

# TRANSFORMING SPORT IN CANADA: TIME FOR ACTION

## FINAL REPORT

Future of Sport in Canada Commission

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Lise Maisonneuve, Commissioner

Noni Classen, Special Advisor

Andrew Pipe, Special Advisor





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# Preface:

## Message from the Commissioner and Special Advisors

Canada is a sporting nation. Every day Canadians organize and participate in sport and physical activity, whether as athletes, coaches, officials, parents, spectators, administrators or volunteers. These experiences are central to who we are as individuals, families, communities and as a country. They are a vital part of Canadian culture, contributing significantly to health, community cohesion, economic growth, and national pride. They foster inclusion, personal development, and social connections across diverse populations.

Canadians experience sport in countless ways and settings — from learning to skate on backyard rinks and playing on school or community teams, participating as an adult in local soccer and hockey leagues, running in community “race weekend” events, coaching, volunteering, to cheering on Canadian athletes on the world stage. The joy on children’s faces at the finish line, the pride of families and friends supporting their team, and the collective cheers of spectators celebrating the victories of Canadians teams and athletes are moments that are truly priceless. Further, high-performance sport can provide invaluable and life-changing personal growth and development. Elite athletes inspire Canadians to pursue excellence in their own lives. Broad participation in sport creates the pipeline that produces world-class performers and international success.

Yet, beneath the surface of this proud sporting tradition, serious failures have occurred — especially in the ways we protect our children and youth. Sport should be a place of joy, growth, community, and belonging. But for far too many Canadians, especially young athletes, sport has been an environment marked by abuse and insecurity, where they have not been adequately protected and where no one has been held accountable.

In recent years, the public has learned, as has the Commission, of a distressing number of abuse and maltreatment cases involving sport participants — particularly young athletes — across many sports and communities. The magnitude of abuse that has been brought to light — and tolerated — is unacceptable. While some have treated these stories as matters of history, the painful truth is that maltreatment and abuse in sport remain a daily reality. As is evidenced by the revelations made public to this day, they continue to take place, in all provinces, territories and communities across the country and across all sports.

These instances of abuse and maltreatment can take many forms, including: vulnerable children groomed for years and sexually assaulted by their coaches; athletes subjected to grueling diets and restrictions on eating; coaches refusing to allow athletes to receive medical care following injuries and forcing them to continue to train and compete; coaches publicly humiliating and punishing male athletes by forcing them to wear women’s



underwear over their competition suits in public until they achieved certain results; physical and sexual abuse perpetrated as part of hazing rituals; athletes publicly humiliating and denigrating the performance of other athletes online as part of incessant cyberbullying; referees and players being subjected to horrific racial abuse, including being called the “N” word, by other players and spectators; parents banned from their children’s practices as a reprisal for reporting incidents of maltreatment and left to agonize about the continued misconduct; coaches retaliating against athletes following the disclosure of maltreatment by forcing them to train excessively or giving them the “silent treatment” and ignoring them thereby subjecting them to psychological abuse; athletes being exploited given their vulnerable financial state, treated as commodities and paraded unwillingly before the media to boost private sponsorships; slander campaigns waged against board members who had the courage to report cases of maltreatment, thereby destroying their reputation and causing long-lasting professional harm; and youth being pressured not to attend school or graduate from high school or spend time with friends under the pretext that they must show full dedication to the sport or else they will fail, resulting in lifelong, adverse consequences.

There is also no doubt that many Canadians have not had equitable access to sport and have not been able to take advantage of the same opportunities as other participants in sport. This is particularly true for people who belong to equity-deserving groups, such as people with disabilities, Black people, people of colour, Indigenous people, and people from 2SLGBTQI+ communities. When they have been able to seize opportunities, it has often been at the cost of financial sacrifices for their families, as well as their dignity and safety.

We have heard heart-wrenching stories of broken dreams, humiliation and destruction. But we have also seen courage and a commitment to make change from numerous individuals across the sport community, many of whom bravely and selflessly shared their experiences with the Commission. Indeed, individuals who have experienced maltreatment and abuse are frequently referred to as “survivors” in recognition of their strength, resilience, and capacity to live beyond trauma and move toward healing.

Despite medals around their necks and records beside their name, some athletes are so broken that they have lost all self-esteem, believe that they deserved these “punishments,” and continue to blame themselves. The blame does not lie at the feet of the survivors and victims, but with those who committed the maltreatment and with a flawed system that too often ignored it and allowed it to happen.

And let us be clear: these harms did not occur in isolation. They are symptoms of deeper systemic weaknesses in Canadian sport structures: governance failures, gaps in oversight and accountability, inadequate safety mechanisms, conflicts of interest, a culture of silence where victims and survivors stay quiet and witnesses look the other way, and a fragmented sport system that too often allowed these behaviours to proliferate rather than preventing them. Sport should protect those who participate in it — particularly children and youth — and every part of the system must acknowledge its role in failing to do so. We saw the lasting pain in the eyes of victims and survivors with whom we met.

As we examined the Canadian sport system, it became very clear that the challenges in Canadian sport are profound — from underfunding and governance deficits, duplication of efforts among organizations, fragmentation and a lack of integration of policies and programs, to an unhealthy focus on high-performance outcomes over participant safety and dignity. Indeed, at times, we wondered whether this can even be described as a “sport system” given the pervasive problems that exist. It is clear to us that the structures of Canadian sport have contributed to the challenges we face. The need for fundamental, systemic change is evident.

Our constitutional and federated governmental model cannot be used as an excuse for inaction. Indeed, in times of national challenges, the federal government, along with the provinces and territories, has stepped forward with leadership and purpose demonstrating that “if there is a will, there is a way.” This is how anti-doping regulations and the previous safe sport mechanism came to be.

But we cannot afford to wait for another front-page story, another complaint or lawsuit, or one more incident, to act. Canadians are demanding action. Sport in Canada is facing a systemic problem and structural flaws that we must address immediately.

Canadians expect, and deserve, transformational and lasting leadership, collaboration, determination and creativity from all orders of government — federal, provincial, territorial and municipal — and from all organizations and participants across the Canadian sport system. This collective movement is needed if we wish to prevent future crisis rather than simply respond to them. Self-interest and personal agendas must be set aside if we are to succeed.

Canadians demand of their political leaders that they recognize and elevate the importance of sport, as they have done for health and education. We all have a role to play. Sport organizations, athletes, participants, parents, fans and communities must all be part of the solution. The future of our children and youth — and their right to safe, positive sport experiences — is at stake.

We appreciate that Canadians, including our governments, are facing a series of fundamental challenges in these tumultuous times. Some striking at the heart of our Canadian identity. But as focus is on nation-building projects, national cohesion, reducing interprovincial barriers and keeping Canadians safe, we must remember that sport can be a powerful vehicle for responding to the challenges and opportunities that confront us. Sport and physical activity are central — indeed vital — components of an active, healthy society that can serve as a Canadian cultural trademark.

Canadians expect meaningful and concrete transformation. They want a system that reliably protects and enhances the well-being of every sport participant by upholding the values of dignity, safety and inclusion — while contributing to the pursuit of sporting achievement and success.

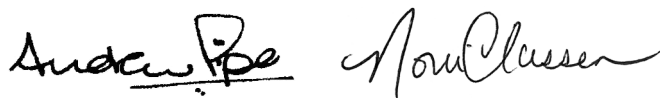
Now is the time to transform beliefs, values, behaviours and practices. Sport in Canada can — and must — become safer, more inclusive and accessible, more efficient, more aligned in purposes and practice, better integrated and more accountable to those it serves, particularly the most vulnerable among us. Every level of government, every organization, and every individual who cherishes sport, and these fundamental Canadian values, must contribute to this shared purpose.

We owe no less to the current generation and all who will come after them.

Change is absolutely essential.



**Lise Maisonneuve, Commissioner**



**Andrew Pipe and Noni Classen, Special Advisors**

**March 2026**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY







# Executive Summary

## Chapters 1 and 17 — Introduction and the Commission's mandate and process

Sport is deeply embedded in Canada's culture and national identity. Millions of Canadians participate in sport and are inspired by it. Sport contributes to physical and mental health, community well-being, and our country's cultural and economic strength. But when systems fail to prevent and address maltreatment, sport environments can become places where significant harms occur.

Recent widely publicized revelations have exposed the prevalence of maltreatment across all levels of sport in Canada. Victims and survivors and advocates have courageously shared experiences of abuse, harassment, discrimination, and other forms of harm. Maltreatment has been identified in various sports throughout the country, and long-standing weaknesses in the sport system such as governance failures, structural gaps, and inadequate oversight, have allowed maltreatment to persist, often unchecked. These revelations heightened public concern, drew parliamentary scrutiny, and generated widespread calls for reform to better protect children and hold sport leaders and organizations to account.

In this context, the Government of Canada established the Future of Sport in Canada Commission in May 2024. The Commission was mandated to examine the sport system and make recommendations to:

- Improve safe sport in Canada, including trauma-informed approaches to support sport participants in the disclosure of and healing from maltreatment.
- Improve the sport system in Canada, including but not limited to policy, funding structures, governance, reporting, accountability, conflicts of interest, systems alignment, culture, and legal considerations.

To fulfill its mandate, the Commission offered a variety of options for participant engagement to individuals, organizations, and other entities that agreed to take part in the Commission's work (which we collectively refer to as "participants"). All our activities were guided by a victim- and survivor-centred and trauma- and violence-informed framework. The Commission successfully engaged with participants from various backgrounds, including athletes, sport participants, coaches, officials, sport administrators, academics, advocates, and members of the public. We heard from victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport as well as academics, advocates, and experts with specific experience in maltreatment in sport and sport systems in Canada and beyond. We also heard from those with personal experience in sport and physical activity organizations and programs from across Canada.

Over the course of its work, the Commission held 591 meetings and met with over 1,000 individuals. We met with 175 victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport and representatives from 270 sport organizations. Participants shared over 1,400 documents and submissions with us. Chapter 17 further describes the work undertaken by the Commission to fulfill its mandate.

The Commission's Preliminary Report was published on August 28, 2025. Its preliminary findings and recommendations were considered by participants who provided their feedback at the National Summit on the Future of Sport, held September 8 to 12, 2025, and through other means. We received over 150 post-Preliminary Report submissions. The Commission also conducted a public online survey and analyzed 3,351 responses received.

Building on the Preliminary Report, this Final Report presents our findings and Calls to Action to improve safe sport and the sport system in Canada. It reflects information gathered through engagement activities, including the National Summit on the Future of Sport, written submissions, our independent research, and our public online survey.

In this report, we examine:

- the importance and benefits of sport
- the prevalence of maltreatment in sport
- the Canadian sport system and Indigenous-led sport
- barriers to participating in sport and physical activity
- safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms
- prevention strategies to foster safe sport environments and prevent maltreatment
- leadership, alignment, governance, and funding within the sport system.

Our review would not have been possible without the contributions of the many participants in our engagement process who generously, and often courageously and selflessly, shared their experiences, knowledge, and insights. We are very grateful to each of them. We hope that our work reflects their determination to eliminate a culture of silence that has existed for too long. We recognize the need for fundamental change in the governance and structure of Canadian sport.



## Chapter 2 — Why sport is important to Canadians and Canada

A consistent message emerged throughout our activities: sport matters deeply to Canadians. Across regions, cultures, and identities, participants spoke about the essential role that sport plays in their communities and daily lives. Many described the magic of their early sport experiences; the joy of learning new skills; the friendships that grew on fields, playgrounds, and rinks; and the sense of safety and belonging they found in sport.

### **COLLECTIVE BENEFITS OF SPORT**

Sport is deeply woven into the fabric of Canadian identity and culture. It is a unifying force in Canadian society, bringing people together across cultural, geographic, and social boundaries. It fosters friendships and enhances social cohesion by enabling meaningful interactions among children, adults, and families. The Commission heard compelling stories of how sport brings people together. These relationships transcend winning or losing and create supportive networks that promote belonging. Canadians value the connection, belonging, and shared experiences that sport creates.

The benefits of sport are far-reaching. Sport's economic impact is substantial. In 2023, sport contributed \$7.6 billion to Canada's gross domestic product, with organized sport alone representing \$2.1 billion. Sport drives tourism, supports local businesses, and creates jobs. Volunteers also make essential contributions to the sport sector. In Canada, 27% of adults reported volunteering in an activity related to sport.

As critical infrastructure, sport facilities are essential to delivering sport and physical activity programs and hosting major sport events. The construction and renewal of sport infrastructure stimulate the economy. As spaces where people can come together, these facilities are vital community assets that stimulate local economies, support public health, and foster inclusion.

Sport also plays a significant role in reducing healthcare costs by promoting physical activity and preventing chronic diseases linked to physical inactivity. In 2022, healthcare costs linked to physical inactivity were estimated at \$3.9 billion. Increasing participation in sport and physical activity can therefore play a critical role in reducing healthcare expenditures and supporting a healthier population. Participants reiterated that there is a role for sport and physical activity in promoting health and affirmed that we should be talking more about the importance of physical activity.

In addition to its evident economic impacts, sport can also serve as a “soft” form of influence and persuasion in the international context. Indeed, international sporting events can foster international relationships, enhance diplomatic relations, and elevate Canada's presence on the international stage.

Sport's impact goes beyond economics and health. Sport is a catalyst for inclusion, diversity, and national pride. Sport provides opportunities for newcomers, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups to connect, build relationships, and develop a sense of belonging. Participants with disabilities shared that

sport was one of the only places where they felt truly accepted. We also heard that sport fosters social cohesion and can help prevent crime among youth.

High-performance sport plays a distinctive role in Canada's sport landscape. Elite athletes inspire national pride, serve as role models, and embody values of perseverance, excellence, and resilience. Their achievements on the international stage unite Canadians and strengthen our collective identity. Para and Paralympic sport are important because, among other things, they advance equity and inclusion.

### **INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS OF SPORT**

For individuals of all ages, sport supports lifelong health, well-being, and personal development. Regular physical activity improves cardiovascular health, reduces the risk of chronic disease and encourages wellness. The mental health benefits are equally compelling. Participation in sport can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression while improving self-esteem and overall life satisfaction. Sport participation at a young age can lead to a lasting interest in physical activity and foster a more active lifestyle as an adult, which is critical for personal and public health.

During the Commission's work, numerous participants highlighted the significant individual benefits of sport for athletes at all levels. They emphasized that sport has the power to save lives. Many told us how they were able to overcome personal challenges through physical activity. We were also told that sport fosters self-care and healing, and that it serves as an important vehicle for self-regulation.

Sport and physical activity promote personal development and inspire individuals to dream. Sport cultivates essential life skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication, discipline, and perseverance. These competencies contribute to personal growth. Participation in sport is also linked to stronger educational outcomes and greater career success. Sport can propel individuals into successful careers and leadership positions.

Sport and physical activity play a particularly crucial role in enhancing the physical, social, emotional, and mental well-being of persons with disabilities. Through sport, participants with disabilities experience feelings of increased independence, belonging, acceptance, and accomplishment. Athletes with disabilities shared how they never thought that they could participate in sport until they found disability sport opportunities.

### **SPECIFIC BENEFITS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

Indigenous people told us that the value of sport extends far beyond physical activity. Sport is a source of healing, cultural connection, and community strength. Participants told us that sport plays a role in preventing early pregnancy, reducing suicide risk, and keeping youth away from gang affiliation, drugs, and alcohol. On numerous occasions, sport was described as a vital outlet to manage stress, grief, and trauma. Many shared that "movement is medicine."

Sport reinforces identity and pride, strengthens relationships and communities, and supports learning. Sport activities were described as linked to the transmission of values and knowledge. We heard that it brings hope to communities and provides a sense of purpose. Participants shared that sport also fosters connections among Indigenous Nations.

### **HARNESSING THE POWER OF SPORT**

Taken together, these individual and collective benefits of sport highlight how investing in sport is investing in Canada's health, economy, communities, and the future. Sport strengthens society, enriches individual lives, supports inclusion, and builds a healthier and resilient Canada.

## **Chapter 3 — Breaking the silence on maltreatment: why the promise of sport has escaped so many**

Sport in Canada offers many benefits to individuals, families, and communities. Yet, beneath its celebrated image lies a crisis: maltreatment is widespread, systemic, and persistent across all levels of sport in this country. Accounts shared by victims, survivors, and witnesses over recent years have revealed the depth of the crisis. Public reports, media investigations, and parliamentary studies have further exposed how harmful behaviours have been able to flourish in environments where safeguards are weak, oversight is inconsistent, and authority figures often hold unchecked power. The steady emergence of new maltreatment cases across the country that were reported in the media throughout the Commission's mandate further demonstrates that these issues are not isolated incidents from the past. They are happening now and will continue to happen unless we make significant changes.

### **DIFFERENT FORMS OF MALTREATMENT AFFECT PARTICIPANTS AT EVERY LEVEL**

The harms experienced by athletes and other participants take many forms, ranging from subtle but damaging daily comments to severe violations of trust and safety. Individuals we met with reported body shaming, physical abuse, psychological abuse, neglect, bullying, hazing, sexual assault, racism, and discrimination. These forms of maltreatment and misconduct often overlap and reinforce each other. They create environments in which safety, dignity, well-being, and autonomy are compromised.

Body shaming is frequently normalized under the guise of performance standards. Many athletes described extreme and intrusive monitoring of their weight, public criticism of their appearance, and rigid food restrictions that produced long-lasting emotional and physical consequences. These practices were often imposed on very young children whose self-image was shaped by adult authority figures.

Physical and psychological abuse, along with neglect, were frequently reported. Individuals described being locked in change rooms as punishment, subjected to verbal attacks, having objects thrown at them, and being denied basic needs such as access to a toilet. Harm inflicted on Indigenous participants, including in residential

school sport settings, was also recounted. Several athletes reported that coaches refused to provide medical care or replacement protective gear after injuries, threatened the loss of financial support, and in some cases tampered with equipment to influence performance.

We heard of bullying and hazing in youth sport, school teams, university programs, and high-performance settings. These practices often involved humiliation, forced activities, peer intimidation, and degrading rituals. Hazing was sometimes described as tradition or team bonding, even when it produced significant psychological and sometimes physical harm.

Victims and survivors recounted numerous instances of sexual harm that revealed profound abuses of power. They described grooming, manipulation, and the calculated exploitation of trust by individuals who held significant influence over their athletic pathways. These experiences left deep emotional wounds, and their long-term effects remain severe and enduring.

Racism, exclusion, and marginalization are also widespread and normalized across the sport landscape. Equity-deserving groups, including Indigenous people, racialized individuals, individuals who identify as 2SLGBTQI+, and persons with disabilities, described environments where they were stereotyped, excluded, targeted, or denied equal treatment.

Maltreatment in sport has evolved alongside broader social changes, with social media amplifying traditional abuse and extending practices like hazing into online spaces. These platforms expose athletes to public pressure, intimidation, and humiliation and have enabled widespread cyberbullying, online harassment, and the non-consensual sharing of images. New risks have also emerged through competition manipulation where individuals attempt to influence the outcome of sporting events through bribery, coercion, or threats. This creates serious safety concerns for athletes, coaches, officials, and staff.

### **SYSTEMIC CONDITIONS THAT ALLOW HARM TO PERSIST**

Maltreatment in sport is rooted in broader systemic issues that shape relationships, expectations, and decision making across the sport landscape. Power imbalances are a central factor. Relationships between athletes and coaches, athletes and administrators, and senior and junior athletes often involve significant authority, dependency, and pressure. Many athletes, particularly those in high-performance pathways, rely on a single coach for advancement, financial support, or access to competition. This concentration of authority increases vulnerability to coercion and exploitation.

A long-standing culture of silence further reinforces harmful behaviour. Victims, survivors, and witnesses frequently described a fear of retaliation, loss of opportunities, exclusion, or reputational harm if they spoke out. Some were discouraged from raising concerns. Others saw their attempts to disclose harm dismissed or minimized. Parents, medical professionals, and support staff also described feeling unable to intervene because they feared losing their positions. This silence allows harmful conduct to persist and remain unchecked.

Harmful practices are also normalized by the belief that sport is exempt from the standards that apply in schools, workplaces, or other community settings. This concept, often referred to as sport exceptionalism, fosters sport environments where behaviours that would be unacceptable elsewhere are tolerated or even encouraged. It also encourages the belief that suffering, humiliation, or extreme discipline are necessary for performance.

Structural weaknesses in oversight allow harmful behaviour to continue. The Canadian sport system relies heavily on volunteers, and many organizations lack consistent screening, training, or independent reporting mechanisms. Safeguards are inconsistent across the country. Studies have shown that many sport organizations do not meet funding conditions related to safety in sport. Without external accountability or independent monitoring, individuals who experience maltreatment have limited pathways to seek help or justice.

### **FINDINGS FROM STUDIES IN CANADA AND AROUND THE WORLD**

Research confirms what victims, survivors, and witnesses described to us. International studies show that maltreatment is widespread across sport systems around the world. Psychological harm is the most common form of maltreatment, followed by neglect, physical harm, and sexual harm. These studies also highlight that individuals from minority groups and those participating in high-level sport are at higher risk of experiencing maltreatment.

Canadian studies involving current and former athletes reveal that between 75% and 85% of athletes report experiencing maltreatment during their sporting journey. Consistent with studies conducted in other countries, evidence shows that the most common form of maltreatment among Canadian athletes is psychological harm, followed by neglect, sexual harm, and physical harm. It also reveals that certain identity characteristics, including being a female athlete, a racialized athlete, or a 2SLGBTQI+ athlete, heighten the risks of harm, and that maltreatment increases with the level of sport participation.

### **URGENT NEED FOR COORDINATED ACTION**

The evidence shows that despite growing awareness and policy efforts, maltreatment remains deeply rooted in Canadian sport. It affects individuals at all levels, including at the grassroots. These systemic problems require immediate and sustained government action. Although it is not possible to eliminate maltreatment entirely, governments and sport organizations must work together to strengthen and align prevention and response measures so that all participants can safely experience sport's benefits.

## **Chapter 4 — Constitutional framework of our country**

Federalism is a defining feature of our country and shapes how legislative authority and responsibilities are distributed across governments. Canada's constitution divides legislative powers between federal and provincial governments, but sport is not an area of jurisdiction explicitly mentioned in the *Constitution Act, 1867*. As a result, both levels of government have enacted legislation that reflects their constitutional authority to support, stimulate, or regulate sport programs.



Under the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction to make laws in relation to education, public land, municipal institutions, property and civil rights, and general matters of a merely local or private nature. Thus, provincial and territorial jurisdiction generally allows for the development, implementation, operation, and support of programs and regulatory standards of health, safety, and integrity in sport.

When it comes to the federal government, scholars have suggested that Parliament may enact federal legislation related to sport based on its residual authority to make “Laws for the Peace, Order, and good Government of Canada,” and on Parliament’s jurisdiction in trade and commerce, taxation, the military, shipping and inland fisheries, immigration and citizenship, and criminal law. Others have noted that the federal government may assert an interest whenever an issue is deemed to be of some national or international interest. These issues have not been definitively addressed by the courts, and there remains uncertainty about whether these heads of power could allow federal intervention in sport beyond the spending power.

There is no doubt that the federal government may provide support for sport through the exercise of its spending power. As such, the federal government primarily supports sport through funding and collaborative frameworks. It also plays a role in supporting Canada’s participation in international competitions.

There have been numerous instances of intergovernmental collaborations over the years in sport, physical activity, and recreation. Governments have entered various agreements, adopted notable national frameworks and policies such as the Canadian Policy Against Doping in Sport (1991), and successfully collaborated to host major international games.

Although jurisdictional tensions sometimes arise, sustained intergovernmental collaboration has enabled progress and the development of national sport initiatives. It demonstrates that constitutional complexities can be effectively managed through collaboration and coordinated action.

## **Chapter 5 — Roles and responsibilities in the Canadian sport system: a fragmented framework**

The Canadian sport “system” is multifaceted and involves a broad range of players, funders, and participants. Many institutions, including different levels of government—as well as countless sport organizations—share responsibilities for sport and physical activity. For many Canadians, the sport system starts and ends in schools and playgrounds, but for others it extends to neighbourhood arenas, playing fields, and competitions within Canada and abroad. While many institutions are part of what can be called a system, that system is frequently described as fractured, fragmented, or even non-existent.

### **FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL, AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS**

Governments at all levels shape sport, although in different ways. The federal government, through Sport Canada, develops national sport policies, provides funding to national organizations and athletes, supports participation



in major international events, and promotes safe and inclusive sport environments. Through the Public Health Agency of Canada, the federal government also contributes to the sport and physical activity landscape by supporting population-level initiatives that promote physical activity. The *Physical Activity and Sport Act* sets out the federal government's policy goals for sport and physical activity.

Provincial and territorial governments can influence sport through education systems, sport and recreation facility development, funding for sport and physical activity, and legislation, among other policy tools. Municipalities own and operate most sport and recreation infrastructure in Canada and deliver or support community programming.

Participants in our engagement process noted the absence of strong leadership and vision from the federal government. They described how frequent shifts in political priorities have contributed to erratic policy development, outdated frameworks, and a lack of long-term planning. There is a common perception that the government is reactive rather than proactive. This approach results in a Canadian sport system that has developed over decades in an ad hoc way in response to crises, pressures, and shifting political priorities.

The Canadian sport system is complex, in part because it involves all levels of government. Different forums exist to facilitate intergovernmental collaboration on sport, physical activity, and recreation matters. These include the Ministers Conferences which bring together the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity, and recreation; the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council; and the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Sport Committee.

Intergovernmental collaboration has produced important outcomes, such as the endorsement of the Red Deer Declaration — For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport in 2019 and of the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035. However, participants expressed concern that collaboration is inconsistent and often ineffective. They described a lack of communication and integrated leadership between provinces and territories and the federal government on matters related to sport and physical activity.

### **NATIONAL, PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL, AND COMMUNITY SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

Numerous sport organizations operate at every level of sport and are responsible for developing and delivering programs, including Para and Disability sport programs.

At the international level, International Sport Federations (also referred to as “International Federations”) serve as the global governing body for one or more sports or distinct sport disciplines. Among their other responsibilities, these organizations establish and enforce rules for particular sports and organize international competitions. Some International Sport Federations are also responsible for the governance and development of Para sport.

Canada's National Sport Organizations are the national governing bodies for their respective sports. They select national teams, oversee high-performance programs, and promote and develop their sport across the country, among other responsibilities. Some National Sport Organizations govern their Para sport equivalent, while others are non-integrated National Sport Organizations that govern only Para sport.

Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are the governing bodies for their sport within their province or territory. Their responsibilities are similar to those of their National Sport Organizations, but they are carried out within their respective province or territory. Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations can govern multiple Para sports, a single Para sport, or both Para and non-Para sport. Most of these organizations are members of their respective National Sport Organizations.

Community Sport Organizations deliver grassroots sport and physical activity programs. They often offer recreational-level sport programming, and they may offer a combination of competitive and high-performance programs. At the community level, Para and Disability sport programs are delivered in both integrated and non-integrated environments. While Community Sport Organizations are generally affiliated with a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization, this is not always the case. Many community-level sport organizations and their participants function beyond the oversight of National, Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations.

Participants emphasized that the proliferation of sport organizations at all levels has contributed significantly to the fragmentation of the Canadian sport system. They explained that there are simply too many organizations. This leads to duplicated efforts, inconsistent approaches, and confusion about roles and responsibilities.

Significant structural challenges within National, Provincial and Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations include widespread misalignment, inconsistent priorities, and limited coordination across all levels. The relationship between National Sport Organizations and their member organizations and clubs was frequently described as broken. Para and Disability sport organizations face comparable, yet more complex challenges with issues of alignment and operational efficiency.

Participants also noted that, in many cases, a lack of collaboration among National Sport Organizations themselves has further fragmented resources, created inefficiencies, and contributed to policy misalignments. They observed that many organizations require similar services — such as human resources, information technology (IT), insurance, accommodations, and travel — yet continue to procure or develop them independently, even though these functions could be delivered more efficiently by a shared provider.

We heard how sport organizations are facing serious funding strains, with resources described as insufficient, unpredictable, and often provided too late to support responsible planning. We also heard significant concerns about governance and integrity within the system, including heavy reliance on volunteers who may lack training. Participants told us about declining volunteer capacity and situations that give rise to real or perceived conflicts of interest.

## **MULTISPORT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

Multisport Service Organizations play an essential supporting role in the Canadian sport system. Unlike sport organizations that deliver programs directly to athletes, these organizations provide specialized services that strengthen sport across all levels. Their work ranges from organizing major games, offering coaching and

education programs, promoting access to sport and physical activity, providing advocacy, and administering dispute-resolution and sport-integrity processes.

At the national level, these organizations include the Coaching Association of Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Paralympic Committee, Commonwealth Sport Canada, Own the Podium, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (called Sport Integrity Canada as of January 2026), and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, among many others. Each organization has its own purpose and mandate, often created to fill gaps in leadership, support underserved communities, or provide system-wide expertise.

Throughout the Commission's engagement process, participants expressed concerns about the overall structure and functioning of Multisport Service Organizations. Many described a landscape crowded with too many organizations operating independently, often with overlapping roles and unclear mandates. This has resulted in duplication of services and inefficiencies—particularly in education, training, certification, and administrative support.

Participants also raised concerns that some Multisport Service Organizations exert too much influence over how sport programs are delivered. Own the Podium was frequently cited as an example. While some praised its contribution to international performance, others criticized its strong emphasis on medal outcomes, and its influence over sport organizations' priorities. Some criticized Own the Podium for placing a disproportionate emphasis on Olympic athletes to the detriment of Paralympic athletes.

Overall, the Multisport Service Organizations model was described as disjointed, inefficient, and overly complex. This system is administratively heavy because all these organizations are required to have their own governance structures, services, and staff. These issues led some participants to suggest that these organizations should be centralized or consolidated into a single entity.

### **OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

Schools, colleges and universities, not-for-profit organizations, private and for-profit sport organizations, and professional leagues also shape how Canadians access sport. Schools introduce children to physical activity, though the time committed to physical education varies widely and extracurricular sport relies heavily on teacher volunteers. Universities and colleges offer competitive and recreational programs. Many community-based not-for-profit organizations offer inclusive and culturally grounded programming, but they face limited resources.

Participants shared significant concerns about the rapid growth and influence of private for-profit sport organizations. Many described these providers as expensive, largely unregulated, and operating outside the structures and expectations of the broader sport system. We heard that many of these private organizations function with limited oversight, inconsistent safety practices, and approaches that place financial interests ahead of participant well-being.

We learned that National Sport Organizations have neither the resources to monitor or oversee clubs, nor the mechanisms to collaborate or communicate with them. The lack of relationship between National Sport Organizations and private clubs, and the increasing numbers of private clubs, threaten to further fragment the sport system.

### **CANADA'S SPORT SYSTEM IS BROKEN**

The Canadian sport system is complex, inconsistent, and fragmented. We heard about a lack of federal government leadership to lead the sport system, insufficient intergovernmental collaboration, erratic policy development, inadequate funding, and political cycles that lead to short-term thinking.

Many participants struggled to describe a cohesive Canadian sport system. The proliferation of organizations and overlapping mandates has led to inefficiencies, duplications, a lack of alignment, and confusion. Conflicts of interest, a lack of transparency, and limited oversight of sport organizations have further undermined trust in the sport system and contributed to the safe sport crisis.

## **Chapter 6 — Indigenous-led sport and the Canadian sport system: structures, interactions and reconciliation**

Our review of Canada's sport ecosystem would not have been complete without considering the realities of Indigenous-led sport and Indigenous people's interactions with the "mainstream" sport system in Canada.

### **ROLE OF SPORT IN INDIGENOUS CULTURES**

The relationship between Indigenous people and sport is deeply interwoven with Indigenous cultures. Sport serves as a source of healing, pride, and community connection. In fact, movement is described as medicine: it brings communities together, it fosters a sense of pride in Indigenous identity, and it provides a vehicle for language and knowledge transmission.

However, to better understand the challenges and struggles that Indigenous people and communities face when engaging with the Canadian sport structures, we need to understand the context in which the Canadian sport system emerged and continues to operate. Settler colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism shaped the Canadian sport system and created systemic barriers that persist today.

Despite these challenges, Indigenous people and communities have demonstrated resilience and advocated for the advancement of an Indigenous-led sport system, Indigenous-led games, and a mainstream sport system that is inclusive and culturally safe.

## **INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITIES**

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis governments, councils, communities, and organizations deliver sport and physical activity programs in their communities. There are also several Indigenous-led organizations that play a role in the sport system, including the Aboriginal Sport Circle, the 13 Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies, and the National Association of Friendship Centres.

Indigenous games also play an important role. They have been described as a means to preserve and revive cultural heritage, and they serve as a vehicle for reconciliation in Canada. The North American Indigenous Games and the Arctic Winter Games were the most often identified in our engagement process as being highly significant to Indigenous people. However, we recognize that there are other Indigenous games, events, and organizations that contribute to Indigenous sport.

Throughout its engagement process, the Commission heard stories of both success and ongoing struggles from Indigenous people. Although Indigenous athletes and coaches are celebrated as role models, many participants emphasized the need for greater representation, recognition, and support. Indigenous participants also shared challenges related to affordability, lack of facilities and infrastructure, and the lack of culturally safe sport environments in the “mainstream” sport system.

## **INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND RECONCILIATION**

Participants identified four key documents as highly relevant regarding Indigenous communities and sport in Canada:

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (2008 to 2015)

In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued their multi-volume Final Report which included Ten Principles for Reconciliation and 94 Calls to Action. These Calls to Action were directed to all sectors of Canadian society with the objective of promoting and advancing reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous Peoples. Among these Calls to Action, five focused on fostering reconciliation through sport and physical activity (Calls to Action 87 to 91).

Call to Action 87 is about providing public education that tells the national story of Indigenous athletes in history. In response, the Government of Canada reports that implementing this education is in progress. For example, the government refers to investments made to support the Aboriginal Sport Circle to deliver and promote the Tom Longboat Awards and the National Indigenous Coaching Awards.

