should be led by an independent interdisciplinary team and have a human rights-based approach included as a key feature of the proposed cultural review framework.”<sup>57</sup> The McLaren report identified six areas to be included in the culture review:

- “Governance and Leadership of Gymnastics in Canada;
- Jurisdiction, Reporting and Accountability;
- GymCan Organisational Structure and Leadership;
- Safe Sport Education and Training;

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53 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1245 (Shannon Moore, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, as an individual); and Canadian Federation of University Women, *Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO) for its study on the Participation of Women & Girls in Sports*.

54 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1220 (Richard H. McLaren, Chief Executive Officer and Professor of Law, McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc.).

55 McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc., *A Framework for Change: How to Achieve a Culture Shift for Gymnastics in Canada*, 25 January 2023.

56 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1220 (Richard H. McLaren).

57 Ibid.



- Club Environments;
- Competitive and High-Performance Environments.”<sup>58</sup>

## REPORTING MALTREATMENT

**“We really need to look back and consider how these incidents have been handled and say that this is not how we need to do it and move on from there and have people independent of the organization do the investigating.”**

FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1250  
(Teresa Fowler, Assistant Professor, Concordia University of Edmonton, as an individual).

The Committee was told that National Sports Organizations (NSOs) should not investigate allegations of maltreatment within their sport.<sup>59</sup> Rather, those allegations should be investigated by a body that is completely independent from the sports system.<sup>60</sup> Survivors of maltreatment need to have access to safe spaces where they can report their experiences and need to know that the system in place will hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.<sup>61</sup> Ciara McCormack explained that the same organization cannot manage athletes’ complaints and also work with NSOs in other roles.<sup>62</sup> As well, the complaint mechanism needs to be simple and easily understood by athletes.<sup>63</sup>

In 2018, the Working Group on Gender Equity in Sport was tasked with recommending ways to deliver programming specifically for women and girls in sport, to address

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- 58 McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc., [A Framework for Change: How to Achieve a Culture Shift for Gymnastics in Canada](#).
- 59 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1250 (Shannon Moore).
- 60 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1715 (François Lemay, as an individual); Brams United Girls Soccer Club, [Brief](#); Canadian Federation of University Women, [Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women \(FEWO\) for its study on the Participation of Women & Girls in Sports](#); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1215 (Sophie Gagnon, Executive Director, Juripop).
- 61 Brams United Girls Soccer Club, [Brief](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1610 (Lanni Marchant); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1135 (Kurt Weaver, Chief Operations Officer, You Can Play, Inc.).
- 62 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1550 (Ciara McCormack).
- 63 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1615 (Lanni Marchant).



gender-based violence in sport, and to increase women’s representation in sports leadership positions. In its final report, it notably recommended establishing an independent third-party mechanism to address harassment and abuse cases.<sup>64</sup> This was also recommended by athletes who participated in the 2019 survey on the prevalence of maltreatment among current and former national team athletes.<sup>65</sup> The following section focuses on services offered by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC), namely the complaint management mechanism recently created.

## The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner

**“To have athletes believe in a system, they need to see that their NSO is on the hook to it and falls under that umbrella. Athletes have fought so hard for something like the [A]buse-[F]ree [S]port program here in Canada. We fought really hard, and it might not be shaped exactly how we wanted it to be, but the frustration is that we at least got a little bit of the taste of something, and you're going to tell me that my abuses don't count because my NSO made the decision not to sign on? It absolutely should have been mandatory from day one.”**

FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1640  
(Lanni Marchant, Olympian, Athlete Advocate, as an individual).

The Sports Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC) was created under the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* and opened in 2004. Its mission is to “provide the sport community (a) a national alternative dispute resolution service for sport disputes; and (b) expertise and assistance regarding alternative dispute resolution.”<sup>66</sup> In July 2021, the SDRCC was mandated by the federal government to establish an independent mechanism to handle complaints of abuse in sports and to implement the *Universal*

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64 Government of Canada, *Working Group on Gender Equity in Sport of the Minister of Science and Sport*.

65 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1100 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge, Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec); and Gretchen Kerr, Erin Willson and Ashley Stirling, *Prevalence of Maltreatment Among Current and Former National Team Athletes*, 30 April 2019, p. 13.

66 *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, S.C. 2003, c. 2, s. 10(1).



*Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)* at the national level.<sup>67</sup> OSIC was established to work as an independent division of the SDRCC and became operational on 20 June 2022.<sup>68</sup> As of 1 April 2023, it is mandatory for federally funded sports organizations to use OSIC services as their independent third-party safe sport complaints mechanism. The Committee would like to note that it received its testimony before sports organizations were required to sign on with OSIC’s Abuse-Free Sport program to receive federal funding. At the time, only a few sports organizations were program signatories. There are two aspects of OSIC’s work: complaint management and sport environment assessments.

## Complaint Management

OSIC is responsible for administering the UCCMS. The UCCMS contains a harmonized set of rules that NSOs receiving federal funding must adopt to “advance a respectful sport culture that delivers quality, inclusive, accessible, welcoming and safe sport experiences.”<sup>69</sup> It defines maltreatment as “volitional act and/or omission described in Sections 5.2–5.6 that results in harm or has the potential for physical or psychological harm.”<sup>70</sup>

Before the creation of OSIC, athletes had to follow their NSO’s processes to report abuse.<sup>71</sup> Organizations, therefore, had considerable power over athletes since they could decide to investigate or not.<sup>72</sup> With OSIC, most national level athletes will be able to access a uniform complaint process mechanism outside of their NSOs. As of 1 April 2023, it is mandatory for federally funded sports organizations to use OSIC services as their independent third-party safe sport complaints mechanism. An overview of the processes to submit a complaint or a report to OSIC as well as of the complaint management process is available in appendices A and B.

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67 Canadian Heritage, *Minister Guilbeault Announces New Independent Safe Sport Mechanism*, News release, 6 July 2021; and Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women pertaining to Women and Girls in Sport*.

68 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women pertaining to Women and Girls in Sport*.

69 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *The UCCMS*.

70 Ibid., Appendix I: Definitions.

71 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1220 (Marie-Claude Asselin, Chief Executive Officer, Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada).

72 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1210 (Isabelle Mondou, Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage).

The Committee heard that providing mental health, social, and legal supports to survivors is essential.<sup>73</sup> OSIC offers legal aid and mental health supports to survivors “before, during and after they've gone through the complaint management process.”<sup>74</sup> Often, these services are first accessed through the Canadian Sport Helpline.<sup>75</sup> Sarah-Ève Pelletier, Sport Integrity Commissioner, indicated that OSIC is looking at ways to “expand and improve” these services.<sup>76</sup> To access the Legal Aid Program and the Mental Health Support Program, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- be complainants or alleged respondents of a complaint admissible to OSIC, or victims or survivors of prohibited behaviour under the UCCMS in a situation admissible by OSIC, whether or not a complaint has been filed;
- be participants in a competitive sport with a current Abuse-Free Sport program signatory, or were participants when the incident occurred; and
- be at least 16 years of age.<sup>77</sup>

The Mental Health Support Program facilitates access to mental health care for eligible individuals.<sup>78</sup> The program provides referrals to mental health professionals and covers certain fees to supplement other funding sources, such as publicly funded health care, health insurance plans and supplementary insurance plans.<sup>79</sup> For victims, the program may fund a total of four individual sessions with a practitioner. Alleged respondents are eligible for two individual sessions.

The Legal Aid Program is designed to help individuals navigate the complaint management process.<sup>80</sup> Access to this program is determined by OSIC once an application has been received. Legal advice services are provided free of charge at key

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73 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1215 (Sophie Gagnon); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1150 (Geneviève Jeanson); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1715 (François Lemay); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1635 (Ciara McCormack).

74 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1145 (Sarah-Ève Pelletier, Sport Integrity Commissioner, Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner).

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, [Mental Health](#); and Office of the Sport integrity Commissioner, [Legal Aid](#).

78 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, [Mental Health](#).

79 Office of the Sport integrity Commissioner, [Mental Health Support Program](#).

80 Office of the Sport integrity Commissioner, [Legal Aid](#).



stages of the complaint process.<sup>81</sup> Additional consultations may occur beyond the key stages if jointly agreed to by the assigned counsel and the program client. Sophie Gagnon, Executive Director of Juripop, stressed the importance of having “a counsel and client relationship that is established in order to make sure there is trust and that legal advice is relevant to the situation at hand.”<sup>82</sup>

During this study, witnesses highlighted several issues regarding OSIC’s processes and mandate, including issues around OSIC’s jurisdiction and authority, possible sanctions for perpetrators of maltreatment, confidentiality of complaints, and OSIC’s independence from the sports system. These issues are described below and in following sections. However, since OSIC became operational less than a year ago, some witnesses told the Committee that it should be given a chance to prove it can work and be trusted.<sup>83</sup>

### Jurisdiction and Authority

**“I would like to request the implementation of a system for receiving and processing complaints that is totally independent of the federations and that is not reserved only for our elite athletes. I would like to remind you that violence in sports crosses all ages, genres and skill levels. It happens at the recreational and the competitive levels.”**

FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1105 (Geneviève Jeanson, Public Speaker and Consultant, as an individual).

The Committee heard that OSIC’s jurisdiction and authority is limited. Currently, it can only accept complaints regarding alleged violations of the UCCMS (maltreatment and discrimination) filed by participants covered by the UCCMS and acting under the authority of an Abuse-Free Sport program signatory.<sup>84</sup> According to the most recent OSIC quarterly activity report (covering the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023), the organization received 48 new complaints and reports, 62% of which were deemed

81 Office of the Sport integrity Commissioner, *Legal Aid Program*.

82 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1235 (Sophie Gagnon).

83 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1220 (Marie-Claude Asselin); and Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, *Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport*.

84 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Program Signatories*.

inadmissible under its jurisdiction and authority (by comparison, 66% of the 24 complaints and reports received between 20 September 2022 and 31 December 2022 were deemed inadmissible).<sup>85</sup>

During her testimony, the Sport Integrity Commissioner outlined three reasons why some complaints cannot be investigated by OSIC. Firstly, she explained that the matter of the complaint or report must relate to maltreatment, discrimination or another behaviour covered by the UCCMS.<sup>86</sup> Secondly, not all NSOs had an agreement in place with OSIC as of December 2022: for sports participants to have access to services offered by OSIC, including the complaint mechanism, their sports organization must have a service agreement with OSIC.<sup>87</sup> As of 13 April 2023, 75 sports organizations have signed on with the Abuse-Free Sport program; as well, seven additional federally funded NSOs have signed agreements that will become effective by summer 2023.<sup>88</sup>

The Honourable Pascale St-Onge, Minister of Sport, stated that, as of 1 April 2023, the Government of Canada will suspend the funding granted to NSOs who have not yet signed with OSIC.<sup>89</sup> Lanni Marchant argued that signing on with OSIC should have been mandatory for NSOs immediately when OSIC was created for athletes to see that their NSO was “on the hook” and accountable for maltreatment.<sup>90</sup> However, the Minister of Sport explained that the expectation was clear that NSOs had to be Abuse-Free Sport program signatories by the start of the next funding cycle (1 April 2023) to receive federal funding. She added that NSOs also needed some time to adjust their internal procedures and policies to account for the UCCMS and OSIC’s processes.<sup>91</sup>

Thirdly, OSIC does not have authority over all sports participants.<sup>92</sup> In most cases, OSIC’s program signatories have authority over participants at the national level only (often national team athletes in a given sport), which represents a small percentage of sports

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85 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, [Quarterly Activity Report for the Period of January 1 to March 31, 2023](#); and Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, [Quarterly Activity Report for the Period of September 20 to December 31, 2022](#).

86 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1145 (Sarah-Ève Pelletier).

87 Ibid.; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1245 (Marie-Claude Asselin).

88 Abuse-Free Sport, [Great advances as Abuse-Free Sport enters fourth quarter of its initial year](#), News release, 13 April 2023.

89 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1135 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge).

90 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1640 (Lanni Marchant).

91 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1105 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge).

92 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1145 (Sarah-Ève Pelletier).



participants in Canada.<sup>93</sup> In rare cases, program signatories may also have authority over participants at the provincial, territorial and club levels, where most sport participants are active. As of 25 April 2023, only Volleyball Canada covered sports participants at the provincial, territorial and club levels.<sup>94</sup> Of note, because of the distribution of legislative powers in Canada, the federal government could only mandate OSIC for federally funded sports organizations, and not for provincial and community sports organizations across the country.

This “systemic limitation”<sup>95</sup> leaves most sports participants unable to access OSIC’s services. In some cases, OSIC can refer a complainant whose case is inadmissible to another existing mechanism: this could be a system like Quebec’s Sport’Aide or a process that is in place within a sports organization.<sup>96</sup> However, this is not always possible because there might not be a mechanism in place for provincial, territorial, and local sports participants.<sup>97</sup> It also imposes a burden on survivors to navigate another system and submit another complaint.

To close existing gaps in the level of service available to sports participants in Canada, witnesses indicated that provinces and territories could either develop similar complaint mechanisms to complement OSIC or that they sign on to OSIC.<sup>98</sup> The Minister of Sport told the Committee that all provinces and territories have committed to having an independent complaint mechanism accessible for sports participants.<sup>99</sup> She added: “There is no reason why children and young athletes should not have equal protection from coast to coast. All levels of government, including the provinces and territories,

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93 Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, *Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1225 (Christopher Winter, Director, Domestic Programs and Safe Sport, Athletics Canada); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1100 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge).

94 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Program Signatories*.

95 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1120 (Sarah-Ève Pelletier).

96 *Ibid.*, 1200.

97 *Ibid.*, 1125.

98 *Ibid.*; Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, *Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1230 (Marie-Claude Asselin); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1235 (Isabelle Mondou); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1155 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1715 (François Lemay).

99 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1135 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge).

must do what it takes to ensure that abusers are excluded from our sports system.”<sup>100</sup> Andrea Proske told the Committee that OSIC services should be available to all sports participants and be adequately funded.<sup>101</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 3**

**That the Government of Canada suspend the federal funding given to national sport organizations who are not Abuse-Free Sport program signatories with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner until they become signatories.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**That the Government of Canada collaborate with provincial and territorial governments as well as with Indigenous peoples to ensure sports participants have access to independent maltreatment complaint mechanisms through the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner or other independent mechanisms to ensure transparency for sexual misconduct, resources for survivors, and equal service across and within jurisdictions.**

## **Sanctions and Provisional Measures**

OSIC can recommend provisional measures and sanctions be put in place to protect sports participants. Committing a form of maltreatment, as defined by the UCCMS, is considered a violation of the UCCMS, and sanctions can be imposed on perpetrators. Considering the independent investigator’s final report, the Sport Integrity Commissioner may make recommendations, including proposing sanctions.<sup>102</sup> These recommendations are forwarded to the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes (DSO).<sup>103</sup> The DSO is independent from OSIC and has the authority to impose sanctions on participants in Abuse-Free Sport program signatories.

Sanctions can include a verbal or written apology or warning, education, probation, suspension, eligibility restrictions, permanent ineligibility and other discretionary

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100 Ibid., 1105.

101 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1655 (Andrea Proske).

102 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1130 (Sarah-Ève Pelletier).

103 Abuse-Free Sport, *Director of Sanctions and Outcomes*.



sanctions.<sup>104</sup> The UCCMS provides a list of relevant factors to consider when determining appropriate sanctions, which includes the “nature and duration of the *Respondent’s* relationship with the affected individuals, including whether there is a *Power Imbalance* or position of trust,” past history of the respondent and the age of the individuals involved.<sup>105</sup>

The DSO may also impose provisional measures if recommended by OSIC.<sup>106</sup> OSIC may find that provisional measures are warranted at any stage of the complaint process. The factors to be considered when imposing provisional measures include the following:

- the seriousness of the allegations, facts and circumstances;
- the safety and well-being of participants and the sports community;
- potential risks and harm due to action or lack of action; and
- the best interest of the sport and those who participate in it, including the views of the individuals directly affected.<sup>107</sup>

Provisional measures may include temporary suspension, a change of duties or workplace, restrictions on contact, lodging, travel, communications or activities, and monitoring.<sup>108</sup> According to the most recent OSIC quarterly activity report (covering the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023), five active complaint cases were subject to provisional measures.<sup>109</sup>

OSIC has the mandate to maintain a registry of sanctions, but currently this registry would only cover sanctions put in place after a complaint process with OSIC has been initiated. A representative from the Department of Canadian Heritage argued that it

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104 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 2022 \(6.0\)](#), 31 May 2022, s. 7.2.

105 Ibid., s. 7.4.

106 Provisional measures include “any temporary remedy warranted under special circumstances to preserve parties’ rights, both substantive and procedural, pending the final resolution of an alleged violation of the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)]. Provisional Measure(s) are not Sanctions (as defined in the UCCMS) and may take many forms, as described in these Guidelines.” See Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, [OSIC Guidelines Regarding Provisional Measures](#).

107 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, [OSIC Guidelines Regarding Provisional Measures](#).

108 Ibid.

109 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, [Quarterly Activity Report for the Period of September 20 to December 31, 2022](#).



would be beneficial if provinces and territories sign agreements with OSIC because the sanctions registry would be more complete, and information would not be scattered between different regulatory bodies.<sup>110</sup> More information about the creation of a national sanctioned coaches registry can be found later in this report.

## Confidentiality

Over the course of the study, there was disagreement over the nature of the confidentiality policy that applies to individuals associated with a complaint process. Marie-Claude Asselin, Chief Executive Officer of the SDRCC, explained that confidentiality rules surrounding the OSIC complaint process do not prevent survivors from speaking about their experiences publicly.<sup>111</sup> She added that the confidentiality rules apply to the information received through the investigation processes “to protect other athletes, witnesses or vulnerable individuals who might participate in the investigation.”<sup>112</sup>

However, Global Athlete disagreed with this interpretation of the OSIC Confidentiality Policy. In a written brief, the group stated that “survivors engaging with OSIC will be under an effective gag order and silenced.”<sup>113</sup> The group noted that the exemptions for disclosure were limited and that the provisions “extend far beyond any restrictions placed on a survivor in the civil or criminal system.”<sup>114</sup> The OSIC Confidentiality Policy does state, for instance, that “[a]s a general practice, persons involved in a Complaint as parties, sport organizations, or potential witnesses should not discuss or disclose the Complaint, allegations, investigation or details thereof with anyone,” except as noted in the exceptions listed in section 4.vi.b. of the policy.<sup>115</sup> Based on the testimony received during this study, it is unclear if a survivor could, for example, speak about their experiences publicly without referring to the complaint process.

## Sport Environment Assessments

OSIC can conduct Sport Environment Assessments to identify systemic issues related to the UCCMS, either at the request of a program signatory or at its own discretion. A

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110 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1250 (Isabelle Mondou).

111 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1245 (Marie-Claude Asselin).

112 Ibid.

113 Global Athlete, *Brief to the Committee for the Status of Women*.

114 Ibid.

115 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Confidentiality Policy*.



complaint does not have to be lodged for a Sport Environment Assessment to be launched.<sup>116</sup> The Assessment Report may include recommendations to address issues identified during the assessment process and to improve the experiences of sports participants. Witnesses noted that OSIC does not have the powers to compel program signatories to participate in a Sport Environment Assessment and to enforce final recommendations.<sup>117</sup>

In its written brief, the SDRCC recommended that “[i]n their independent fact-finding responsibilities, investigators and assessors of the OSIC ... be granted [the] power to compel witness testimony as well as the production of documents.”<sup>118</sup> As well, a representative from the Department of Canadian Heritage noted that if a sports organization is not implementing recommendations stemming from a Sport Environment Assessment, Sport Canada could include that as a criterion in its contribution agreement and cut funding if the organization does not comply.<sup>119</sup>

Another issue that was highlighted to the Committee regarding OSIC’s Sport Environment Assessments is that “there is no clear ability for OSIC to use testimony provided by survivors”<sup>120</sup> during a sport environment assessment and use it as evidence for substantiating a complaint. According to Global Athlete, this means that “survivors may be required to engage in both processes separately and re-tell their stories in multiple processes.”<sup>121</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 5**

**That the Government of Canada amend the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* to grant investigators of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner the power to subpoena witnesses and compel testimony.**

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116 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1205 (Isabelle Mondou).

117 Global Athlete, [Brief to the Committee for the Status of Women](#); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1140 (Amelia Cline).

118 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women pertaining to Women and Girls in Sport](#).

119 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1205 (Isabelle Mondou).

120 Global Athlete, [Brief to the Committee for the Status of Women](#).

121 Ibid.

## Recommendation 6

**That the Government of Canada require signatory organizations with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner's Abuse-Free Sport Program to implement the recommendations concerning them stemming from Sport Environment Assessments as a condition to receive federal funding.**

### Independence of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner

The Committee heard concerns about the lack of independence of OSIC from the sports system, which can affect survivors' trust in the complaint process.<sup>122</sup> The SDRCC board members are appointed on the recommendation of the Minister of Sport, as provided by the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.<sup>123</sup> Marie-Claude Asselin explained:

When the SDRCC was established, the sport community determined that three of the seats on its board would be reserved for athletes and that there would also be a coach, a representative of a national sport organization and a representative of a multisport games organization. The other six members come from the legal community and the dispute resolution field.<sup>124</sup>

In a written brief, the SDRCC noted that board members "are not privy to matters before the Dispute Resolution Secretariat nor to those before the OSIC."<sup>125</sup> However, Amelia Cline, Lawyer and Co-Founder of Gymnasts for Change Canada, highlighted that SDRCC board members might also have been part of NSOs; they may have contributed to covering up maltreatment.<sup>126</sup>

The Committee also heard that there were concerns with the independence of OSIC investigators who conduct maltreatment investigations. For example, in a written brief, Global Athlete stated:

OSIC is deeply embedded within the sport system and rife with potential conflicts of interest. OSIC is funded by Sport Canada, an entity that has come under fire for failing in its mandate to ensure sport is delivered safely in Canada. OSIC contracts investigators

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122 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1140 (Amelia Cline).