The Government of Canada considers Call to Action 88 on ensuring the long-term development of Indigenous athletes and the continued support for the North American Indigenous Games as complete. In its response to this call, the government points to its investments in supporting team preparation and travel for the North American Indigenous Games, ongoing funding, and the funding framework in place for hosting the games.



As a first step toward fulfilling Call to Action 89 which relates to required amendments to the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, the federal government reported that it invested in the development of a National Indigenous Sport Strategy. The Aboriginal Sport Circle has completed this strategy and shared it with Sport Canada.

Call to Action 90 calls on the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Indigenous Peoples. The government reports that investments have been made to support Indigenous youth and sport initiatives, to enable the Aboriginal Sport Circle to assume a leadership role in Indigenous sport development, and to support the leadership of Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies. The federal government notes that it has also supported National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations to promote the long-term development of Indigenous athletes.

Finally, Call to Action 91 calls on officials and countries hosting international sporting events to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in planning such events. In response, the Government of Canada reports that it reminds partners of Call to Action 91 by including it in the document shared with bid and host organizations. They also made financial investments to support Call to Action 91.

During our engagement activities, Indigenous people and communities shared that, although some progress has been made in responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action related to sport, significant gaps remain. They emphasized that Sport Canada has not mandated National Sport Organizations to address Calls to Action 87 to 91. Participants raised the lack of permanent funding for the North American Indigenous Games and the need to revise the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* to align with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. They also emphasized the importance of ensuring Indigenous representation, protocols, and partnerships at all national and international sporting events held in Canada.

- The Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2016 to 2019)

Following the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, in 2016 the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls began its work investigating the mass disappearance of Indigenous women and girls. It concluded that their disappearances and Canada's inaction in responding was genocide. The inquiry released its final report in 2019 with 231 individual Calls for Justice directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries, and Canadians generally. Calls for Justice 3.1 and 7.3 related to sport and physical activity. They call on the government to ensure that the rights to health and wellness of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people are protected, and to support Indigenous-led prevention initiatives in the areas of health and community awareness.



To implement the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice related to sport, the federal government created a dedicated stream of the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component of the Sport Support Program. This stream funds Indigenous-designed sport and physical activity initiatives that create safe, culturally grounded opportunities specifically for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

- The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007)

The 2007 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* is a comprehensive, international human-rights instrument addressing the rights of Indigenous people around the world. Canada has taken steps toward implementing this declaration by adopting the *United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2021). The Act provides a roadmap for the Government of Canada and Indigenous people to work together to fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- The *Commonwealth (Lekwungen) Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples* (2023)

The *Commonwealth (Lekwungen) Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples* is an international declaration with 10 calls to action. It aims to respect, protect, and promote the rights and opportunities of Indigenous Peoples through sport. Sport organizations, institutions, governments, game organizers, individuals, and Indigenous Peoples are encouraged to work together to support and implement the declaration's spirit and actions. The Government of Canada supported its creation by providing funding to assist the working group in its development.

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND SPORT**

Following our review of Indigenous-led sport and Indigenous people's interactions with the "mainstream" sport system in Canada, the Commission recognizes the settler colonialism context in which the Canadian sport system emerged and continues to operate today. The Commission further acknowledges the complexity of the Indigenous-led sport system and its relationship with the "mainstream" sport system. Although it is clear to the Commission that some progress has been made through Indigenous-led initiatives and some government investment, gaps remain in funding, infrastructure, inclusive and culturally safe sport environments, and meaningful engagement.

The Commission believes that all involved within the "mainstream" sport system have an important role to play for true and meaningful reconciliation by engaging and collaborating constructively with Indigenous people. Our findings make it clear how important it is for Indigenous people to exercise control over how sport serves them and their communities — and that such decisions must be made by and for Indigenous people.

The Commission recognizes that the Government of Canada has made progress in addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice related to sport and physical activity. However, this work must continue.

For these reasons, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada to continue the work to fulfill its commitment to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 87 to 91. We further call upon all levels of government to respect the principle of Indigenous self-determination in their decision-making processes related to Indigenous people in sport. We also call on governments to take proactive steps to engage with Indigenous people to ensure their meaningful participation in these processes. To extend the scope of these calls to action, all levels of government are called upon to encourage other sport participants within their jurisdiction to meaningfully engage with Indigenous people to ensure their voices are present and heard. Finally, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada to include Indigenous perspectives in all measures it takes to implement the Calls to Action made in this report.

## Chapter 7 — Barriers to sport and physical activity in Canada

Although sport and physical activity are central to the health, identity, and social fabric of Canada, significant barriers persist and limit participation. Despite long-standing commitments from all levels of government, several barriers prevent many people in Canada, especially those from equity-deserving groups, from accessing and benefiting from sport and physical activity.

National data demonstrate that fewer than half of adults meet recommended physical activity levels, and only one in five teenagers is sufficiently active. Participation in sport remains a serious area of weakness despite continuing recommendations that it should be meaningfully addressed, and equity-deserving groups continue to be significantly under-represented in sport and physical activity programs.

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

We found that financial barriers at all levels of the sport system are widespread and worsening. We learned that many can no longer afford to participate in sport activities. The rising cost of registration, equipment, and travel, combined with the privatization of sport and the prevalence of “pay-to-play” models, has made participation increasingly exclusive, particularly for those in lower-income households and remote communities.

To address these barriers and promote sport participation, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, to examine all available fiscal, programmatic, and administrative tools to address barriers and increase participation. This could include exploring targeted subsidies for youth and families and tax exemptions on essential equipment.

## **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS**

Canada faces a chronic shortage of adequate, safe, and accessible sport facilities and programs. Many existing facilities are in urgent need of repairs and upgrades to ensure that they are accessible and safe and that they meet modern-day standards. Across the country, the scarcity of facilities limits opportunities for participation at all levels. We recognize that remote and Indigenous communities experience even greater challenges with accessing facilities. Access to existing municipal and school facilities is often limited by costs, administrative complexity, or a lack of coordination.

To address these challenges, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, to develop a national sport infrastructure strategy to determine which facilities need to be built or renovated. The strategy should be supported by shared data to assess facility needs and by coordinated planning to increase community access to existing public facilities. We believe that renewed federal investment is required to modernize aging facilities, improve accessibility, and build new multi-use spaces that support both community and high-performance sport. We also call on the federal government to establish a dedicated sport infrastructure program to provide stable, long-term funding and to earmark a portion of federal infrastructure transfers specifically for sport infrastructure.

## **BARRIERS TO SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR EQUITY-DESERVING GROUPS**

While important progress has been made in making sport more accessible, persistent structural and systemic barriers continue to disproportionately limit the participation of equity-deserving groups, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, racialized individuals, newcomers, 2SLGBTQI+ persons, and Indigenous people.

Throughout our engagement activities, we were consistently informed about the significant barriers that members of equity-deserving groups face when they seek to participate fully in sport and physical activity. These barriers are varied and intersecting, and while not exhaustive, the examples we list here reflect the systemic, structural, and individual challenges that continue to limit access, inclusion, and safety for many participants across Canada.

Women and girls continue to encounter unwelcoming and male-dominated sport environments. We heard that quality experiences for girls are often lacking. While programs for girls have expanded, there remain limited grassroots opportunities for women aged 18 and older. It was also noted that pregnancy and parenting are not well accommodated within the sport system.

Persons with disabilities face discrimination and long-standing systemic barriers, including inaccessible facilities, limited adapted equipment, and a lack of programs and specialized coaches. Many programs are led by non-disabled decision makers whose practices might not reflect the needs of athletes with disabilities.

Racialized people continue to experience racism and discrimination in sport. We heard accounts of racial slurs, micro-aggressions, and tokenism, alongside a lack of representation among coaches and leaders. Statistics Canada data show that racialized participants were three times as likely to report experiencing unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in community sports.

Newcomers face barriers such as language challenges, unfamiliar registration processes, transportation difficulties, and financial constraints. Registration systems are often complex and available in only English or French. Many newcomers noted that navigating unfamiliar sport structures makes participation difficult.

2SLGBTQI+ individuals continue to encounter exclusion, discrimination, and unsafe conditions in sport. We heard that homophobic and transphobic language remains common in sport environments. Transgender and gender-diverse people experience transphobia, including discriminatory comments and acts of violence. Many 2SLGBTQI+ participants ultimately leave sport because they do not feel safe.

Indigenous people continue to experience overt and systemic racism in sport. The lack of culturally relevant programming or sport facilities in most Indigenous communities, the cost of participation, and the high costs of travel also limit access to sport. Indigenous communities have highlighted these barriers for years.

### **Findings and Calls to Action: improving equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in sport**

The Commission recognizes that many newcomers and Canadians from equity-deserving groups continue to face additional intersecting barriers to sport participation. Harassment, discrimination, and systemic inequalities all contribute to creating unsafe sport environments and limiting access to sport. A continued focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion is therefore required to ensure that sport and physical activity are safe and accessible for all. The Commission is of the view that coordinated national action that centres the voices and experiences of equity-deserving groups is needed to improve access to sport for equity-deserving groups.

We call on the Government of Canada to create a national strategy on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport and physical activity, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, and equity-deserving groups. The Commission also calls on the federal government to collaborate with equity-deserving groups to develop and implement mandatory standards on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility that all federally funded sport organizations must follow. Consideration should be given to board and staff representation, training and education, and inclusive policies. Finally, the Commission calls for the federal government to continue to support and expand initiatives to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport and physical activity. These responsibilities should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity (outlined in Chapter 12).

Canada's sport system has extraordinary potential to advance national well-being, strengthen communities, and support youth development. Realizing this potential requires decisive and coordinated action. It is crucial to address the barriers that limit access to sport and physical activity and prevent optimal participation for many Canadians.

## Chapter 8 — Improving safe sport in Canada: the Commission's proposed approach

### DEFINING SAFE SPORT

Although the term “safe sport” has emerged internationally and in Canada only in recent years, the principles behind it have existed for decades. However, progress in advancing safe sport has been slow. This is partly because there has been no broadly accepted definition of safe sport or a framework for advancing it.

Different international and Canadian organizations define safe sport in varying ways, but all of them emphasize environments free from maltreatment, abuse, harassment, and discrimination. Definitions differ in who they focus on (some focus on athletes, others on all sport participants) and whether the emphasis is solely on preventing harm or on broader well-being and human rights.

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, which was developed in direct response to the 2019 Red Deer Declaration and the 2019 National Safe Sport Summit that followed, came into effect in 2022. Its purpose is to advance “a respectful sport culture that delivers quality, inclusive, accessible, welcoming and safe sport experiences.”

Also in 2022, Canadian researchers developed a safe sport framework based on input from the sport community. They identified three core components to safe sport: physical/environmental safety, relational safety, and programs that promote inclusion, fairness, and positive development.

### SAFE SPORT IN THIS REPORT

Participants we spoke with during our engagement process highlighted the absence of a commonly agreed-upon definition of safe sport across the sport system. We learned that the meaning of safe sport differs for Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups because their experiences, histories, and cultural contexts affect how they understand safety and well-being. Other participants noted a connection between injury and maltreatment. We also observed that the concept of safe sport has recently taken on some negative connotations.

For the purposes of the Commission's mandate, we adopted the definition of safe sport that is articulated in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. That is, a safe sport environment is one that is free from all forms of maltreatment and one that treats every individual with dignity and respect. The Universal Code of Conduct defines maltreatment as psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, along with neglect and grooming.

However, in this Report, we use the word “maltreatment” more broadly to encompass not only these forms of maltreatment, but also all other behaviours that are prohibited under the Universal Code of Conduct (including boundary transgressions, discrimination, exposing someone to the risk of maltreatment, aiding or abetting misconduct, failing to report maltreatment or other prohibited behaviours, making false allegations, interfering with investigations, and retaliating).



## **WHY SAFE SPORT IS IMPORTANT**

Through our work, we came to realize that maltreatment in sport reaches far beyond individual harm. It undermines athletes' sense of safety and belonging and weakens the foundations of the sport system itself. When abuse occurs or is ignored or handled without transparency, public trust in sport institutions erodes, participation declines, and parents become less willing to involve their children in organized sport. As trust in the system decreases, so does the pipeline of future athletes, coaches, and volunteers. This not only weakens the likelihood of competitive success but also the social and community-building power of sport itself.

A truly safe sport system is one in which every participant, regardless of age, gender, background, or level of ability, feels safe, respected, included, and supported. A safe sport environment is one where individuals can engage fully, learn new skills, develop friendships, grow in confidence, and experience the joy of movement without fear of harm or discrimination.

The social value of sport is immense: it builds character, strengthens communities, improves physical and mental health, and fosters national pride. However, these benefits can be fully realized only when safety and human rights are a fundamental requirement, not an option.

## **OUR APPROACH TO SAFE SPORT: PREVENTION, RESPONSE AND SUPPORT**

Because Canada's sport system spans both federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions, meaningful collaboration across all levels of government and among sport organizations is necessary to reduce the occurrence of maltreatment.

The Commission's proposed approach is built on three interconnected priorities—prevention, response, and support—which together form the foundation for a sustainable safe sport framework. Prevention aims to proactively reduce risks, response focuses on harmonized, effective, and accountable processes for addressing maltreatment, and support ensures appropriate assistance for those affected.

## **Chapter 9 — Safe sport standards in Canada: structure, limitations, and gaps**

Governments and sport organizations have created a wide range of policies to support safe sport in Canada. These policies aim to prevent maltreatment, abuse, harassment, and discrimination, and to ensure respectful and safe environments for all participants.

### **NATIONAL SAFE SPORT STANDARDS**

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, first published in 2019, is the principal national safe sport policy. It defines and prohibits maltreatment (psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect and grooming), and other prohibited behaviours such as discrimination, boundary



violations, and failure to report maltreatment. It also establishes a range of sanctions, from apology to permanent ineligibility to participate in sport.

Since 2022, all federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes must adopt the Universal Code of Conduct, now administered through the Canadian Safe Sport Program. These organizations also maintain their own codes of conduct that set behavioural expectations for individuals involved with the organization and may address matters beyond safe sport, such as recreational drug use during sport activities.

### **PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL SAFE SPORT STANDARDS**

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport can also apply at provincial, territorial, and local levels through a “flow-through” system. This means that National Sport Organizations require their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to adopt their policies, which are then passed on to local clubs and associations. Organizations outside this hierarchy, such as universities, can choose to adopt the Universal Code of Conduct voluntarily.

Provincial and territorial approaches vary widely. Quebec is the only jurisdiction with legislation requiring sport bodies to adopt safety regulations. British Columbia and Nunavut have universal codes or policies tied to government funding. Several provinces and territories require sport organizations to develop their own policies as a condition of funding, while others impose no mandatory standards at all.

### **COMMUNITY SAFE SPORT STANDARDS**

At the grassroots level, Community Sport Organizations often adopt their own policies, though they are generally not required to do so. Quebec remains an exception. All sports bodies there, including leagues, clubs, and associations, are legally required to adopt safety regulations. In other provinces and territories, some local organizations must adopt safe sport policies because of their affiliation with a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization.

### **THE UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT’S CONTENT, REACH, AND CUSTODY**

Participants in our engagement process described the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as overly legalistic, difficult to understand, and missing important areas. They identified cyberbullying, digital exploitation, child protection, Para-specific definitions, and mechanisms to hold organizations accountable as missing. Many viewed it as either too broad or insufficiently adaptable to high-performance, community, or youth sport settings.

Concerns were also raised about its limited reach because relatively few organizations below the national level have adopted it. Participants expressed differing views on how to broaden its application. Some favoured downward adoption through the sport hierarchy and others called for provincial and territorial leadership. Opinions also diverged regarding custody of the Code. Some supported the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport

due to its expertise, while others argued that the body enforcing the Code should not also be responsible for updating it.

### **A NEED FOR UNIFORM SAFE SPORT STANDARDS**

Participants noted major inconsistencies in safe sport policies across levels of sport and jurisdictions, emphasizing the need for a shared understanding of maltreatment and consistent standards “from coast to coast to coast.” They supported the development of clear and harmonized expectations and remedies for all participants, regardless of sport or level.

### **LACK OF EXPERTISE, AWARENESS, AND CONSIDERATION FOR UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS**

Sport organizations widely reported lacking the expertise and resources to develop effective safe sport policies and expressed interest in standardized templates or external guidance. Many noted that existing policies are poorly communicated, rarely read, and unevenly enforced, especially at the community level.

Participants stressed the need for policies that apply beyond the field of play, including during travel and on online platforms. They also emphasized that safe sport frameworks must be shaped through an Indigenous lens and better tailored to the needs of athletes with disabilities whose experiences and realities are not adequately reflected in current standards.

## **Chapter 10 — Safe sport complaint mechanisms: responding to maltreatment and supporting those affected**

Safe sport complaint mechanisms in Canada consist of a diverse array of national programs, provincial and territorial mechanisms, and Independent Third Parties. These vary widely in structure, scope, and reporting processes.

### **THE OFFICE OF THE SPORT INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER AND THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM**

Following the 2019 Red Deer Declaration, governments committed to exploring a mechanism to report and monitor harassment, abuse, and discrimination in sport. At the 2019 National Safe Sport Summit, representatives from across the sport system agreed that an independent body should administer what would become the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

This led to the creation of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, housed within the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. Launched in June 2022, the Abuse-Free Sport Program empowered the Office to receive and investigate complaints under the Universal Code of Conduct, while decisions on violations and sanctions were handled by the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes and review and appeals were handled by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada’s Dispute Resolution Secretariat.

The Office's jurisdiction depended on organizations opting in through an agreement and collecting consent forms from all participants. Most program signatories were federally funded National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations, which were required to join as of April 1, 2023, as a condition of funding. The Office could also conduct Sport Environment Assessments for program signatories.

Through our engagement process, participants identified several major shortcomings in the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. For example, its jurisdiction was limited to participants who had provided consent within participating sport organizations, and its high costs discouraged many provincial, territorial, and grassroots sport organizations from joining. The requirement for explicit consent created significant administrative burdens for sport organizations.

Users also described the complaint process as opaque, slow, and confusing, with inconsistent investigations, weak communication, and inadequate trauma-informed support. We were told that sanctions were not consistently implemented, and the adversarial model offered few restorative or educational resolution options. While the program was an important first step toward responding to maltreatment, it was launched quickly during a national crisis and lacked the phased implementation that experts recommended.

### **THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ETHICS IN SPORT AND THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM**

In 2024, responsibility for the national complaint mechanism moved from the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, an independent National Multisport Service Organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. The change was intended to ensure the national safe sport program's independence from the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. Before assuming its new role, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport updated the program rules based on community feedback and published the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules in January 2025. The Canadian Safe Sport Program launched in April 2025.

Under the program, the Centre independently administers and enforces the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, including report intake, investigation, decisions, and sanctions. Reviews and appeals continue to be heard by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.

Like its predecessor, the program operates on a contract-based model requiring sport organizations to adopt it through an agreement and participants have to provide written consent. Federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes must adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program as a condition of Sport Canada funding. Unlike the former Abuse-Free Sport, the Canadian Safe Sport Program is not available to provincial, territorial, or community sport organizations, and the Centre does not currently conduct Sport Environment Assessments.

Participants in our activities generally welcomed the transition to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, seeing its independence from the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada as an opportunity to rebuild trust. Early

feedback was largely positive. Participants noted clearer program rules, defined timelines for steps in the report process, stronger communication, enhanced trauma-informed practices, and more flexible ways to resolve reports. They also appreciated having one independent administrator for the entire process and a system fully funded by the Government of Canada.

However, some concerns remain. Specifically, the Canadian Safe Sport Program still applies only to federally funded national-level organizations, meaning most cases fall outside its scope. Participants also pointed to ongoing challenges related to its continued reliance on individual consent, the absence of Sport Environment Assessments, the need for stronger legislative authority, and the risk of frivolous or bad-faith complaints. Some also raised concerns about the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's dual role in both anti-doping and safe sport.

### **ONGOING RELIANCE ON INDEPENDENT THIRD-PARTY MECHANISMS**

Because the Canadian Safe Sport Program only covers only a narrow segment of the sport system, National Sport Organizations employ Independent Third-Party Mechanisms to handle reports of maltreatment involving individuals who fall outside of this program's scope. Independent third parties are external individuals or agencies (such as law firms) hired to independently review maltreatment complaints and conduct investigations, or to direct complaints to a competent authority. Their jurisdiction is set out in the sport organization's discipline and complaints policy.

Participants told us that although Independent Third-Party Mechanisms are widely used across the sport system, they suffer from major shortcomings. Sport organizations heavily rely on them because national programs cannot handle all complaints, but these services are extremely costly, sometimes reaching several million dollars per year. Participants also stressed that there is no oversight, licensing, or required training for these third-party providers. This leads to inconsistent quality, limited expertise in sensitive cases, and real or perceived conflicts of interest, since the same contractors are hired and paid by the sport organizations whose cases they handle.

Many viewed these mechanisms as ineffective, with unclear, inconsistent, and overly complex procedures. They reported poor communication, lengthy delays, inadequate due-process protections, and insufficient support for complainants and respondents who often cannot afford legal representation. Participants also pointed to problems such as administrative investigations taking place during ongoing criminal matters, weak enforcement of sanctions, and breaches of confidentiality. They also described a lack of cultural awareness, particularly for Indigenous communities, who emphasized the need for culturally grounded, restorative approaches. Despite some positive experiences, most participants felt that the current Independent Third-Party system lacks fairness, transparency, and accountability.

### **INCONSISTENT PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL APPROACHES**

After endorsing the 2019 Red Deer Declaration, federal, provincial and territorial governments agreed, at the 2022 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation, to implement an Independent Third-Party Mechanism or join the then Abuse-Free Sport Program by 2023.

Several provinces and territories have implemented, or are working to implement, a centralized mechanism to address maltreatment. However, this is not the case in every jurisdiction. More precisely:

- Quebec, which did not sign the 2019 Red Deer Declaration, appointed the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman as required by the *Act respecting safety in recreation and sport*.
- New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Nunavut have entered into a contract with an Independent Third-Party Mechanism.
- Prince Edward Island, Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and Manitoba are currently in the process of implementing Independent Third-Party Mechanisms.
- British Columbia is in the process of establishing Sport Safeguarding BC, an independent not-for-profit organization created to maintain a centralized complaint mechanism.
- Ontario and Yukon do not have a centralized provincial complaint mechanism.

In jurisdictions without centralized systems, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations hire Independent Third Parties to act as their own private complaint mechanisms. Other than Quebec's recreation and sports integrity ombudsman who is empowered to hear complaints at all levels of sport, existing provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms have limited reach at the grassroots level. They generally apply to only individuals registered with sport organizations that are members of a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization affiliated with the provincial or territorial Multisport Service Organization, which is required for government funding. In some cases, local-level sport organizations may be required to refer their complaints to the Independent Third Party hired by the Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization they are affiliated with.

Participants overwhelmingly felt that complaints should not be handled internally by sport organizations or by third parties they hire. They emphasized the need for a fully independent, simple, and consistent national complaint mechanism. Many reported that the current decentralized system is confusing, inconsistent, and difficult to navigate, and urged the creation of a unified process with clear rules and consistent sanctions.

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: CANADA NEEDS A COORDINATED RESPONSE TO MALTREATMENT IN SPORT**

There is an urgent need for greater uniformity and alignment across safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms. While governments endorsed the 2019 Red Deer Declaration, progress across the country has been uneven. Maltreatment occurs at all levels — not only in high-performance environments but also in community and youth sport where most participants are children. Complaint mechanisms remain fragmented, with significant differences in standards, procedures, and access across federal, provincial, and territorial systems. Several jurisdictions still lack a formal centralized complaint mechanism, and many governments and sport organizations depend on Independent Third-Party Mechanisms that are costly, inconsistent, and affected by perceived or real conflicts of interest.



In our Preliminary Report, we examined four possible frameworks for creating a coherent, pan-Canadian approach to addressing maltreatment in sport. One option envisioned a national authority jointly empowered through federal, provincial, and territorial legislation. Another proposed assigning responsibility to a single independent not-for-profit organization that would administer a universal safe sport policy across the country. A third option relied on federal contributions to provinces and territories to encourage them to establish complaint mechanisms that meet shared national standards. A final option considered the creation of federal legislation and a federal tribunal to address maltreatment in national and international-level sport only.

A comprehensive response to maltreatment in sport requires implementing consistent policies and complaint mechanisms that are applicable and accessible to everyone at all levels of sport.

### **Improving the Universal Code of Conduct**

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport provides a shared set of standards for preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport, but it now needs modernization to remain current and aligned with best practices. In our view, the Code should be reviewed regularly, and — to ensure independence, fairness, and accountability — the responsibility for updating it must be separate from the responsibility for enforcing it.

We call upon the Government of Canada to maintain the Universal Code of Conduct as a mandatory condition for federal funding and to ensure it remains current through regular updates. For the time being, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport may continue to act as the Code's custodian, but this responsibility should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity (outlined in Chapter 12) as soon as that body is established. Safeguards must also be put in place to clearly separate the Centre's policy-development functions from its adjudicative responsibilities, preserving independence and preventing real or perceived conflicts of interest.

We recommend that the Code undergo a comprehensive review every two years to ensure it continues to reflect evidence-based best practices and the needs of Canadians. UNESCO's forthcoming Global Policy Standards for Inclusive, Equitable and Safe Sport and Physical Education, which will be presented for endorsement by UNESCO Member States (including Canada) at the 8th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport in 2027, should be considered when updating the Universal Code of Conduct.

### **Harmonizing safe sport standards across the sport system**

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport sets national-level standards for preventing and addressing maltreatment. However, its reach is limited because it applies to only national and international sport and only where organizations choose to adopt it. Most national-level sport organizations also maintain their own safe sport policy or code of conduct. These policies or codes are applicable to all individuals affiliated with their organization, including those who do not compete or are not otherwise involved in national or international-level sport.



Provinces and territories rely on a mix of statutory frameworks, mandatory policies, or organization-developed codes, resulting in varying requirements and often conflicting expectations across jurisdictions and levels of sport. This patchwork places a heavy burden on organizations that sometimes lack the expertise to draft effective policies and creates significant misalignment across the country.

The Commission therefore calls upon the Government of Canada to mandate, as a condition of federal funding, that sport organizations adopt a safe sport policy or code of conduct that include safe sport standards consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct.

### **Aligning and expanding enforcement of safe sport standards**

The current system for addressing maltreatment in sport is highly fragmented. It leaves participants uncertain about where to turn and often passed between multiple complaint mechanisms. Because the Canadian Safe Sport Program and its provincial and territorial counterparts have limited reach at the local level, many individuals have no access to an independent report process. In most jurisdictions, governments and sport organizations rely on Independent Third Parties despite concerns about conflicts of interest, high costs, uneven expertise, and a lack of regulatory oversight over these professionals and law firms.

We believe the most effective long-term solution is a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program supported by complementary federal, provincial, and territorial legislation and administered by an independent Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority. This model would create one coherent framework, streamline responses to maltreatment across the country, and enhance safety at every level of sport.

We recognize that such a system will take time and political commitment to build. Therefore, in the short term, we recommend that the federal government pursue the more immediately feasible approach of supporting provincial and territorial mechanisms through conditional financial contributions. These contributions should help each jurisdiction establish a centralized complaint mechanism that meets jointly defined criteria. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport will continue to administer the national program.

### **Phase I: Roadmap to implementing harmonized safe sport programs**

Although the Canadian Safe Sport Program has been in operation for less than a year, the Commission considers it a meaningful improvement over the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. This view is based on both our independent review of the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules and the largely positive feedback we received from participants in our engagement activities.

The program has introduced clearer rules and timelines, more consistent communication, and stronger trauma-informed and procedurally fair practices. It also offers a broader range of resolution options and provides greater oversight of investigations, ensuring that reports are handled efficiently and appropriately. Finally, by making the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport the sole administrator of all steps in the process, the program brings greater consistency and independence than the previous divided model.

However, we believe Sport Environment Assessments are vital to identifying and addressing unsafe sport cultures, and that they should be carried out by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

We therefore call upon the Government of Canada to continue treating the Canadian Safe Sport Program as a mandatory condition of federal funding for national-level sport organizations. The program should remain under the independent administration of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, with sustained federal funding to ensure it can receive and manage reports and carry out its policy functions effectively. We further call for increased federal funding so the Centre can resume conducting Sport Environment Assessments. Stable, long-term funding must also be provided to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada to ensure that reviews and appeals of the Centre's decisions under the Canadian Safe Sport program remain accessible and free of charge for users.

To harmonize the response to maltreatment in sport across national, provincial, and local levels, the Commission calls, in the short term, for a three-step approach, inspired by the models used in health and childcare. As a first step, the Commission recommends developing a Multilateral Sport Framework, led by the federal government in partnership with provinces and territories. This framework would establish shared criteria, common objectives, and a coordinated vision for safe sport systems across the country. It would commit the federal government to providing funding that builds on existing provincial and territorial investments. It would also require provinces and territories to use that funding to develop or strengthen their own safe sport programs while aligning with the framework's criteria.

Based on our research and review of existing safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms, and on feedback from participants, we strongly believe that provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs should meet these minimum criteria to qualify for federal funding under the Multilateral Sport Framework:

1. **Universal safe sport standards.** Provinces and territories shall adopt a universal code of conduct, legislation, or regulations establishing safe sport standards consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.
2. **Independent safe sport authority.** Provinces and territories shall establish a provincial or territorial safe sport authority to administer reports of alleged violations of universal safe sport standards. The safe sport authority shall be an independent public or non-profit body, and it shall have jurisdiction over all reports of alleged violations of universal safe sport standards in the province or territory, regardless of government funding. It must be funded by the provincial or territorial government and free of charge for users.
3. **Information sharing.** Provinces and territories shall ensure collaboration and information sharing between their safe sport authority and the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. Safe sport authorities must agree to share all imposed sanctions that involve suspensions, permanent ineligibility, or other restrictions on sport participation, for inclusion in a Pan-Canadian Public Registry.

4. **Universal screening policy.** Provinces and territories shall adopt a universal background screening policy applicable to sport organizations receiving government funding.
5. **Universal governance standards.** Provinces and territories shall adopt a sport governance code or universal governance standards consistent with those contained in the Canadian Sport Governance Code applicable to sport organizations receiving government funding.

Eventually, governments should expand the Multilateral Sport Framework beyond safe sport programs to develop a shared vision for promoting broad sport and physical activity participation in the country.

Once the Multilateral Sport Framework is finalized, we call upon Parliament, as a second step, to amend the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* to support the Multilateral Sport Framework and bilateral funding agreements with provinces and territories.

As a third and final step, we call upon the Government of Canada to enter into bilateral funding agreements with each province and territory to put the Multilateral Sport Framework and the amended Act into operation. Each bilateral funding agreement would set out the conditions under which federal funding is provided. It would also require a plan explaining how the province or territory will use that funding to meet the shared framework's criteria in a way that reflects its local realities. It would also require the province or territory to report annually on its progress and on the impact of federal investments.

We also call upon the Government of Canada, once provinces and territories have implemented a safe sport program compliant with the agreed-upon criteria under the Multilateral Sport Framework, to require that National Sport Organizations amend their membership rules to ensure that their members, the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, adopt and comply with the universal safe sport standards established by their respective provincial or territorial government. This would become a condition of federal funding.

#### **Phase II: Roadmap to implementing a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program**

As we mentioned earlier, we believe that the most effective long-term solution to the issues we outlined is a single pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program administered by an independent Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority. The Commission acknowledges that this important undertaking will require significant collaboration between governments and a commitment to transformational leadership. However, the work is worthwhile.

The model would streamline how governments respond to maltreatment in sport by creating a single, coherent framework that applies to everyone from community participants to high-performance athletes. It would also simplify access to the system, replacing multiple overlapping policies and mechanisms with a clear point of entry in every jurisdiction. A legislated national authority would have the powers needed to investigate and sanction misconduct, while a council of ministers would ensure shared federal-provincial-territorial oversight and respect for each government's jurisdiction.

We encourage governments to build on the existing Canadian Safe Sport Program and the safe sport programs that will be developed under the Multilateral Sport Framework to create a single pan-Canadian program. The Commission therefore calls upon the Government of Canada, in the long term, to actively collaborate with provinces and territories to develop a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program. This would require all governments to:

- jointly design the program
- adopt complementary federal, provincial and territorial legislation
- consolidate existing national, provincial and territorial safe sport authorities into a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority with provincial and territorial safe sport authorities serving as regional offices in each participating jurisdiction.

We also call for the creation of a council of ministers to oversee the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority and for the Government of Canada to fund, jointly with participating provincial and territorial governments, this Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority's operations.

## **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: ENHANCING COMPLAINT MECHANISMS AND THEIR RESOLUTION PROCESS**

Our independent review and engagement process revealed that safe sport complaint mechanisms across Canada function inconsistently, with major differences in how reports are received, assessed, investigated, and resolved. Many processes are overly complex, slow, and opaque. They offer little support to those involved and lack trauma-informed approaches, due-process protections, and effective oversight or enforcement. We also echo participants' concerns about confidentiality issues, particularly within Independent Third-Party Mechanisms. Overall, the landscape is fragmented and unreliable, leaving many complainants without a clear, fair, or consistent pathway to resolution.

### **Complaint-resolution processes and procedures: key features**

Our Preliminary Report recommended that all resolution processes and procedures for handling safe sport reports in Canada be clear, straightforward, and easily accessible to all. We also recommended that they be timely, efficient, trauma informed and adapted to individuals who have experienced harm. They must embed procedural fairness for all parties involved and include monitoring and accountability measures to ensure that sport organizations properly enforce sanctions.