123 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women pertaining to Women and Girls in Sport](#); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1250 (Isabelle Mondou).

124 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1240 (Marie-Claude Asselin).

125 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women pertaining to Women and Girls in Sport](#).

126 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1140 (Amelia Cline).



who fulfil multiple conflicting roles in sport, such as individuals who have provided legal advice to NSOs/PSOs [provincial sports organizations] who can now conduct abuse investigations into those same organizations for OSIC. Athlete survivors do not trust that OSIC and its contractors are sufficiently independent to conduct investigations.<sup>127</sup>

The Committee was told that investigators, mediators, and arbitrators are required to sign a declaration of independence after having examined case files, and are subject to the SDRCC Conflict of Interest Policy.<sup>128</sup> The Sport Integrity Commissioner explained:

In terms of our investigations, they are performed by independent professionals. They bring experience from human rights, sexual violence, and dealing with children and minors. Some of them have experience in sports, and some don't. All of them have both experience and specific training to ensure trauma-informed care in everything they do.<sup>129</sup>

Parties to a complaint process have the right to challenge the appointment of an investigator, assessor, mediator, or arbitrator to their case on the grounds of conflict of interest or apprehension of bias.<sup>130</sup> The SDRCC recommended that professionals (investigators, assessors, mediators, and arbitrators) be granted immunity, in the same way as in statutory tribunals, to guarantee full independence from the sports system.<sup>131</sup>

In a written brief, the SDRCC acknowledged that its cost-sharing model causes the organization to have to collect funds from program signatories, as the Abuse-Free Sports program is not fully funded by the Government of Canada. The SDRCC noted “that true (as well as perceived) independence from sport organizations can only be achieved if the totality of the program is funded by government, and not in a cost-sharing model.”<sup>132</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 7**

**That the Government of Canada make legislative amendments to grant immunity to investigators, assessors, mediators, and arbitrators working for the Office of the Sport**

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127 Global Athlete, [\*Brief to the Committee for the Status of Women\*](#).

128 FEWO, [\*Evidence\*](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1245 (Marie-Claude Asselin).

129 FEWO, [\*Evidence\*](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1110 (Sarah-Ève Pelletier).

130 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, [\*Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women pertaining to Women and Girls in Sport\*](#).

131 Ibid.

132 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, [\*Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women pertaining to Women and Girls in Sport\*](#).

Integrity Commissioner and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada to ensure protection of professionals involved in investigating reports of maltreatment to be able to make decisions without fear, repercussions, or being sued.

## RETHINKING THE CANADIAN SPORTS SYSTEM

**“We need a sports system that is values-based, that prioritizes the dignity, rights and well-being of participants above all else, reflected in how sport is designed, measured and funded. We need a sports system that reflects the needs and interests of women, girls and other under-represented groups by embedding their voices and perspectives in every aspect, from governance and strategy to program delivery. We need a sports system that is diverse, equitable and inclusive at its core.”**

FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1220  
(Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Women and Sport).

The Committee heard that there is a need to rethink the sports governance system in Canada, from the goals to reach to how funding is provided, to eliminate all forms of maltreatment in sports. Culture change is needed to better protect all sports participants, including children.<sup>133</sup> Ciara McCormack stated: “Systemic change means shining a light into the financial relationships that preserve power and uncovering and dismantling these relationships and systems that protect Canadian sport institutions at the expense of athletes' lives.”<sup>134</sup>

Witnesses identified several systemic changes that could be made to the Canadian sports system, as explained in the following sections. More generally, Gretchen Kerr told the Committee that recommendations from the Federal and Provincial/Territorial Sport

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133 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1130 (Kim Shore); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1220 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves).

134 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1550 (Ciara McCormack).



Committee Work Group on Women and Girls in Sport as well as the 2019 Red Deer Declaration provide a roadmap for the next steps to be implemented.<sup>135</sup>

The Canadian sports system is composed of many actors, including NSOs, Multisport Service Organizations (MSOs), Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, the Government of Canada, provincial and territorial governments, as well as private and not-for-profit organizations. The federal government is directly involved in the sports system through Sport Canada. Sport Canada is the branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage responsible for administering sports programs at the federal level (it does not administer programs at the provincial or municipal level), some of which are listed below. Sport Canada “provides leadership and funding to help ensure a strong Canadian sport system which enables Canadians to progress from early sport experiences to high performance excellence.”<sup>136</sup> Sport Canada programs include:

- the Athlete Assistance Program, a “sport funding program that contributes to the pursuit of excellence;”<sup>137</sup>
- the Hosting Program, designed to assist “sport organizations to host the Canada Games and international sport events in Canada;”<sup>138</sup> and
- the Sport Support Program (SSP), assisting “the development of the Canadian sport system. Funding is provided to eligible organizations for programming that is aligned with the goals of the Canadian Sport Policy.”<sup>139</sup>

The SSP includes a number of components, including the National Sport Organization component which funds NSOs to support the development of the Canadian sports system.<sup>140</sup> Every NSO funded by Canadian Heritage’s SPP “must have a policy on harassment, abuse and discrimination; offer mandatory training on those issues; and provide access to an independent third party to receive and manage complaints.”<sup>141</sup> The

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135 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1100 (Gretchen Kerr).

136 Government of Canada, [Role of Sport Canada](#).

137 Government of Canada, [Athlete Assistance Program](#).

138 Government of Canada, [Hosting Program](#).

139 Government of Canada, [Sport Support Program](#).

140 Government of Canada, [National Sport Organization — Sport Support Program](#).

141 Canadian Heritage, [“Government of Canada announces financial support for Skate Canada,”](#) News Release, 28 October 2022.

Minister of Sport told the Committee that the Department of Canadian Heritage funds “close to 94” sports organizations.<sup>142</sup>

## Funding, Oversight and Accountability of Sports Organizations

**“I think that's an entire culture shift that we need to see here in Canada. We need to view sport not as the be-all and end-all for achieving a medal or to achieve Olympic greatness. It should be something that's considered a lifelong love and something that people can do all the way through to adulthood. That is the type of cultural shift that will, I think, inform and change policy in a profound way.”**

FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1155  
(Amelia Cline, Lawyer and Co-Founder, Gymnasts for Change Canada).

The Committee was told that the Canadian sports system cannot self-regulate<sup>143</sup> and that there should be an oversight of sports organizations’ funding use and ways they process maltreatment allegations. Sports organizations receiving public funding should be held accountable, notably regarding athlete protection and gender equality.<sup>144</sup> Richard McLaren explained:

The problem is accountability. Monies are provided. Then, how are they used? Are they used effectively, and who is examining the use of the funds? That's the accountability. If they're directed at protecting young athletes, how is that done? Who is checking to see that it has been done and where it needs to be improved or changed if it hasn't been done?<sup>145</sup>

Andrea Neil indicated that lack of financial transparency and lack of safety intersect to negatively affect athletes’ experiences in their sports.<sup>146</sup> In particular, she called for a

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142 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1105 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge).

143 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1100 (Rob Koehler).

144 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1115 (Guylaine Demers, Professor, Department of Physical Education, Université Laval, as an individual).

145 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1240 (Richard H. McLaren).

146 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1555 (Andrea Neil).



financial audit of Canada Soccer’s finances to “disclose how funding is being used and [what is its purpose] to ensure the mission of the organization is being carried out ethically and effectively.”<sup>147</sup>

The Minister of Sport told the Committee that she is working to review the criteria the federal government uses to provide funding to NSOs.<sup>148</sup> The Committee was told the federal government must mandate “minimum standards for gender equity, diversity, inclusion and safeguarding” to all sports organizations receiving federal funding.<sup>149</sup> In a written brief, Canadian Women and Sport recommended that a “new set of metrics for measuring the health” of the sports system be developed and be a core criterion for receiving federal funding.<sup>150</sup> These standards should “reflect diversity, equity, inclusion, and safeguarding in governance and operations with emphasis on positive participant outcomes for health and well-being.”<sup>151</sup> To that effect, Geneviève Jeanson stated: “We cannot continue to give money to federations solely based on performance, because this ‘winning at all costs’ mentality is enabling the culture of abuse.”<sup>152</sup>

François Lemay, who appeared as an individual, told the Committee that one of the problems with the Canadian sports system is that it relies heavily on volunteers, whose resources, time, and experience regarding safe sport might be limited.<sup>153</sup> He added: “[T]o build a sports program based on long-term athlete development, to handle an abuse or harassment situation fairly, to establish governance and organizational transparency and to develop a strategic plan for women's sport takes time, experience, and the necessary training.”<sup>154</sup> Therefore, he recommended funding be provided for the training of volunteers regarding governance, how to develop their sports, and safe sport.<sup>155</sup>

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147 Ibid.

148 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1100 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge).

149 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1220 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves).

150 Canadian Women and Sport, [Written Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#).

151 Ibid.

152 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1105 (Geneviève Jeanson).

153 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1650 (François Lemay).

154 Ibid.

155 Ibid.



Witnesses also indicated that harmonized rules around maltreatment in sports are needed in Canada.<sup>156</sup> The whole sports system must be involved in ensuring safe sport. The UCCMS is only applicable at the national level, which means that there is a “lack of consistency in the rules and their application at the different levels of sports participation.”<sup>157</sup> Richard McLaren explained that the report on Gymnastics Canada showed that, sometimes, there are significant frictions between organizations at different levels of sport (clubs, provincial/territorial, and national). Therefore, all organizations might not be working collaboratively to create a safer sport environment for athletes.<sup>158</sup> He added that for the system to be effective, rules must be harmonized across all levels of sport, which would represent a major change from the current sports system.<sup>159</sup> The Committee was also told that all sports organizations in Canada should adopt and enforce the UCCMS.<sup>160</sup> However, the Government of Canada only has the capacity to enforce the UCCMS at the federal level, which is currently done by requiring sports organisations to integrate the UCCMS in their organizational policies and procedures in order to receive funding from Sport Canada.<sup>161</sup>

Further, in a written brief, Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd argued that Canada should track and report on its sports-related obligations under relevant international instruments.<sup>162</sup> They noted that Canada has signed numerous human rights international instruments “that require member states to bring a rights-based perspective to sport, physical education and physical activity, and to provide protections to designated populations, including children and women.”<sup>163</sup> For example, they listed the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which calls for governments to protect children from physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or

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156 Coaching Association of Canada, [\*Brief submitted to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women \(FEWO\): Women and Girls in Sport\*](#); and FEWO, [\*Evidence\*](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1250 (Richard H. McLaren).

157 FEWO, [\*Evidence\*](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1110 (Sarah-Ève Pelletier).

158 FEWO, [\*Evidence\*](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1225 (Richard H. McLaren).

159 Ibid., 1235.

160 Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, [\*Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport\*](#).

161 Canadian Heritage, [\*Backgrounder - Minister Guilbeault Announces New Independent Safe Sport Mechanism\*](#).

162 Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, [\*Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport\*](#).

163 Ibid.



exploitation,<sup>164</sup> and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's *International Charter on Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport*.

As well, the Committee heard that increasing athlete representation in the sports governance systems so that they are part of the decision-making process could help empower athletes.<sup>165</sup> A representative from the Department of Canadian Heritage noted that the Government of Canada has established an athlete advisory committee to hear athletes' perspectives on government policy and program decision-making.<sup>166</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 8**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples, and sports organizations, work to ensure that the specific needs and experiences of young athletes are taken into account in efforts to create a safe sport environment.**

### **Recommendation 9**

**That the Government of Canada develop and support initiatives that promote gender equity and diversity within sports organizations, especially the inclusion of more women and girls in leadership and decision-making roles.**

### **Recommendation 10**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples, and sports organizations, include athletes in all bodies and all decision-making processes regarding sport in Canada.**

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164 Ibid.; and United Nations Children's Fund, *The Convention*.

165 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1150 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge); and Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, *Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport*.

166 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1220 (Jaimie Earley, Deputy Director General, Sport Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage).

### **Recommendation 11**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories and sports organizations, commit to funding education, training and support for volunteers, with the goal of providing them the tools to better support athletes.**

### **Recommendation 12**

**That the Government of Canada accelerate its review of the criteria it uses to grant funding to sports organizations and that it include, in the new criteria, clauses mandating the respect of gender equity, diversity, and inclusion standards, as well as the respect of updated sports participants safeguarding standards.**

## **The Canadian Sport Policy and Culture Change**

The Committee was told that the Canadian Sport Policy, which is currently being reviewed, should focus on promoting safe sport at all levels of sport in Canada and on integrating the recommendations for systemic changes in sports culture and governance highlighted in previous paragraphs. Currently, the objectives of the Canadian Sport Policy are:

- a) “to increase participation in the practice of sport and support the pursuit of excellence in sport; and
- b) to build capacity in the Canadian sport system.”<sup>167</sup>

The new policy will be “co-developed and co-led and will be co-endorsed by all ministers of the provinces and territories.”<sup>168</sup> A representative from the Department of Canadian Heritage said that 24 consultations were held across Canada, as well as one online consultation.<sup>169</sup> According to Debra Gassewitz, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Sport Information Resource Centre, the consultations indicated that sports participants want Canada to be a safe sport leader.<sup>170</sup> She stressed that, to achieve this,

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167 *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, S.C. 2003, c. 2, s. 4(2).

168 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1215 (Jaimie Earley).

169 Ibid.

170 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1220 (Debra Gassewitz, President and Chief Executive Officer, Sport Information Resource Centre).



safe sport must become a long-term priority and related initiatives must be adequately funded.<sup>171</sup> The Minister of Sport told the Committee:

The discussion is truly about how we define excellence. In previous mandates I would say that it was about medals and podiums; now we need to take into account the excellence of the organizations themselves and how they bring the well-being of athletes into a holistic approach. The renewal of the Canadian Sport Policy also stems from the need to revisit the values that form the foundation of the sports system. What is most important, beyond medals and podiums, is ensuring the safety and well-being of athletes in all respects.<sup>172</sup>

As well, Teresa Fowler, Assistant Professor at the Concordia University of Edmonton, who appeared as an individual, noted that having the sports portfolio fall under the health portfolio instead of the heritage portfolio might make a difference in how the federal government approaches sports.<sup>173</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 13**

**That the Government of Canada make the core objectives of any new Canadian Sport Policy to be centred by the safety and well-being of sports participants as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion in sports.**

## **Setting Up a Commission of Inquiry**

**“A [C]ommission of [I]nquiry into the toxic culture of abuse across Canada is absolutely necessary if there’s to be any possibility of building a system that enables Canadians and Canadian sport to rise to a level commensurate with their ability to achieve results and win medals. That’s what we all hope for.”**

FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1545  
(Myriam Da Silva Rondeau, as an individual).

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171 Ibid.

172 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1125 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge).

173 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1235 (Teresa Fowler).

Most witnesses who testified over the course of the study called for the Government of Canada to establish an independent national judicial inquiry into maltreatment in sport.<sup>174</sup> At the federal level, such an inquiry is a Commission of Inquiry, often referred to as a “Royal Commission.” Commissions of Inquiry can be established by the Governor in Council to “fully and impartially investigate issues of national importance.”<sup>175</sup> They can either be established under the *Inquiries Act* or under a federal statute that has specific provisions in that regard. There are two types of Commissions of Inquiry: (1) public inquiries, which can look into and concern “any matter connected with the good government of Canada or the conduct of any part of the public business thereof”<sup>176</sup> and (2) departmental inquiries, which can look into the “state and management of the business, or any part of the business, of [a] department.”<sup>177</sup> Commissions of Inquiry can be investigative (broader mandate) or advisory (more focussed mandate).<sup>178</sup> Commissions of Inquiry can “subpoena witnesses, take evidence under oath and request documents.”<sup>179</sup> Findings and recommendations made by Commissions of Inquiry are reported to Cabinet, but they are not binding.<sup>180</sup> Under the *Inquiries Act*, a Commission of Inquiry’s mandate would cover issues that fall under federal jurisdiction, unless it is co-appointed. To avoid jurisdictional challenges, Commissions of Inquiry can be co-appointed by federal, provincial, and territorial governments.<sup>181</sup>

Witnesses argued that a Commission of Inquiry into maltreatment in sport in Canada would shed light on how the sports system has allowed maltreatment of athletes of all

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174 For example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1100 (Rob Koehler); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1110 (Kim Shore); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1140 (Léa Clermont-Dion); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1555 (Andrea Neil); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1630 (Randall Gumbley); Teresa Fowler and Shannon D.M. Moore, *Heritage or Health?: Recentring Sport in Canada*; Jennifer Fraser, *Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study of the Women and Girls in Sport*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1605 (Ciara McCormack); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1120 (Wendy Glover, Secondary School Teacher and Athlete Development Consultant, as an individual); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1655 (Lorraine Lafrenière, Chief Executive Officer, Coaching Association of Canada).

175 Government of Canada, *About commissions of inquiry*.

176 *Inquiries Act*, R.S.C., 1985, c. I-11, s. 2.

177 *Ibid.*, s. 6.

178 Government of Canada, *About commissions of inquiry*.

179 *Ibid.*

180 *Ibid.*

181 Ronda Bessner and Susan Lightstone, *Public Inquiries in Canada: Law and Practice*, 2017, pp. 95–96.



levels to occur and go unpunished.<sup>182</sup> Kim Shore told the Committee that a Commission of Inquiry is necessary because culture reviews within NSOs are “not going to suffice” as NSOs would not voluntarily expose problems within their organizations.<sup>183</sup>

The Committee heard that a Commission of Inquiry could help gain a systemic understanding of the problem of maltreatment at all levels of sports, as well as of the challenges in changing the culture and designing solutions.<sup>184</sup> More specifically, Global Athlete and Gymnasts for Change Canada noted that a Commission of Inquiry could:<sup>185</sup>

- gather testimony from survivors of maltreatment;
- examine the role played by NSOs and Sport Canada in protecting abusive coaches and individuals;
- evaluate the current funding and governance structures in Canadian sports;
- recommend avenues for establishing a new culture in Canadian sports; and
- generate buy-in from actors in the sports system to participate in creating a new sports culture.

As well, the Committee was told that effort to set up a Commission of Inquiry should be led by survivors of maltreatment in sports as they “have a unique experience in sport that they can bring” to the process, “for example, when it comes to drafting the terms of reference for any sort of investigation.”<sup>186</sup> While every Commission of Inquiry’s mandate is different because of the division of powers in Canada, witnesses referenced the Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase

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182 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1545 (Myriam Da Silva Rondeau); Jennifer Fraser, [Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study of the Women and Girls in Sport](#); Global Athlete, [Brief to the Committee for the Status of Women](#); Gymnasts for Change Canada, [Canada Requires a Royal Commission into Abuse in Sport](#); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1655 (Lorraine Lafrenière).

183 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1140 (Kim Shore).

184 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1220 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves).

185 Global Athlete, [Brief to the Committee for the Status of Women](#); and Gymnasts for Change Canada, [Canada Requires a Royal Commission into Abuse in Sport](#).

186 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1120 (Amelia Cline).

Athletic Performance (Dubin Inquiry)<sup>187</sup> as an example of an inquiry that created systemic change in the sports system in Canada.<sup>188</sup>

However, some witnesses expressed concerns or reticence over the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry. While she did not argue against the establishment of such an inquiry, Marie-Claude Asselin noted that it would take years to complete and that survivors need a place to report maltreatment and access services in the meantime.<sup>189</sup> Gretchen Kerr argued that since information on the prevalence, effects, and causes of maltreatment is already available, changes can be implemented without having to conduct an inquiry.<sup>190</sup> That being said, in a written brief, Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd noted if there were to be an independent national judicial inquiry,<sup>191</sup> instead of focussing on specific athlete experiences, it should focus on problems such as:

- the lack of transparency, accountability, and athlete representation in Canadian sports governance;
- “the disconnect between the activities at the national level and those at the provincial, territorial and municipal levels;” and
- the relationship between Sport Canada and NSOs, including NSOs compliance with Sport Canada policies.<sup>192</sup>

While the Government of Canada has not responded to the calls for a Commission of Inquiry as of 13 June 2023, the Minister of Sport told the Committee that “it is not a question of whether something should be done, but more importantly how it should be done.”<sup>193</sup> The Minister noted that the Government of Canada is currently assessing the best ways “to do justice to survivors in a safe, trauma-focused way, and then to take

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187 Library and Archives Canada, *Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athletic Performance*.

188 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1145 (Rob Koehler); and Canadian Women and Sport, *Written Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women*.

189 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1250 (Marie-Claude Asselin); et FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1655 (Lorraine Lafrenière).

190 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1135 (Gretchen Kerr).

191 Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, *Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport*.