While reinforcing our preliminary recommendations, our independent review and engagement process following the release of our Preliminary Report led us to conclude that processes and procedures must also incorporate a triage or screening step, a broad range of resolution options, restorative principles, and an Indigenous approach.

- First, an early triage step can quickly identify matters that do not involve maltreatment and redirect them appropriately, preventing the system from becoming clogged with issues better handled by sport organizations.
- Second, complaint processes must offer multiple avenues for resolution—beyond full investigations—so that responses can match the nature and seriousness of each case.
- Third, restorative practices should be available as voluntary options that promote learning, accountability, and healing, but never at the expense of a victim's or survivor's right to a formal investigative process.
- Finally, processes must meaningfully incorporate Indigenous legal traditions and cultural practices where appropriate, including the involvement of Elders or Knowledge Keepers, to ensure that safe sport systems are culturally relevant and responsive.

We therefore call on the Government of Canada to encourage provinces, territories, and sport organizations to ensure that the report processes and procedures of safe sport authorities and Independent Third-party Mechanisms incorporate the following features:

- clarity and simplicity
- timeliness and efficiency
- procedural fairness
- proportionality
- restorative practices
- Indigenous practices
- sanction enforceability.

### **Safe sport authorities and Independent Third-Party Mechanisms: key features**

In our Preliminary Report, we recommended that all complaint mechanisms handling safe sport reports across Canada be transparent and provide consistent communication with all parties involved. They should also provide appropriate assistance to help individuals navigate the process and provide case managers who can act as intermediaries between the parties and the investigator or decision maker. These case managers can answer procedural questions or concerns and provide access to legal aid resources for all parties involved.

Given participants' broad support for our preliminary recommendations regarding complaint mechanisms' key features, we maintain them and call upon the Government of Canada to encourage provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations to ensure that safe sport authorities and Independent Third-Party Mechanisms develop safe sport programs that incorporate trauma-informed practices, transparency, support, expertise in the area relevant to the complaint, and legal aid resources.



## Chapter 11 — Prevention strategies to build and sustain safe sport environments

Preventing maltreatment in sport is just as important as responding to it after harm occurs. While a prevention-focused approach reduces risks and helps create safer environments, reactive systems act only once harm has already been done. Because sport is an important part of life for many Canadians, strong prevention efforts have wide societal significance, especially for children and other vulnerable participants.

We focus on safe sport education and training, background screening processes, data collection, registries of sanctioned individuals, and safeguarding officers. These preventative measures were most frequently highlighted by participants throughout our work, and the Commission found them to be foundational.

### SAFE SPORT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education and training are essential to preventing maltreatment in sport and promoting safe and inclusive sport environments for all. Numerous education and training initiatives specific to safe sport are currently in place across the Canadian sport system.

For example, the National Coaching Certification Program provides standardized coach education, including the Make Ethical Decisions module. The Canadian Safe Sport Program requires participants to complete the Safe Sport 2025 e-learning module on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. Under the former Abuse Free Sport Program, accredited training programs such as the Coaching Association of Canada's Safe Sport Training and the Respect in Sport Training offered by the Respect Group Inc. were also mandatory.

Led by the Canadian Olympic Committee with support from Sport Canada and partners across the sport system, Project Lighthouse worked to promote and align safe sport education nationally. It expanded access to resources like the Quality Coaching Campaign and supported the development of new learning modules, including Safe Sport 2025.

The True Sport Movement, administered by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport until February 2025, promoted a values-based approach to sport grounded in fairness, excellence, inclusion, and fun through seven widely adopted principles. It offered tools such as a multimedia toolkit, podcasts, e-learning resources, programming support, social media materials, and educational content for children. The program ended in 2025 when the Centre withdrew due to a conflict of interest arising from its new role as the national safe sport authority.

Participants emphasized that safe sport training needs clearer, more practical, and updated content. They noted gaps in areas such as racism, sexism, hazing, digital harms, and grooming. They also viewed many online modules as superficial and stressed the need for accessible, interactive, or in-person learning. The lack of national coordination has led to duplicated and burdensome training requirements across sport organizations.



While participants highlighted True Sport as a strong values-based model, its uneven uptake and the loss of its administrator (the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport) raised concerns about sustaining its impact.

### **Findings and Calls to Action: harmonizing and coordinating safe sport education across the system**

In our Preliminary Report, we recommended that the Government of Canada take a leadership role in harmonizing and coordinating safe sport education. This means launching a national public awareness campaign and developing and delivering a National Safe Sport Education Program in collaboration with stakeholders, provinces and territories, and Indigenous groups. The proposed program would include tailored chapters for all sport participants. It would be delivered and updated by a designated Multisport Service Organization and later the Centralized Sport Entity (outlined in Chapter 12). It would also be mandatory for federally funded sport organizations, with encouragement for provinces and territories to adopt the same requirement. The Commission also recommended that National Sport Organizations receiving federal funding update their membership rules to ensure the national safe sport program's delivery within Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and that the federal government provide the necessary resources for implementation. Finally, we called for the continued delivery of the True Sport Program by transferring it to an independent Multisport Service Organization and, eventually, the Centralized Sport Entity.

### **Launching a public awareness campaign**

Despite education efforts within the sport system, a broader national public awareness campaign is needed to counter the long-standing culture of silence, harmful norms, and limited understanding of safe sport across Canada. Everyone involved in sport plays a role in creating and maintaining safe, respectful, and inclusive sport environments. Limiting education to only certain groups undermines the collective responsibility required to prevent maltreatment.

Given participants' broad support, including provincial and territorial governments, we maintain our preliminary recommendation. We call upon the Government of Canada to launch a national public awareness campaign to inform the Canadian public about safe sport practices and the various forms of maltreatment and other prohibited behaviours in sport. We also call upon the Government of Canada to collaborate with provinces and territories to ensure consistent delivery of the national public awareness campaign while also considering each province and territory's unique circumstances.

### **Developing a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program**

Across the Canadian sport system, various organizations from the grassroots to high-performance levels deliver a wide range of safe sport education and training initiatives. That said, through our work, we identified several areas for improvement.

To make meaningful changes in the system, safe sport education and training must be delivered to all participants, go beyond identifying maltreatment, vary in formats, and be delivered in a coordinated manner. The

current fragmented system leads to overlapping, duplicated courses and inconsistent messaging, underscoring the need for centralized, harmonized delivery.

We therefore maintain our preliminary recommendations regarding the creation of a single unified Safe Sport Education Program. We call on the Government of Canada to lead the development and rollout of a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program. It must work in partnership with provinces and territories and draw on subject-matter expertise to create a single, comprehensive, and interactive program for all sport participants. A National Multisport Service Organization, overseen by Sport Canada, would be responsible for implementing, updating, and delivering the program until these responsibilities transition to the Centralized Sport Entity.

We call on the Government of Canada to transfer to the same National Multisport Service Organization, and eventually to the Centralized Sport Entity, the mandate currently held by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to develop and maintain educational resources on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

To ensure broad uptake, we call on the Government of Canada to require all federally funded sport organizations to deliver the education program to everyone within their organization. The Government of Canada must also encourage provinces and territories to apply similar conditions for their own funded sport organizations, in addition to making the program available to any organization wishing to use it. We also recommend that the government provide the funding and resources necessary to support the program's development and delivery across all levels of the sport system.

### **Reinstating the True Sport Program**

Safe sport education must extend beyond identifying maltreatment. It needs to actively define what safe, positive sport environments look like and highlight core values such as fairness, respect, inclusion, and responsibility. In this regard, the True Sport Program has been an important vehicle for promoting values-based sport. It was discontinued by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport but, if it was reinstated, the True Sport program could continue to play a significant role.

We therefore maintain our preliminary recommendation and call upon the Government of Canada to contract a National Multisport Service Organization to advance the mission and expand the reach of the True Sport Program across the Canadian sport system. Custody of the True Sport Program should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

### **Offering bystander training**

Through our engagement process, participants repeatedly emphasized the need for bystander training to ensure that everyone involved in sport can recognize, prevent, and appropriately respond to maltreatment. Despite existing legal duties to report child abuse and obligations to report prohibited behaviour in sport under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, individuals often remain silent — even when they are aware of harm.

Given these gaps, the Commission concludes that both the national public awareness campaign and the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program must include training on identifying harmful behaviours and understanding reporting obligations. This would help ensure that all participants are equipped to act when they witness maltreatment in sport.

We therefore call upon the Government of Canada to include bystander training, including education on the duties to report child abuse and maltreatment in sport. This should be part of the public awareness campaign and the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to be developed under the Government of Canada's leadership.

### **BACKGROUND SCREENINGS**

Background screenings are a core component of creating safe sport environments. Many sport organizations across the country have developed policies and processes to screen applicant coaches, staff, and volunteers to ensure they meet important integrity requirements to participate or otherwise be involved in sport. The screening tools most commonly used include vulnerable sector checks, criminal record checks, disclosure forms, reference checks, interviews, and, most recently, social media screening.

However, the implementation of background screening remains inconsistent across jurisdictions and among sport organizations, largely because the requirements for it vary. Sport Canada requires National Sport Organizations to obtain background checks from coaches as a condition of receiving federal funding for their salaries. These include the Enhanced Police Information Center (E-PIC) check, Vulnerable Sector Search (VSS), Vulnerable Sector Verification (VSV), Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC), or equivalent background checks.

Some provinces and territories also impose screening requirements:

- Ontario mandates risk-based screening policies to ensure the protection of children for Provincial Sport Organizations as a prerequisite for funding.
- British Columbia requires designated Provincial Sport Organizations to comply with the *Criminal Record Review Act*, including mandatory criminal record checks for employees and volunteers.
- Quebec's Bill 45—*An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports* now obliges sport federations, sport bodies, and recreation bodies to conduct background verifications. These checks are for persons working with, or regularly in contact with, minors or persons with disabilities.

Participants agreed that background checks are essential to preventing abuse in sport and should be mandatory for all individuals in positions of trust, not just coaches. They raised concerns about inconsistent and insufficient screening practices across the country, especially at the grassroots level, where procedures may be less rigorous and can be burdensome for volunteer-run organizations.

Many cited troubling cases, such as banned individuals continuing to coach or individuals being hired despite prior offences, that highlight gaps in policy enforcement. Participants also noted that screenings are often not repeated over time and that vulnerable sector checks are becoming less common, even though they are more comprehensive than standard criminal record checks.

In our Preliminary Report, we proposed two approaches to standardizing background screenings. One option was to mandate vulnerable sector checks for coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes for federally funded sport organizations. The second option was to develop a standardized background screening policy in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, Indigenous groups, and Multisport Service Organizations, which sport organizations would be required to adopt. Across both options, the Commission recommended expanding the requirement to conduct vulnerable sector checks or to adopt a background screening policy to all levels of sport.

### **Findings and Calls to Action: establishing a universal screening standard**

The consistent implementation of harmonized background screening procedures for anyone who has authority, access, or influence over athletes (especially minors) is a fundamental component of a sound maltreatment prevention strategy. The Government of Canada has a vital leadership role to play in establishing and supporting this national standard.

We recognize that many participants raised concerns that vulnerable sector checks are outdated, costly, administratively burdensome, and sometimes not comprehensive. We also recognize that a standardized background screening policy allows for greater flexibility in screening tools. We therefore recommend that the Government of Canada develop a standardized background screening policy.

The background screening policy should be risk based and should include, at a minimum, the following screening tools:

- vulnerable sector checks
- criminal record checks
- screening disclosure forms
- reference checks
- interviews
- social media screening.

It is also essential that it incorporates a requirement for sport organizations to verify individuals against the Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals (outlined in Chapter 11).

In the Preliminary Report, we recommended that all governments jointly develop a standardized background screening policy, which would then be mandated as a condition of federal or provincial and territorial funding.

After careful consideration, we think that a more effective approach would be for each government—federal, provincial, and territorial—to develop its own universal background screening policy. This would allow provinces and territories to tailor their policies to local needs and the specific characteristics of their communities and populations. It would also let them decide whether to tie the policy to provincial or territorial funding or, as Quebec did with Bill 45, to mandate background screening through legislation to extend their reach beyond funded sport organizations. This second choice is preferable.

We therefore call upon the Government of Canada to develop a national background screening policy for adoption and implementation by federally funded sport organizations. Additionally, we strongly encourage governments to develop a provincial or territorial background-screening policy as a criterion for provincial or territorial Safe Sport Programs to qualify for federal funding under the Multilateral Sport Framework (outlined in Chapter 10).

### **DATA COLLECTION**

Experts urge decision makers to adopt strategies to prevent and address maltreatment in sport that are grounded in theory and empirical data. They emphasized that evidence must be accessible to all participants, including coaches, parents, officials, volunteers, and support staff, to ensure safe sport practices are effectively applied.

### **Findings and Calls to Action: grounding prevention and response efforts in evidence**

In the Preliminary Report, we recommended creating a national data tool to regularly collect, measure and analyze the key indicators that are needed to assess the health and safety of sport environments across Canada.

While we acknowledge that information sharing must take into account applicable privacy and access-to-information legislation, governments should collaborate to share non-personal data to support evidence-based decision making and strengthen safe sport outcomes across Canada. An easy first step would be for governments to consolidate data collected through the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, along with data from existing provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms.

We therefore call on the Government of Canada to establish a comprehensive national tool to regularly collect and analyze data on key indicators that measure and assess the health and safety of sport environments in Canada. Safe sport reports and their outcomes should be included in the data collected.

We also call for collaboration with provincial and territorial governments to consolidate data collected by provinces, territories, or their centralized complaint mechanisms or safe sport authorities.

### **PUBLIC REGISTRIES OF SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS**

The former Abuse-Free Sport Registry and its successor, the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry, were created to meet the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport requirement for a public, searchable list of individuals whose eligibility to participate in sport has been restricted.



Maintained by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner until August 2025, the former Abuse-Free Sport Registry disclosed sanctions and provisional measures that restricted eligibility to participate in sport. Since April 2025, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport maintains the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry, which similarly publishes sanctions and provisional measures restricting an individual's eligibility to participate in sport. It may also recognize and publish sanctions issued by other regulatory bodies or sport organizations. The Centre maintains an internal database containing resolutions and sanctions not posted publicly, accessible to organizations with consent of the concerned individual.

Beyond the national system, some National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations maintain their own public sanction registries, though these vary widely in scope, detail, and consistency and no legislation requires them to exist. Examples include registries maintained by Athletics Canada, Gymnastics Canada, Skate Canada, Swimming Canada, and certain Provincial Sport Organizations such as Ontario Volleyball and Gymnastics Ontario. To our knowledge, Sask Sport is the only sport federation maintaining a centralized registry at the provincial level.

Participants explained that individuals banned from sport can often move between organizations or jurisdictions without detection because sanction information is inconsistently recorded and communicated. They viewed the current patchwork of registries as inadequate. They noted that many sanctions are never published, some registries are hard to find on sport organization's websites, and most sport organizations lack any registry at all. As a result, participants strongly supported creating a single national registry to help all sport organizations verify individuals' histories and prevent sanctioned participants from continuing their involvement elsewhere.

In our Preliminary Report, we outlined four possible approaches for creating a pan-Canadian registry of sanctioned individuals in sport. One option involved both orders of government empowering a single safe sport authority to administer federal, provincial and territorial safe sport legislation and maintain a national registry. A second was for governments to delegate the administration of a universal safe sport policy to an independent not-for-profit corporation that would also be contractually required to operate the registry. A third option proposed tying federal contributions to provinces and territories' willingness to share sanction information, enabling the creation of a single registry. A fourth option would have the federal government enter agreements with provinces and territories that already have centralized complaint mechanisms to report sanctions into a pan-Canadian registry.

### **Findings and Calls to Action: creating a Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals**

Sanction registries remain the exception rather than the rule. This makes it difficult to know whether an individual has been banned or restricted. It also allows some to move between organizations or jurisdictions despite active sanctions against them. To address this, participants and governments supported creating a pan-Canadian registry.

However, a national registry of sanctioned individuals is only as reliable as the national, provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms that feed into it. In other words, the broader the reach of the centralized complaint mechanisms, the wider the range of sanctions that the registry can capture. This objective underpins



our Calls to Action articulated in Chapter 10. How to establish a Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals is an issue that flows naturally from these Calls to Action, given that the registry would centralize information provided by these various safe sport authorities.

In the short term, we call on the Government of Canada to enter into an agreement with provincial and territorial governments. It would specify collaboration and information sharing between the National Safe Sport Authority (that is, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport) and provincial and territorial safe sport authorities to be established according to the Multilateral Sport Framework. This collaboration should encompass sharing imposed sanctions for inclusion in a Pan-Canadian Public Registry of Sanctioned Individuals.

As we suggest in Chapter 10, information sharing between the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the various provincial and territorial safe sport authorities could be agreed to as a criterion under the Multilateral Sport Framework. This could be further formalized through bilateral funding agreements between the federal government and each province and territory. Until the Multilateral Sport Framework is executed, the Government of Canada could immediately conclude agreements with the provinces and territories that already have centralized complaints mechanisms, or that are in the process of implementing one, to share information with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to create a Pan-Canadian Registry.

As for the Pan-Canadian Registry's content, the Commission believes it should only capture sanctions that involve a suspension, a permanent ineligibility, or other measures that restrict an individual's eligibility to participate in sport. While we agree, in principle, that past sanctions would ideally remain publicly available on a permanent basis, we acknowledge that privacy laws impose restrictions on the disclosure of personal information. The scope of the personal information published could expand if, as recommended in Chapter 10, provinces and territories enacted legislation delegating the power to investigate and adjudicate reports of maltreatment to a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority, and empowered it to maintain a sanction registry.

Consequently, in the long term, we call on the Government of Canada to work closely with provincial and territorial governments, when developing a single unified Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program, to mandate the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority to oversee and maintain the Pan-Canadian Registry.

### **SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS**

As we explain in Chapter 3, power imbalances, a culture of silence, and a winning-at-all-costs mentality create conditions where maltreatment is ignored or normalized. This leads athletes and bystanders to remain silent even when they are aware of harmful behaviours.

Athletes described situations where their concerns raised about abusive coaching were dismissed, minimized, or suppressed by sport leaders who prioritized performance results and avoided negative publicity. Even when formal complaint processes existed, many athletes first disclosed concerns to team personnel who lacked the independence or qualifications to handle them. This resulted in mishandled complaints or further silencing.

To address these systemic issues, participants emphasized the need for every sport organization to appoint an independent, dedicated individual responsible for athletes' safety and well-being. Ideally this person would be a licensed health professional who operates outside performance structures. They would observe training and competition environments directly to identify potential maltreatment without relying on athletes to report it themselves.

### **Findings and Calls to Action: designating safeguarding officers in all sport organizations**

Athletes need protection from power imbalances and organizational cultures that prioritize performance outcomes and reputational risk over their welfare. These conditions can make it difficult for athletes to speak up about maltreatment or unsafe practices. The Commission considers it essential that sport organizations appoint individuals whose sole responsibility is to safeguard athletes' safety and well-being. The presence of such safeguarding officers strengthens public confidence, helps dismantle cultures of silence, and removes significant barriers to reporting maltreatment. It also encourages the use of complaint mechanisms and support services.

To be effective, safeguarding officers must operate independently of both the team environment and the sport organization's performance structures. They need appropriate safeguards in place to ensure their autonomy and protect them from undue influence. Safeguarding officers must also be licensed health professionals with an understanding of athletes' psychological and physical health and well-being.

We therefore call upon the Government of Canada to mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding designate a safeguarding officer. The officer's responsibilities shall be to safeguard athletes' safety and well-being within the sport organization's activities. Safeguarding officers shall be independent from the team environment and the sport organization's performance structures. We also call upon the Government of Canada to encourage provincial and territorial governments to implement the same requirement for Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations receiving funding.

## **Chapter 12 — the need for new leadership of Canadian sport**

The Canadian sport system is complex and fragmented. Complicated jurisdictional issues combined with inconsistent accountability mechanisms, governance requirements, oversight, and a lack of information-sharing mechanisms among sport and physical activity organizations at all levels have led to confusion and gaps. At the same time, the combination of stagnant federal funding, a focus on high performance, and the proliferation of sport organizations has contributed to a system that lacks cohesion and shared purpose.

Despite the many committed individuals and organizations working within the sport system, participants consistently emphasized that no identifiable point of national leadership exists.

They also consistently noted that the sport portfolio is not prioritized and does not get the attention it deserves. It has typically remained an entry-level ministerial position. Sport Canada is a branch within the Department

of Canadian Heritage that is responsible for sport—it does not have its own ministry. In some instances, a secretary of state or minister of state holds this portfolio, which diminishes its importance at the federal cabinet table because these positions do not necessarily have full authority or presence within the cabinet. Because sport is housed within the Department of Canadian Heritage—the department responsible for promoting Canadian identity and values and celebrating Canada’s history and heritage it is seen as a vehicle to foster and promote national pride.

Frequent turnover among federal ministers and short-term political objectives further destabilize the system, leaving it without a sustained vision or clear sense of direction. Over the past 15 years, there have been 10 changes in ministers and portfolios, and sport has not always had a dedicated minister. This has led to delays and confusion when priorities are re-examined or re-established.

Many participants indicated that sport and physical activity policies and initiatives are often slow to be implemented and, in some cases, they are not implemented at all. Although federal, provincial and territorial governments endorse policies and initiatives, implementation is inconsistent across jurisdictions. Participants frequently cited the delayed or incomplete implementation of the 2019 Red Deer Declaration — For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport, as a clear example of these challenges. Shortcomings were also evident in the implementation of previous editions of the Canadian Sport Policy, aimed to increase participation in sport, which it did not achieve.

The efficiency of existing intergovernmental collaboration mechanisms was also questioned. Participants recognized that several forums exist for intergovernmental collaboration, including the Ministers Conferences and the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council. These participants, however, told the Commission that these mechanisms face important challenges, describing the meetings among ministers as infrequent, inefficient, or insufficiently action oriented.

From coast to coast to coast, the message is consistent: the sport system requires structural transformation and genuine leadership. Participants expressed an urgent need for renewed national leadership capable of setting a unified direction, restoring trust, and driving meaningful reform.

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP**

In its Preliminary Report, the Commission recommended that a single federal department should be responsible for both sport and physical activity, and our view on this remains unchanged. These responsibilities are currently divided between two departments, with Canadian Heritage responsible for sport (via Sport Canada) and the Ministry of Health responsible for physical activity (via the Public Health Agency of Canada).

The interdependence of sport and physical activity, reflected in the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, makes unified oversight essential to ensure coordinated policy, improved national direction, and a consistent approach from the grassroots to the high-performance level. Consolidating these areas under a single department ensures that the minister benefits from integrated policy and program support.

The federal minister needs to show stronger and more decisive leadership to drive a new and integrated vision for sport and physical activity in Canada. Government and ministerial leadership are essential for guiding departmental activities, leading enhanced collaboration with provinces and territories, and shaping new structures to ensure a more integrated sport and physical activity system. Stronger leadership will ultimately lead to a stronger and safer sport system.

When considering these required changes, it is important to distinguish the Commission's understanding of “sport” and “physical activity.” The Commission views sport as an organized rule-based activity with a focus on skills development, including community, competitive, and high-performance-level activities that can be performed either alone or in a team. Physical activity, on the other hand, refers to less organized or informal activities and movement, which are fundamental elements of health and well-being.

The Commission therefore calls on the Government of Canada to ensure that a single federal minister is responsible for sport and physical activity. Structural changes must then follow to ensure that the minister responsible for sport and physical activity is supported by a single department. The necessary legislative changes must be made to promote this long-lasting structural change.

## **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED FOR ENHANCED INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION GROUNDED IN ACCOUNTABILITY**

Enhanced collaboration between federal, provincial, and territorial governments is needed to promote consistent and harmonized approaches to promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, and well-governed sport and physical activity opportunities for all Canadians at all levels. Although collaboration mechanisms exist and have produced positive results in the past, the Commission finds that their effectiveness has not been consistent, and they have not delivered the level of coordination required to address the safe sport crisis or strengthen the sport system.

Only by working together can all governments improve safe sport in Canada, improve the sport system, and establish Canada as a world leader in sport and physical activity. The Commission therefore calls on the Government of Canada to collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to enhance the rigour of their collaboration to improve safe sport and advance sport and physical activity for all Canadians.

## **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED FOR FEDERAL SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY UPKEEP AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The federal government's sport and physical activity policies must reflect the values that are important to our society such as respect, diversity, inclusion, and fairness. Current federal sport policies and programs do not always reflect these values.

The Commission is of the view that the federal government should review and revitalize its sport-related policies in association with the implementation of the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 to better serve the sport community. Many key policies, like the 2006 Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability and the 2008 Federal Policy for Hosting International Sport Events, are more than a decade old and no longer reflect contemporary needs or expectations.

We therefore call on the Government of Canada to review its sport-related policies and commit to regularly reviewing sport and physical activity policies and strategies. These policies should reflect current realities, emerging challenges, and best practices. This reviewing role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established (as we describe below).

As a part of the broader efforts to renew and modernize federal sport policies, the Commission maintains its preliminary recommendation that the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Disability sport community, should develop a separate national strategy for Disability sport. The objective of this strategy would be to promote access to sport for persons with disabilities, which includes Para and Paralympic sport. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

We also call on the Government of Canada to develop and implement a new strategy to promote broad sport participation and physical activity. This strategy should be consistent with a new approach that balances support for high-performance and broad sport participation. Canada has no coordinated, long-term federal approach focused on increasing participation. It is essential to recognize the importance of addressing participation across the entire continuum of sport, from the grassroots to high performance.

The Government of Canada must ensure that there is a national tool to systematically and regularly collect information and data related to sport and physical activity to support evidence-based policy development. Although some organizations endeavour to provide this information, there is a lack of regular, systematic collection of data relating to sport and physical activity. This includes data on participation, funding, infrastructure, and participant well-being. There is also insufficient coordination among these organizations, which leads to duplicated efforts. The Commission calls on the Government of Canada to establish a national data tool capable of regularly gathering and analyzing key indicators across the country.

We also recognize the lack of research, information, and data specific to Indigenous people and sport in Canada and call on the Government of Canada to provide continued funding to support research in this area.



Developing comprehensive sport and physical activity policies is an important first step toward fostering safe, inclusive, equitable, and accessible sport environments, as well as promoting physical activity. But the creation of such policies alone is insufficient to achieve meaningful outcomes. Without consistent implementation, progress is limited and people's trust erodes. To address this shortcoming, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada to develop and implement action plans and institute programs to support all its sport and physical activity policies and strategies. Each action plan should clearly define the policy's objectives, set measurable targets, and outline specific actions to be taken by the Government of Canada. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED FOR A CENTRALIZED, COORDINATED, AND UNITED APPROACH TO SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CANADA AND A CENTRALIZED SPORT ENTITY**

As we articulated in our Preliminary Report, Canada's approach to sport must encompass both the pursuit of excellence in high-performance sport and broad sport participation. After considering participant feedback on this recommendation, our position remains the same.

Decisions made with respect to sport and physical activity must be evidence-based and timely, not shaped by undue political influence and pressure. More importantly, there must be a single point of leadership for sport and physical activity in Canada to provide clearer and greater accountability.

Consequently, the Commission maintains that a Centralized Sport Entity will allow for a harmonized, strategic, and coordinated approach to sport across the country. Indeed, uniting Canada's sport and physical activity organizations will lead to better efficiencies, reduce redundancies, and clarify responsibilities. Through this entity, synergies and efficiencies between sport and physical activity programs will be created. In addition, the centralization of functions as opposed to the fragmentation of functions across different organizations will enhance public confidence by providing a clear and distinct entity they can refer to.

#### **Centralized Sport Entity: mandate, key functions, and responsibilities**

To achieve such an approach to centralize sport and physical activity in Canada, the Commission is of the view that the Centralized Sport Entity's mandate should be to encourage, promote, and develop sport and physical activity in Canada consistent with the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. To carry out this mandate, the Centralized Sport Entity should take on the following key functions:

- 1. Strategic direction and leadership for sport and physical activity:** Provide national leadership to align federal, provincial, and territorial priorities; identify systemwide needs; and promote coherent strategies, policies, and investments across Canada. This includes fostering collaboration across governments and sectors, and ensuring the entity is included in ministerial discussions that shape the sport and physical activity landscape.



2. **Funding for sport and physical activity:** Centralize all federal sport and physical activity funding, including receiving, allocating, and distributing funds and overseeing funding; develop a long-term funding strategy, set funding criteria and conditions, make funding decisions, and use funding levers to reinforce national priorities—for example, safe sport and governance requirements—through funding conditions. Some of these functions currently reside with Sport Canada and Own the Podium as they relate to sport, and with the Public Health Agency of Canada as they relate to physical activity.
3. **Policy for sport and physical activity:** Develop, review, maintain, update, and implement national sport and physical activity policies. This includes developing new national strategies that the Commission recommended, including a national strategy to promote participation in sport and physical activity, encompassing high-performance sport and broad participation as well as a national Disability sport strategy to promote access to sport for persons with disabilities, including Para and Paralympic sport, and a national strategy on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport and physical activity.

The Centralized Sport Entity would also be responsible for implementing action plans with measurable goals and reporting publicly on policy and program outcomes. Some of these functions currently reside with Sport Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada as it relates to policies that fall within the scope of physical activity described in the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.

4. **Custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in sport:** Assume custody of both codes and maintain, review, and update them to ensure they reflect current best practices and remain relevant. Responsibility for the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport currently resides with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.
5. **Education and Training:** Lead the development and delivery of pan-Canadian education and training efforts related to sport and physical activity. This would include responsibility for operationalizing, updating, and delivering the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program; advancing the mission and expanding the reach of the True Sport Program across the Canadian sport system; and developing and implementing the national coaching certification program. We recognize that these functions currently reside with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the Coaching Association of Canada.
6. **Compliance and oversight:** Develop and implement a monitoring, compliance, and auditing regime for all organizations receiving federal sport and physical activity funding. This includes verifying compliance with governance and safe sport requirements, including regular and proactive audits.
7. **Sport and physical activity research and knowledge:** To inform the policies and strategies developed by the Entity and ensure they are evidence-based, support and advance Canadian sport and physical activity through best practice research and knowledge-building efforts for the sport sector. This function currently resides with the Sport Information and Resource Centre and the Public Health Agency of Canada, among others.

For many of these functions, the Centralized Sport Entity will need to collaborate with Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation, including participation at the Ministers Conference.

Consistent with our Calls to Action in Chapter 6 regarding Indigenous people and sport, the Centralized Sport Entity will also engage with Indigenous sport organizations, governments, and communities in its decision-making processes to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are reflected throughout its work.

### **The Commission's chosen model: the Crown Corporation**

In our Preliminary Report, we presented five options for consideration: a ministerial department, a ministerial departmental agency, a crown corporation, a not-for-profit created by federal legislation, and a not-for-profit third-party delivery organization. Without making a preliminary recommendation on the entity's legal structure, the Commission noted that it a crown corporation or a not-for-profit created by federal legislation to be the preferred options.

In exploring these five options, we wanted to identify a model that provided the right balance between ensuring autonomy and independence of decision making on sport-specific issues while accounting for ministerial direction and accountability of the entity. After considering the feedback we received in response to our Preliminary Report, including deliberations at the National Summit organized by the Commission, we conclude that the crown corporation is the most optimal model for the Centralized Sport Entity.

A crown corporation operates autonomously from government. Therefore, it reduces the influence of political interference and pressures in the decision-making process. To provide even further balance between autonomy and independence from government in decision-making powers, the enabling legislation should clearly define the circumstances in which the minister responsible for the entity can intervene. Another advantage to the crown corporation model is the fact that it is created through federal legislation, which makes it less likely to experience funding changes. This, in turn, provides the entity with some stability and predictable funding. An added benefit of the crown corporation model is the possibility for revenue-generating avenues to be explored as the Centralized Sport Entity's scope and mandate evolve.

### **A phased approach to creating the Centralized Sport Entity**

As functions and responsibilities are transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity, the financial resources associated with those functions and responsibilities will also be re-allocated to it. To be clear, this transfer would reallocate some of the existing funds that Sport Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada already manage as it relates to their functions under the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, using Vote 5 (Grants and Contributions envelope) and Vote 1 (the associated administrative cost allocation).

Since base funding would come from this budget transfer, a transitional fund would need to be established to offset the initial costs related to the entity's establishment, as is the case for any large transformational initiative. The Commission is of the view that this consolidation and reallocation of existing resources will maximize impact and reduce duplication and redundancy.

We recognize that the scope of the Centralized Sport Entity is broad, as it aligns with both the sport and physical activity objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. Therefore, we are of the view that steps toward creating the Centralized Sport Entity must be taken immediately. However, the implementation of its functions could be approached in two phases, starting with those related to sport, followed by those related to physical activity.

The first phase would focus on the growth, promotion, and increased participation in sport at all levels. The second phase should expand the functions assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity to include improving physical activity. This phased approach would enable the Centralized Sport Entity to achieve initial success before organically expanding the scope of its functions and responsibilities.

For these reasons, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada to create a Crown Corporation (the "Centralized Sport Entity"), established by legislation, which would confer a broad mandate to the entity. The new entity will encourage, promote, and develop sport and physical activity in Canada consistent with the objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.

To ensure initial success before organically expanding its functions and responsibilities, the Commission also calls upon the Government of Canada to adopt a phased approach to operationalize the Centralized Sport Entity starting with the implementation of functions and responsibilities related to the sport objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* followed by those related to the physical activity objectives of the Act.

Through deliberate centralization, clearer leadership, stronger governance, and more robust intergovernmental collaboration, the Centralized Sport Entity will help strengthen trust, reduce redundancy, and deliver a more coherent, coordinated, and safe sport environment for all Canadians.

## Chapter 13 — Alignment across sport system structures

The growing number of sport organizations at the national, provincial, territorial, and community levels has created a context in which too many organizations are vying for too few resources. Each of these sport organizations has its own board of directors, staff, and coaches. They also each have their own internal legal, human resources, communications, information technology (IT), and accounting departments or are required to purchase these services elsewhere. Each sport organization spends part of their budget on administrative services. This has led to redundancies and duplication in the Canadian sport system.

The lack of influence, control and oversight that National Sport Organizations have over their sport from the national level to the grassroots further undermines consistency and alignment across all aspects of sport delivery. Most National Sport Organizations have very little oversight or control over their provincial and territorial member organizations and are disconnected from the grassroots. This is typically not well understood by the public. Most people assume that a sport is affiliated with its National Sport Organization and guided by that organization's policies, programs, and processes, which often, is not the case. This disconnect has resulted in inconsistent application of policies and procedures across all levels of a sport.

Issues of alignment and efficiencies also exist within Canada's Disability and Para sport structures. There is inconsistency with respect to sport for people with disabilities, which is offered either in segregated, adapted, or integrated environments. For example, at the national level, four Para sport organizations are funded by the federal government. There are also other national level Para sport organizations that operate independently within the broader sport system, meaning they do not operate within the structure of the National Sport Organization responsible for the non-Para sport equivalent. Additionally, there are some National Sport Organizations that have integrated a Para sport extending their responsibilities to that Para sport.

A similar combination of organizations operates at the provincial, territorial, and community level of sport so a variety of organizations deliver sport for athletes with disabilities. Some offer opportunities in a specific sport across disabilities, while others offer opportunities across a variety of sports for a specific group of participants with disabilities. Some organizations offer opportunities for individuals with and without disabilities, while others focus on participants with disabilities. There are also organizations that offer adapted opportunities within a broader offering for everyone.

While recognizing these inconsistencies across all levels of the sport system, the Commission also acknowledges that the integration of Disability sport with non-Disability sport is not always optimal. This is due to the unique realities of athletes with disabilities, which include the need for disability-specific expertise and equipment.

A further challenge to alignment in the sport system is the emergence and growth of private entities. These entities operate in an ecosystem where National, Provincial, and Territorial Sport Organizations have limited or no ability to oversee or influence them. This frequently results in poor governance and the absence of any consistent oversight or accountability.

## **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION FOR A MORE COHESIVE, ALIGNED AND UNITED SPORT SYSTEM**

In its Preliminary Report the Commission proposed several mechanisms, including shared services, amalgamation, and improved policy consistency as potential pathways to reduce duplication and strengthen coherence. Considering the feedback we received from participants following the release of our Preliminary Report, we advance these mechanisms as essential for system-wide change.

To strengthen alignment among sport organizations and enhance overall efficiency in the sport system, the Commission urges the Government of Canada and the sport sector to take immediate steps to initiate sustainable change. For this change to occur, shared service models among sport organizations must be established, sport organizations must amalgamate, and policies must be applied consistently across all levels of sport. Once implemented, these changes will lead to a more cohesive, aligned, and united Canadian sport system. In turn accountability will be reinforced, duplication and redundancies will be reduced, and financial and operational efficiencies will be achieved.

### **Establishing shared services models among sport organizations**

Sharing common services among sport organizations will result in a better integrated sport system. It will allow sport organizations to come together and pool their resources, have greater purchasing power, lower their respective administrative overheads, create efficiencies and synergies, and generate savings.

At the national level of sport, a group of National Sport Organizations could establish a horizontal shared service model. These National Sport Organizations could also consider a vertical shared services model with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. This model could also extend to club-level organizations. A model combining both horizontal and vertical shared services would also be possible.

Considering the unique and specific needs of athletes with disabilities and Disability sport organizations, the Commission recognizes that any process to achieve a shared services model will require meaningful engagement and collaboration with Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations. It also must include athletes with disabilities to obtain their insights and evaluate whether a shared services model is optimal. Different models are possible since services could be shared among organizations that serve persons with disabilities or with organizations that serve other types of sport participants.

The Commission therefore calls on the Government of Canada to encourage National Sport Organizations to establish horizontal shared service models. It further calls upon the Government of Canada to encourage National Sport Organizations to establish vertical shared service models with their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and where appropriate, with community clubs. With respect to a vertical shared service model, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada to collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to encourage their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to consider such models.

### **Amalgamating sport organizations**

Recognizing the current financial challenges that the sport system faces and the limited funding available, the Commission considers that sport organizations have reached a critical point. Many organizations reported acute financial pressures and a lack of operational capacity. They acknowledged that without structural consolidation they will struggle to meet safe sport obligations, governance requirements, or core program delivery.



Amalgamating sport organizations will generate efficiencies and contribute to a more cohesive, united, and accountable sport system. Amalgamation, whether horizontal, vertical, or a combination of both, is necessary to ensure sport organizations' long-term stability.

The Commission therefore calls on the Government of Canada to encourage the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations (horizontal amalgamation), and the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations (vertical amalgamation). The Commission also calls on the Government of Canada to collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to encourage their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to consider such an amalgamation.

It will be crucial for sport organizations to engage and collaborate with Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations and athletes with disabilities as processes to amalgamate are undertaken. Given the unique and specific needs of athletes with disabilities and Disability sport organizations, their input and insights are crucial in deciding whether amalgamation with non-Disability or with other Disability sport organizations would be optimal.

Positive incentives from the Government such as additional one-time funding or other benefits from the Government would encourage these efforts and reward cost-saving measures. However, the reality is that such steps are essential regardless of external motivation. In the current fiscal context, sport organizations must pursue these steps to transformation not only for financial gain but also to ensure their survival and long-term stability. The Commission therefore calls on the Government of Canada to create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations as they undertake the establishment of shared services models and the amalgamation process.

### **Ensuring consistent policies across the sport system**

The Commission understands that in many cases, there is a lack of collaboration between National Sport Organizations and their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and private clubs. Even in cases where there is a high degree of collaboration and alignment, there can be a disconnect between a National Sport Organization's vision and those of their provincial and territorial counterparts. Additionally, there is a common misconception among the public that any given sport is subject to its National Sport Organization's oversight. As such, parents and athletes can be under the impression that a private club, league, or institute operates under the umbrella of a National Sport Organization and is subject to their policies and procedures. However, that is often not the case.



To provide greater accountability and uniformity across the sport system and ensure that all Canadians have access to the same sport experience, the Commission is of the view that policies and their application must be consistent within and across all levels of sport. National Sport Organizations are therefore called upon to take the lead in seeking consistent policies and their application throughout their respective sport. Similarly, the Commission is of the view that provincial and territorial governments could encourage their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to seek this same consistency at the grassroots level.

Private sport organizations, clubs, and leagues operating outside the scope of governmentally funded sport bodies have proliferated. The Commission therefore calls upon the sport system, including National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, to collaborate and develop processes to ensure that policies are consistently applied through all levels of sport and extend to private entities.

## Chapter 14 — Sport governance: from inconsistent to transparent and harmonized

Many of the issues that led to the Commission's creation reflect a fundamental failure of the governance structures in the sport system. Participants described a clear and persistent governance crisis across the Canadian sport system. They explained that weaknesses in governance structures have contributed directly to the safe sport crisis and affect organizations at every level, including national, provincial and territorial, and community sport organizations.

Many sport organizations manage significant public funding while depending heavily on volunteer boards whose members often lack governance expertise. This reliance on volunteers has contributed to recurring conflicts of interest, recycled leadership, inconsistent decision making, and inadequate handling of maltreatment complaints. Participants also stated that existing governance requirements are limited, inconsistently applied, and rarely monitored in a meaningful way. A further challenge to appropriate governance and oversight in the sport system is the growth of private clubs, leagues, and organizations. These organizations also lack guidance on sport governance standards.

### SPORT GOVERNANCE AND EXISTING FRAMEWORKS

While some governance requirements currently exist in the Canadian sport system, they are limited and have been applied inconsistently. As not-for-profit corporations, sport organizations must comply with either federal, provincial, or territorial not-for-profit corporation legislation. However, this legislation provides only basic statutory requirements with respect to governance, such as key duties for directors, and the duties and rights of members. Therefore, governments, as funders, can establish governance guidelines as stand-alone tools or as conditions of their funding agreements with sport organisations.

At the national level, the Canadian Sport Governance Code was released in April 2021. This Code aims to enhance governance practices within National Sport Organizations. In 2023, the federal government announced that compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code would become a condition of receiving federal funding for all federally funded National Sport Organizations. The required governance changes would have to be implemented by April 2025.

In late 2024, however, the federal government introduced the Sport Integrity Framework along with revised guidelines. Rather than requiring sport organizations to formally adopt the Canadian Sport Governance Code as a stand-alone instrument, the new framework required the adoption of five mandatory governance elements. The new framework also recognizes the Canadian Sport Governance Code as an established source of best practices in sport organization governance. As a result, federally funded National Sport Organizations are currently required to comply with the five mandatory governance elements prescribed by the Sport Integrity Framework.

At the provincial and territorial level, some provincial and territorial governments use policy to require sport organizations within their jurisdiction to comply with some governance requirements. Quebec is the only province that has developed a governance code specifically tailored for not-for-profit sport and leisure organizations. This Code is detailed and includes 14 governance requirement categories.

The Commission also takes note of governance frameworks developed by international groups and other countries. The International Olympic Committee, the Council of Europe, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Wales, Australia, and the Netherlands have established sport governance codes and/or frameworks. While each country has taken a different approach to sport governance, they emphasize that consistency within their systems is fundamental to fostering a strong sport culture and mitigating a governance system's vulnerabilities. Canada has not yet achieved such consistency.

The Commission concludes that Canada urgently needs to reconsider its approach to sport governance across all levels of sport. The Commission believes that sport governance standards must be mandatory, regularly reviewed, and subject to oversight. The Commission also finds that a harmonized approach to sport governance standards across federal, provincial, territorial, and community levels of sport is essential to system-wide change.

## **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED FOR MANDATORY SPORT GOVERNANCE STANDARDS**

The Commission finds that the Government of Canada must clearly define governance standards that all federally funded sport organizations must meet. The adoption of and compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code should be required as a condition of federal funding. The Commission recognizes that many sport organizations already comply with the Code or parts of it even though compliance with it is not currently mandatory. However, making the Code mandatory would promote consistency and strengthen accountability. By making it mandatory, sport organizations could rely on this requirement to respond to any resistance from their boards of directors and effect needed changes in governance practices.

The Commission therefore calls on the Government of Canada to require all federally funded sport organizations to adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Considering the Code is currently written for National Sport Organizations, that language will need to be revised to include National Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.

The Commission also recommends that a reasonable transition period be provided to sport organizations to allow them to reach compliance without affecting their eligibility for funding. Finally, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada to provide financial support and governance guidance during this transition. The Government of Canada must also serve as the Code's custodian until the Centralized Sport Entity is established (outlined in Chapter 12).

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED TO REVIEW AND ENHANCE SPORT GOVERNANCE STANDARDS**

As governance practices evolve the Commission is of the view that governance standards must be regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant and reflect good governance practices. Considering that the Canadian Sport Governance Code was drafted and released in 2021, the Code is up for review. Although the Code should be reviewed, this review should not postpone making it mandatory for all federally funded sport organizations.

The Commission identified five enhancements that should be made to the Code and considered in the review process. These enhancements involve diverse representation on boards of directors, athlete representation with voting rights, mandatory training for all board members on inclusion and anti-racism, education on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport, and increased transparency.

The Commission therefore calls on the Government of Canada, in collaboration with governance experts, to conduct a review of the Canadian Sport Governance Code. As part of this review, the Government of Canada is called upon to amend the Code to expand its application to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes. It should also integrate the five enhancements that the Commission identified as mandatory practices in the Code.

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED FOR SPORT GOVERNANCE STANDARDS OVERSIGHT**

It is crucial to implement regular oversight measures to ensure sport organizations comply with governance requirements and implement good governance practices. The Commission finds that such oversight must be random, periodic, and go beyond self-reporting.

As such, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada in collaboration with governance experts to develop and implement an oversight mechanism capable of verifying whether sport organizations are truly complying with the governance standards they must follow. The Government of Canada must use this oversight mechanism to conduct regular audits of federally funded sport organizations to ensure their implementation of the Canadian Sport Governance Code. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

## **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED FOR A HARMONIZED APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE STANDARDS AT ALL LEVELS OF SPORT**

We recognize that Canada's sport system extends beyond National Sport Organizations to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and then to the community or local level. The Commission therefore believes that all three levels need to work together to reach a consistent and harmonized approach to sport governance.

The Commission's preliminary recommendations proposed two options to achieve greater uniformity of sport governance standards between the federal and the provincial and territorial levels of sport. We considered the feedback we received on these options. Given the jurisdictional challenges inherent to the Canadian federated system, the Commission finds that harmonized sport governance standards can be achieved only through sustained collaboration among federal, provincial, and territorial governments.

The Commission proposes a two-phased collaborative approach. Phase I (short term) would establish universal governance standards within the Multilateral Sport Framework outlined in Chapter 10. This would require provinces and territories to adopt governance standards aligned with nationally agreed criteria as a condition of receiving federal funding. The Commission therefore calls on the Government of Canada to include universal governance standards within the Multilateral Sport Framework and to require National Sport Organizations to amend their membership rules so that their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations comply with their respective provincial or territorial governance standards.

Phase II (long term) would involve federal, provincial, and territorial collaboration to develop a Pan-Canadian Sport Governance Code that applies across all levels of sport. The Commission therefore calls on the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, to pursue the development of this pan-Canadian code. All jurisdictions must work together toward uniform expectations and consistent governance practices across the country.

It is important for federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work together and not in silos. They have demonstrated collaboration is possible in several contexts, including healthcare, childcare, and more recently to break down interprovincial trade barriers. This must be replicated in the context of sport. It is time to recognize the importance of a unified and harmonized approach to sport governance across Canada.

## **Chapter 15 — Building the future: investing in sport and physical activity**

The Canadian sport system is a complex ecosystem that relies on various sources of funding to support athletes, organizations, events, and infrastructure. Funding comes from all levels of government as well as non-governmental sources.

The federal government primarily invests in national-level sport through Sport Canada's three core funding programs: the Sport Support Program (including targeted components such as the Community Sport for All Initiative and Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities), the Athlete Assistance Program, and the Hosting Program. The Public Health Agency of Canada also funds initiatives that promote physical activity and healthy living. Most National Sport Organizations depend heavily on federal funding as their primary revenue source.

In turn, provincial and territorial funding for sport and physical activity varies considerably across the country. Each has programs to support athletes, provincial and territorial organizations, and initiatives. Municipalities also support local sport and physical activity programming. All levels of government invest in sport and recreation facilities.

A clear picture of a widespread funding crisis throughout the Canadian sport system clearly emerged during our work. Participants told us that federal funding has not kept pace with inflation, rising operational demands, or expanded governance and safe-sport responsibilities. They described a system where both sport organizations and athletes themselves are strained because the federal framework no longer reflects the true cost of delivering sport in Canada.

Throughout our engagement process, participants were clear that without renewed and increased federal investment, the system cannot meet its obligations to athletes, communities, or the public. We were told that an underfunded sport system is an unsafe sport system. They also underscored how athletes themselves need stronger federal support to manage their basic living costs and sustain the training and competition demands required to represent Canada.

Across the system, participants urged the federal government to establish a new, multi-year funding strategy that provides stability; aligns investments with safety, equity, access, and inclusion; and offers clear, transparent funding criteria for support. Many expressed serious concerns about the lack of robust auditing and monitoring of federally funded sport organizations. They cited inconsistent oversight, limited transparency, and unclear follow-through on compliance issues.

In our Preliminary Report, the Commission made several preliminary recommendations intended to address the funding crisis and improve the allocation of federal funds to support sport and physical activity in Canada. Participants widely supported these preliminary recommendations, emphasizing that they reflected the challenges facing the sport system. The Commission maintains them in this Final Report.

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED TO INVEST IN THE SPORT SYSTEM**

There is no doubt that the sport system is facing a funding crisis. The current federal funding has not kept pace with inflation or the system's demands. In the face of this funding crisis, many organizations have reduced their programs and activities, and some may even be forced to cease operating if the funding gaps persist. Inadequate resources negatively impact both the accessibility and the quality of their programs.



Therefore, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada to urgently increase core funding for National Sport Organizations to account for inflation since 2005. Additional funding is needed to support National Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations given the additional costs they face to meet the needs of athletes with disabilities.

To ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of Canada's sport system, we call on the Government of Canada to regularly review and adjust all core funding under the Sport Support Program. This funding, allocated to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, should be adequate to support operational needs and long-term priorities, including safe sport. Providing appropriate support to federally funded sport organizations is essential to protect the safety of everyone involved in the sport system.

That said, the Commission understands that funding alone cannot resolve systemic issues. Everyone involved in the sport system has a responsibility and duty to carefully review their own practices, structures, and spending. The sport community must recognize the need for efficiencies and work to achieve them within their own organizations and across the broader sport system.

To address inefficiencies in the sport system, we call on the federal government to require National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes to undertake operational efficiency reviews. These organizations have a duty to seek efficiencies to ensure public funds are being used effectively, including by establishing shared services and pursuing amalgamation.

Increased and continued investments in community-level sport are also required to strengthen Canada's sport system, and to promote access and inclusion. We call on the federal government to increase its funding for programs that support community sport such as the Community Sport for All Initiative, which is expected to end in 2026. In addition to enhancing this direct federal support, the Government of Canada should collaborate with provinces and territories to increase their investments in community-level sport. We believe that the promotion of broad sport participation should eventually become a criterion under the Multilateral Sport Framework (outlined in Chapter 10).

We also recognize the need for continued and increased funding to support Indigenous-led sport and Indigenous athletes in Canada. We therefore call on the Government of Canada to increase the funding they provide to support Indigenous-led sport and its athletes. To meet its commitments under the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action 81 to 91, the Government of Canada should increase funding for the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component of the Sport Support Program. The Government of Canada should also collaborate with the provinces and territories to increase their financial contributions to support Indigenous sport through bilateral agreements.



The Commission finds that our national-level athletes continue to face significant financial pressures. Athletes told us that they struggle to meet basic living expenses while balancing their competition and training demands, and that strain affects both their well-being and performance. We call on the federal government to increase and regularly review funding for the Athlete Assistance Program to ensure that Canada's high-performance athletes are adequately supported.

We recognize that Canadians, including our governments, are navigating profound challenges and tumultuous times. Governments are under pressure to fund priorities that are seen as more urgent. Still, as we work to strengthen national cohesion and build a resilient Canada, it is important to remember that sport can be an important vehicle for nation-building.

Sport and physical activity are essential investments in Canada's health, social fabric, and economic vitality. They contribute to physical and mental well-being, strengthen communities, foster inclusion, develop life skills, and reduce long-term health and social costs. They also stimulate economic growth through tourism, events, infrastructure, and innovation. A strong, well-funded sport and physical activity system is an investment in Canada's youth and the country's future.

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED TO DIVERSIFY FUNDING FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

The Commission recognizes the need to ensure the financial health and viability of the Canadian sport system and to balance federal investments across sectors and jurisdictions. We strongly urge the Government of Canada to explore alternative revenue sources, including but not limited to taxation revenues from sport betting and taxes on professional sports, to support greater investment in sport and physical activity.

We emphasize that public funding must be complemented by non-governmental sources. We therefore call on all sport organizations, including National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, to diversify their revenue streams through partnerships, collaborations, and sponsorships.

### **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED TO CENTRALIZE FEDERAL FUNDING AND IMPROVE THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND THE MONITORING OF SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

To respond to the need for new leadership in Canadian sport, the Commission concludes that federal funding for sport and physical activity must be centralized within a single Centralized Sport Entity. This Entity should become responsible for the allocation, distribution, and oversight of federal sport and physical activity funding, including the development of a long-term funding strategy.

The Commission also finds that federal funding applications must be clear, efficient, and accessible. We note that existing processes remain overly long, complex, and costly, and should be simplified to reduce administrative burden.

Finally, the Commission emphasizes that monitoring and auditing of federally funded sport organizations must be regular, proactive, and effective. They must ensure compliance with funding conditions (including good governance practices and safe sport requirements), appropriate use of public funds, and improved financial and operational accountability. Canadians need to trust that public funds are allocated and dispensed responsibly.

## **FINDINGS AND CALLS TO ACTION: THE NEED FOR A NEW FUNDING STRATEGY FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

There is a clear need for a sustainable and long-term funding strategy for sport and physical activity programs in Canada. This strategy should guide federal investments and ensure that funding priorities are realigned to better reflect Canadians' values.

We recognize the importance of high-performance sport in the Canadian sport landscape. However, we saw a disproportionate emphasis on high-performance sport and winning medals, which often came at the expense of developing sport at the community level and increasing access to sport and physical activity. The new funding strategy must appropriately balance high-performance sport and the broader goals of fostering a sport system that is safe, equitable, inclusive, and accessible for all.

We therefore call on the Government of Canada to develop a comprehensive multi-year and evidence-based funding strategy focused on safety, equity, access, and inclusion to guide the allocation of public funds to all federally funded sport and physical activity organizations. To ensure that resources are directed where they will have the most impact, we strongly encourage the Government of Canada to undertake a careful review of the eligibility and evaluation criteria of the Sport Support Program to align them with the new funding strategy.

## **Chapter 16 — Now what? A look toward the future**

Canada's sport system is at a pivotal point, struggling with fragmentation, inefficiency, and a lack of safety, transparency, and oversight that has eroded public trust. Participants are calling for a unified, accountable system that prioritizes safety, inclusion, accessibility, and strong governance.

We recognize the scale of change ahead to implement our Calls to Action. For this reason, this chapter outlines a phased approach that provides a path forward for implementing our Calls to Action. This approach prioritizes urgent action to address the safe sport crisis and the systemic weaknesses in the Canadian sport system, while coordinating federal, provincial, and territorial efforts to make deeper structural changes over time.

The Commission recommends that the implementation should proceed as follows:

- the **immediate** Calls to Action must begin without delay and be substantially completed within the first 12 months of this report's publication
- the **short-term** Calls to Action must be substantially completed within approximately two years
- the **long-term** Calls to Action must be completed over a period of two to five years.

To ensure consistent progress and maintain accountability, we call upon the Government of Canada to establish an independent monitor to oversee and publicly report on the implementation of our Calls to Action. We also call for the creation of a federal–provincial/territorial mechanism to support their implementation across jurisdictions.

## CONCLUSION

Sport in Canada stands at a defining moment. The current sport system—fragmented, inconsistent, and too often unsafe—does not meet the expectations of Canadians. The proliferation of organizations and overlapping mandates led to inefficiencies, duplications, a lack of alignment, and confusion, while conflicts of interest, a lack of transparency, and limited oversight of sport organizations has further undermined trust in the sport system. Persistent gaps in leadership and coordination across all levels have compounded these problems. Participants have voiced concerns about barriers to access, governance failures, and experiences of harm, and they have called for a sport system grounded in safety, inclusion, accessibility, and accountability.

Addressing the safe sport crisis requires not only structural reform but also a harmonized country-wide approach to safe sport. A more coherent, accountable, and participant-centred sport system is both necessary and within reach.

While our report is delivered to the Government of Canada, its message extends to everyone who shapes and supports sport and physical activity in Canada. Meaningful transformation and lasting changes cannot rest with the federal government alone. They require coordinated action from all levels of government and from the sport sector as a whole. We trust that the need for change, leadership, and the approaches we suggest in our report will resonate throughout the sport and physical activity communities and spur meaningful action at every level.

Our Calls to Action respond to the systemic failures we examined. They offer more than structural adjustments—they present an opportunity to rebuild trust, restore integrity, and fundamentally rethink how sport is governed and delivered in Canada. They lay out a path toward a system that is safer, more transparent, more equitable, and better aligned with the values Canadians expect to see reflected in sport.

Achieving this vision will require deliberate, disciplined, and sustained effort. Transformation must be accompanied by strong leadership, clear accountability, and a commitment to implementation—not just policy creation. Success will depend on collaboration between all levels of government, a renewed focus on participant well-being, and ongoing attention to public trust. Canadians expect a system that protects them, includes them, and supports their development throughout all stages of participation.

By acting on these Calls to Action, Canada can build a sport system that truly serves its people. Such a system would provide sport environments that are safe, equitable, and supportive for participants at every level and across all jurisdictions. This system would be transparent in its governance, appropriately funded, aligned in purposes and practices, and more accountable to those it serves. Safe sport would be non-negotiable, and prevention measures to proactively reduce risks would be prioritized. Policies would be consistently implemented, fair and trusted complaint mechanisms would respond effectively to maltreatment, and participants would be supported throughout their involvement in sport, from the grassroots to high performance. Such a system eliminates unnecessary duplication, rationalizes programs, and expands safe, accessible, and welcoming opportunities for all.

Canada has an opportunity to be a global leader recognized for sporting excellence, and for the health, safety, happiness, and pride that sport inspires in our country.

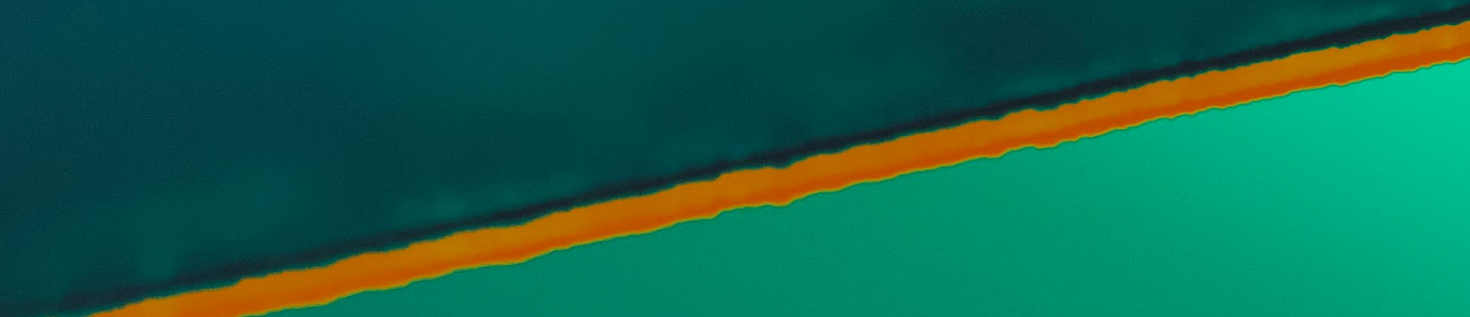
Canadians are ready for a transformed, reinvigorated sport system that reflects their values and ambitions. This re-envisioned sport system will not emerge without deliberate and sustained effort. The path forward requires collaboration, disciplined implementation, and a shared commitment to public trust and participant well-being. This moment calls for leadership that is steady, principled, and aligned with the needs of those who rely on the system.

The work ahead is substantial, but achievable. And it must begin now.



# CHAPTER 1:

# Introduction







# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Context for the Future of Sport in Canada Commission

Canadians are passionate about sport. Sport is and always has been an integral element of our national culture. Indigenous Peoples were practising sport long before settlers arrived. Their sports and games were deeply rooted in their lives, spirituality, and world views — designed not only for fun and competition but also to teach life skills. Since then, generations of immigrants have brought new sports and games to the country. Sharing sport traditions and embracing new sports have contributed to a rich and diverse sport culture in Canada.

Millions of Canadians participate in and are inspired by sport. From learning to skate on back-yard rinks, to playing on a school team, to coaching emerging athletes, to enjoying a weekly adult hockey game or pick-up soccer and parents supporting their children from playing fields, pools and arenas, Canadians experience sport in countless ways and in multiple settings every day. We cheer on Canadian competitors at world championships and watch with pride as the Canadian flag is paraded into the opening ceremonies of Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games.<sup>1</sup>

Sport and physical activity are important for individual health, but also for the health and well-being of our communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation and limited opportunities for sport, particularly engagement in collaborative and team sport, took a toll on neighbourhoods, schools, and communities. Ironically, the significance of sport was emphasized by its absence. While numerous sport organizations did commendable work during the pandemic to sustain sporting activities, the challenges were significant.

Although sport and physical activity contribute to physical, mental, and community well-being, as well as to Canada's cultural and economic strength, they continue to face significant, systemic challenges. These include the presence of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as sexism, racism, bigotry, and homophobia. These broader societal issues have left their mark on the Canadian sporting community, just as they have marked sporting communities across the world and society in general. Sport is too important, too valuable to allow these challenges to go unaddressed.

Virtually no sport in Canada, or internationally, has been immune to issues of maltreatment and abuse. Failures of governance, structural inadequacies, and inadequate oversight of the sport system have all contributed to failures in recognizing and responding to the abuses that have come to light.

In 1990, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athletic Performance, led by the late Chief Justice Charles Dubin, examined the events surrounding Ben Johnson at the Olympic Games in Seoul 1988. As a reminder, Johnson set a world record for the 100-metre race but tested positive for steroid use. He was immediately disqualified and stripped of his medal. Global media attention led to public outrage about performance-enhancing drugs in sport. The incident sent shock waves through the Canadian sport system.<sup>2</sup>

The Dubin Report, as the sport community refers to it, emphasized in its first recommendation that government funding ought to be based on:

- broad participation in sport, not solely a focus on elite sport
- access to sport programs by all Canadians
- encouragement of women in sport by ensuring equal access to sport programs and facilities
- encouragement of greater participation in sport by disadvantaged groups
- support for the disabled in sport
- amelioration of regional disparities in access to sport programs and facilities.<sup>3</sup>

Justice Dubin recommended that “those responsible for administering federal funds ensure that (a) individuals and organizations in receipt of government funding meet the ethical standards as well as performance standards for funding ... [and] (c) that those involved in the health, care and training of athletes are qualified to be so ethically as well as technically.”<sup>4</sup> He further recommended “that those responsible for administering government funds consider in making funding decisions: (a) the extent to which a sport organization has made its programs accessible to the broader community.”<sup>5</sup>

The challenges we face today suggest that the Dubin Report’s extensive warnings have still not been completely addressed. Revelations of abuse and maltreatment have reignited public concerns about sport and contributed to the pressures that led to this Commission’s creation.

Such revelations have emerged in many sport settings. Recent movements addressing violence against youth, women, Indigenous people, and racialized people have fostered an environment in which those who have been abused and maltreated are now increasingly breaking their silence and holding public institutions accountable. Disappointingly, sport organizations have been slow to respond. We learned that in many cases, the media were the only ones willing to listen to victims and survivors and bring their stories to light.

Leading up to the Commission's establishment, several other major reports and investigations were undertaken or released regarding allegations of maltreatment and abuse in Canadian sport. To name just a few:

- In April 2019, AthletesCAN, in partnership with the University of Toronto, released a report on the prevalence of maltreatment among athletes.<sup>6</sup>
- In January 2022, the Canadian Hockey League released a report by an independent review panel on the abuse of young hockey players.<sup>7</sup>
- In March 2022, an independent review of Rugby Canada's high-performance programs raised concerns about that organization's high-performance environment and culture.<sup>8</sup>
- Also in March 2022, a group of current and former gymnasts called for an investigation into alleged toxic and abusive practices against athletes in the sport.<sup>9</sup>
- In May 2022, Boxing Canada announced the appointment of an independent expert to conduct a high-performance culture review of its High-Performance Program.<sup>10</sup>
- Later in May 2022, Hockey Canada issued a statement regarding allegations of sexual assault involving members of the 2017–2018 National Junior Hockey Team. The statement specified that the organization had reached a settlement with the alleged victim.<sup>11</sup>
- In July 2022, an independent review undertaken by McLaren Global Sport Solutions found that Canada Soccer had mishandled sexual assault complaints between 1988 and 2008.<sup>12</sup>
- In October 2022, Water Polo Canada's board of directors launched an independent internal investigation into allegations of mistreatment of female water polo athletes between 2004 and 2016.<sup>13</sup>
- In November 2022, Hockey Canada released the final report by the Honourable Thomas Cromwell regarding an independent review of the organization's governance. The report had been commissioned in August 2022.<sup>14</sup>
- In January 2023, Gymnastics Canada released the independent report it had commissioned, "A Framework for Change: How to Achieve a Culture Shift for Gymnastics in Canada." It focused on governance and safe sport issues.<sup>15</sup>

As a nation prizing hockey as one of its national sports,<sup>16</sup> the revelations regarding the conduct of junior national team players and Hockey Canada itself shocked Canadians and, in 2022, triggered reviews by two parliamentary standing committees in relation to safe sport more generally:

- The Standing Committee on the Status of Women issued its report entitled “Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada” in June 2023.<sup>17</sup>
- The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage issued its report entitled “Safe Sport in Canada” in June 2024.<sup>18</sup>

The work of both parliamentary committees and their subsequent reports reflected increasing public concern about harmful behaviours in many sport settings. There was also a growing awareness of systemic issues within sport, including “calls for broad reform of the Canadian sport system, with an emphasis on reform that better protects children and holds sport leaders and organizations to account.”<sup>19</sup>

It was in this context that the Government of Canada announced the creation of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission in December 2023 and named the Commissioner and Special Advisors on May 9, 2024.

As we describe further in this report, the problems of abuse, maltreatment, and discrimination in sports persist. We only have to note the numerous cases that have come to light since the Commission began its work to see that these are not problems of the past. Recent cases clearly demonstrate that our Final Report is as relevant as ever. Sustained government action and transformative change within sport organizations will be necessary to resolve these issues once and for all and ensure a safe environment for all Canadians involved in sports.