192 Ibid.

193 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1100 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge).



stock of what has been accomplished and what remains to be done to ensure the safety of all participants in sport.”<sup>194</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

#### **Recommendation 14**

**With the goal of shedding light on how the sports system has allowed maltreatment of athletes of all levels to occur with no action taken, that the Government of Canada establish an independent national public inquiry into maltreatment in sports in Canada; that it appoint the head of the inquiry in the same way as the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner as set out in *Parliament of Canada Act*; that it ensure the development of the Terms of Reference of the inquiry be survivor-led and trauma-informed with the participation of survivors; that it utilize the process of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls’ pre-inquiry design process in drafting the Terms of Reference; and that it commit to implementing the recommendations made by the inquiry.**

### **Creating a Registry of Sanctioned Coaches**

During the study, witnesses called for the creation of a publicly accessible national coaches registry, or coordinated set of registries,<sup>195</sup> that includes information about coaches’ prior and current suspensions or disciplinary sanctions related to maltreatment, including child abuse.<sup>196</sup> The Committee heard that there is a need to improve transparency and accountability regarding the selection and retention of coaches in the Canadian sports system. For example, Amelia Cline noted that trust-based professions, such as teachers and lawyers, are:

... in such a position of power and such a position of trust with the public. It's recognized that [these professionals] give up some of [their] privacy rights in an effort to protect the public if [they] abuse that power. I see that being analogous to the position that coaches are in, especially in sports such as gymnastics. The people over whom they have

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194 Ibid.

195 Coaching Association of Canada, [\*Brief submitted to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women \(FEWO\): Women and Girls in Sport\*](#).

196 FEWO, [\*Evidence\*](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1145 (Amelia Cline); FEWO, [\*Evidence\*](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1235 (Guylaine Demers); and FEWO, [\*Evidence\*](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1230 (Marie-Claude Asselin).



power are these very vulnerable children. Why wouldn't we have a publicly available discipline record at that point?<sup>197</sup>

When discussing the tracking of coaches' disciplinary history, various witnesses explained that no national registry exists in Canada; however, some sports organizations do have such lists for their registered coaches.<sup>198</sup> For example, Amelia Cline explained that Gymnastics Canada has a public list of coaches who are currently suspended or banned. This list, however, does not include persons who have faced disciplinary sanctions in the past.<sup>199</sup> In addition, Kim Shore noted that the Gymnastics Canada's list of suspended or banned coaches does not specify the reason for the sanction. She said: "we don't know if it was [a financial aspect related to their membership rights], abuse of children or bullying and harassment of a peer."<sup>200</sup>

While some sports organizations require annual criminal record checks for all coaches or volunteers who will be working with children,<sup>201</sup> the Committee heard that the "background check system in Canada is woefully inadequate."<sup>202</sup> François Lemay explained that to have a criminal record, the behaviour must be "reported and [undergo] a police investigation," so certain maltreatment, such as "yelling, [and] borderline" behaviours are not being identified through this process.<sup>203</sup>

Lorraine Lafrenière, Chief Executive Officer of the Coaching Association of Canada, confirmed that there is no national coaching registry but described a "back-end screening" that the Coaching Association of Canada undertakes to select certain coaches who participate in the Olympics, Paralympics, Commonwealth, and Pan American Games as well as some national championships. This screening process covers only about 1,000 coaches and requires the mandated safe sport training, criminal record checks, and "two good references" which are then provided to the Canadian Olympic Committee or to NSOs.<sup>204</sup> Lorraine Lafrenière called for professional standards to be set for coaches in the Canadian sports system to remove abusers and prevent further

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197 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1120 (Amelia Cline).

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid.

200 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1125 (Kim Shore).

201 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1705 (François Lemay).

202 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1145 (Kim Shore).

203 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1705 (François Lemay).

204 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1735 (Lorraine Lafrenière).



maltreatment.<sup>205</sup> She added that a national registry is difficult to establish due to jurisdictional issues in Canada. Professions are typically regulated at the provincial and territorial levels and there never was “the buy in” to create a registry.<sup>206</sup>

Jurisdictional barriers can inadvertently allow coaches who are accused of, or disciplined for, maltreatment of athletes to continue coaching in other jurisdictions, sports or clubs.<sup>207</sup> Witnesses agreed that without a national registry,<sup>208</sup> or a way to share information between sports organizations in different jurisdictions,<sup>209</sup> coaches who face disciplinary measures for maltreatment may be able to move to other jurisdictions and/or sports to continue coaching, “[setting] the stage for more abuse.”<sup>210</sup> Marie-Claude Asselin explained that Canada’s legislative framework surrounding privacy laws limits “what we can do with a public registry” and noted that other countries in Europe, as well as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, are facing similar issues related to privacy laws.<sup>211</sup> The Sport Integrity Commissioner also concurred that a publicly available “registry of sanctions” is required, but privacy legislation across jurisdictions remain a problem. She stated:

[W]e support it, and we strongly believe that a national registry of individuals under sanction is needed. That needs to be a registry that is publicly searchable. As of today, our office has a mandate and maintains a sanctions registry. That said, there are challenges in terms of making the information in this registry publicly available, because of the current privacy legislation across the various jurisdictions.<sup>212</sup>

The Minister of Sport explained that the federal government is exploring ways to create a public registry of sanctioned coaches to ensure that those who are found to have

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205 Ibid., 1720.

206 Ibid., 1735.

207 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women pertaining to Women and Girls in Sport*.

208 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1700 (Lorraine Lafrenière); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1230 (Marie-Claude Asselin); and Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women pertaining to Women and Girls in Sport*.

209 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1705 (François Lemay).

210 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1700 (Lorraine Lafrenière).

211 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1230 and 1235 (Marie-Claude Asselin).

212 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1140 and 1145 (Sarah-Ève Pelletier).

engaged in maltreatment of athletes cannot continue coaching in any jurisdiction in Canada.<sup>213</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### Recommendation 15

**That the Government of Canada work with provincial and territorial governments to create a national registry of individuals sanctioned in relation to maltreatment in sports that is publicly searchable and that, in the interim, it amend the mandate of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada so that it can maintain a public registry of imposed sanctions based on the prohibited behaviours in the *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport*.**

## Providing Training and Education to All Individuals in the Sports System

**“[S]afe sport requires more than developmentally appropriate and technically sound programs. It requires a focus on mandatory safe sport training and anti-racism and cultural awareness training for everyone in sport. Here, we stress “everyone”, meaning the participants, the athletes, the parents, the coaches, the officials, the administrators and the leaders. That was loud and clear: It was everyone.”**

FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1220 (Debra Gassewitz, President and Chief Executive Officer, Sport Information Resource Centre).

Witnesses underscored the need for improved and expanded safe sport education and training for athletes, coaches, parents, and any other individuals involved in the Canadian sports system.<sup>214</sup> Training and education topics that were highlighted by

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213 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1115 (Hon. Pascale St-Onge).

214 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1255 (Christopher Winter); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1230 (Richard H. McLaren); Coaching Association of Canada, *Brief submitted to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO): Women and Girls in Sport*; and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1655 (Lorraine Lafrenière).



witnesses ranged from safety in sport, gender identities and equality, bodily autonomy, consent, identifying and addressing maltreatment (including sexual harassment, abuse, rape culture<sup>215</sup> and grooming), and bystander training.<sup>216</sup> Witnesses emphasized the importance of ongoing professional development for coaches and administrators to ensure: accountability of behaviour; that new information is delivered adequately; and that there are “checks and balances” throughout a coach’s career.<sup>217</sup> Lanni Marchant asserted that “trauma-informed practices are of vital importance.”<sup>218</sup> She explained that speaking up about abuse and maltreatment requires immense courage, so every individual involved in sports must have the appropriate knowledge and understanding of how to respond, in a trauma-informed way, to an athlete disclosing this information.<sup>219</sup>

In reference to training and education about maltreatment, witnesses emphasized certain considerations and recommended appropriate approaches to this education and training. For example, witnesses spoke about:

- education related to integrity, ethics and inappropriate/appropriate treatment and athletes’ rights, which should be mandatory for coaches, federation officials, and parents, as well as children of all ages who are in sports, as well as resources and services for individuals who experience maltreatment of any kind;<sup>220</sup>

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215 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1200 (Léa Clermont-Dion); and Canadian Federation of University Women, [Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women \(FEWO\) for its study on the Participation of Women & Girls in Sports](#).

216 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1115 (Wendy Glover); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1235 (Shannon Moore); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1635 (Ciara McCormack); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1120 (Léa Clermont-Dion).

217 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1130 (Wendy Glover); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1730 (Lorraine Lafrenière).

218 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1635 (Lanni Marchant).

219 Ibid.

220 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1105 and 1120 (Geneviève Jeanson); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1130 (Jennifer Fraser); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1700 (Karen O’Neill, Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Paralympic Committee); Jennifer Fraser, [Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study of the Women and Girls in Sport](#); and Canadian Federation of University Women, [Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women \(FEWO\) for its study on the Participation of Women & Girls in Sports](#).

- the importance of explaining “grooming” to athletes of all ages, and the ways in which coaches may engage in these behaviours with young athletes;<sup>221</sup>
- the provision of bystander training to ensure that all individuals involved in sports are aware of adequate and appropriate responses to witnessing all forms of maltreatment;<sup>222</sup>
- the need to understand power dynamics and imbalances in coach–athlete relationships;<sup>223</sup>
- the meaning of healthy masculinities and the ways in which unhealthy masculinities can affect sports culture in harmful ways;<sup>224</sup>
- parental participation to ensure that parents understand what constitutes maltreatment, and are aware of the resources and reporting avenues available;<sup>225</sup>
- the delivery of content and information in ways that are adapted to different groups of people, for example young children, teens, and parents, and that this delivery includes “continuous follow-up;”<sup>226</sup> and
- federal leadership related to mandatory safety and integrity training through NSOs, while respecting the jurisdictions of the provinces and territories.<sup>227</sup>

When speaking about education and training, witnesses acknowledged a jurisdictional challenge in Canada, as education and training typically falls within provincial and territorial jurisdictions. However, the Committee heard that education efforts should be

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221 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1205 (Allison Forsyth).

222 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1655 (Andrea Proske); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1740 (Karen O'Neill).

223 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1205 (Amelia Cline).

224 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1235 (Shannon Moore).

225 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1700 (François Lemay).

226 Ibid., 1710; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1130 (Jennifer Fraser); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1740 (Andrea Proske).