## The Commission’s mandate

The Commission’s mandate, as specified in its Terms of Reference, was two-fold. The Commission was tasked to review the sport system and make recommendations on concrete and effective actions to:

- Improve safe sport in Canada, including trauma-informed approaches to support sport participants in the disclosure of and healing from maltreatment.
- Improve the sport system in Canada, including but not limited to policy, funding structures, governance, reporting, accountability, conflicts of interest, systems alignment, culture, and legal considerations.<sup>20</sup>

The Terms of Reference clearly stipulated that, “while the Preliminary and Final Reports will contain recommendations for the Government of Canada, they may be of assistance to all governments and sport participants to use in both joint and independent efforts to improve sport systems in Canada.”<sup>21</sup>

To achieve its mandate’s objectives, the Commission was required, as part of its activities, to:

- Engage victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport, as well as subject-matter experts, academics, and advocates to bring to light the experiences, causes, and impacts of inappropriate behaviour and maltreatment; support healing; and seek input to inform recommendations.
- Engage a broad group of experts, academics, stakeholders, and sport participants on how to improve the sport system in Canada, including but not limited to issues related to policy, funding structures, governance, reporting, accountability, conflicts of interest, systems alignment, culture, and legal considerations.<sup>22</sup>

The Commission drew on existing literature to guide our work. We also examined the earlier reports carefully, and we refer to past recommendations throughout this report because many of those have not yet been implemented and deserve additional consideration.

The Terms of Reference required the Commission to engage and seek input from provinces and territories to foster collaboration and constructive engagement from the outset of its work.<sup>23</sup>

In accordance with the Commission’s Terms of Reference, a Preliminary Report was published on August 28, 2025. This report contained our preliminary findings and recommendations. These were considered by participants who provided their feedback at the National Summit on the Future of Sport held September 8 to 12, 2025. We also received feedback through other means.

The Commission was asked to conduct an examination and review of the sport system. It was not within our mandate to make any findings of misconduct or liability, nor to determine whether individuals or organizations are civilly or criminally responsible.<sup>24</sup> The Commission was also required to ensure that its conduct and activities did not jeopardize any legal proceedings.<sup>25</sup>

Later in this report (in Chapter 17), we describe in detail the process we undertook to fulfill the Commission’s mandate.



## A roadmap and remaining work to do

Building on our Preliminary Report, this Final Report is the product of our review of the Canadian sport system. It reflects information gathered by the Commission through its engagement activities, written submissions, and our own independent research.

In this Final Report, the Commission:

- explores the importance and benefits of sport for Canadians and Canada (Chapter 2)
- shares some of the experiences that victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport shared with us (Chapter 3)
- describes in general terms the constitutional imperatives relevant to sport (Chapter 4)
- describes the sport system's structure, including its institutions' roles and responsibilities (Chapter 5)
- describes the Indigenous sport system, including the roles and responsibilities of Indigenous governments, communities, and organizations within the Indigenous sport system (Chapter 6)
- examines the barriers to sport and physical activity in Canada (Chapter 7) defines safe sport and outlines the Commission's proposed approach to improve safe sport in Canada, including the broader significance of safe sport for Canadians (Chapter 8)
- reviews safe sport policies and codes of conduct at different levels of the Canadian sport system (Chapter 9)
- reviews various complaint mechanisms created to administer safe sport policies and codes of conduct, along with their complaint-management processes (Chapter 10)
- reviews prevention strategies currently in place to foster safe sport environments and prevent maltreatment, including public registries of sanctioned individuals implemented at different levels of sport (Chapter 11)
- explores leadership in Canadian sport and the potential for establishing a Centralized Sport Entity in Canada (Chapter 12)
- examines alignment in sport system structures (Chapter 13)
- assesses the current governance frameworks in the Canadian sport system (Chapter 14)
- examines the sport system's funding model, including funding sources, levels, and priorities (Chapter 15)
- provides a roadmap for the future (Chapter 16)
- provides an overview of the Commission's process to fulfill its mandate (Chapter 17).

Throughout these chapters, we summarize the viewpoints, experiences, and knowledge that a wide range of participants shared with the Commission during the engagement process. With the exception of Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 17 which are descriptive in content, each chapter includes our final findings and Calls to Action associated with the topics and themes discussed in the chapter. A list of our Calls to Action can be found in Appendix 20.

Our examination of the Canadian sport system revealed both its complexity and the range of challenges and issues it faces. Given the Commission's time and resources, it was not possible to address all of the matters that participants raised during our engagement process or conduct an extensive review of them. However, we wish to identify these issues so that they may be considered in future efforts to effect meaningful change. We heard about, but were unable to fully review: competition manipulation; challenges facing transgender athletes; dramatically evolving pressures introduced by sport gambling; parents' distorted perspectives and priorities regarding their children's abilities and aspirations; a disturbing emphasis on early specialization in sport; the "commodification" of young participants at an early age; concerns related to the use of non-disclosure agreements; and issues exclusively within the professional sport environment. While we do not directly examine these matters in this report, we believe that strengthening the sport system and enhancing safe sport mechanisms will provide a foundational framework within which these issues may be addressed further and with some urgency.

## A note on language and terminology

The Commission recognizes that language carries history, impact, and weight. Consequently, language can cause harm or confusion when used or interpreted incorrectly.

In this report, where we use "we were told," "we were advised," "we were informed," or other such variations, we refer to the information that participants provided to us during our engagement activities.

In this regard, we are committed to protecting the confidentiality of our conversations and communications. Therefore, as outlined in the Commission's Terms of Reference and consistent with our trauma-informed approach,<sup>26</sup> we have not included any information in this Final Report that might identify specific individuals or organizations. This includes specific sport organizations or provincial or territorial governments. We have included such information only if it had already been established through legal proceedings or admission, publicly disclosed by the individual or organization, or if they provided us with consent to do so.

We use the expression “**Indigenous people**” to refer to a group of people who identify as Indigenous when no reference is being made to a specific distinct society. Relatedly, we use the phrase “**Indigenous Peoples**” as a collective term that refers to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in Canada. We recognize that the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples each have unique perspectives and interests. Understanding these perspectives is fundamental for the purpose of our work and reconciliation.

We have chosen to use the phrase “**victims and survivors**” to refer to individuals who experienced maltreatment in sport. Some people we spoke with prefer the word “victim,” while others prefer “survivor,” and some identify with both. Using “victims and survivors” allows us to respect these preferences without identifying individual choices. For some, the word survivor emphasizes resilience and reclaims their experience from the abuser who aimed to victimize them. The word “victim” is often used by institutions, as in legal and medical contexts. Some individuals feel this term better holds the person who hurt them accountable and better describes how they feel about their experience.

In addition, we refer to both “**sport**” and “**physical activity**.” Our engagement activities underlined how interconnected sport and physical activity are. These words are used together in the governing federal legislation, the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.<sup>27</sup> However, sport generally involves more than just physical activity. The Commission views “sport” as an organized rule-based activity with a focus on skills development, including community, competitive, and high-performance-level activities that can be performed either alone or in a team setting. “Physical activity,” on the other hand, refers to less organized or informal activities and movement which are fundamental elements of health and well-being.

Our use of the word “sport” also encompasses Disability, Para, and Paralympic sport. That said, we recognize that Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport have their own specific definitions. We use these terms intentionally to reflect those distinctions throughout this report.

The terms “**Disability sport**” or “**sport for persons with disabilities**” refer broadly to any sport practised by a person with disabilities.

A **Para sport** is any sport in which athletes with disabilities participate and whose International Sport Federation has been recognized by the International Paralympic Committee.<sup>28</sup> Depending on the sport, athletes may have physical, visual, or intellectual impairments. Athletes participate in Para sports at all levels, from the grassroots to international competitions. Not all Para sports are included in the Paralympic Games sport program.

**Paralympic sport** refers specifically to the sports included in the Paralympic Games program during a given cycle. Like Para sports, Paralympic Sports are governed by International Sport Federations recognized by the International Paralympic Committee.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout this report, when we refer to **sport organizations**, we include Disability sport unless expressly stated otherwise. Where distinctions between types of organizations are necessary, we refer specifically to “**Disability sport organizations**,” “Para sport organizations,” and “Paralympic sport organizations.” For example, references to National Sport Organizations generally encompass Disability sport organizations that are recognized as such.

Throughout this report, we use the terms “**community sport**,” “**local sport**,” and “**grassroots sport**” interchangeably to refer to local, community-based organized sport.<sup>30</sup>

Lastly, the sport landscape continues to evolve and there were changes that occurred during the preparation of this Final Report. As such, this report reflects the information available at the time it was drafted. For example, since the publication of our Preliminary Report, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport changed its name to Sport Integrity Canada. At the time of writing this report, the new name was expected to be fully operationalized by January 1, 2026.<sup>31</sup> For clarity and consistency, we continue to refer to the organization as the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the name by which it is more commonly known but do include reference to its new name, Sport Integrity Canada, in a footnote and a few other places throughout the report.

Other organizations ceased operating in the course of our review of the sport system. Notably, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner ceased operations on August 1, 2025. We recognize that external references to the organization’s resources may no longer exist or be available to the public, but we reference them to provide context and to acknowledge the sources of our information.

## Acknowledgements

Our review would not have been possible without the contributions of the many participants in our engagement process who generously, and often courageously and selflessly, shared their experiences, knowledge, and insights. We are very grateful to each of them. We hope that our work reflects their determination to eliminate a culture of silence that has existed for too long. We recognize the need for fundamental change in the governance and structure of Canadian sport.

The work of this Commission would not have been possible without the efforts and unwavering commitment of a small yet incredibly dedicated team of individuals. We are extremely grateful to our Commission colleagues who gave so selflessly of their time and effort, were deeply committed to our processes, and resolute in ensuring that our work reflected the contributions and perspectives of all who interacted with us.



# **CHAPTER 2:**

## **Why sport is important to Canadians and Canada**



## Chapter 2:

# Why sport is important to Canadians and Canada

Sport plays a crucial role in society. It can act as a powerful unifying force that transcends cultural, geographical, and social boundaries. It can shape healthy, cohesive, and inclusive communities by bringing people from diverse backgrounds together and driving positive societal change.

Sport is a fundamental element of Canadian culture and identity. Sport instills a deep sense of pride in Canadians. The victories of Canadian athletes at home and abroad have long been a source of collective joy. They bring communities together in celebration of their hard work and dedication. Sport inspires the next generation of athletes and leaders by providing positive role models that embody values such as perseverance, integrity, respect, and excellence.

Sport is an essential avenue for health and well-being and can afford unique opportunities for vulnerable populations. Sport, including high-performance sport, can provide invaluable and life-changing personal growth and development. Sport promotes physical activity, health, social inclusion, education, and the development of essential life skills.

Sport contributes to the national and local economies by driving tourism, supporting local business, and creating jobs through major events and ongoing activities. Its infrastructure is central in supporting sport and physical activity programs. It is an important community resource that enhances public health and fosters community involvement and inclusiveness. Increasing sport participation and physical activity can also reduce the economic burden of physical inactivity on the healthcare system.

The importance of sport and physical activity to Canadians was emphasized in almost all of our conversations. Many participants recounted the magic of their first sport experiences, and the lessons and camaraderie that developed in sport environments. People spoke of the joy and sense of accomplishment in acquiring new skills, and of sport's value in community life and social interactions. We also heard how sport was a safe place away from home for some, who attributed their current success to opportunities gained through sport. It is particularly significant that many discussions emphasized the importance of school and community sport, and the value of multiple sport experiences in childhood and youth.

Even when individuals shared their experiences of maltreatment, one clear theme consistently emerged: sport is important and valuable.



This section provides an overview of the benefits of sport, highlighting its positive impacts for Canada, communities and individuals.

## Collective benefits of sport

The Commission heard compelling stories of how sport brings people together, fosters social connections, creates friendships, and enhances community life. Whether it is playing on a team, interacting on a playground, or participating in recreation leagues, sport allows children (and often parents and guardians), teens, and adults, to connect with others in healthy and socially positive ways. These relationships transcend winning or losing and create supportive networks that promote belonging. We heard that Canada could benefit from a more physically active population.

According to the public online survey conducted by the Commission, connecting with others and building friendships was the second most important benefit of participating in organized sport (chosen by 52.6% of respondents who answered questions about improving the sport system in Canada) after improved physical health (chosen by 54.1% of respondents). Benefits like “Economic impact” and “Crime reduction” were chosen as the most important benefit of participating in organized sport by less than 2% of respondents. This suggests that while these may be real outcomes of organized sport, they are not the primary reasons why a majority of respondents value or participate in it.

### SPORT’S IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

The economic impact of sport is substantial and multifaceted, contributing significantly to both national and local economies. The sports industry encompasses a wide range of activities, including sport tourism that generates considerable revenue.<sup>32</sup>

Statistics Canada reports that sport’s contributions to Canada’s gross domestic product totalled \$7.6 billion in 2023, with the subdomain of organized sport accounting for \$2.1 billion.<sup>33</sup>

Major sporting events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Commonwealth Games, the Canada Games and national championships attract significant tourism and therefore boost local businesses, create employment opportunities and drive infrastructure development.<sup>34</sup>

For example, Canada is preparing to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup, together with the United States and Mexico. This event is expected to generate over 24,000 jobs and \$2 billion for the Canadian economy, with massive boosts to tourism, small businesses, hotels and local communities.<sup>35</sup>

A 2024 news release from the Government of Canada notes that Canada hosts over 250,000 sports events annually, ranging from professional events to multisport amateur games to local tournaments.<sup>36</sup> Canada hosts

over 80 international single sport events each year.<sup>37</sup> These events all provide economic benefits in the form of visitor spending.<sup>38</sup>

According to Sport Tourism Canada, sport tourists (both domestic and international) spent \$6.8 billion in total spending across Canada in 2018 (on items ranging from game tickets and concession stand snacks to travel, accommodation, restaurants, general shopping and others).<sup>39</sup> These tourist dollars can have long-term impacts for local economies.

Community sport amenities enhance community appeal, which can help attract and retain knowledge workers.<sup>40</sup> According to a 2025 Statistics Canada report, there were 99,600 sport-related jobs in Canada in 2023.<sup>41</sup>

While sport and recreation employ thousands of Canadians across the country, they would not exist without the legions of volunteers who make an essential contribution to community health and well-being. In Canada, 27% of adults reported volunteering in an activity related to sport, the third most significant level of volunteer activity after hospitals and religious organizations.<sup>42</sup> In 2020, the social impact generated by sport, physical activity and recreation, reflected as the value of volunteering for sport-based activities, was estimated at \$13.6 billion.<sup>43</sup>

Infrastructure is vital to the delivery of sport, physical activity and recreation programs and services, but it also serves as valuable community assets.<sup>44</sup> These facilities improve public health and, as spaces where people come together, they foster community engagement. This infrastructure can also help with emergency response.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to its evident economic impacts, sport can serve as a “soft” form of influence and persuasion in the international context. Indeed, international sporting events can foster international relationships, increase diplomatic relations and elevate Canada’s presence on the international stage. For example, the 2026 FIFA World Cup, is staged as an opportunity to bring countries together. Such events can be used to forge diplomatic relationships.<sup>46</sup>

### **SPORT’S IMPACT ON HEALTH CARE**

Sport is a key determinant of life-long physical activity. The impact of physical activity on the health of Canadians has significant socioeconomic implications. Physical inactivity is a controllable risk factor linked to multiple diseases and mental health disorders, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, breast and colon cancer, and type-2 diabetes.<sup>47</sup> Physical activity contributes to the prevention and management of such noncommunicable diseases and reduces the symptoms of depression and anxiety.<sup>48</sup>

Participants reiterated that there is a role for sport and physical activity in health care. They affirmed that we should be talking more about the importance of physical activity.



A physically active population reduces strain on the healthcare system and is associated with lower healthcare costs in the short term.<sup>49</sup> When people's physical activity levels increase, the incidence of physical-inactivity-related diseases decline, with associated effects on health care costs.<sup>50</sup>

In 2022, the healthcare system costs associated with sedentary lifestyles were estimated at \$3.9 billion.<sup>51</sup>

Other reports indicate that in 2012, physical inactivity cost Canadians approximately \$10 billion in combined direct and indirect costs. A 1% relative reduction in physical inactivity would save an estimated \$20.3 billion over 20 years.<sup>52</sup> Overall, every dollar invested in public health interventions generates more than 14 dollars in cost savings.<sup>53</sup>

### **SPORT'S IMPACT ON IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Beyond sport's economic and health benefits in communities, sporting events can bring communities together, fostering a shared sense of identity and pride. Sport can reflect the diversity that characterizes Canada.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, sport improves social cohesion because sport participants experience a high degree of interaction with other individuals. This interaction improves interpersonal relationships, establishes trusts and builds teamwork.<sup>54</sup> Sport gives individuals of all ages opportunities to be actively involved in their communities.<sup>55</sup>

After-school sports programs in culturally diverse communities have successfully facilitated social inclusion, helping students from different cultural backgrounds to develop relationships with each other.<sup>56</sup> From local leagues to national competitions, sport provides opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to connect, as well as achieve and celebrate common goals.<sup>57</sup>

A 2014 report from the Institute for Canadian Citizenship showed that 95% of new Canadians believe that sports are an important part of Canadian culture, generating national pride and a more intense connection to being Canadian.<sup>58</sup> In addition, 87% of new citizens reported that watching their children play sports or volunteering for their children's sports teams helped them to feel more connected to the community. Newcomers also shared that the social interactions they experienced in the stands and on the field were often more meaningful than those they had at work.<sup>59</sup> Sport venues can also play an important role in supporting the successful integration of newcomers to Canada.

Consistent with this information, the Commission heard particularly important messages from new Canadians, Indigenous people and organizations, racialized athletes, and athletes with disabilities about the incredible value of sport in facilitating inclusion, community development, and exchange of cultural knowledge for marginalized groups.

We learned that sport is a pathway for inclusion by providing opportunities for connection, bringing people from different backgrounds and abilities together. We heard that sport can be a universal language.

When people feel included, they tend to behave in prosocial ways. For example, throughout our engagement activities, we heard about the importance of sport in crime prevention. Although the relationship between the benefits of sports participation and the reduction of youth crime is complex, sport is a factor that can influence positive social development among children and youth.<sup>60</sup> Sport can also connect youth to positive role models and promote learning and applying positive life skills.<sup>61</sup>

Various sport-based crime prevention programs have been implemented in the past in many countries, including Canada.<sup>62</sup> However, academic findings about the degree to which sport reduces crime and recidivism are inconsistent.<sup>63</sup> Sport is nevertheless seen as a vehicle to minimize risk factors associated with crime, violence and drug use.<sup>64</sup> Some experts cite data to suggest that sport programs might act as a “protective” measure that reduces unlawful, anti-social and risky behaviour.<sup>65</sup>

## **SPORT’S IMPACT ON NATIONAL PRIDE AND AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION**

Sport cultivates national pride and unites Canadians through shared moments of triumph and passion. Moments like a game-winning goal in overtime, a record-breaking relay performance or a last-second penalty shot remind Canadians of their collective strength and determination.

We share in the moments of triumph and the heartbreaking near misses in competitions and games. With their dedication, perseverance, and resilience, athletes serve as role models and inspire Canadians to pursue their own goals and face challenges with grace, whether personal or professional. Athletes’ achievements remind us that sport is shared by everyone.

Sport successes are powerful forces for building morale and fostering shared celebrations among regions and communities. Whether it is cheering for local teams in small towns or rejoicing over national victories in packed stadiums, people who celebrate sport are participating in the richness of a collective history — one of perseverance, inclusion, and the pursuit of excellence.

National pride in Team Canada was palpable during the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and Radio-Canada reported that 7 in 10 Canadians (27 million) followed the event and consumed a record-breaking 24.3 million hours of Olympic content.<sup>66</sup> This represents a 170% increase from the Tokyo 2020 Games and 121% from the Beijing 2022 Games.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, CBC and Radio-Canada’s coverage of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games similarly reached new milestones, with total viewership on digital platforms rising by 153% compared to Tokyo 2020.<sup>68</sup>

## Individual benefits of sport

Participation in sport provides a wide range of benefits to individuals. It fosters lifelong physical activity, and improved physical and mental health, while building essential life skills and leadership. Participation in sport supports better educational and career outcomes and promotes personal growth.

The importance of these benefits was supported by the Commission's survey. Survey respondents who answered questions about improving the sport system in Canada were asked to identify the three most important benefits of participating in organized sport. The three most important benefits according to the survey respondents were: improved physical health at 54.1%, connecting with others and building friendships at 52.6%, and skill development (e.g., leadership, teamwork) at 50.6%. Competition was ranked much lower, chosen by only 14.3% of respondents. This indicates that for the majority of respondents, the primary motivation and benefit of participating in sport did not reflect competition.

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

One of the most profound impacts of sport lies in its contribution to individual health and the introduction of enjoyable physical activity. The evidence is clear – it is ongoing physical activity that contributes to health. Compelling evidence shows that consistent participation in physical activity strengthens cardiovascular health, thereby decreasing the likelihood of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and other medical conditions.<sup>69</sup> It also reduces the risk of premature death.

Engaging in moderate physical activity helps people maintain a healthy weight, mitigating the likelihood of developing type-2 diabetes. Weight-bearing physical activity, such as running, racket sports and weightlifting, also promotes bone health for people of all ages.<sup>70</sup> Childhood physical activity is crucial for building strong bones and it reduces the risk of osteoporosis later in life.<sup>71</sup> Physical *inactivity* is also one of the causes of childhood obesity.<sup>72</sup>

Sport participation at a young age can lead to a lasting interest in physical activity, fostering a more active lifestyle as an adult, which is critical for public health.<sup>73</sup> Lifelong participation in physical activity can be supported by the sport system.

### MENTAL HEALTH

Beyond their physical benefits, quality sport and physical activity experiences contribute to mental and emotional health. Exercise can significantly decrease anxiety, stress, and depression, and by extension, improve overall mood.<sup>74</sup> Among adults, engaging in sport also boosts psychological well-being, including higher levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction.<sup>75</sup>

Among youth, participation in sport can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.<sup>76</sup> The 2022 Rally Report published by Canadian Women and Sport indicates that 90% of girls believe that sport benefits their physical and mental health.<sup>77</sup> Children and youth who participate in sport demonstrate higher rates of self-esteem, self-concept, and self-worth.<sup>78</sup> Girls' participation in sport can enhance body image, with one in two girls reporting

that sport positively influences their body image according to the 2024 Rally Report published by Canadian Women and Sport.<sup>79</sup> For youth, the positive effects of sport increase with the number of sports they participate in.<sup>80</sup> However, pressure placed on children to be elite athletes at a young age can cause stress and anxiety.

During the Commission's work, numerous participants highlighted the significant individual benefits of sport for athletes at all levels. They emphasized that sport has the power to save lives, and many told us that they were able to overcome personal challenges through physical activity. We were also told that sport fosters self-care and healing, and that it serves as an important vehicle for self-regulation, including for high-performance athletes. Participants noted that sport was especially important for youth in northern communities as it could offer a positive path forward, keep youth away from criminality and save lives.

Parents of athletes can also benefit from their child's participation in sport. They can, for instance, experience pride and joy from observing their child compete, interact with other adults and expand their social networks, while noting strengthened familial relationships.<sup>81</sup> According to the 2025 Jumpstart State of Youth Sport in Canada report, the top three positive emotions for parents associated to their children's participation in organized sport were pride, joy and fulfillment, and confidence in skill development.<sup>82</sup>

Sport and physical activity play a particularly crucial role in enhancing the physical, social-emotional and mental well-being of persons with disabilities. Through sport, participants with disabilities experience feelings of increased independence, belonging, acceptance and accomplishment.<sup>83</sup> Sport empowers persons with disabilities and allows them to realize their full potential. It enhances their quality of life, provides a sense of purpose, and plays a crucial role in overcoming trauma. Athletes with disabilities build confidence, resilience, and life skills through sport, while also gaining a strong sense of belonging and community.

Athletes with disabilities shared how they never thought that they could participate in sport until they found disability sport opportunities, and that sport is the only place where they truly feel accepted. Such developments, we learned, afford advantages and opportunities that extend to entire families, and to other areas, like employment and advocacy efforts.<sup>84</sup>

## **ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP**

Sport plays a vital role in the cultivation of essential life skills. Team sports, in particular, teach participants how to work, communicate, and cooperate with others. By providing a structured environment where people work together towards common goals, team sports strengthen interpersonal skills such as conflict resolution and collaboration.<sup>85</sup> These shared experiences encourage social bonding, and support the development of meaningful relationships.<sup>86</sup>

While we noted that some adverse behaviours may originate in certain inappropriately led sport settings, we also recognize that sport participants can learn how to respect rules while developing a sense of fair play.<sup>87</sup> This promotes ethical behaviour, values that can extend beyond the playing field, shaping responsible and engaged

citizens. Skills like commitment and perseverance, cultivated through striving for improvement in sport, can help participants develop self-discipline and a strong work ethic.<sup>88</sup>

Sport develops leadership skills that are important both within and beyond the world of sport. Participation in sport provides the opportunity to learn and use leadership skills, including teamwork, communication, strategic planning and organization and self-discipline.<sup>89</sup>

Sport can help propel individuals into successful careers and leadership positions. A study conducted by EY's Women Athletes Business Network and ESPNW in 2015 revealed that 94% of women in top corporate leadership positions had a background in sport.<sup>90</sup> According to the 2022 Rally Report published by Canadian Women and Sport, 72% of women and girls reported the development of leadership skills as a benefit of participating in sport.<sup>91</sup>

### **BETTER EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER OUTCOMES**

Early involvement in sports is linked to better educational and employment outcomes, especially for women and girls.<sup>92</sup> It is also associated with higher earnings and job satisfaction later in life.<sup>93</sup>

Employers increasingly acknowledge the role of physical activity in boosting workplace productivity. Active employees tend to demonstrate greater focus, experience fewer and shorter absences, and are less impacted by health issues that commonly lead to absenteeism.<sup>94</sup>

### **PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Sport and physical activity promote personal development and inspire individuals to dream. Many participants noted that sport instills important values such as perseverance and teamwork. Challenging and exceeding perceived limits contributes to building self-confidence.

Youth participation in sport fosters several social, emotional, and durable skills. As noted in the Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report 2025, youth report that sport has enhanced their ability to make friends, increased their desire to do well in sport, and raised their belief in themselves.<sup>95</sup> The number one reason youth like playing sports is playing with friends (56%). Having fun (33%) and learning new skills (32%) were the second and third most common reasons why youth play sports.<sup>96</sup>

As previously noted, according to the 2024 Rally Report published by Canadian Women and Sport, one in two girls say that participating in sport positively influences their body image because sport helps them focus on what they are doing rather than how they look. Sport makes them feel strong and capable.<sup>97</sup> Participating in physical activity, including sport, fosters physical literacy which encompasses the skills, knowledge and confidence to engage in lifelong physical activity.

High-performance athletes' relationship to sport is fundamentally different from that of recreational participants. For these athletes, sport is marked by the drive to achieve extraordinary success, often measured in medals and international recognition. They experience a heightened sense of pride and accomplishment from competing



at the highest level. We learned that being pushed to achieve excellence can be a positive and rewarding experience. We also heard a resonating passion and love for their sport.

Paralympic athletes also emphasized the importance of high-performance sport for Canadians with disabilities. In addition, being recognized at par with their Olympic counterparts is very important, both to the individual athletes and serving as a broader message about equity and inclusion. Paralympic athletes are athletes first: athletes who are excellent at what they do. And, like Olympic athletes, they are role models and a source of inspiration and national pride for Canada.

## Specific benefits for Indigenous people

During our work, Indigenous people shared with us that for them, the significance of sport extends far beyond staying active and combatting obesity. It can literally save lives. We were also told that sport helps prevent early pregnancies, reduces the risk of suicide, and keeps youth away from gang affiliation, drugs, and alcohol.

Our discussions revealed that, in the context of a growing mental health crisis (especially among Indigenous youth), being involved in sport provides a vital outlet, helps channel frustration and grief, and helps people manage stress, anxiety and trauma. Sport was described as a great tool for healing. We were told that “movement is medicine.”

We also learned from Indigenous communities that sport plays an important role in bringing people together because it is one of the few spaces where children can learn to embrace diversity. Participants shared with us that one of sport’s main benefits for Indigenous youth is the opportunity to go beyond their immediate community and engage with others. Indigenous people also shared that sport fosters connections among Indigenous nations.

Sport can nurture pride and Indigenous identity. We heard that it brings hope to communities and provides a sense of purpose. Promoting Indigenous athletes can encourage and inspire young people to participate in sport programs.<sup>98</sup>

Within Indigenous communities, sport builds social skills, develops a sense of belonging, and teaches important life lessons. The holistic approach of Indigenous people emphasizes the development of the whole person, balancing the physical, mental, emotional, cultural, and spiritual aspects of life.<sup>99</sup> We heard repeatedly that sport creates meaningful opportunities in that it encourages youth to stay in school, reduces the risk of homelessness, and increases the chances of graduating and pursuing post-secondary education.

Sport activities are often linked to identity, the transmission of values and knowledge, healing, and community building. Sport can also be a vector of resistance to anti-Indigenous racism, colonialism and patriarchy.<sup>100</sup>

## Harnessing the power of sport: a call to action

The impact of sport is unmistakable – sport contributes to physical and mental health and is an integral part of Canada’s culture and national identity. Sport is a powerful engine for economic vitality, social cohesion, and national pride. It drives economic growth, contributing billions in revenue to the Canadian economy, creating thousands of jobs, boosting tourism, and reducing healthcare costs related to physical inactivity.

Canada needs to invest more in sport, including sport infrastructure. Investing in sport from the grassroots to high performance means investing in public health, stronger communities, and a more resilient economy. It is also an investment in fostering inclusion, celebrating diversity, uniting people across regions and backgrounds, and striving for excellence together. It is an investment in Canada’s youth and the country’s future.

# **CHAPTER 3:**

## **Breaking the silence on maltreatment: why the promise of sport has escaped so many**





## Chapter 3:

# Breaking the silence on maltreatment: why the promise of sport has escaped so many

As Chapter 2 outlines, sport is immensely beneficial in how it positively impacts individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Yet, beneath sport's celebrated benefits, a troubling reality persists. Sport has long been plagued by various forms of maltreatment.

In recent years, a sequence of widely publicized cases has exposed the widespread and systemic maltreatment present across all levels and types of sport, from grassroots participation to the national stage. Many studies and reviews have been conducted by parliamentary committees and independent investigators at the behest of athletes, victims, survivors, and advocates. These public outcries and the reports that followed have revealed not only individual suffering but also the systemic failures that allow such harm to continue. There is also no denying that maltreatment in sport remains deeply entrenched, with numerous new cases coming to light over the course of the Commission's work.

Given this troubling reality, it is important to recognize the bravery of those who have shared their experiences. Whether before the Commission or in other forums, victims and survivors have courageously recounted the painful trauma they have experienced and revealed how widespread the abuse is. Their willingness to speak out emphasizes the need for lasting change. Such stories, while difficult to hear, remind us of the courage it takes to confront injustices.

We also commend the work of investigative journalists. They not only offered a voice to the many who suffered in silence or felt their cries went unheard but played a critical role in the processes that led governments to listen and act. Indeed, the media sparked a collective awakening that Canadians responded to with outrage and demands for change. This public pressure compelled governments to take concrete action, such as the study conducted by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which led to the "Safe Sport in Canada" report.<sup>101</sup>

## Different forms of maltreatment

The Commission heard heart-wrenching stories of serious abuse. We were told that maltreatment in sport takes many forms, including sexual assault, physical and psychological abuse, neglect, racism, body shaming, bullying, hazing and discrimination. Victims and survivors described feeling humiliated, degraded, and broken.



Many of the victims and survivors who met with us were children when they were subjected to maltreatment. Now adults, they continue to live with the devastating and life-altering consequences of maltreatment. We also heard from individuals who have suffered maltreatment in recent years, including some who are currently experiencing harmful behaviours. These behaviours impact individual athletes and tarnish the integrity of the entire sporting community.

Despite increased awareness and numerous studies and reports aimed at exploring and addressing these issues, maltreatment in sport in this country is still pervasive. In what follows, we summarize some of the accounts that were shared with us by victims, survivors, and witnesses.

### **BODY SHAMING**

Victims and survivors, many of whom were children at the time, experienced body shaming, inappropriate monitoring of weight, food restriction, and other harmful weight-control tactics. We heard stories of child gymnasts being forced to wear an elastic band around their waist to make their stomachs look slimmer, or being put in front of a mirror and told that their legs were touching when they should not be. We heard of athletes resorting to extreme methods such as fasting, vomiting and laxatives to reach the ideal weight for competition, and of team nutritionists reinforcing food restrictions imposed by coaches. They shared how these practices continued to impact them into adulthood, leading to long-lasting psychological and physical effects, and frequently to eating disorders.

Although some of these practices were once considered acceptable, we now understand how damaging these behaviours can be. Still, weight-related maltreatment remains common in sport, especially in artistic sports and sports where athletes must compete within specific weight classes.<sup>102</sup>

### **PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

The Commission heard victims and survivors describe incidents of physical and psychological abuse such as being locked in change rooms as a punishment, being verbally abused in locker rooms, having things thrown at them such as balls and shoes, and being refused access to a toilet. We heard of abuse inflicted upon Indigenous people in sport, including in residential schools.

We heard accounts of coaches refusing to allow athletes to receive medical care or replacement protective gear after accidents. Some athletes were threatened with having their Athlete Assistance Program funding withdrawn. We also heard of coaches tampering with sports equipment without the athlete's knowledge to improve performance.

### **HAZING AND BULLYING**

The Commission heard multiple accounts of hazing. Hazing is a form of group bullying or group intimidation of rookies by established team members, and sometimes by team coaches and parents. It involves humiliation and degradation but with the goal and outcome of inclusion (as opposed to bullying, which also involves humiliation and degradation but with the outcome of exclusion).<sup>103</sup>

We were told about rookies being forced to shave their heads, consume excessive amounts of alcohol (often for the first time in their lives), and attend strip clubs. Athletes described being physically and sexually abused by veterans, being deprived of sleep, food or water and acting as personal servants as part of hazing rituals. We heard accounts of athletes being bullied and receiving daily threats from their coaches while traveling to competitions and of coaches forcing male athletes to wear women's underwear over their competition suits in public until they managed to achieve certain results.

### **SEXUAL ABUSE**

Other victims, survivors, and witnesses shared harrowing accounts of sexual maltreatment including sexual assault, violence, and harassment. The Commission heard how these experiences of sexual misconduct are often preceded by grooming and cause lasting and corrosive harm. Grooming involves manipulating perceptions as well as desensitizing and normalizing unacceptable behaviours.

Experts advised us that grooming is a gradual process that typically appears at first as a special opportunity or treatment, such as getting additional attention from individuals in positions of authority or more playing time on the field, which may lead to better athletic performance. But these “special opportunities/treatment” are actually part of the harmful grooming process. They are deliberately used by individuals who hold positions of trust and power over them to gain more control and ultimately sexualize contact with them. Grooming leads to a fundamental and lasting betrayal of trust.

### **RACISM**

Racism, including abuse directed toward Indigenous communities, as well as homophobia, ableism (discrimination based on disability), and sexism, have been identified as being deeply ingrained within the sport system. These harms undermine the very principles of fairness and inclusivity that sport is meant to uphold.

The Commission was informed of racism frequently happening both on and off the field of play. Athletes shared experiences of opposing players and administrators hurling racial slurs or employing vicious stereotypes. Some were told they made the team only to fill a “quota.” Racial stereotypes have also been used to justify the lack of diversity in the sport system.

According to the Ontario University Athletics Anti-Racism Report published in 2021, racism in Ontario University Athletics programs often manifests as “microaggressions.”<sup>104</sup> These are:

“[...] the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group.”<sup>105</sup>

According to this study, students reported that white coaches were often unaware of the impact that jokes and microaggressions had on individuals under their care, and unequipped to handle grievances.<sup>106</sup>

## **EXCLUSION AND MARGINALIZATION**

Many people from equity-deserving groups continue to be marginalized and excluded from sport. We heard that 2SLGBTQI+ people, including athletes, coaches, and officials, struggled with having to keep their personal lives hidden for fear of retribution. They often felt that equal opportunities were not provided to them.

We also heard of instances where National Sport Organizations housed non-para-athlete participants in one hotel and Para athletes in another, due to a failure by leadership to secure wheelchair-accessible accommodations. We also heard about coaches refusing to provide necessary assistance to Para athletes.

## **NEW FORMS OF MALTREATMENT**

Maltreatment has also evolved over time as a result of significant shifts in the way society functions. The rise and impact of social media have exacerbated traditional forms of abuse. For example, hazing rituals, which have long been a problem in sport culture, are now present online.

Social media platforms can cause a second layer of harm because they are easily accessible to a broader audience. The Commission heard that in some cases, social media have facilitated abuse and have been used to pressure, intimidate and humiliate.

The increase in online communication has also created new ways for abuse to happen, with cyberbullying becoming a significant concern for athletes of all ages. Online harassment can take many forms, from harmful comments to sharing intimate images without consent. It contributes to a culture of shame, fear, and intimidation.

Another example of a newly emerging form of maltreatment relates to the issue of competition manipulation — “a deliberate effort to influence elements of a sporting contest or its outcome, usually for financial gain.”<sup>107</sup> Competition manipulation is a serious threat to sport’s integrity because it is often associated with gambling and linked to organized crime.<sup>108</sup>

However, it is also a direct threat to athlete safety. This is because competition manipulation occurs when a party known as the “fixer” compromises a player, an official, a coach, or other staff by influencing their behaviour. Such influence can take the form of monetary bribes and intimidation, including threats of physical harm, and often seeks to exploit the weaknesses of the targeted person.<sup>109</sup> Fear of exposure by the “fixer” further increases vulnerability to abuse in many forms.

## **What enables maltreatment in sport**

As we look closely at the complexities of ongoing, pervasive maltreatment in sport, we recognize that these issues are not isolated incidents. They are a symptom of larger systemic problems, including power imbalances, a long-standing culture of silence, historical normalization of harmful practices, and a self-regulated sport system.

Understanding the multifaceted nature of maltreatment and the environments that allow it to thrive is essential in order to collectively create safe, respectful, and supportive sporting environments for all.

### **POWER IMBALANCES**

Power imbalances are a root cause of maltreatment in sport. Sport involves several relationships that reflect power imbalances which, if exploited, can set maltreatment in motion.<sup>110</sup> These relationships include coach/athlete, team captain/athlete, trainer/athlete, sport administrator/athlete, and veteran athlete/newcomer athlete.<sup>111</sup> Within such relationships, several individuals in the sports ecosystem might abuse their power. The victims, like the perpetrators, occupy various roles within the sporting community, including athletes but also coaches, referees, parents, and other members.

From a young age, athletes' lives can become very closely tied to their athletic pursuits, sometimes at the expense of a more balanced lifestyle. Many high-performance athletes are discouraged from attending school or pursuing post-secondary education. Oftentimes, they are separated from their parents and support systems. This can create an environment where athletes feel pressured and controlled, especially in sports where they have only one coach. Athletes shared that they felt trapped, with no autonomy or control over their lives. When they stopped performing, they were left to deal with the aftermath of a world that, until then, had been entirely controlled by the sport system.

Coaches become mentors, but also gatekeepers for the athletes' career, which can lead to an unhealthy dependency relationship. This can render athletes more vulnerable to abuse, particularly psychological abuse, by individuals in positions of trust who may exploit that power imbalance. We were told that coaches have the authority to create the environment they want on and off the field of play and to lure athletes into inappropriate situations outside of sport settings. We heard that coaches even used athletes to perpetrate maltreatment against other athletes.

Although we heard that maltreatment most often occurs within coach/athlete relationships, we were told that complaint mechanisms across the country are now receiving an increased number of cases of maltreatment within the athlete-to-athlete relationships.

Often, despite the trauma they have endured, athletes return to the sport system, in part because it is all they know and in part because they have been led to believe they are not good enough and need to prove themselves to others, even after winning world and Olympic medals.

These power dynamics also happen outside of the sanctioned sport system. Victims and survivors reported to us that they had been physically and sexually assaulted by their physical education teacher or their coach in public school sport programs.

## CULTURE OF SILENCE

A culture of silence, prevalent in sport, exacerbates maltreatment. Conflicts of interest and favouritism often allow abuse to remain unaddressed, unchecked, and unresolved. Coaches and administrators sometimes prioritize winning, and their own personal or professional interests, over player welfare. We were told stories of high-performance athletes being used by sport organizations as trophies that they parade before the media to attract private sponsorship, with little regard for their choices or well-being.

Power imbalances between and among the different actors in sport can create environments where fear and silence overshadow the well-being of athletes.

Many individuals shared with the Commission that they were hesitant to speak out, whether as witnesses, victims, or survivors. They feared retribution from coaches, teammates, supervisors, or institutions. In many instances, these fears of retribution were realized when victims, survivors, and witnesses did raise concerns or report maltreatment. We heard of parents being prohibited from attending practices after raising concerns. We also heard how, on several occasions, many individuals were aware of what was happening but chose to do nothing. We were told of professionals, including doctors, therapists and nutritionists, who witnessed maltreatment, listened to athletes, and yet allowed coaches to continue their behavior because they too feared losing their employment if they reported it. This culture of silence often motivates bystanders or victims and survivors to drop out of their sport or change teams instead of reporting the abuse.<sup>112</sup>

Athletes and others involved in sport often worry about losing funding, being excluded, or being labelled as troublemakers if allegations of maltreatment come to light. This creates a climate of fear where concerns about financial instability or their sporting future outweigh the willingness to report misconduct. This culture makes it difficult for victims and survivors to come forward and seek help; it perpetuates cycles of abuse. Furthermore, victims' and survivors' feelings of shame contribute to their perception that speaking out causes trouble. This sense of shame can lead victims and survivors to doubt themselves and reinforces the harmful idea that they are to blame, not the perpetrator. These compounded fears silence victims, survivors, and witnesses. They ultimately hinder the progress needed to address maltreatment in sport.

The Commission heard numerous accounts of athletes and other sport participants who raised concerns or reported maltreatment to their sport organizations, only to be dismissed or undermined by leaders fearful of adverse publicity. On many occasions, we were informed that, despite victims, survivors, and witnesses disclosing maltreatment, alleged perpetrators remained within the system, and in some cases were even promoted. We were told that, in many cases, sport organizations acted only when faced with the threat of a scandal.

Nonetheless, despite this long-lasting culture of silence, there are signs of progress. Individuals are increasingly starting to come forward. This shift shows a growing awareness, a better understanding of the issues, and a stronger desire by some to confront injustices that have been historically tolerated.



The sport environment is also slowly changing. Efforts such as safe sport policies and educational tools have contributed to an evolving cultural shift that prioritizes the safety and well-being of all participants. While there is still much work to be done, these efforts show positive progress and the gradual dismantling of the silence that has allowed maltreatment to continue.

This progress, however, must not lead to complacency, as that would allow maltreatment to persist or resurface. Preventing maltreatment must remain a central priority for all sport organizations within the Canadian sport system.

### **SPORT'S EXCEPTIONALISM AND NORMALIZED HARMFUL PRACTICES**

The Commission consistently heard that individuals engaged in sport, including coaches, administrators, athletes, and parents, were willing to tolerate behaviours within sport that would be deemed unacceptable in other contexts, as though sport was exempt from the standards applied elsewhere.

This pattern illustrates what scholars describe as “sport exceptionalism,” which is the notion that sport is distinct from other domains by engaging those with exceptional talent in the pursuit of exceptional achievements.<sup>113</sup>

Exceptionalism can lead to the tolerance of behaviours that would be considered unacceptable in, for example, education, parenting, or workplace settings.<sup>114</sup> Studies investigating the risk factors for psychological violence by coaches have identified the normalization of such behaviour in sport as one of the most prevalent risk factors for maltreatment.<sup>115</sup>

As scholars have documented, sport exceptionalism is reinforced by how sport operates as a self-regulated sector by establishing its own rules and enforcement mechanisms.<sup>116</sup> They argued that without a regulatory body, sport will continue to justify practices that contradict the standards applied in other sectors involving young people.

### **SPORT IS SELF-REGULATED**

Throughout our work, participants consistently expressed concern that the sport system in Canada operates in a largely unregulated environment, despite the significant involvement of children. Historically, sport has operated independently, with little external oversight, and relied on an unsupervised and self-governing workforce.<sup>117</sup> As has been said of other institutions, sport has remained insular, closed, self-confident, persuaded of the merits of its methodology and rarely exposed to the broader societal norms.<sup>118</sup>

The self-regulating nature of sport has contributed to poor and inconsistent prevention measures within sport organizations and government oversight of those organizations.

In Canada, while some National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations receive government funding, many sport organizations depend heavily on volunteers. A 2005 Statistics Canada survey found that 40% of children aged 5 to 14 play soccer, and over 20% participate in minor league hockey. Despite these high participation rates, most coaches for children's sports are volunteers.<sup>119</sup> Because sport largely regulates itself,<sup>120</sup> safeguards to prevent maltreatment are limited and inconsistent. As we discuss later in this report, volunteers are not consistently screened for prior incidents of maltreatment, nor do all of them receive training or education related to safety in sport, child protection, and ethical coaching practices. In fact, a 2024 study conducted by the Coaches Association of Ontario reveals that 4 in 10 coaches cannot identify specifically what values make a positive sport culture.<sup>121</sup>

Furthermore, even National Sport Organizations that receive federal funding fail to meet the funding conditions related to safety in sport. In the 1990s, there were several high-profile cases of sexual abuse of athletes perpetrated by their coaches. These cases prompted Sport Canada to mandate that all National Sport Organizations in receipt of public funding develop a publicly accessible harassment and abuse policy, designate arm's length trained harassment officers, and annually report to Sport Canada on their compliance with these requirements. This initiative was also adopted by provincial governments, which required funded Provincial Sport Organizations to meet similar standards.<sup>122</sup>

A study conducted 20 years later reveals that only 86% of National Sport Organizations and 71% of Provincial Sport Organizations (Ontario) had accessible harassment policies.<sup>123</sup> Among other issues, the study highlights that only 10% of National Sport Organizations and 14% of Provincial Sport Organizations (Ontario) actually had harassment officers in place and that none of them were at arm's length from the sport organization.<sup>124</sup>

The unregulated nature of sport organizations also means that they are not monitored by independent bodies and, as a result, are not consistently held accountable.<sup>125</sup> Sport organizations, many of which rely on volunteers, are largely left to manage reports of physical, mental, and emotional maltreatment within their own programs.<sup>126</sup> As we discuss later in this report, most sport organizations lack the capacity to manage these issues effectively, in large part because they lack independence, expertise, and organizational capacity.

## Global prevalence of maltreatment in sport

There is no denying it. The extensive research on maltreatment experienced by athletes in sport worldwide has painted a clear, at times horrifying and heart breaking, picture. There is now substantial evidence from research studies and athlete testimonies documenting the widespread occurrence of maltreatment, including psychological, physical and sexual abuse, as well as neglect and discrimination in sport internationally.<sup>127</sup> In Canada, there is limited, but growing, evidence of the national prevalence of these issues.<sup>128</sup>

Here, we share the results of research projects that have compiled data on the prevalence of maltreatment in sport across multiple countries, including Canada. We then examine Canadian studies, which reveal similar

prevalence rates, trends, and risk factors to those observed internationally. These studies confirm what the Commission has consistently heard throughout its work: maltreatment in sport remains a serious issue requiring urgent action within the Canadian sport system.

**INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE CONSENSUS STATEMENT**

In 2024, the International Olympic Committee published the IOC Consensus on Interpersonal Violence and Safeguarding in Sport (“IOC Consensus Statement”). Among other objectives, the consensus statement aimed to synthesize peer-reviewed studies originating mainly from Europe and North America (including Canada) on how common interpersonal violence was in sport.<sup>129</sup> It reveals that the overall prevalence of interpersonal violence in sport ranges from 44% to 86%, with most studies employing a low threshold measure, defined as an individual having experienced at least one event.<sup>130</sup>

According to the IOC Consensus Statement, although sexual violence is the most thoroughly documented form of interpersonal violence in sport, it is psychological violence that is the most common:

Table 3.1 Prevalence of interpersonal violence in sport and quality of documentation — IOC Consensus Statement (2024)<sup>131</sup>

| Type of interpersonal violence in sport | Quality of documentation    | Minimum prevalence estimate (%) | Maximum prevalence estimate (%) |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Sexual violence                         | Most well documented        | 0.5                             | 78                              |
| Psychological violence                  | Second most well documented | 21                              | 79                              |
| Physical violence                       | Less well documented        | 4                               | 66                              |
| Neglect                                 | Less well documented        | 27                              | 69                              |

### MACPHERSON STUDY

According to a 2022 study conducted by MacPherson, Battaglia, Kerr, and colleagues (referred to as the “MacPherson Study”), prevalence studies in the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, and the United States show the following prevalence rates:

Table 3.2. Prevalence of interpersonal violence in sport — MacPherson Study (2022)<sup>132</sup>

| Type of interpersonal violence in sport | Minimum prevalence estimate (%) | Maximum prevalence estimate (%) |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Psychological violence                  | 40                              | 79                              |
| Physical violence                       | 11                              | 56                              |
| Neglect                                 | 36                              | 76                              |
| Sexual violence                         | 9                               | 29                              |

The Macpherson study noted that only two studies had explored the prevalence rates of neglect, both of which are Canadian.<sup>133</sup> It also indicated that “athletes from equity-deserving groups, including girls and women, 2SLGBTQI+, racialized, and indigenous athletes, and athletes with a disability, are at an increased risk of harm in the sport context.”<sup>134</sup>

### CASES PROJECT REPORT

In 2019, seven universities and research institutes and three sport organizations partnered to deliver the Child Abuse in Sport: European Statistics (CASES) project.<sup>135</sup> The project, led by the Edge Hill University in the United Kingdom, aimed to collect evidence in six European countries (Austria, Belgium (Brussels-Wallonia), Belgium (Flanders), Germany, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom) on the prevalence of interpersonal violence experienced by children (individuals under the age of 18) in sport.<sup>136</sup> The results of the CASES project show that 75% of respondents reported at least one experience of interpersonal violence against children inside sport.<sup>137</sup> The prevalence rates of specific categories of interpersonal violence against children in sport are as follows:

Table 3.3. Prevalence of interpersonal violence experienced by children — CASES Project Report (2021)<sup>138</sup>

| Interpersonal violence against children in sport | Prevalence rate (%) |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Psychological violence                           | 65                  |
| Physical violence                                | 44                  |
| Neglect                                          | 37                  |
| Non-contact sexual violence                      | 35                  |
| Contact sexual violence                          | 20                  |

**BJØRNSETH & SZABO LITERATURE REVIEW**

A 2018 European literature review by Ingunn Bjørnseth and Attila Szabo highlights certain characteristics that increase an individual’s likelihood of experiencing maltreatment.<sup>139</sup> These factors, which are particularly associated with an increased risk of sexual violence, include homosexuals, bisexuals, ethnic minorities and disabled athletes.<sup>140</sup> It also suggests that performing at higher levels of sport increases the risks of sexual violence.<sup>141</sup> The authors attribute this increased risk to the extended time coaches and child athletes spend together and the heightened proximity these relationships often entail.<sup>142</sup>

Other studies from several countries, including Canada, have also reported a high prevalence of abuse against officials, ranging from 10% to 92%.<sup>143</sup>

These statistics and studies demonstrate that maltreatment in sport is a globally documented issue. Psychological harm emerges as the most common form of maltreatment, followed by neglect, physical harm, and sexual harm. These international studies also highlight that individuals from minority groups and those participating in high-level sport are at higher risk of experiencing maltreatment.



## Prevalence of maltreatment in Canadian sport

Canadian studies on the prevalence of maltreatment in sport reveal patterns that are consistent with international evidence, including disturbing prevalence rates, trends, and risk factors.

### STUDIES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL HARM, AND NEGLECT

In Canada, three recent studies have examined the prevalence of all forms of maltreatment in sport, including psychological, physical and sexual harm, and neglect:

- In 2019, Kerr, Willson and Stirling (the “Kerr Study”) surveyed national team athletes.
- In 2021, Parent and Vaillancourt-Morel (the “Parent Study”) surveyed athletes aged 14 to 17 competing at various levels.
- In 2022, Willson, Kerr, Stirling, and Buono (the “Willson Study”) surveyed national team athletes.

The evidence presented in these studies demonstrates that between 75% and 85% of Canadian athletes report experiencing maltreatment of some kind in sport (Parent and Willson Studies). Consistent with international studies, evidence shows that the most common form of maltreatment among Canadian athletes is psychological harm, followed by neglect, sexual harm, and physical harm (Kerr and Willson Studies).

These Canadian studies also found that certain identity characteristics, including being a female athlete, a racialized athlete, or a 2SLGBTQI+ athlete, are associated with a higher risk of harm in sport (Parent and Willson Studies).

No significant differences were observed in reported harm between athletes with and without a disability (Parent and Willson Studies). Finally, the evidence demonstrates that maltreatment increases with the level of sport participation (Parent and Willson Studies).

We present the scope and detailed results from the three studies below.

### Kerr Study

In 2019, the authors of the Kerr Study developed an anonymous survey to assess the prevalence of maltreatment among current and former national team athletes.<sup>144</sup> The survey was completed by 1,001 athletes, among whom were 764 current national team athletes and 237 retired athletes. The results showed the following percentages of current and retired athletes who reported experiencing at least one form of the specified harmful behaviour:

Table 3.4. Forms of harm experienced among current and former national team athletes — Kerr Study (2019)<sup>145</sup>

| Form of harm   | Reported experiences of at least one harmful behaviour by current athletes (%) | Reported experiences of at least one harmful behaviour by retired athletes (%) |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Neglect        | 67                                                                             | 76                                                                             |
| Emotional Harm | 59                                                                             | 62                                                                             |
| Sexual Harm    | 20                                                                             | 21                                                                             |
| Physical harm  | 12                                                                             | 19                                                                             |

The study also measured the reported frequency with which current and retired athletes experienced each form of harm by calculating how often athletes and retired athletes reportedly experienced specific behaviours within each form of harm relative to the total number of possible experiences:<sup>146</sup>

Table 3.5. Most commonly experienced form of harm among current and former national team athletes — Kerr Study (2019)

| Form of harm       | Harmful behaviours reportedly experienced by current athletes (%) | Harmful behaviours reportedly experienced by retired athletes (%) |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Psychological harm | 17                                                                | 23                                                                |
| Neglect            | 15                                                                | 22                                                                |
| Sexual harm        | 4                                                                 | 7                                                                 |
| Physical harm      | 3                                                                 | 5                                                                 |

### Parent Study

In 2021, the Parent Study investigated the magnitude of interpersonal violence toward young Canadian athletes in the context of sport and explored associated risk factors. The study was conducted among 1,055 Canadian athletes aged between 14 and 17 and competing at various levels (local/regional, interregional, provincial, national, and international) and across different types of sport. This study revealed that 84.5% of athletes reported at least one type of violence.<sup>147</sup> More specifically, participants reported experiencing at least one incident of a specific type of violence in these percentages:

Table 3.6. Magnitude of interpersonal violence toward young Canadian athletes — Parent Study (2021)<sup>148</sup>

| Type of violence       | Reported experiences of at least one incident of violence (%) |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Psychological violence | 79.2                                                          |
| Physical violence      | 39.9                                                          |
| Neglect                | 35.7                                                          |
| Sexual violence        | 28.2                                                          |

In the Parent Study, disability and ethnicity were not found to predict violence toward athletes.<sup>149</sup> The study found that some personal and performance-related characteristics are risk factors for one of more types of interpersonal violence. These risk factors are summarized in the following table:

Table 3.7. Risk factors for interpersonal violence toward young Canadian athletes — Parent Study (2021)

| Type of violence                   | Risk factors                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Psychological violence and neglect | Higher age, sex (girls), early sport specialization, and hours of practice weekly                                                                              |
| Physical violence                  | Higher age, sex (boys), sexual preference (non-heterosexual), hours of practice weekly, sport level (interregional or provincial), and sport type (team sport) |
| Sexual violence                    | Sexual preference (non-heterosexual) and sport level (interregional or international)                                                                          |

**Willson Study**

More recently, in 2022, the Willson Study surveyed 995 current and retired national team athletes in Canada to examine:

- the prevalence of maltreatment (including physical, sexual, and psychological harm, as well as neglect)
- whether the harm occurred before or during membership on the national team
- the extent to which identity characteristics influenced reported experiences of maltreatment
- the perpetrators of maltreatment in sport.<sup>150</sup>

The study found that 75% of surveyed athletes had experienced at least one instance of maltreatment of some kind, mostly in the form of neglect and psychological harm.<sup>151</sup> Like the Kerr Study, the Willson Study also assessed the percentage of reported behaviours for each form of harm. The results show that the most common forms of harm were as follows:

Table 3.8. Most commonly experienced form of harm within national teams — Willson Study (2022)<sup>152</sup>

| Form of harm       | Harmful behaviours reportedly experienced (%) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Psychological harm | 24                                            |
| Neglect            | 23.7                                          |
| Sexual harm        | 4.7                                           |
| Physical harm      | 3.4                                           |

The results also indicated that athletes reported significantly more experiences of all forms of maltreatment while on a national team compared to their athletic careers prior to joining the team.<sup>153</sup>

Regarding identity characteristics, the Willson Study observed no significant differences in reported harm between athletes with and without a disability.<sup>154</sup> However, the study notably found that:

- Female athletes experienced significantly higher rates of all forms of harm compared to male athletes.
- Indigenous athletes experienced significantly lower rates of psychological harm than non-Indigenous athletes.
- Racialized athletes experienced significantly higher rates of physical harm than their non-racialized peers.
- LGBTQ2I+ athletes experienced significantly more experiences of sexual harm than non-LGBTQ2I+ athletes.<sup>155</sup>

Finally, the results indicated that coaches were the most frequently identified perpetrators of neglect, psychological harm, and physical harm, whereas peers were most often identified as perpetrators of sexual harm.<sup>156</sup>

### **PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Canadian studies also show that young women and girls in sport experience higher rates of sexual violence victimization than young men and boys.<sup>157</sup> As noted by the Ending Sexual Violence Association of Canada, “when women and girls are sexually mistreated while participating in sport, the negative consequences are not just significant mental health and other injuries, but also the perpetuation of a sport culture in which women and girls are not treated with dignity and perpetrators are not held to account.”<sup>158</sup>

### **PREVALENCE OF HARM AMONG ATHLETES WITH A DISABILITY**

Data regarding the prevalence of maltreatment among athletes with a disability in Canadian sport remains relatively limited. In 2019, Kerr, Willson, and Stirling conducted another study to assess the prevalence of maltreatment among 110 current and retired Canadian national team athletes who identified as having a disability.<sup>159</sup> The authors then compared this data to data related to 891 Canadian athletes who did not identify as having a disability.

The survey results revealed no statistically significant differences in the prevalence rates of maltreatment between athletes who identified as having a disability and those who do not. The results also showed that experiences of maltreatment between non-para-athletes and Para athletes were similar.<sup>160</sup>

Just as it was for non-para-athletes, the most commonly experienced form of harm for athletes who identified as having a disability was psychological harm, followed by neglect and sexual harm. No Para athlete reported experiences of physical harm.<sup>161</sup>

Although these results are not conclusive because of the small sample size of Para athletes surveyed, they are consistent with the Parent and Willson Studies discussed above, which also found that disability did not appear to be a risk factor for violence against athletes. However, we note that international studies do suggest that disability increases the likelihood of experiencing maltreatment in sport.

### **PREVALENCE OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN COMMUNITY SPORT**

Other Canadian studies have focused specifically on the prevalence of racism and discrimination, particularly within the context of community sport.

A 2025 Statistics Canada study aimed at shedding light on the prevalence of unfair treatment, racism, and discrimination specifically in Canadian community sports.<sup>162</sup> This study found that in 2023, 26% of athletes felt that racism and discrimination were problems in community sport and 6% of individuals within the broader sports community reported experiencing unfair treatment, racism, or discrimination in community sport in the past five years.<sup>163</sup>



Prevalence rates were higher among racialized populations, persons who identify as having a disability, and people who are 2SLGBTQ+, as well as among those participating exclusively in competitive sport.

These results reinforce the Commission's findings that issues of racism and discrimination are widespread not only at the national level but also within community sport.

### PREVALENCE OF HAZING IN SPORT

The Commission heard that hazing is a prevalent issue not only within the sanctioned sport system but also, importantly, in school sports. As a reminder, hazing is a form of group bullying or group intimidation of rookies by established team members, and sometimes by team coaches and parents.

The 2024 Ontario Coaching Report reveals that hazing is a major issue in Ontario sport, with 4 in 10 coaches being aware of hazing among athletes and 6 in 10 coaches having experienced hazing as athletes themselves.<sup>164</sup> The results also show that a majority of coaches (86%) agree that hazing in sport is a serious issue but do not agree on what behaviours constitute hazing.<sup>165</sup>

In 2018, a study led by the University of Manitoba investigated, among other issues, the prevalence and nature of hazing behaviours among 434 student athletes in Canadian interuniversity sport, now known as U SPORTS. Results demonstrated that 57.8% of athletes reported that at least one hazing behaviour had happened to them or to others on the team.<sup>166</sup> Women reported experiencing more hazing behaviours (56.57%) than men (43.43%).<sup>167</sup>

The most common hazing behaviours included:

- wearing embarrassing clothing (30.2%)
- singing or chanting in public at an unrelated sport event, practice, or game (28.1%)
- attending a skit night or roast (18.2%)
- drinking or eating vile concoctions (15.9%)
- being yelled or cursed at by others (15.7%)
- associating with specific people and not others (11.1%)
- acting as a personal “servant” to other team members (10.4%).<sup>168</sup>

The Commission finds it troubling that these results indicate that more than half of university sport athletes have experienced hazing at some point in their sport journey. But more importantly, that some coaches continue to be unsure as to what constitutes hazing.

## **PREVALENCE OF INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL MISCONDUCT AMONG NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

Maltreatment does not occur solely between coaches and athletes. It is also deeply ingrained within sport organizations. A research project led by the University of Guelph studied publicly available documents and identified 132 cases of misconduct in Canadian National Sport Organizations between 2008 and 2024.<sup>169</sup> The study defined “misconduct” as “any violation of legal, ethical, or organizational norms which threaten the legitimacy, accountability, or ethical functioning of an organization.”<sup>170</sup>

This research found that the 132 misconduct cases emanated from 53% of National Sport Organizations in Canada (which represents 36 different National Sport Organizations). On average, three cases of misconduct were managed by each of these National Sport Organization during the 16-year study period, with some handling up to 10 cases each. The authors identified misconduct relating to the following:

- team selection and carding (32%)
- doping (28%)
- relationships and power (16%)
- organizational governance (16%)
- toxic culture (8%).

More precisely, the study identified 256 infractions across the 132 cases of misconduct. The most prevalent infractions were:

- assault (18%)
- harassment (16%)
- policy violations (15%)
- administrative malpractice (14%)
- inaction (11%).

As the study notes with concern, assault and harassment infractions alone accounted for one-third of all infractions identified across all cases of misconduct.<sup>171</sup>

## **LÉGER MARKETING SURVEY ON ETHICS, EQUITY AND SAFETY IN SPORT**

In early 2024, a Léger Marketing survey on ethics, equity and safety in sport was conducted among the general population of Canada (10,376 Canadians aged 16 and older), National Sport Organizations administrators and high-performance athletes at the request of Sport Canada.<sup>172</sup>

The survey results revealed that 49% of the general-population respondents participated in a sport in Canada in the last three years. Among these respondents, 83% agreed that they have experienced sport in a “safe” environment and 80% agreed to have experienced sport in a “welcoming” environment.

According to the survey, almost half of the respondents who participated in sport in Canada in the last three years (40%) reported witnessing or experiencing at least one “incident” within their organized sport. For the purpose of that survey, “incidents” included a wide range of issues, namely mental health challenges (16%), diagnosed (15%) and non-diagnosed (11%) concussions, harassment (14%), sexism (14%), racism (13%), homophobia (10%), abuse or maltreatment (9%), any form of corruption (8%) and doping (6%).

The results also revealed that Indigenous (69%), bisexual (62%), homosexual (50%), respondents with a disability (55%) and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour) respondents (46%), as well as respondents aged between 16 and 34 (54%), were more likely to experience or witness an “incident.”

Using the data collected from this question of the Léger Marketing survey, the Commission calculated the prevalence rate of maltreatment and other behaviours prohibited under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, excluding other types of “incidents” that were not covered under the Commission’s survey and the Universal Code of Conduct (mental health challenges, diagnosed and non-diagnosed concussions, corruption, and doping or use of prohibited performance-enhancing drugs). It was found that more than one in four respondents who participated in sport in Canada in the last three years (28%) reported witnessing or experiencing at least one incident involving harassment, sexism, racism, homophobia, abuse, or maltreatment. More specifically, 14% reported witnessing or experiencing harassment, 14% reported witnessing or experiencing sexism, 13% reported witnessing or experiencing racism, 10% reported witnessing or experiencing homophobia, and 9% reported witnessing or experiencing abuse or maltreatment.<sup>173</sup>

The results also revealed that Indigenous (56.3%), bisexual (46.1%), homosexual (40.2%) respondents, respondents with a disability (39.5%), and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour) respondents (36.8%), as well as respondents aged between 16 and 34 (35.1%), were more likely to experience or witness harassment, sexism, racism, homophobia, abuse or maltreatment.

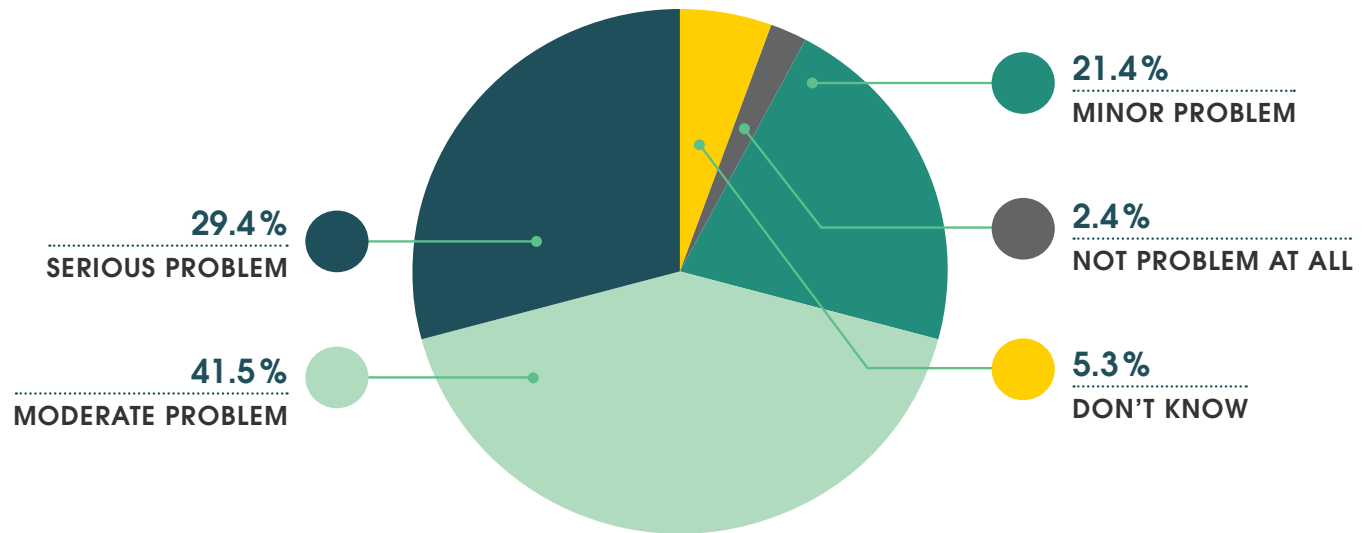
## Public online survey conducted as part of the Commission’s activities

The results of the Commission’s public online survey support that maltreatment is prevalent in Canadian sport. For the purpose of the survey, the Commission defined “maltreatment” as follows:

“unacceptable and prohibited behaviours in sport. It includes physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, bullying, hazing, and neglect, as well as grooming, crossing appropriate boundaries, and discrimination.”<sup>174</sup>

The survey asked participants who answered questions about improving safe sport in Canada to indicate how serious they think the problem of maltreatment is in organized sport in Canada. The figure below illustrates the survey results.