227 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1135 (Geneviève Jeanson).



coordinated and that there should be a role for the federal government in these efforts.<sup>228</sup>

Finally, some witnesses spoke to the Committee about education and training related to sexual violence and abuse. They noted that young athletes may be vulnerable to sexual abuse from coaches or other authority figures in sports, as there is a lack of awareness and understanding of this type of violence and of the ways in which it manifests in sports environments and relationships.<sup>229</sup> According to witnesses, individual athletes and teams of all ages, as well as coaches and administrators, must be taught about sexual assault, sexual abuse, consent and bodily autonomy.<sup>230</sup> Additionally, training, education, and national awareness campaigns must include resources and services that are available to survivors of sexual violence.<sup>231</sup> In a written brief, the Canadian Women's Foundation highlighted the “chronic insufficient government funding for sexual assault centres” as a barrier to the provision of adequate sexual violence services, including education and awareness programs.<sup>232</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 16**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, continue funding initiatives and resources that support the physical and emotional health and safety of women and girls in sports, including training for coaches and other professionals, mental health support, legal support and education and awareness programs.**

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228 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1235 (Guylaine Demers).

229 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1145 (Jennifer Fraser); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1 December 2022, 1715 (François Lemay); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1120 (Geneviève Jeanson).

230 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1205 (Amelia Cline); Canadian Women's Foundation, [Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women \(FEWO\) for its study on the Participation of Women & Girls in Sport](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1245 (Shannon Moore); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1115 (Léa Clermont-Dion).

231 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1120 (Geneviève Jeanson); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1115 (Léa Clermont-Dion).

232 Canadian Women's Foundation, [Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women \(FEWO\) for its study on the Participation of Women & Girls in Sport](#).

#### **Recommendation 17**

**That the Government of Canada work with provincial and territorial governments to implement mandatory training on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sports for all coaches, administrators, and other professionals involved in sports organizations, and that the training be based on the *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent Abuse and Maltreatment in Sport*.**

#### **Recommendation 18**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories, and Indigenous peoples, work with organizations that fall outside the mandate of the Canadian sports system that offer training and education to sports participants (children and adults), parents, volunteers, coaches, and administrators on maltreatment in sports, including on:**

- **all types of maltreatment;**
- **grooming signs, bodily autonomy and consent;**
- **power dynamics in sports; and**
- **bystander intervention and adequate and appropriate responses to witnessing all forms of maltreatment.**

#### **Recommendation 19**

**That the Government of Canada ensure athletes receive information about their rights and available services they can access should they experience maltreatment in sports.**

#### **Recommendation 20**

**That the Government of Canada specify required training and establish a national review process to assess whether a national sport organization meets the training requirements for athletes, coaches, and support staff as a prerequisite to receive federal funding under the Sport Support Program.**



## Diversity and Inclusion in Canadian Sports

**“Diversity and equity inclusion in sport is not just the right thing to do; it makes sport better. It's more accountable. When there are more and different voices, faces and people involved in sport, people are more accountable to themselves and to a sport itself. Frankly, the teams and sports that take on this kind of work are simply better, and they're more successful.”**

FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1120  
(Kurt Weaver, Chief Operations Officer, You Can Play, Inc.).

Many witnesses underscored the importance of improving diversity and inclusion in sports in Canada, in particular witnesses highlighted that gender inequality persists in the Canadian sports system. Women’s and girls’ participation in sports in Canada is below that of men and boys,<sup>233</sup> and the gender gap widens for women and girls with intersecting identities. Belle Bailey, Assistant, Sport Program Development, at Indigenous Sport and Wellness Ontario, explained:

[G]irls' sport participation rates decrease as they enter adolescence, leading to a dropout rate of one in three girls leaving sport by their teens. By ages 19 to 24, that number is reduced to a 34% participation rate. For [I]ndigenous women and girls, this disparity is even worse, with only a 24% participation rate starting in their teenage years.<sup>234</sup>

Karen O’Neill, Chief Executive Officer of the Paralympic Committee, agreed that the flagship athlete discovery program—the Paralympian Search—was “consistently yielding significantly lower participation from women.” She explained that this reflects the systematic underrepresentation of women with disabilities in sports and that efforts have been made to create a safe and welcoming space for women and girls in parasport.<sup>235</sup>

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233 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1235 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves).

234 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1225 (Belle Bailey, Assistant, Sport Program Development, Indigenous Sport and Wellness Ontario).

235 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1700 (Karen O'Neill).



The Committee heard that an integral aspect of achieving gender equality—and women’s and girls’ full inclusion—in sports is ensuring their safety.<sup>236</sup> Some NSOs, such as Volleyball Canada and Athletics Canada, are making efforts to improve safety, diversity, inclusion, and equality in their sports programs through independent reviews.<sup>237</sup> Mark Eckert, President and Chief Executive Officer of Volleyball Canada, told the Committee that “culture audits”—or independent reviews that examine the culture and environment—of sport programs are just as important as financial audits and that these should be conducted on a regular basis.<sup>238</sup> Christopher Winter, Director of Domestic Programs and Safe Sport for Athletics Canada, agreed that sports organizations can create environments that ensure athletes’ safety, gender equity and equal representation.<sup>239</sup> Canadian Women and Sport called for permanent federal funding targeted for gender equity and safety in sports to support organizations in their long-term efforts towards cultural and systemic changes.<sup>240</sup>

Witnesses explained that safety in sport requires accountability, as well as equitable gender representation and opportunities for all, at all levels of sport.<sup>241</sup> Belle Bailey called for an increase in support to “build sport pathways and career pathways” to increase the number of women athletes, coaches, personal trainers and managers in sports in Canada, as these women will serve as role models for young women and girls.<sup>242</sup> Other witnesses agreed that sports in Canada—and women’s and girls’ participation in sports—would benefit from an increased presence of women in all roles,

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236 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1220 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1720 (Erica Gavel, PhD candidate, Canadian Paralympic Committee).

237 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1210 (Christopher Winter); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1205 (Mark Eckert, President and Chief Executive Officer, Volleyball Canada).

238 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1205 (Mark Eckert).

239 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1210 (Christopher Winter).

240 Canadian Women and Sport, [Written Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#).

241 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1220 and 1235 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1240 (Christina Ruddy, Director of Government Relations and National Strategy Coordinator, Indigenous Sport and Wellness Ontario); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1120 (Kurt Weaver); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1700 (Karen O’Neill); and Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, [Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport](#).

242 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1225 (Belle Bailey).



including in leadership and as coaches at the grassroots and national levels.<sup>243</sup> A representative from the Department of Canadian Heritage added that diversity in leadership, such as on corporate boards and among coaches, improves safety in sports and sport culture. Targeted federal investments in 2019 of \$30 million for gender equity have contributed to an increase in the representation of women in these roles.<sup>244</sup>

The Committee also heard that the representation of diverse women athletes, such as Indigenous women, in the media can influence women's and girls' participation in sports. A witness noted that women and girls need role models in sports; representation matters because "what you cannot see, you cannot become."<sup>245</sup> Donna Gall, a professor and filmmaker who appeared as an individual, explained:

The systemic and persistent lack of media coverage contributes to the perception that women and girls in sport are less worthy of an audience's attention, literally less valuable in terms of ratings. It perpetuates the idea that women and girls have no legitimate role in sport and puts the safety of female athletes at risk.<sup>246</sup>

She suggested increased funding to improve media coverage of women's sports to ensure that they are covered equitably with men's sports, are shown during primetime slots, and that their value is meaningfully recognized.<sup>247</sup> Finally, she noted that women and girls must be able to share their stories through various platforms, showcasing and celebrating their wide range of experiences in sports, from their hardships to their triumphs.<sup>248</sup>

In addition to under-representation and absence of safety in sport cultures and environments,<sup>249</sup> witnesses highlighted various barriers to women's and girls' participation in sports in Canada. Among these barriers were:

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243 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1205 (Mark Eckert); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1235 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1210 (Christopher Winter); and Brams United Girls Soccer Club, [Brief](#).

244 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2023, 1215 (Isabelle Mondou).

245 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1225 (Belle Bailey).

246 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 30 January 2023, 1210 (Donna Gall, Professor and Filmmaker, as an individual).

247 Ibid.

248 Ibid.

249 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1225 (Belle Bailey); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1235 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves).

- conscious and unconscious bias based on gender, race, and indigeneity;
- perceived inequality and perceived competency;<sup>250</sup>
- lack of information and understanding related to the benefits and importance of sport for girls and women;<sup>251</sup>
- body image and confidence;<sup>252</sup>
- bullying;<sup>253</sup>
- poverty and food insecurity;
- geographic location and access to opportunities and sports facilities, including at the professional level;<sup>254</sup>
- lack of sustained and ongoing federal funding, that is not based on specific projects;<sup>255</sup>
- recruiting and supporting women coaches to ensure they are present at the national team and high-performance levels;<sup>256</sup> and
- lack of access to other services that facilitate participation in sports, such as transportation and child care.<sup>257</sup>

Witnesses added that while some claimed that the “success of outstanding athletes” inspires participation in sports, data has shown that this may in fact have the reverse effect. Some research has indicated that there may be a relationship between the focus

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250 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1225 (Belle Bailey).

251 Brams United Girls Soccer Club, *Brief*.

252 Sport for Life, *Improving Sport Experiences for Women & Girls through Quality Sport, Long-Term Athlete Development and Physical Literacy: Written Submission for the Study on the Participation of Women and Girls in Sport*.

253 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1235 (Allison Sandmeyer-Graves).

254 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 21 November 2022, 1240 (Christina Ruddy); and Brams United Girls Soccer Club, *Brief*.

255 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 5 December 2022, 1115 (Guylaine Demers).

256 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 12 December 2022, 1210 (Christopher Winter).