Figure 3.1. Severity of maltreatment in organized sport — Future of Sport in Canada Commission (2025)



As this figure shows, 70.9% of the 2,524 respondents who answered this specific question believe that maltreatment in sport is a moderate or serious problem.

Participants who chose to answer questions about improving safe sport in Canada were also asked whether they had experienced or witnessed maltreatment in organized sport in Canada over the past 10 years. Among the 2,223 respondents who answered this question and who identified as participating in organized sport:

- 50.3% reported having witnessed maltreatment
- 22.0% reported having personally experienced maltreatment
- 36.0% reported not having witnessed or experienced maltreatment.

We have analyzed the Commission survey results based on certain identity characteristics to determine whether they were associated with higher prevalence rates and therefore increased the likelihood of experiencing maltreatment.

Table 3.9. Risk factors for maltreatment in organized sport — Future of Sport in Canada Commission (2025)

| Identity characteristic                                                               | Prevalence rate (%) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Racialized                                                                            | 32.7                |
| Indigenous                                                                            | 33.7                |
| 2SLGBTQI+                                                                             | 35.5                |
| Disability                                                                            | 41.1                |
| Official Language Minority (English in Quebec except the National Capital Region)     | 28.3                |
| Official Language Minority (French outside Quebec except the National Capital Region) | 32.6                |

This table shows that each of these identity characteristics increases the likelihood of respondents experiencing maltreatment in organized sport in Canada. Indeed, these prevalence rates are significantly higher than the prevalence rate of 22.0% mentioned above, among all respondents who answered this question and identified as participating in organized sport.

The respondents who reported that they had witnessed or experienced maltreatment in organized sport over the past 10 years were then asked whether their most recent incident of maltreatment was personally experienced or witnessed. Among the 319 respondents who answered this question, 49.5% reported that they personally experienced the most recent incident of maltreatment, while 50.5% indicated that they witnessed it.

## Conclusion on the prevalence of maltreatment in Canadian sport

The findings from Canadian studies investigating the prevalence of all forms of maltreatment in sport, including physical, psychological, and sexual harm, as well as neglect, align closely with international research. These studies reveal alarmingly high prevalence rates of maltreatment among individuals involved in Canadian sport, with many reporting having experienced some form of maltreatment at least once over the course of their sporting journey.



Also consistent with international research, Canadian studies confirm that certain identity characteristics, such as being a female, Indigenous, racialized, or an 2SLGBTQI+ athlete, are associated with a heightened risk of experiencing maltreatment in sport. This evidence underscores the exclusivity of the sport system, a reality that has been consistently reiterated throughout the Commission's engagement process.

The statistics presented in this chapter clearly demonstrate that maltreatment is both pervasive and deeply embedded within the Canadian sport system. These high prevalence rates leave no doubt that maltreatment is, and despite the efforts made so far, continues to be, a symptom of systemic issues requiring immediate and sustained government intervention.

Following the release of our Preliminary Report, we were told that the focus of any measures to improve safe sport in Canada should extend beyond high performance sport as maltreatment is prevalent at the grassroots level of sport.

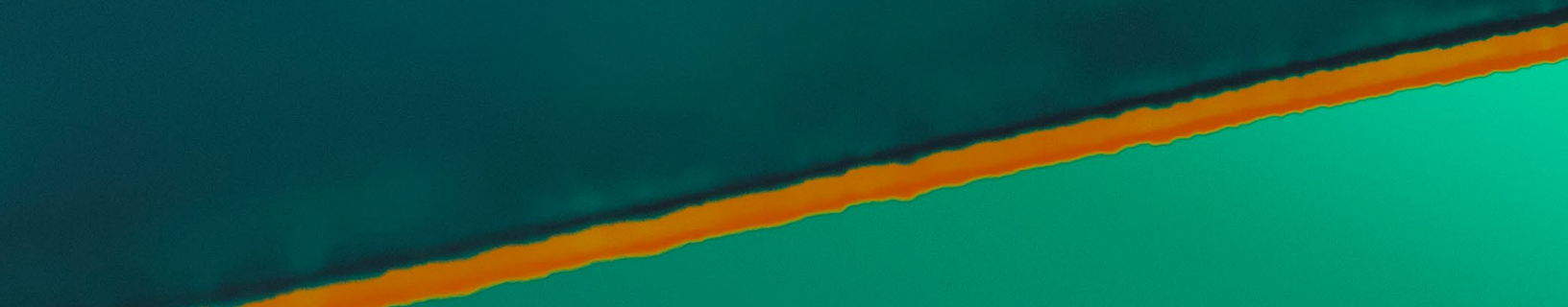
While the eradication of maltreatment in Canadian sport may not be feasible, it is imperative that governments and sport organizations collaborate to strengthen and harmonize both prevention and response measures. The ultimate goal is to significantly reduce maltreatment and ensure that all participants can safely experience the many benefits that sport provides.

# **CHAPTER 4:**

# **Constitutional**

# **framework**

# **of our country**







# Chapter 4:

## Constitutional framework of our country

Before we embark on a description of the relevant issues the Commission examined during its review, along with our findings and Calls to Action, it is important to recognize some of the constitutional and legal imperatives relevant to sport which had to be considered as part of our work, and may at times constitute obstacles to change. But as we describe in this report, these obstacles can be overcome through meaningful collaboration.

### Division of powers

Canada is a federation. One of the features of federalism is the distribution of legislative powers between multiple orders of government. The Canadian Constitution divides the legislative powers between the federal and the provincial legislatures.<sup>175</sup> Each order of government is assigned respective spheres of jurisdiction by the *Constitution Act, 1867*.<sup>176</sup> However, it has been said that cooperation and coordination is required for the federation to succeed:

“[...] the federal government and the provincial governments are better described as ‘coordinate,’ having equal authority and independence in their distinct spheres.

In classical ballet, a *pas de deux* is a dance for two performers that involves solo variations by each partner that concludes with both partners dancing together to display their talent. The division of legislative powers between the federal Parliament and the provinces found in sections 91 and 92 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* can be understood as such a dance, where each partner has a sphere of legislative competence, yet interaction and cooperation are required for the federation to succeed.”<sup>177</sup>

### Jurisdiction over sport

#### NO EXCLUSIVE POWER

Sport is not an area of jurisdiction explicitly mentioned in the *Constitution Act, 1867*.<sup>178</sup> As a result, each level of government has enacted legislation reflective of its constitutional authority to support, stimulate or regulate sports programs.<sup>179</sup> Some legal scholars and commentators, including from Quebec, have argued that sport is an area of shared jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments.<sup>180</sup>

Under the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction to make laws in relation to education, public land, municipal institutions, property and civil rights and general matters of a merely local or private nature. Since sport, recreation and physical activity include aspects of health, culture and education, the more direct responsibility for sport has generally fallen to private, community, municipal and provincial bodies for the development and participatory aspects of sport.<sup>181</sup>

Thus, generally, provincial and territorial jurisdiction allows for the development, implementation, operation and support of programs and regulatory standards of health, safety and integrity in sport.<sup>182</sup>

As for the federal government, scholars have suggested that Parliament may enact federal legislation related to sport based on its residual authority to make “Laws for the Peace, Order, and good Government of Canada” and on Parliament’s jurisdiction in trade and commerce, taxation, the military, shipping and inland fisheries, immigration and citizenship and criminal law.<sup>183</sup> It has also been suggested that whenever an issue is deemed to be of some national or international significance, the federal government may assert an interest.<sup>184</sup> That may be in part why the federal government, as matters of international presence and diplomacy, has a role in supporting participation in international competitions such as the Olympics and Paralympics, the Commonwealth and Arctic Winter Games.

During our engagement process, several participants analogized sport to culture. Like sport, neither level of government is allocated exclusive jurisdiction over culture under the Constitution, meaning that both the federal and provincial legislatures are free to enact laws with impact on culture. It has been suggested that culture is a matter of concurrent or shared jurisdiction, rather than one subject to the primary authority of either level of government, and that the federal government has an important role to play. Professor Patrick J. Monahan (as he then was) has suggested:

“In addition to its general ability to enact laws with cultural impact, the federal government has a particular role and responsibility to promote a distinct Canadian identity. This is a matter of distinct national concern and permits the federal government to undertake the regulation and support of the arts and cultural industries in Canada.

I have already referred extensively to the particular challenges facing the development of a distinctive Canadian identity. Ever since the Massey Commission in 1951, it has been widely accepted that the national government has a crucial role to play in responding to these challenges. What remains is to elaborate the constitutional significance of these circumstances. My view is that the promotion of a distinct national identity constitutes a matter of distinct national concern in Canada, and that this, therefore, qualifies as a matter falling within the ‘Peace, Order and Good Government’ (POGG) power of the federal Parliament.”<sup>185</sup>



Could it be argued that the same logic applies to sport in that it is a core element of Canadian identity? Some of the participants who engaged with the Commission were of the view that the regulation of national-level sport organizations and the safety and well-being of athletes, and Canadians generally, ought to be a matter of national concern. Courts have also opined that “the international connection [in a given sport] and the desire to coordinate the sport throughout Canada might help to justify federal legislation, if it existed, but they do not bring [the sport] under federal power in the abstract.”<sup>186</sup> However, this has yet to be tested in Canadian courts and the Supreme Court of Canada has emphasized that “the national concern doctrine can be applied only in exceptional cases, where doing so is necessary in order for the federal government to discharge its duty to address truly national problems.”<sup>187</sup> For example, the control of marine pollution by dumping of substances and the establishment of minimum national standards of greenhouse gas price stringency to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have been held to be matters of national concern.<sup>188</sup>

Further, some have noted that the federal government also has jurisdiction over the regulation of interprovincial or international trade and commerce, and interprovincial undertakings, which could serve as a source of authority for the federal government to regulate national-level sport organizations.<sup>189</sup> However, courts have found that sport participants traveling across borders for competitions does not make competition a form of international or interprovincial trade.<sup>190</sup> They also reasoned that national-level sport organizations facilitate and promote activities that are carried out at a local level, and that travel across provincial and national borders for competition is incidental to the competition itself. As a result, they ruled that competitions do not constitute interprovincial undertakings.<sup>191</sup>

### **FEDERAL SPENDING POWER**

That said, there is no doubt that the federal government may provide support for sport through the exercise of its spending power, provided its intervention does not amount to a regulatory scheme relating to matters under provincial jurisdiction.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, the federal spending power allows Parliament to allocate funds, not only within, but also outside of its areas of legislative authority. The spending power enables Parliament to impose conditions on federal contributions to the provinces, including conditions that influence matters that come within provincial jurisdiction, and which could not be directly legislated by Parliament.

Provincial sectors where the federal government has exercised its spending power include health, pharmacare, childcare and school food programs.<sup>193</sup> It has also done so with respect to sport. While federal spending statutes generally set conditions that provinces must meet to receive funding, they do not require provinces to enact specific legislation or uphold a federal code or policy. Instead, federal spending legislation focuses on adherence to principles that provinces must operationalize in their own way, often through provincial laws or policies, which in several cases appear to have been agreed upon by the provinces in the context of a framework or a policy.<sup>194</sup>

The federal spending statute cannot amount to a regulatory scheme relating to matters under provincial jurisdiction. For example, the *Canada Health Act*<sup>195</sup> stipulates the terms on which federal funding can be granted to each province. Because the Act applies to federal spending and does not regulate the delivery of health care in each province, it is a valid exercise of the federal government's spending power.<sup>196</sup>

## FEDERAL LEGISLATION

The federal government has a long history of involvement in sport, primarily through spending power and collaborative agreements, not direct regulation. Statutes such as the *National Physical Fitness Act* (1943), *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act* (1961), and *Physical Activity and Sport Act* (2003) have emphasized cooperation with provinces and territories.

In 1943, Parliament introduced the *National Physical Fitness Act*. The measure was introduced at the beginning of the war, as many Canadian citizens were declared unfit for active military service, making it necessary to take steps to improve the physical fitness of the population. The resolution proposing the adoption of the law states that it aims to (i) promote the physical fitness of the people of Canada, (ii) constitute a National Council on physical fitness to carry out such purpose, and (iii) establish a special account in the consolidated revenue fund out of money appropriated by Parliament to carry the purposes of the act, including grants to the provinces. Under the Act, provinces were required to contribute to 50% of the total cost and to implement the programs, while the federal government was responsible for providing guidance and support to the provinces.<sup>197</sup> Several provinces refused any costs-sharing agreements with the short-lived National Fitness Council and the statute was repealed in 1954.<sup>198</sup>

In 1961, the federal government passed the *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act*. Members of Parliament advocated for federal involvement in Canadian sport on the basis that sports were a national concern and fitness a national crisis.<sup>199</sup> The Act aimed to promote and develop fitness and amateur sport across Canada and provided a legal framework to support sport and fitness initiatives under provincial jurisdiction through its spending power.<sup>200</sup> The purpose of the Act, as stated in the House of Commons debates of September 1961, was to introduce a measure aimed at promoting physical fitness through amateur sport in Canada. It sought to provide grants to agencies, organizations and institutions, to provide contributions to provinces for programs relating to physical fitness and amateur sport, and to establish a National Advisory Council on Physical Fitness and Amateur Sport. The statutes emphasized the need for cooperation with provinces but also for cooperation with voluntary bodies concerned with fitness and amateur sport.<sup>201</sup>

We note that the legislator emphasized the benefits of this statute both for the citizens of the nation and the nation itself. It was said that citizens would see an increase in their enjoyment of life and reap the social benefits associated with athletics. As for the nation, Canadian prestige, international relations, national unity, and cultural development would all be enhanced.<sup>202</sup> The poor performance of Canadian athletes in recent Olympic Games was also cited as a reason for government assistance in fitness and amateur sport. The 1961 *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act* was repealed by the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.<sup>203</sup>

## Intergovernmental relations over sport

It has been observed that “[...] besides ice hockey, fighting over intergovernmental relations is one of the most popular sports in Canadian politics.”<sup>204</sup> Indeed, “clashes” over which one of the federal or provincial and territorial government has jurisdiction to act in a variety of policy fields has not escaped the area of sport.

However, as often noted, “if there is a will, there is a way.” There have been numerous instances of intergovernmental collaborations over the years. These include:

- a variety of different agreements including (i) agreement of a general nature to facilitate collaborative action towards shared objectives, such as the High Performance Athlete Development in Canada agreement of 1985 and the National Recreation Statement of 1987, (ii) action driven agreements such as the Canadian Policy Against Doping in Sport (initially developed in 1991) and (iii) multi-party agreements such as the Multi-Party Agreement that created the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games
- the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Conference and its sub committees, further discussed in Chapter 5
- bilateral agreements between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments.<sup>205</sup>

In particular, the 1987 National Recreation Statement (1987) provided an interesting example of collaboration. The policy document defined and affirmed the value of recreation and outlined the roles of each level of government in promoting it. The Statement recognized the primacy of the provinces in the field of recreation, while also acknowledging that primacy does not mean exclusivity.<sup>206</sup> The Statement defined the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government and of the private sector in the provision of recreation opportunities to minimize duplication of effort and ensure that all resources are directed to meet the recreation needs of the 1980s in a coordinated, responsible and effective manner. The role of the federal government was defined as contributing to the development of recreation in Canada by:

1. providing, through national organizations and agencies, complementary opportunities for individuals to participate in recreation activities
2. ensuring Canadian representation, both internationally and within Canada, in recreation activities that serve a national purpose
3. contributing, at the national level, to the development of recreation services through the provision of resources and support to the public, voluntary and commercial sectors
4. developing and circulating nationally, promotional and resource materials which will encourage individuals to participate in recreation activities.<sup>207</sup>

Consequently, while we must work within the confines of the constitutional requirements, precedents make it clear that collaboration between the federal and provincial and territorial governments offers virtually unlimited possibilities and opportunities for improvement.

# **CHAPTER 5:**

## **Roles and responsibilities in the Canadian sport system: a fragmented framework**





## Chapter 5:

# Roles and responsibilities in the Canadian sport system: a fragmented framework

The Canadian sport “system” is multifaceted and involves a broad range of players, funders, and participants. For many Canadians, the sport system starts and ends in schools and playgrounds, but for others it extends to neighbourhood arenas, playing fields, and other facilities. For a much smaller minority, it moves to sites of provincial, territorial, national, or international competitions, and the potential to be recognized as medal-winning “elite” athletes and national heroes.

There are many different institutions in the world of Canadian sport, including different levels of government who share responsibilities for sport and physical activity, and countless sport organizations. While they are all part of what can be called a system, that system is frequently described as fractured, fragmented, or even non-existent. Many of the participants we engaged with struggled to describe or paint a picture of a cohesive Canadian sport system. Some bluntly told us that there was no sport system in Canada.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the key institutions in Canadian sport. These are generally divided into three main categories: governments, sport organizations, and other entities. We begin with a review of the roles and responsibilities of the federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments. We then turn our attention to National, Provincial, Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations. We conclude by briefly addressing other notable institutions including schools, colleges and universities, private and for-profit sport organizations, and professional leagues. This chapter presents participants’ perspectives on these institutions and the sport system, informing our findings and Calls to Action that are presented in later chapters.

Recognizing the importance of Indigenous-led sport and the Indigenous sport system, the Commission acknowledges that Indigenous people participate in both the Indigenous and the “mainstream” sport systems.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to Indigenous people and sport. It explores the roles and responsibilities of Indigenous governments, communities, and organizations within the Indigenous sport system and the interactions between the Indigenous and the “mainstream” sport systems.

## Governments

Sport is a fundamental aspect of our culture, identity, and economy. All levels of government play roles in supporting and promoting sport in Canada. They can include funding, supporting athletes and sport organizations, developing policy, providing infrastructure, and reporting on sport participation.

In what follows, we provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the federal government, provincial and territorial governments and municipal governments.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The federal government has a central role in supporting sport and physical activity. This includes policy and program development, and funding. Through Sport Canada, the federal government provides funding that primarily supports sport organizations and individuals at the national level of the Canadian sport system. It also provides funding to support physical activity primarily through the Public Health Agency of Canada. Chapter 15 explores federal government funding of the sport system.

When possible, in this report, the Commission has relied on the most recent publicly available information found in the Public Accounts of Canada volumes when referring to funding provided by the federal government.

### Sport-related federal legislation

Over many years, the federal government's role in sport has evolved and developed, partly through changes in underlying legislation. In 1961, the *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act* came into effect to encourage, promote, and develop fitness and amateur sport.<sup>208</sup>

In 1994, the *National Sports of Canada Act* formally declared hockey to be the national winter sport of Canada and lacrosse to be the national summer sport.<sup>209</sup> While recognizing the importance of these sports to Canadian society, this legislation did not include provisions to encourage funding for sport.

In 2003, the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* replaced the *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act*, expanding the government's role in addressing physical activity, accessibility, and public health.<sup>210</sup> Last amended in 2017, the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* remains in effect today.

According to the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, the federal government's policy objectives regarding physical activity are:

- to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being
- to encourage all Canadians to improve their health by integrating physical activity into their daily lives
- to assist in reducing barriers faced by all Canadians that prevent them from being active.

The policy objectives regarding sport are:

- to increase participation in the practice of sport and support the pursuit of excellence in sport
- to build capacity in the Canadian sport system.<sup>211</sup>

### International agreements

Canada has signed numerous international agreements that require member states to bring a human-rights-based approach to sport and physical activities. Such agreements include:

- the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
- the UNESCO *Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport*
- the United Nations *International Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- the United Nations *International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.<sup>212</sup>

These documents were identified as key resources in the federal government's Sport Integrity Framework (discussed later).

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.<sup>213</sup> It outlines fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to equality, and the right to life, liberty, and security of the person.<sup>214</sup> The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is deeply inspired by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.<sup>215</sup>

The *Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport* was adopted at UNESCO's General Conference in 1978 and renewed in 2015.<sup>216</sup> It is a rights-based reference that provides a framework for policy and decision making in sport. The Charter declares that "the practice of physical education, physical activity and sport is a fundamental right for all."<sup>217</sup> It promotes safe, inclusive, and accessible sport and physical activity. It also integrates the need to protect the integrity of sport from doping, violence, manipulation, and corruption. Canada signed the *Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport*, but has never explicitly recognized the right to physical education, physical activity, and sport in domestic law.<sup>218</sup>

Canada ratified the United Nations *International Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1991. The Convention provides a list of rights for all children until the age of 18 and mandates that governments are responsible for ensuring that children's rights are respected and that children are aware of their rights.<sup>219</sup> Its basic principles are that:

- The rights of all children are to be respected without discrimination.
- The best interest of the child is a primary consideration when decisions are made that affect the lives of children, including actions by courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies.
- Children have the right to give their opinions in all matters that affect them and to have their voices heard.<sup>220</sup>

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* has not been explicitly incorporated into domestic law in Canada.<sup>221</sup>



Canada ratified the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in 2010.<sup>222</sup> It aims to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination. Parties to the Convention are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities.<sup>223</sup> Canada has agreed to take appropriate measures respecting accessibility and to develop and monitor minimum accessibility standards.<sup>224</sup>

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, another major international instrument, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007. The Declaration affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples, including the right to maintain, protect, and develop sports and traditional games as a part of cultural practice. The federal government enacted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*,<sup>225</sup> which came into force on June 21, 2021. The Act requires the federal government, in consultation with Indigenous peoples, to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the Declaration.<sup>226</sup> The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the events leading to the adoption of the Act are discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

### Department of Canadian Heritage and Sport Canada

The minister responsible for sport has changed many times since the position was introduced in 1961 with the introduction of the *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act*. Initially the Minister of Amateur Sport reported to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. However, over the past 60 years, the ministerial title, reporting lines, and position in government have changed many times — sometimes incorporating both “physical activity” and “sport” in the title.<sup>227</sup>

The ministerial role has been variously called: Secretary of State (Sport), Minister of Sport, Minister for Sport and Physical Activity, Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Minister of State (Sport), and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport), among others. The minister’s duties were sometimes combined with other portfolios including economic development for different regions, science, and youth.<sup>228</sup>

Since 1995, the Department of Canadian Heritage, and ultimately the minister responsible for the department, has jurisdiction related to “the encouragement, promotion and development of sport.”<sup>229</sup> This positions sport as an element of Canadian identity and values, cultural development, and heritage.<sup>230</sup>

Typically, the Minister of Canadian Heritage is responsible for the Department of Canadian Heritage, including sport.<sup>231</sup> Following the 2025 Canadian federal election, a Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages was appointed to oversee the Department of Canadian Heritage.<sup>232</sup> Responsibilities for sport and physical activity were respectively attributed to the Secretary of State (Sport) and the Minister of Health.<sup>233</sup>

Within the Department of Canadian Heritage, Sport Canada is the branch primarily responsible for sport. At the minister’s direction, Sport Canada’s roles include developing national sport policies and providing support (including funding) to National Sport Organizations and National Multisport Service Organizations. The branch also



encourages Canada's participation in international sport events such as the Olympics, Paralympics, Pan American, Parapan American, Commonwealth Games, Arctic Winter Games, and North American Indigenous Games.<sup>234</sup>

### Sport-related policies and frameworks

To meet the objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, the federal government, through Sport Canada, has introduced a range of policies that establish benchmarks and measures to achieve them.<sup>235</sup>

The Canadian Sport Policy, introduced in 2002 and renewed in 2012 and 2025, is arguably the fundamental policy related to sport. It serves as a strategic framework for guiding the development and governance of sport in Canada. It was endorsed by federal, provincial, and territorial ministers.<sup>236</sup>

The 2002 Canadian Sport Policy claimed to adopt a new approach to shared leadership and collaboration among all entities to achieve enhanced participation, excellence, capacity, and interaction in sport.<sup>237</sup> The policy describes its four goals as:

- **Enhanced participation.** A significantly higher proportion of Canadians from all segments of society are involved in quality sport activities at all levels and in all forms of participation.
- **Enhanced excellence.** The pool of talented athletes expands and Canadian athletes and teams are systematically achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition through fair and ethical means.
- **Enhanced capacity.** The essential components of an ethically based, athlete/participant-centred development are in place and are continually modernized and strengthened as required.
- **Enhanced interaction.** The components of the sport system are more connected and coordinated as a result of collaboration and communication among partners in the sport system.<sup>238</sup>

The Canadian Sport Policy 2012 was adopted a decade after its predecessor. While the 2002 policy reflected the desire to increase the sport system's effectiveness and for Canadian athletes to move to the forefront of international sport, the 2012 policy articulated an expanded vision, new goals, and additional partners. It outlined five overarching goals for intergovernmental cooperation for the period of 2012 to 2022, namely that:

- **Introduction to sport.** Canadians have the fundamental skills, knowledge, and attitudes to participate in organized and unorganized sport.
- **Recreational sport.** Canadians have the opportunity to participate in sport for fun, health, social interaction, and relaxation.
- **Competitive sport.** Canadians have the opportunity to systematically improve and measure their performance against others in competition in a safe and ethical manner.

- **High-performance sport.** Canadians systematically achieve world-class results at the highest levels of international competition in a safe and ethical manner.
- **Sport for development.**<sup>239</sup> Sport is used as a tool for social and economic development and the promotion of positive values at home and abroad.<sup>240</sup>

A desired outcome of the Canadian Sport Policy 2012 was that both the number and diversity of Canadians participating in sport would increase between 2012 and 2022.<sup>241</sup>

In order to implement the Canadian Sport Policy 2012, the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity, and recreation then approved two lists of Priorities for Collaborative Action at their Ministers Conference — the first covering the period between 2012 and 2017 and the second covering 2017 to 2022.<sup>242</sup> Still, there was no clear strategy to implement the policy or these Priorities for Collaborative Action.

The Canadian Sport Policy 2012 was in effect until 2022. It set ambitious goals. However, its objectives were only partially realized. An independent evaluation shows that progress was made in aligning sport programming with the policy's goals and objectives, and maintaining Canada's high-performance success. However, its broader goals — particularly increasing participation — were not fully accomplished.<sup>243</sup> Similar to its predecessor, the Canadian Sport Policy 2012 lacked concrete mechanisms or strategies to achieve increasing participation.<sup>244</sup>

It was originally announced that an updated policy would be released in February 2023.<sup>245</sup> But it was not until two years later, in August 2025, that the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers for sport endorsed the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035.

This recent Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 articulates values of inclusion, accessibility, fairness, safety, and community building. Its vision involves “working together to enable everyone to grow, excel and achieve well-being through sport.”<sup>246</sup> It emphasizes the importance of collaborative actions to ensure that everyone can participate in sport and that sport provides positive, safe experiences while also inspiring participants to pursue excellence. The outcomes and objectives of the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 are noted here:

- **Canadians are healthy.** Everyone in Canada can enjoy the benefits of sport, including physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and mental well-being.
- **Communities are strong and resilient.** Sport brings people together, builds resilience, and contributes to culture, identity, and the economy.
- **Canada is an international leader.** Canada is recognized for sport excellence, and for the health, happiness, and pride that sport inspires.<sup>247</sup>

As illustrated by the changing goals, the Canadian Sport Policy has significantly evolved over its three versions. Beginning with strengthening the sport system and high-performance sport, it now aims toward a more holistic,

inclusive approach to sport focused on the benefits of sport. While the 2002 policy focused on government involvement alone, since 2012 the policy also focuses on the roles of other participants in the sport system like sport organizations, coaches, leaders, and parents. Enhancing participation has been a constant goal. Notably, the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 explicitly recognizes, among other things, that participation remains an area of weakness.<sup>248</sup>

Sport Canada also introduced other notable sport-related policies:

- **Sport Canada’s Policy on Aboriginal Peoples’ Participation in Sport** (2005) aims to ensure that the vision of the Canadian Sport Policy is inclusive and that the positive impact of sport is maximized for Indigenous Peoples.<sup>249</sup>
- The **Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability** (2006) aims to increase the number of persons with a disability involved in sport at all levels of the Canadian sport system.<sup>250</sup>
- The **Federal Policy for Hosting International Events** (2008) establishes how the federal government will support the bidding for and hosting of international multisport and single-sport events.<sup>251</sup>
- “**Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls**” (2009) encourages and creates opportunities for women’s and girls’ participation in sport as athletes, coaches, officials, and technical and administrative leaders.<sup>252</sup>
- The 2019 **Canadian High Performance Sport Strategy** outlines the strategic areas of focus to achieve the goal of world-leading high-performance sport in both results and values.<sup>253</sup>

Most of these policies were adopted between 2005 and 2009, which means that they are more than a decade old and may not reflect the sport system’s current landscape or needs.

In November 2024, the federal government launched its Sport Integrity Framework which clarifies the role of the federal government and other key entities in sport integrity issues, including maltreatment, doping, concussions, discrimination, and governance.<sup>254</sup>

The framework recognizes that maltreatment is unacceptable and incompatible with the core values of sport. It also provides information on the government’s approach to promoting safe sport environments. This includes requiring National Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Centres and Institutes to adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program in order to be eligible for funding.<sup>255</sup> As we describe in Chapter 10, the Canadian Safe Sport Program receives and manages allegations of maltreatment in sport at the national level.<sup>256</sup>

The framework also calls attention to the importance of good governance to protect the sport system.<sup>257</sup> Therefore, the Government of Canada has committed to integrating good governance principles as a requirement for federally funded sport organizations.<sup>258</sup> See Chapter 14 for more details on governance in the sport system.

### Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada

The Public Health Agency of Canada falls under the health portfolio, led by the Minister of Health, who is responsible for maintaining and improving the health of Canadians.<sup>259</sup> The Agency's mandate is to promote health, prevent and control chronic diseases and injuries, prevent and control infectious diseases, and prepare for and respond to public health emergencies.<sup>260</sup>

As a part of its mandate to promote health and prevent chronic diseases, the Public Health Agency of Canada is committed to improving the physical activity levels of those living in Canada through various initiatives, including:

- providing information related to physical activity and injury prevention to Canadians (e.g., the Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport)
- collaborating with partners, including the provinces and territories, on physical activity through the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council (which we discuss later)
- monitoring the physical activity levels of Canadians
- providing funding to promote physical activity through several funding programs (which are discussed in Chapter 15).<sup>261</sup>

The Public Health Agency of Canada also supports safe sport in two specific areas by addressing sport-related concussions and supporting mental health in sport.<sup>262</sup>

At times in the past, when there was a Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, both the Public Health Agency of Canada and Sport Canada reported to the same minister (the former on matters related to physical activity). At the time, that expanded mandate was explained by the linkages between sport, physical activity, and health, particularly at the community level.<sup>263</sup> The stated intention was to fulfill the full extent of the minister's mandate articulated in the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.<sup>264</sup>

Although the Public Health Agency and Sport Canada remained in different departments, they developed some integrated governance practices and provided advice to the same minister. These changes have since been reversed and Sport Canada is no longer specifically responsible for physical activity though it still supports organizations like ParticipACTION as a part of its mandate.

### Physical-activity-related policies

Launched in 2016, the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines offer comprehensive, evidence-based recommendations that integrate physical activity, sedentary behaviour, and sleep for children and youth aged 5 to 17. These guidelines, which were developed through a collaboration between academic institutions, government bodies, and health organizations such as the Public Health Agency of Canada, highlight the interconnected nature of daily movement behaviours within a 24-hour period.<sup>265</sup>

In 2018, the Public Health Agency of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, released the policy entitled “Let’s Get Moving: A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada.”<sup>266</sup> The aim of this policy on physical activity was, among other things, to:

- establish physical activity and movement as a social norm
- prioritize accessibility for all Canadians by addressing the barriers to physical activity
- increase physical activity by strengthening the connection between physical activity and sport, recreation, health, and other policy areas.<sup>267</sup>

### PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS

Provinces and territories in Canada also have responsibilities in the area of sport and physical activity and, as with all issues in the Canadian federation, they each have unique approaches to what they fund, legislate, govern, and oversee within their jurisdictions.

Their roles include, among other things, developing school curricula, creating recreational and sport facilities, and supporting Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. Certain provinces and territories have also adopted sport-specific legislation. For example, Ontario has legislation to prevent concussions.<sup>268</sup> Quebec also has comprehensive legislation for safe sport,<sup>269</sup> and Manitoba introduced a bill in its legislative assembly to address this issue, which received royal assent in June 2025.<sup>270</sup> We discuss these legislative measures in greater detail in Chapter 9.

Provinces and territories have ministries responsible for sport, although the exact title of each ministry and its responsibilities vary by jurisdiction. For example, in British Columbia, sport is the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. In Quebec, it falls under the mandate of the ministère de l’Éducation (Ministry of Education). A table illustrating the ministries responsible for sport within each province and territory at the time of writing can be found in Appendix 1.

As we discuss in greater detail in Chapter 15, which focuses on funding, each of the provinces and territories has funding programs to support athletes and sport organizations. Many provinces and territories have delegated the distribution and administration of funds to Multisport Service Organizations, as is the case with viaSport in British Columbia and Sask Sport in Saskatchewan. Some provinces like Saskatchewan leverage lottery funds to support sport in the province.



## MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

Municipalities play a very significant role in the Canadian sport system. They provide funding, infrastructure, and support for a broad range of high-performance, amateur, and recreational sport and physical activities. Municipalities and regional school boards own, build, and maintain the majority of publicly owned sport facilities.<sup>271</sup> The local parks, sport facilities, and community centres that municipalities provide are critical elements of the Canadian sport environment. Many of these facilities serve as homes for Community Sport Organizations.<sup>272</sup>

There are the playing fields, skating rinks, pools, beaches, curling rinks, and hockey arenas that millions of Canadians use daily. Community centres and municipal facilities and programs are where most Canadians enjoy and participate in organized sport and physical activity.