257 Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, *Written Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO): Study on Women and Girls in Sport*.



on and funding for medals, and the decline in sports participation.<sup>258</sup> In a written brief, Teresa Fowler and Shannon D.M. Moore explained that by positioning sports in the federal Heritage portfolio, the purpose of sports has been tied to nation building. This has contributed to the creation of an environment of “win at all costs” which places the nation over athletes’ safety and has “invited abuse.”<sup>259</sup>

In a written brief, Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd explained that the “*Physical Activity and Sport Act* and the Canadian Sport Policies 1.0 and 2.0 give equal weight to participation and excellence, in practice, the focus and resources have been almost exclusively placed on 'excellence'.”<sup>260</sup> As such, they recommended that the federal government “realign the funding of Canadian sport” to give equal weight to participation and excellence, as set out in the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* and Canadian Sport Policies 1.0 and 2.0.<sup>261</sup> Regarding performance funding, the Committee heard that compensation inequalities still persist. Olympic athletes can receive \$10,000, \$15,000 and \$20,000 for bronze, silver and gold medals respectively, whereas there is no equivalent performance funding for paralympic athletes in Canada. Initiatives are underway to honour the performance accomplishments of paralympic athletes after the 2024 Paralympic Games.<sup>262</sup>

Regarding efforts to increase diversity, inclusion, and women’s and girls’ participation in sports in Canada, witnesses made several suggestions to the Committee, including:

- creating a federal task force in collaboration with multi-sector and multi-level partners to make recommendations related to improving and tracking gender equality across all sports and all levels in Canada;<sup>263</sup>
- supporting existing community recreation and sport initiatives that remove barriers for women’s and girls’ participation in sport,<sup>264</sup> and

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258 Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, [\*Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport.\*](#)

259 Teresa Fowler and Shannon D.M. Moore, [\*Heritage or Health?: Recentring Sport in Canada.\*](#)

260 Gretchen Kerr and Bruce Kidd, [\*Ensuring Full and Safe Participation by Canadian Girls and Women, Fair Athlete Representation, and Good Governance in Canadian Sport.\*](#)

261 Ibid.

262 FEWO, [\*Evidence\*](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2 February 2023, 1745 (Karen O'Neill).

263 Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, [\*Written Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women \(FEWO\): Study on Women and Girls in Sport.\*](#)

264 Ibid.

- funding initiatives that support municipalities and not-for-profit sports and recreation facilities to “enhance and retrofit facilities to be physically and emotionally safe and more inclusive.”<sup>265</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

**Recommendation 21**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, work to facilitate more professional sport opportunities for women and girls in Canada.**

**Recommendation 22**

**That the Government of Canada provide funding for greater coverage of women’s sports, including documentaries, to increase visibility of all aspects of the athlete experience.**

**Recommendation 23**

**That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories, and Indigenous peoples, build sport pathways and career pathways for athletes from underrepresented groups including women, girls, and gender diverse individuals from Black, Indigenous and People of Colour communities, including encouraging more women to pursue leadership roles.**

**Recommendation 24**

**That the Government of Canada continue investing in gender equity in sports, notably in projects that reduce barriers for women and girls to participate in sports, including:**

- socioeconomic conditions;
- lack of access to sports facilities, including community and municipal facilities;
- discrimination, sexism, racism and ableism;
- gender-based violence; and
- lack of health literacy.

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265    Ibid.



## CONCLUSION

During this study, the Committee learned that maltreatment takes different forms and can include psychological, sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. Maltreatment can also take the form of discrimination. Certain groups of athletes are more likely to experience maltreatment or need protection. This is the case for women and girls, who are more likely to report experiencing maltreatment than men and boys.

Maltreatment in sports is an ongoing problem reported by survivors for decades. This report highlights various measures that can be taken to protect women and girls against maltreatment in sports. The Committee put forward 24 recommendations to help eliminate maltreatment in sports in Canada.

First, the Committee believes that it should be a priority for the Government of Canada to establish an independent national public inquiry to shed light on how the sports system has allowed maltreatment of athletes of all levels to occur with no action taken. With regards to the inquiry, the Committee thinks that the Government of Canada should:

- appoint the head of the inquiry in the same way as the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner as set out in the *Parliament of Canada Act*;
- ensure the development of the Terms of Reference of the inquiry be survivor-led and trauma-informed with the participation of survivors;
- utilize the process of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' pre-inquiry design process in drafting the Terms of Reference; and
- commit to implementing the recommendations made by the inquiry.

Secondly, the Committee believes a rethink of the sports governance system in Canada is needed. The Committee recommends that change be made targeting:

- the improvement of OSIC processes for managing complaints and for sport environment assessments;
- increased access to independent maltreatment complaint mechanisms in Canada;

- an oversight of sports organizations' funding use and ways they process maltreatment allegations;
- the creation of a publicly accessible national coaches registry aiming to prevent coaches subject to sanctions for maltreatment being able to coach in another sport or to coach in a different province or territory; and
- efforts to increase women's and girls' participation as well as gender equality and inclusion in sport.

Finally, the Committee thinks it is essential to improve and expand safe sport education and training for athletes, coaches, parents, and any other individuals involved in the sports system.

The Committee calls on the Government of Canada to implement these recommendations rapidly.





# APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS TO SUBMIT A COMPLAINT OR A REPORT TO THE OFFICE OF THE SPORT INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

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**Table 1—Submitting a Complaint or Report to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner**

<b>What is a complaint?</b>	An individual who files a complaint agrees to act as a complainant throughout the complaint management process.
<b>What is a report?</b>	An individual who files a report may choose to remain anonymous or to not act as a complainant throughout the complaint management process. A report leads to an initial review, but does not necessarily engage the formal complaint management process.
<b>Is it possible to remain anonymous?</b>	Yes, but only for a report. Complaints cannot be submitted anonymously. However, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner may not be able to follow up on information provided in an anonymous report.
<b>What information must be included in the form?</b>	<p>At a minimum, the complaint/report form requires the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• type of report (complaint or report);</li> <li>• type of involvement in the incident (victim, witness, person who heard about it, etc.);</li> <li>• identity of the sport organization;</li> <li>• sport level (national, provincial, university, etc.);</li> <li>• details about the incident;</li> <li>• respondent’s role; and</li> <li>• contact information for the individual submitting the report or complaint, if it is not an anonymous report.</li> </ul> <p>Further details, such as supporting documents for the complaint or report, may be provided but are optional.</p>

Sources: Table prepared by the Library of Parliament using information obtained from Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, [Report Online](#).



## APPENDIX B: OVERVIEW OF THE OFFICE OF THE SPORT INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER'S COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT PROCESS

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**Table 1—Complaint Management Process Overview**

Step	Description
1. Initial review	When a complaint is received, a case file is opened. The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC) examines the complaint to ensure that all necessary information is provided, with no omissions that would prevent the process from continuing. The OSIC must also determine whether the complaint process should be expedited.
2. Preliminary assessment	The OSIC must conduct a preliminary assessment of every complaint received. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the complaint procedurally to determine what is the appropriate process for it and whether, on its face, it indicates a potential violation of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) by a respondent who is under the OSIC's authority.
3. Preliminary assessment outcome	<p>Preliminary assessment outcomes include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the complaint is accepted and, by agreement of the parties, moves to mediation;</li> <li>• the complaint is accepted and moves to the investigation stage; or</li> <li>• the complaint is not admissible before the OSIC, and the case is closed (if appropriate and the complainant consents, the complaint may be referred to another organization).</li> </ul>

Step	Description
4. Initiation of an investigation and assignment of an independent investigator	<p>An investigation may be initiated following the preliminary assessment or the mediated outcome of a complaint. The OSIC is responsible for determining the scope of the investigation, developing the investigation plan and mandate, and assigning the independent investigator. When assigning an investigator, the OSIC must consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• absence of conflict of interest or apprehension of bias;</li> <li>• availability;</li> <li>• geographical location;</li> <li>• official languages; and</li> <li>• areas of experience, expertise and specific skills desired, given the nature or circumstances of the complaint.</li> </ul> <p>The complainant and the respondent have the right to challenge an investigator’s role with the OSIC on the grounds of conflict of interest or reasonable apprehension of bias. The OSIC assesses this challenge, and if it believes that the investigator cannot effectively fulfill their role, it hires another independent investigator to carry out the investigation.</p>
5. Review and analysis	<p>The independent investigator gathers and verifies the evidence. They then review all of the evidence and make findings of fact using the “balance of probability” standard. The independent investigator then applies the UCCMS or any other applicable code or policy to the facts and determine whether a breach of the relevant code or policy has occurred (whether the complaint is substantiated, partially substantiated or unsubstantiated).</p>
6. Investigation report	<p>After the review and analysis, the independent investigator submits a written investigation report to the OSIC. This report must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an overview of the process used to investigate the allegations;</li> <li>• a summary of the evidence obtained and the resulting findings of fact;</li> <li>• an analysis of the facts about each of the allegations with respect to the UCCMS or any other applicable policy or code;</li> <li>• conclusions – whether an alleged violation of the UCCMS or any other applicable policy or code is substantiated or unsubstantiated; and</li> <li>• any mitigating or aggravating circumstances identified.</li> </ul> <p>The OSIC reviews the investigation report to ensure that it contains the required elements and that the investigation was conducted in accordance with its policies and procedures.</p>
7. Communication of the investigation report	<p>The OSIC provides the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes (DSO) with the investigation report, along with its recommendations regarding sanctions. The parties to the investigation receive a copy of the final investigation report from the DSO.</p>

Step	Description
8. Challenge of a finding	Any party who objects to a step or procedure during the course of an investigation must notify the OSIC and may notify the independent investigator. Such an objection does not constitute a challenge. A challenge regarding an investigation step or procedure must be made to the Safeguarding Tribunal with respect to the investigation report's finding(s) once it or they have been communicated by the DSO.
9. Investigation outcome	<p>If the investigation's findings are not challenged, an investigation may have one of the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mediation, with the consent of the parties;</li> <li>• sanctions imposed by the DSO, in the case of a substantiated allegation of a violation of the UCCMS or any other relevant policy or code;</li> <li>• closure of the complaint by the OSIC, in the case of an unsubstantiated allegation of a violation of the UCCMS or any other relevant policy or code; or</li> <li>• initiation of other applicable procedures by the parties and/or the OSIC.</li> </ul>

Sources: Table prepared by the Library of Parliament using information obtained from Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC), [\*OSIC Guidelines Regarding Initial Review & Preliminary Assessment of Complaints\*](#); and OSIC, [\*OSIC Guidelines Regarding Investigation of Complaints\*](#).



## APPENDIX C LIST OF WITNESSES

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The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p><b>As an individual</b></p> <p>Léa Clermont-Dion, Producer, Author and Political Scientist</p> <p>Teresa Fowler, Assistant Professor, Concordia University of Edmonton</p> <p>Shannon Moore, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba</p>	2022/11/21	40
<p><b>Canadian Women and Sport</b></p> <p>Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, Chief Executive Officer</p>	2022/11/21	40
<p><b>Global Athlete</b></p> <p>Rob Koehler, Director General</p>	2022/11/21	40
<p><b>Gymnasts for Change Canada</b></p> <p>Amelia Cline, Lawyer and Co-Founder</p> <p>Kim Shore, Co-Founder</p>	2022/11/21	40
<p><b>Indigenous Sport and Wellness Ontario</b></p> <p>Belle Bailey, Assistant, Sport Program Development</p> <p>Christina Ruddy, Director of Government Relations and National Strategy Coordinator</p>	2022/11/21	40
<p><b>As an individual</b></p> <p>Myriam Da Silva Rondeau</p> <p>François Lemay</p> <p>Ciara McCormack</p>	2022/12/01	43
<p><b>Coaching Association of Canada</b></p> <p>Lorraine Lafrenière, Chief Executive Officer</p>	2022/12/01	43

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>As an individual</b> Guylaine Demers, Professor, Department of Physical Education, Université Laval Jennifer Fraser, Author and Educational Consultant Wendy Glover, Secondary School Teacher and Athlete Development Consultant Geneviève Jeanson, Public Speaker and Consultant	2022/12/05	44
<b>ITP Sport and Recreation Inc.</b> Allison Forsyth, Chief Operating Officer	2022/12/05	44
<b>Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada</b> Marie-Claude Asselin, Chief Executive Officer	2022/12/05	44
<b>As an individual</b> Léa Clermont-Dion, Documentary Filmmaker and Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre for the Study of Learning Performance, Concordia University Waneek Horn-Miller, Mohawk Olympian, Canadian Hall of Famer	2022/12/12	46
<b>Athletics Canada</b> Christopher Winter, Director, Domestic Programs and Safe Sport	2022/12/12	46
<b>Sport Information Resource Centre</b> Debra Gassewitz, President and Chief Executive Officer	2022/12/12	46
<b>Volleyball Canada</b> Mark Eckert, President and Chief Executive Officer	2022/12/12	46
<b>You Can Play, Inc.</b> Kurt Weaver, Chief Operations Officer	2022/12/12	46
<b>As an individual</b> Donna Gall, Professor and Filmmaker Gretchen Kerr, Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, University of Toronto	2023/01/30	47
<b>Gymnastics Canada</b> Ian Moss, Chief Executive Officer	2023/01/30	47



<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Juripop</b> Sophie Gagnon, Executive Director	2023/01/30	47
<b>McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc.</b> Richard H. McLaren, Chief Executive Officer and Professor of Law	2023/01/30	47
<b>Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner</b> Sarah-Ève Pelletier, Commissioner, Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner	2023/01/30	47
<b>As an individual</b> Lanni Marchant, Olympian, Athlete Advocate  Andrea Neil, Former Canadian Women's National Soccer Team Player and Assistant Coach	2023/02/02	48
<b>AthletesCAN</b> Andrea Proske, Vice-President	2023/02/02	48
<b>Canadian Paralympic Committee</b> Erica Gavel, PhD candidate and Vice-Chair, Canadian Paralympic Committee Athlete Council  Michelle Killins, Director, Paralympic Performance and Pathways  Karen O'Neill, Chief Executive Officer	2023/02/02	48
<b>Swimming Canada</b> Ahmed El-Awadi, Chief Executive Officer	2023/02/02	48
<b>World Association of Icehockey Players Unions</b> Randall Gumbley, Consultant  Sandra Slater, President, North America Division	2023/02/02	48

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Department of Canadian Heritage</b> Jaimie Earley, Deputy Director General, Sport Canada Isabelle Mondou, Deputy Minister Emmanuelle Sajous, Assistant Deputy Minister, Sport, Major Events and Commemorations Hon. Pascale St-Onge, P.C., M.P., Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	2023/02/13	51

## APPENDIX D LIST OF BRIEFS

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The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

**Bhagwandin, Anthony**

**Brams United Girls Soccer Club**

**Canadian Federation of University Women**

**Canadian Paralympic Committee**

**Canadian Parks and Recreation Association**

**Canadian Women and Sport**

**Canadian Women's Foundation**

**Coaching Association of Canada**

**Donnelly, Peter**

**Ending Violence Association of Canada**

**Fowler, Teresa**

**Fraser, Jennifer**

**Global Athlete**

**Gymnasts for Change Canada**

**Kerr, Gretchen**

**Kidd, Bruce**

**Lemay, François**

**McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc.**

**Moore, Shannon**

**Québec contre les violences sexuelles**

**Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada**

**Sport for Life**



# REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 40, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 61, 62, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71 and 72](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Vecchio  
Chair



## **Supplementary Report on behalf of the Conservative Members of the Status of Women committee**

On behalf of the Conservative Members of the Status of Women committee, we submit this supplementary report to the committee's study on Women in Sport focusing on the abuse and maltreatment of athletes.

Across Canada, hundreds of athletes stepped forward to share their concerns with the sport system in Canada and its lack of accountability and transparency. Testimony shared with the committee included body shaming, grooming, sexual misconduct and abuse, physical abuse and coercive behavior. Witnesses testified that allegations brought forward to sporting organizations were not addressed or investigated. The committee heard from witnesses who were forced to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements and others who are signatories to an ongoing class-action lawsuit.

Many witnesses expressed the need for this government to conduct an "independent, trauma-informed, survivor-led inquiry into maltreatment in Canadian sport." The priority of this proposed solution is independence from conflict of interest and bias. Athletes shared their lack of trust with the current processes within their organizations and with the complaint mechanism and financial links to Sport Canada.

Although many Canadian Sporting Organizations have signed the Universal Code of conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, it is not clear that these organizations have fully addressed either the claims made against them or developed a reform process to improve their governance. According to an access to information request, the Government of Canada re-established funding to Gymnastics Canada and Hockey Canada once they signed the Universal Code<sup>i</sup>. Conservatives, however, question why the Government of Canada re-established funding to these organizations as multiple allegations continued to emerge in national media<sup>ii</sup> and through witness testimony in both the Heritage Committee and the Status of Women Committee.

Under the current government, there is an agreement that organizations must sign the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS). According to the Sport Integrity Commissioners:

"The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) is the core document that sets harmonized rules to be adopted by sport organizations that receive funding from the Government of Canada to advance a respectful sport culture that delivers quality, inclusive, accessible, welcoming and safe sport experiences."<sup>iii</sup>

The UCCMS is a code of conduct that sets out rules which promote inclusive, safe, and welcoming sport experiences. By signing the Consent Form, Participants agree to abide by the UCCMS. Participants also agree to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Sport Dispute

Resolution Centre of Canada (“SDRCC”) and related services and processes which relate to the administration and enforcement of the UCCMS.

Athletes have shared their concerns of allegations being brought forward to organizations that were never acted upon:

According to Ciara McCormick “Numerous administrators are implicated in the Birarda cover-up, but few have faced any real consequences for their actions.”<sup>iv</sup>

Our committee heard that the trust between athletes and organizations has been broken. For example, Andrea Neil shared her disappointment with Canada Soccer “Canada Soccer could not be counted upon. Our national federation had completely failed at safeguarding.”<sup>v</sup>

The Office of the Sports Integrity Commissioner is an important mechanism established by the government to address maltreatment. Unfortunately, many survivors question the independence of this authority.

As Myriam Da Silva Rondeau stated “When athletes say there’s no system to protect them, they aren’t referring to the number of resources or programs because there are a lot of them. They mean there is no authority to hold people accountable for their actions or to impose consequences, something that’s completely nonexistent in the sport system in Canada”<sup>vi</sup>

Conservatives recommend that:

A) Acknowledging the extensive and courageous testimony the Standing Committee on the Status of Women received over the course of our study, that the terms of reference for any inquiry include an examination of

- i. The failure of sporting bodies to report or address breaches or alleged breaches of the criminal code to the proper authorities
- ii. The manner in which law enforcement authorities deal with allegations of criminality in the sport context
- iii. How sports organisations can improve their ability to address and sanction patterns of abusive behaviour
- iv. Specific legislative changes which could improve sports governance and improve legal protections for athletes in both professional and amateur contexts

B) That the Government of Canada, working with provincial and territorial governments, national sport organizations, and coaches certification resources, create a centralized registry for coaches who have been sanctioned by a sporting or regulatory body for conduct of an inappropriate or abusive nature.



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<sup>i</sup> Inquiry of Ministry to the Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, The Honourable Pascale St-Onge, Question Q-1285 submitted by Mrs, Vecchio (March 2, 2023)

<sup>ii</sup> For example, see the following articles:

Lori Ewing “Gymnastics Canada has federal funding suspended until it signs with safe sport office” *National Post*, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-gymnasts-ask-sport-minister-to-suspend-government-funding-to-their-sport> (21 July 2022)

Christian Paas-Lang “Federal Government Says it Will Restore Funding to Hockey Canada-with Conditions” *CBCNews*, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/hockey-canada-federal-government-funding-restored-1.6812492#:~:text=Hockey%20Canada%20received%20%247.7%20million,revenue%2C%20according%20to%20government%20statistics>. (16 April 2023)

<sup>iii</sup> Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, “Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport” [The UCCMS \(sportintegritycommissioner.ca\)](https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca). (31 May 2022)

<sup>iv</sup> Ciara McCormick, as quoted in Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Minutes of Evidence, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, no. 43 (1 December 2022)

<sup>v</sup> Andrea Neil, as quoted in Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Minutes of Evidence, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1st session, no.48 (2 February 2023)

<sup>vi</sup> Myriam Da Silva Rondeau, as quoted in Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Minutes of Evidence, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1st session, no. 43 (1 December 2022)

## **Bloc Québécois complementary opinion**

Over the course of this study, the Bloc Québécois has done no more than carry the voice of thousands of athletes and victims. Unfortunately, this present report and its conclusions do not fully reflect the wishes so strongly expressed by many witnesses during the hearings of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women ("the Committee") on the study of women and girls in sport. We recognize the crucial importance of the testimony heard during the Committee's consultations. It is with a positive mindset and a renewed commitment to our original objective that the Bloc Québécois writes this supplementary opinion. We aim to reaffirm the fundamental demands made by victims and the vast majority of witnesses, as we firmly believe that the time has come to take concrete actions to address their needs and concerns.

Throughout this study, the Committee heard from over forty witnesses from all sectors of the sports community in the country. According to the data collected, more than 80 % of these witnesses told the Committee they wanted the federal government to launch an independent public inquiry to shed light on mistreatment (abuse and maltreatment) in sports environments across the country.

We believe that the Committee should not prescribe solutions before it has conducted an independent public inquiry. It is imperative that we give all necessary latitude to the future commissioners of the inquiry and to the victims who will contribute and participate to this work. It is also essential that this inquiry be trauma-informed and conducted with the participation of survivor groups. It's not up to us, federal legislators, to dictate the conclusions and solutions to a problem that is deeply rooted in every part of the country's sports system; it's up to the independent public inquiry to undertake this task.

Consequently, the Bloc Québécois proposes only one recommendation:

That the Government of Canada launch an independent public inquiry into maltreatment and abuse in sport pursuant to Part I of the *Inquiries Act*, and that it ensures that the following elements are met:

- that the appointment of the Commissioner of the inquiry be endorsed by the House of Commons;

- that such inquiry be conducted with the participation of survivor groups, that is trauma informed and that it includes public hearings; and
- that the inquiry's mandate includes, but not be limited to, the review of:
  - existing structures of the sport system, including organizations above the level of national sport organizations, such as Own the Podium, the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Sport Information Resource Centre, Sport Canada, etc.;
  - agreements with sport clubs, provincial and territorial sport organizations, national sport organizations and professional sport teams;
  - the use of non-disclosure agreements in the sport context;
  - how law enforcement authorities deal with potential criminal activity in the sport context; and
  - how patterns of abusive behavior are assessed and sanctioned, as opposed to individual complaints and incidents.