In some regions, municipalities provide sport and physical activity programming, and support local sports clubs and organizations, and community sport councils.<sup>273</sup> Some municipalities also collaborate with sport organizations. According to a 2020–2021 survey conducted by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, approximately half of sport organizations (52%) entered partnerships with municipalities to undertake sport initiatives.<sup>274</sup> Furthermore, municipalities often play a central role in supporting informal sport participation.

Municipalities have limited independence because they are legal creations of the provinces and have no independent constitutional status.<sup>275</sup> They can exercise the powers that have been delegated to them by their province.<sup>276</sup> Consequently, municipalities' roles and responsibilities will vary. For example, in Quebec, the *Municipal Powers Act* explicitly grants jurisdiction over recreation to municipalities.<sup>277</sup>

Further, because municipalities are subordinate to provinces, they are generally not in a position of power in intergovernmental relations and rarely interact directly with the federal government.<sup>278</sup>

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

As we discuss in Chapter 4, there are a number of mechanisms for intergovernmental collaboration on sport matters between the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. These include:

- the Ministers Conferences
- the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council
- the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Sport Committee
- the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council.

The **Ministers Conferences** typically occur three times over the span of four years.<sup>279</sup> They bring together federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity, and recreation to set priorities, make decisions, and build relationships to further collaborative work.<sup>280</sup>

The most recent Ministers Conference was held on August 8 and 9, 2025, in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. During the conference, the Ministers endorsed the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 and seven Priorities for Collaborative Action to help advance it.<sup>281</sup>

A notable product of intergovernmental collaboration, the Red Deer Declaration — For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport<sup>282</sup> was endorsed by the Ministers at the 2019 conference in Red Deer, Alberta.<sup>283</sup> Under the Red Deer Declaration, the Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Ministers agreed to collaborate to address harassment, abuse, and discrimination in sport. They agreed to work together to implement a collaborative intergovernmental approach, with better harmonized commitments, mechanisms, principles, and actions to address harassment, abuse, and discrimination in sport. The following areas were targeted: awareness, policy, prevention, reporting, management, and monitoring.<sup>284</sup>

The **Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council** is a minister-led intergovernmental cooperation mechanism that is co-chaired at the federal level by Canadian Heritage (Sport Canada) and the Public Health Agency of Canada.<sup>285</sup> It began as a provincial and territorial board in the late 1950s and early 1960s. We understand that the council played a pivotal role in creating the Red Deer Declaration — For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport.

Today, the Council is an advisory body that facilitates coordination between federal, provincial and territorial governments.<sup>286</sup> The Council holds Ministerial, Deputy Ministerial and officials working group level meetings and discussions. All are co-chaired by the federal representatives and a provincial or territorial representative.

The **Federal-Provincial/Territorial Sport Committee** is a standing committee of the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council. It is composed of up to three members appointed by Sport Canada and six members appointed by provincial and territorial governments to provide regional representation.

The activities of the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Sport Committee include coordinating the implementation of sport initiatives from the Ministers Conferences, as well as those contained in the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Priorities for Collaborative Action.<sup>287</sup> This work aligns with the objectives of other key policy documents: “A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let’s Get Moving” (2018) and “A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015: Pathways to Wellbeing.”

Notably, the committee is responsible for coordinating, monitoring, and reporting on initiatives to advance the Canadian Sport Policy.

Similar to the Council, the Committee holds Ministerial, Deputy Ministerial and officials working group level meetings and discussions. All are co-chaired by the federal representatives and a provincial or territorial representative.

The **Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council** is another forum for intergovernmental collaboration between the provinces and territories. This council originated over five decades ago as a provincial and territorial body. Today, it is an operational arm of the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council.

### **Bilateral agreements**

The Government of Canada also supports provincial and territorial sport and physical activity projects and activities by providing funding through bilateral agreements. While there are significant differences in the content of these bilateral agreements, they share some similarities. Generally, the federal government agrees to offer financial assistance to support a list of activities agreed to by the federal government and the provincial or territorial government. Their implementation and the nature of these activities vary by province and territory.<sup>288</sup>

The purpose of recent agreements has been to encourage sport participation and physical activity among children and youth. More specifically, the primary objectives are:

- to support projects that strengthen physical literacy and child and youth participation. These projects must be compatible with the first three stages of Sport for Life or programming at comparable stages that exist across jurisdictions<sup>289</sup>
- to support projects that provide opportunities for persons from underrepresented and/or marginalized populations to actively participate in sport, including in roles as athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteer leaders
- to strengthen Indigenous capacity and leadership for the Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies
- to increase culturally relevant sport programming for Indigenous children and youth at the community level.<sup>290</sup>

These are cost-sharing agreements between the federal and provincial and territorial governments, meaning that provinces and territories match the federal funds.<sup>291</sup> The federal funding for these agreements is partly provided by Sport Canada's Sport Support Program and its Hosting Program. We discuss these programs and the bilateral agreements in further detail in Chapter 15.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON GOVERNMENTS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Participants' perspectives on leadership**

Throughout our engagement activities, we heard a consistent emphasis on the need for clear leadership from the federal government to address the multiple challenges that the sport and physical activity community faces.

There is significant concern regarding the absence of a single entity responsible for the strategic leadership and support of sport and physical activity in Canada.

Many noted the absence of strong leadership and vision from the federal government. We were told that the federal government has failed to create a common understanding of sport's power in Canada. We also heard that the federal government lacks the capacity and capability to enact the Canadian Sport Policy or to support the ongoing development of sport. Many see the government as a distributor of funding, without the capacity or expertise to lead the sport system. But even when it comes to funding, a majority of participants felt that the federal government has failed for many years to provide sufficient resources to the sport system.

We were told that the lack of leadership from the federal government is further exacerbated by the lack of alignment between national, provincial, territorial, and community levels of sport. Most agreed that the federal government should be a leader in sport, and that a good framework and direction for sport at the national level could provide a template for provinces and territories who would want to create a similar framework.

Participants perceived the federal government's approach to sport as fragmented and lacking in strategic vision. There is a common perception that government is reactionary rather than proactive. This has led to a Canadian sport "system" that has evolved in an ad hoc manner over decades, responding to various crises, issues, pressures, and political priorities.

While acknowledging such criticisms, many also spoke of the work that the federal government has accomplished in the area of sport, with past ministers introducing important sport policies. For instance, many participants highly valued the provision of multiyear funding for sport organizations. Others noted that the federal government has made progress in developing policies but was not successful in implementing policies and developing programs.

### **Participants' perspectives on shifting priorities**

Participants described their perception that Canadian sport policy, funding, and programs have emerged over decades like a pinball bouncing from crisis to crisis, and from one latest political or ministerial priority to the next. We were told by many involved in sport that ministers and politicians in all governments bring good intentions and a deep commitment to sport and physical activity when they are responsible for the portfolio. However, the nature of politics means that portfolios, ministers, and governments change, and therefore so do priorities, initiatives, and leadership.

While changing ministers and policy directions are expected and regularly occur, it has nevertheless contributed to erratic policy development. Some participants hypothesized that the Canadian Sport Policy 2025-2035 was delayed because governments decided to prioritize safe sport. While attention to safe sport was crucial, the delay created a void in policy direction. We also heard that successive ministers had a different vision for the policy and wanted to ensure that they were "comfortable with it" before signing off.

The Commission understands that the policy-development process is often prolonged. By the time a policy is ready to be approved by a minister, changes in leadership may have ensued and new strategic directions could have emerged, requiring further revisions, ongoing delays, and often confusion. We understand that the changes of federal ministers and governments contributed to the delayed release of the Canadian Sport Policy 2025-2035.

### **Participants' perspectives on the focus on high-performance sport**

The shift to a medal- and performance-focused system was linked to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games through programs to accentuate Canada's performance at other major international events did exist previously.<sup>292</sup> The federal government's current funding focus on performance and medals was highly criticized by many organizations and individuals, who noted that an emphasis on performance puts undue and sometimes unhealthy pressure on athletes, coaches, and organizations.

We often heard that a focus on medals and high performance, while important in one context, significantly interfered with the development of a broad, inclusive, and accessible culture of physical activity and sport across Canada, an equally important concept.

The importance and value of high-performance athletes as Canadian role models were noted by many. At the same time, many individuals, including elite athletes, emphasized the importance of achieving a better balance between high-performance and community sport.

Many noted that the time was right for rebalancing priorities between high performance and participation within a comprehensive national physical activity and sport system.

We learned that sport also plays a fundamental role in encouraging physical activity and community building. There is no doubt that sport is important for all members of society, not only for high-performance athletes. Participants noted that it is therefore important that the government's policies and funding priorities reflect the needs and align with the expectations of society at large by striking a better balance between participation and inclusion and high performance.

### **Participants' perspectives on strategy shortcomings**

The lack of clarity, cohesion, and strategic depth of Canada's current sport policy framework was highlighted throughout our engagement activities. Participants explained that the federal government does not have the ability to identify priorities for sport in Canada or to advance sport policy to build a holistic sport system from the grassroots to the national level. They attributed this, at least in part, to a lack of sport expertise within Sport Canada.

Many of the federal government's sport-related policies like the Policy on Sport for Disabled Persons and Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport are significantly outdated. We were also told that the federal government does not have a clear strategy to promote sport participation or accessibility and inclusion. Many feel that there is no coherent sport strategy in Canada.



Participants explained that the federal government is inconsistent and unclear when it comes to its priorities for National Sport Organizations and the projects it funds. Many cited the stalled Sport Funding and Accountability Framework and challenges with the renewed Canadian Sport Policy as examples of the government's lack of leadership (see this chapter's section called "Participants' perspectives on financial challenges").

We heard that Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport requires revision because it was written prior to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and employs outdated language. The Commission was advised that this policy was never meaningfully integrated into the Canadian sport system. On a related note, at the time of writing the Preliminary Report, we were advised that work had been undertaken with respect to the Indigenous sport policy, but its status was unknown at that time. Since then, the Aboriginal Sport Circle has released "A National Strategy for Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada" (2025). We were advised that this policy has been presented to the Government of Canada.

Prior to the release of this National Strategy, participants noted that the Indigenous policy needed to provide a long-term plan for creating opportunities for and supporting Indigenous athletes and sport events. We were strongly advised that the development of this policy could not use a colonial approach, and that collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and communities was essential.

Participants shared that the Canadian sport system would benefit greatly from a policy framework that ensures a disability lens is applied in decision making. It should also take a human-rights-based approach and emphasize equality of opportunity and access. They stated that confidence is lacking in the Canadian sport system's leadership and its approach to Disability sport, which is detrimentally impacting equity and disability inclusion.

Despite the best intentions, political cycles and shifting priorities limit sport organizations' ability to undertake proper strategic long-term planning with secure multiyear funding. Sport organizations typically struggle with insufficient and short-term funding. This makes it difficult for them to address an array of challenges, including governance, accessibility, and safe sport. Limited resources hinder their ability to ensure coordinated and consistent approaches to these issues.

We learned that Canada is internationally respected for its researchers and thought leaders in sport. Participants acknowledged that the resources exist to create a first-in-class sport system. The sport and physical activity sector is seeking sound, long-term strategic thinking and secure multiyear funding to ensure that appropriate planning is possible and becomes a reality. The reforms that are needed require commitment, time, and independence from the political and governmental cycles that too often reflect short-term thinking. There is a need for long-term vision and coordinated leadership.

### **Participants' perspectives on the Canadian Sport Policy**

We learned that the Canadian Sport Policy was supposed to guide the sport system and provide long-term direction to the sector. However, participants advised us that the federal government and its provincial and territorial counterparts had failed to entrench the policy and the values it espouses throughout the system.

We heard how the Canadian sport system is rapidly evolving. For this reason, participants suggested that the Canadian Sport Policy should be reviewed more frequently, perhaps at four-year intervals instead of every ten years. Participants felt that a more regular renewal of the policy would allow it to better address current and emerging challenges facing the sport community. We were told that any renewal of the policy should trigger a review of all Sport Canada's policies. Participants saw most of these policies as outdated and thought they merited reconsideration.

Participants in our engagement activities were concerned with the opacity surrounding the delayed introduction of the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035. They noted the absence of publicly accessible justifications for the delay or interim guidance to the sport community. For many, the delayed renewal demonstrated the lack of leadership within the sport system.

We also heard concerns related to the Canadian Sport Policy's implementation. While the newest version of the policy emphasizes the need for collaboration between all levels of government and various actors within the sport system, many told us that it remains unclear how it will be implemented. Participants noted that the policy does not provide any recommendations or guidance, nor is it attached to any funding to achieve the goals it articulates. The policy has been described as being a vision and values document with no implementation strategy.

For some, the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 signals a shift in priorities, with its greater emphasis on participation and access.<sup>293</sup> Many welcomed this direction, although they also noted that the two previous Canadian Sport Policies' goals of increasing sport participation had not been met. Some participants hoped that the new policy would finally achieve this outcome. Participants also noted that the policy places a stronger emphasis on inclusion and equity and takes a values-driven approach.

We heard calls to incorporate human rights and safe sport principles into the Canadian Sport Policy and the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. Participants advised us that Norway incorporated the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* into their approach to sport for children and youth.

Some participants felt that the release of the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 was performative, given that it came out before the conclusion of this Commission's work. They felt that the outcomes mattered less to governments than the optics of presenting the policy ahead of the Canada Games. For some, it demonstrated elected officials' failure to recognize that the system is not working.

### **Participants' perspectives on the lack of oversight**

On numerous occasions, we were informed that there is no true supervision or auditing of the sport system. Many noted that Sport Canada has failed to enforce thorough compliance with its policies, including those addressing safe sport, gender equity, and bilingualism. There is a common view that Sport Canada does not adequately ensure that the conditions of funding, like minimum governance requirements for National Sport Organizations, are being met.

We were also advised that Sport Canada's ability to provide effective oversight over National Sport Organizations and the sport system is also limited — that its only form of leverage is its spending power. Essentially, Sport Canada can only control or influence the organizations that it funds, which are largely national-level organizations. This form of influence may be ineffective in cases where a sport organization receives funding from various sources and is not heavily reliant on federal funding.

Some participants perceived that governments side with sport organizations, rather than athletes. We heard that for decades, athletes, parents, and others have raised alarms about abuse, corruption, and system failures within the Canadian sport system. Despite these alarms, participants felt that governments and sport leaders have prioritized protecting the sport system's reputation over athletes.

We also understand that withdrawing funding from a sport organization is a measure of last resort because it usually has a more significant impact on athletes than on the organization itself. Additionally, the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, which empowers Sport Canada to provide funding to sport organizations, does not provide for any enforcement mechanisms as it relates to compliance with funding conditions.

### **Participants' perspectives on federal responsibility for sport and physical activity**

There are mixed views on who should be responsible for sport and physical activity at the federal level. As we noted earlier, the responsibility for sport and physical activity is currently divided between Sport Canada (i.e., Canadian Heritage) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (i.e., the Ministry of Health).

We heard calls to consolidate the sport and physical activity portfolios under a single minister, with some advocating for both portfolios to be under the Ministry of Health. Participants noted the importance of recognizing the correlation between health, physical activity, and sport. They also suspected that there would be more of a focus on lifelong health and physical activity if sport was under the Health Portfolio. Many saw this as a potential positive outcome of consolidation.

We were told that transferring the responsibility for sport to the Ministry of Health, coupled with additional funding, could underline the critical role of physical activity in Canadians' physical and mental health. Some noted that the Ministry of Health may be a pragmatic choice for sport because of the stability of funding for health, especially given the current economic uncertainty. Additionally, there was concern that sport bureaucracies within Sport Canada were too closely tied to sport organizations and high-performance culture, and that they did not bring a sufficiently independent health-focused perspective to sport, and to safe sport in particular.

However, others expressed concerns that sport would likely not get the attention it requires in the health portfolio. This is because of the many substantial jurisdictional, funding, infrastructure, and program challenges that governments and the Canadian health system already face.

Instead, some suggested that the federal government should permanently institute a Ministry for Sport. Others noted that, under Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Sport or Secretary of State (Sport) is a supporting or entry-

level minister who is responsible for specific elements of a portfolio, but who is not always a member of the Cabinet. These participants saw this as limiting the opportunities to convince the Cabinet to address significant sport or physical activity issues. Some advised that having a Minister of Sport was crucial to effective advocacy for sport and the development of appropriate, relevant public policy.

Others believe that Sport Canada, led by the minister responsible for sport, should continue to support sport with a focus on high-performance athletes. They suggested that a new branch or agency within Health Canada, led by the minister of health, should be created to coordinate and develop youth and grassroots sports.

Some emphasized the need to either bring together sport and physical activity under a single ministry or to increase collaboration between the ministries because of the overlap in both activities. Participants explained that sport and physical activity should be brought together because they are part of a continuum with participation at one end and excellence at the other. It would also align with the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.

Despite the divergence of opinions on which ministry should be responsible for sport and physical activity, there is a consensus that these areas need to be prioritized. Participants also agreed that the Government of Canada should continue to invest in increasing physical-activity levels and reducing barriers to becoming active in Canada. There is an overwhelming desire for change — substantive change — to address the multiple challenges facing the Canadian sport and physical activity communities. Many feel that the existing sport system no longer meets the needs of contemporary Canadian society.

There were numerous calls for the creation of a centralized, arm's-length entity responsible for sport and physical activity. Such an entity would provide a clear and visionary direction, align the system under shared values, and provide strategic support to sport organizations.

### **Participants' perspectives on provincial and territorial governments**

Many of the concerns that participants raised about the federal government were also heard in discussions about activities at the provincial and territorial level. These concerns included a lack of direction and a lack of funding and resources from governments to support their sport communities.

Participants also noted a lack of vision and strategy for sport at the provincial and territorial level. While some provinces and territories have comprehensive policies and strategic plans to promote sport participation, we were informed that it was not the case in every jurisdiction. On numerous occasions, participants commented that provincial and territorial governments seem to be uninterested in advancing sport and physical activity issues within their jurisdictions, and that these matters are often ignored by elected officials. Many participants, including Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, specifically called for more programs and resources, and stronger guidance on coaching certifications and safe sport.

Many shared that they were concerned with the increasing administrative burdens that sport organizations experience. They explained that most sport organizations rely heavily on volunteers and are already under strain

due to a lack of resources, including human resources. Although many provincial and territorial governments provide core funding to sport organizations, we were told that the funding levels are insufficient to sustain many Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

### **Participants' perspectives on municipalities**

Many participants acknowledge that municipalities are the owners and custodians of most sport infrastructure in Canada. That said, many municipal sport facilities are aging and need repairs. As we discuss in Chapter 7, there have been broad calls from the sport and physical activity communities for renewed investment in sport infrastructure which is fundamental to achieving the goals of broad sport participation and excellence. Infrastructure planning and facility management are central to the delivery of sport programs.

Some participants suggested that municipalities and schools could collaborate to offer opportunities to develop physical literacy and introduction to sport programs at a low cost. In some settings, such collaboration between schools and municipalities already exists: municipalities provide schools with access to their facilities during the day, and schools give them access to their gymnasiums at night.

In some cases, however, participants noted that municipalities were not providing equitable access to their facilities. Some rent their facilities to private clubs who, we understand, may have better capacity to pay rental fees than community organizations. Many participants noted that the rise of private sport organizations and the “pay to play” model has limited municipalities’ ability to offer cost-effective programming.

Municipalities also typically play an important role in delivering sport programs at the community level. Some offer no- or low-cost sport programs, like swimming or skating lessons. Many participants noted that these programs were quite popular and frequently had waitlists. We learned that some municipalities focus on introductory programs. In some locales, while municipalities provide access to facilities, a large majority of recreational sport falls under the umbrella of Provincial, Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations. We heard that some organizations maintain strong relationships with municipalities.

Participants advised that in some circumstances, there are jurisdictional tensions between sport organizations, municipalities, and school boards which negatively affect sport programming and access to facilities. For example, participants shared that some municipalities have limited or no relationships with National, Provincial, Territorial, or Community Sport Organizations.

Some participants noted that municipalities are rarely aligned with federal or provincial sport policies. They suggested that such policies should specifically recognize and identify the role of municipalities. We learned that while municipalities form a *de facto* third order of government when it comes to sport in Canada, they are not a part of the intergovernmental collaboration mechanisms responsible for developing sport policies.

Overall, municipalities’ ability to deliver programs is shaped by uneven resources and funding structures. Some municipalities, especially rural ones, face challenges in developing sport opportunities because of resource



limitations, declining populations, and volunteer burnout. Some suggested that there should be provincial and territorial funding mechanisms that account for regional context to support municipalities' sport development activities.

### **Participants' perspectives on shared responsibilities and intergovernmental collaboration**

Participants noted that the Canadian sport system is complex because it involves all levels of government. The federal government and the 13 provinces and territories each have their own approach, policies and programs to support sport and physical activity. Some suggested that this complexity made it easy for governments to "point fingers" at other levels of government for inaction or funding gaps. This was identified as a long-standing challenge by many in the sport community.

On numerous occasions, we were told that intergovernmental collaboration, communication, and coordination are essential to effectively deliver sport programs throughout the country, particularly at the community level. Participants explained that collaboration between the provincial and territorial governments and the federal government is crucial because the federal government is far removed from the grassroots and may not have any awareness of needs at the local level. However, we were frequently told that such collaboration and communication were absent.

Participants told us about a lack of communication and integrated leadership between provinces and territories and the federal government on matters related to sport and physical activity. Many questioned the ongoing effectiveness of intergovernmental collaborations, even though they have been successful in the past, for example, with the creation of the Canadian Sport Policy. While systems are in place to facilitate collaboration, we were advised that meetings occur infrequently and have limited accomplishments. Others noted that these meetings involve ministers and high-level officials who are too far removed from the day-to-day realities of sport on the ground. This contributes to the fractured and disjointed approach to sport that many feel is evident throughout the country.

We learned that even when intergovernmental collaboration is successful in creating policies, there are evident shortcomings in implementing these policies. For example, for many participants, the continued absence of complaint mechanisms to address maltreatment in sport in some jurisdictions, six years after the endorsement of the Red Deer Declaration, clearly demonstrated a lack of commitment when it comes to the implementation of the declaration. They underscored the need for monitoring to ensure the effective realization of these collaborative measures and commitments.

Participants stressed that the federal, provincial, and territorial governments need to assume leadership to address an ongoing crisis in the sport system.

Some suggested that intergovernmental collaboration mechanisms like the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council must be strengthened.

Participants, including representatives from provincial and territorial governments, noted the need to use collaborative mechanisms to their full potential. For example, they explained that the Ministers Conferences last only two days with very full agendas. They suggested that these meetings could be divided into more frequent and manageable meetings to ensure that enough time and consideration could be given to addressing the agenda. We heard of the need to capitalize on the existing momentum to promote collaboration.

To improve the speed and efficiency of decision making, some participants suggested that collaborative mechanisms could be revised to delegate some of the decision-making authority to lower levels, such as deputy ministers or directors, instead of having to wait for decisions to be made by the ministers who meet only about three times every four years. Many noted the importance of clear timelines for implementing policies, initiatives and collaborative priorities.

If a new collaboration mechanism was created, we were advised by provincial and territorial governments that they need to be a part of its co-design, along with the federal government. It would also need a level of autonomy and accountability. They also informed us that working groups have worked well in the past. These can report directly to ministers and have clear milestones and timelines.

We also heard considerable frustration with the lack of collaboration between federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments in supporting hosting opportunities for sport events. Some participants suggested that the federal, provincial, and territorial governments should collaborate to adopt and endorse a renewed international major multisport games hosting strategy.

## Sport organizations

In addition to the varying levels of government involved in the Canadian sport system, there are numerous sport organizations responsible for developing and delivering sport programs, including Para and Disability sport programs. The differing levels of coordination and alignment between and within these organizations further complicate the Canadian sport system.

As we discuss later, International Sport Federations, National Sport Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and Community Sport Organizations all play a variety of roles across the Canadian sport landscape. But before we explore their roles in the Canadian sport system, including Disability sport, we need to acknowledge the crucial contributions of volunteers to the sport system.

Dedicated volunteer coaches, team managers, support personnel, officials, competition organizers, and fundraisers are at the core of the sport universe in Canada. Many of them are parents of athletes, but also aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, neighbours, community-minded volunteers, and former athletes. It is estimated that over 25% of Canadian adults volunteer in a sport-related capacity,<sup>294</sup> and that volunteers in the sport and recreation context give, on average, 105 hours of their time each year.<sup>295</sup> Sport organizations, clubs, teams, and

competitions across Canada would not exist without the invaluable volunteer commitment of their members and supporters. Volunteers play a critical and fundamental role in the sport and physical activity community system and make an incalculable human contribution to the sector.

## **DISABILITY SPORT**

The Disability sport community in Canada is vibrant and diverse. It is made up of movements such as the Paralympic Movement, Special Olympics, and Deaf Sports. It includes a vast array of community, provincial, territorial, and national organizations who govern and administer sports and competitions and offer disability-inclusive programming.

There are different forms of Disability sport in Canada, including Para and Paralympic sport. As we describe in what follows, some sport organizations offer opportunities in a specific sport across disabilities. Others offer opportunities across a variety of sports for a specific group of participants with disabilities.

Some organizations offer opportunities for individuals with and without disabilities (integrated sport organizations), while others focus on participants with disabilities (non-integrated or disability-specific organizations). Still others offer adapted opportunities within a broader offering for everyone.

## **INTERNATIONAL SPORT FEDERATIONS**

International Sport Federations (also referred to as International Federations) are independent non-governmental organizations that serve as the global governing body for one or more sports or distinct sport disciplines. These organizations establish and enforce rules for particular sports and organize international competitions. They also manage and administer the sport's disciplines,<sup>296</sup> and are responsible for the organization, conduct, and oversight of their sport at major international multisport events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games. International Sport Federations promote and develop their sport around the world and provide indirect oversight (through their national counterparts) of athletes' development at every level of sport.<sup>297</sup>

Some examples include the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (better known as FIFA, the governing body for soccer),<sup>298</sup> World Athletics (the governing body for track and field as well as road and cross-country running),<sup>299</sup> World Aquatics (the governing body for diving, swimming, artistic swimming, and water polo),<sup>300</sup> and the International Skating Union (the governing body for speed skating and figure skating).<sup>301</sup>

Some International Sport Federations are also responsible for the governance and development of Para sport. For example, the Union Cycliste Internationale has governed Para cycling since 2007.<sup>302</sup> Other Para sports are governed by disability-specific International Sport Federations, such as the International Blind Sport Federation (the governing body for goalball).<sup>303</sup> Additionally, the International Paralympic Committee is the International Sport Federation for five Para sports (Para athletics, Para ice hockey, Para powerlifting, Para swimming, and shooting Para sport).<sup>304</sup>

## **NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

National Sport Organizations are the governing bodies for their sport in Canada. Among other responsibilities, National Sport Organizations may select and manage national teams, sanction and oversee national competitions, develop and provide education for coaches, professional staff, and officials, manage high-performance programs, and promote and develop their sport.<sup>305</sup> Although National Sport Organizations' programs and services are ordinarily designed to be nationwide, they may not extend to all provinces or territories.<sup>306</sup>

Sports under the authority of National Sport Organizations in Canada typically align with those of the International Sport Federations. Canada Soccer, for example, is the governing body for soccer in Canada and is the only Canadian member of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) as well as its regional subdivision (Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football or CONCACAF).

In other instances, multiple Canadian National Sport Organizations are members of, or are affiliated to, a single International Sport Federation through an overarching umbrella organization. For example, the International Skating Union has two Canadian National Sport Organizations among its members: Skate Canada and Speed Skating Canada.<sup>307</sup> World Aquatics, on the other hand, is affiliated to four Canadian National Sport Organizations (Water Polo Canada, Canadian Artistic Swimming, Diving Canada, and Swimming Canada) via Aquatics Canada. Aquatics Canada is the member of World Aquatics and is the umbrella organization for these four disciplines.<sup>308</sup>

Figure 5.1. National Sport Organizations affiliated to World Aquatics





Ski and snowboard sports also have an umbrella organization that represents Canada in the International Sport Federation. The Canadian Snowsports Association is a member of the International Ski and Snowboard Federation and is the umbrella organization for eight National Sport Organizations: Alpine Canada (also referred to as Alpine Canada Alpin), Nordiq Canada (also referred to as Cross-Country Ski de Fond Canada), Canadian Freestyle Ski Association, Ski Jumping Canada, the Canadian Snowboard Federation, Nordic Combined Ski Canada, Speed Skiing Canada (also referred to as the Canadian Speed Skiing Association), and Telemark Canada (also referred to as Telemark Ski Canada Télémarmk).<sup>309</sup>

Figure 5.2. National Sport Organizations affiliated to the International Ski and Snowboard Federation



The National Sport Organizations marked by an asterisk (\*) did not receive funding from Sport Canada in 2024-2025

Disability sports used to be governed at the national level by a group of disability-specific organizations like the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association, the Canadian Blind Sports Association, the Canadian Amputee Sports Association, and the Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association. These organizations administered national programs in multiple sports for athletes with a specific disability. They also worked with and provided expertise in that disability to the broader sport community. Disability sport was largely integrated in the early 1990s, which provides important context to the current challenges that exist within the sport system.<sup>310</sup>

At the national level of sport, some National Sport Organizations govern their Para sport equivalent.<sup>311</sup> These include Swimming Canada, Athletics Canada, and Cycling Canada. There are four non-integrated National Sport Organizations that govern only Para sport that receive funding from Sport Canada.<sup>312</sup> Other similar organizations exist but do not receive this funding.

All federally funded National Sport Organizations are currently incorporated under the federal *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.<sup>313</sup> These organizations are typically governed by a board of directors. We discuss details about their governance in Chapter 14.

There are no statutes or legislative requirements specific to National Sport Organizations. To be recognized as such by Sport Canada, they are required only to meet certain criteria and abide by certain policies. These requirements are set out in funding agreements and policy frameworks as opposed to federal, provincial, or territorial legislation. Being recognized as a National Sport Organization by Sport Canada makes it eligible to receive funding from the federal government.<sup>314</sup>

Funding for National Sport Organizations can come from a variety of sources, including the federal government, through Sport Canada's three funding programs.<sup>315</sup> For example, over the 2024–2025 fiscal year, Sport Canada funded a total of 63 National Sport Organizations under the Sport Support Program.<sup>316</sup> Appendix 2 lists these organizations.

Approximately 90% of these National Sport Organizations are heavily dependent on federal funding to deliver programs and services. Further details on Sport Canada's funding programs are described in Chapter 15. National Sport Organizations may also obtain funding from non-governmental sources, including membership fees, event management, sponsorships, and corporate and individual donations.

## PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

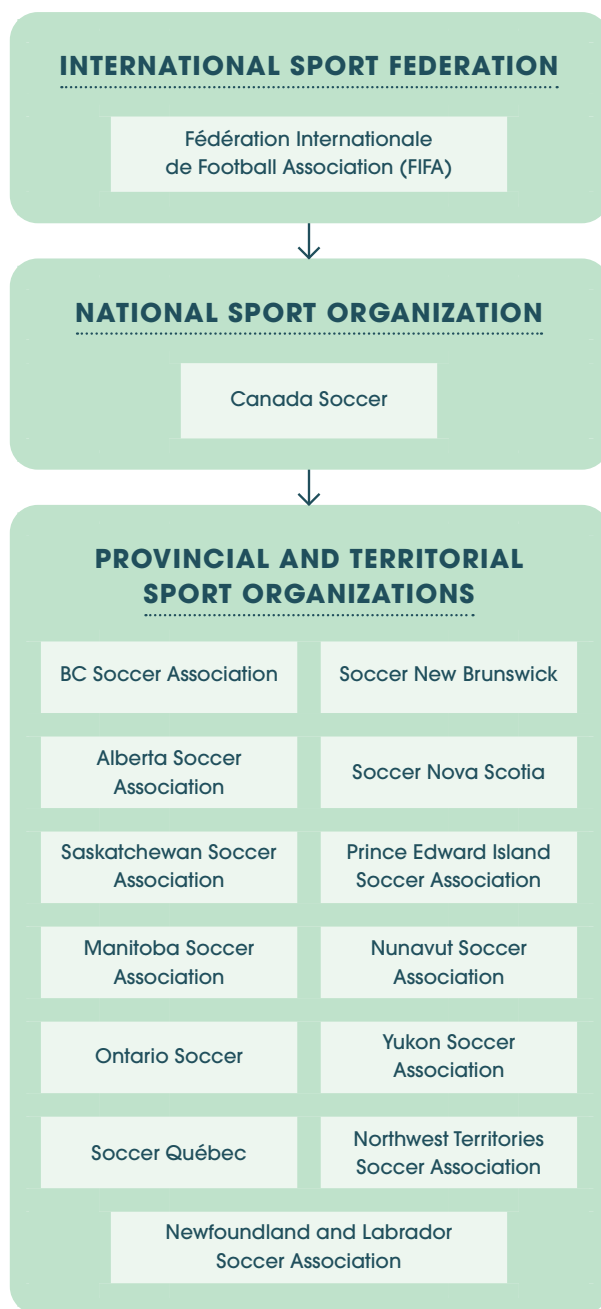
Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are the governing bodies for their sport within their province or territory. Their responsibilities are similar to those of their National Sport Organizations, but they are discharged within their respective provincial or territorial boundaries. These responsibilities include the selection and management of provincial-territorial teams for national competitions.

Similar to National Sport Organizations, some Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations can govern multiple Para sports, a single Para sport, or both Para and non-Para sport. For example, the Ontario Para Network governs multiple Para sports: wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, and wheelchair tennis.<sup>317</sup> In contrast, BC Wheelchair Basketball governs a single Para sport: wheelchair basketball.<sup>318</sup> Conversely, Swim Alberta governs both Para sport and non-Para sport.<sup>319</sup>

Most Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are members of their respective National Sport Organizations. As a result, they have certain rights under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* and governance documents, which include the election and removal of the directors of their National Sport Organization, and the ability to confirm, reject, or amend any bylaw of the corporation.<sup>320</sup> Other voting members' rights include the right to receive notice of and attend annual meetings of members.<sup>321</sup>

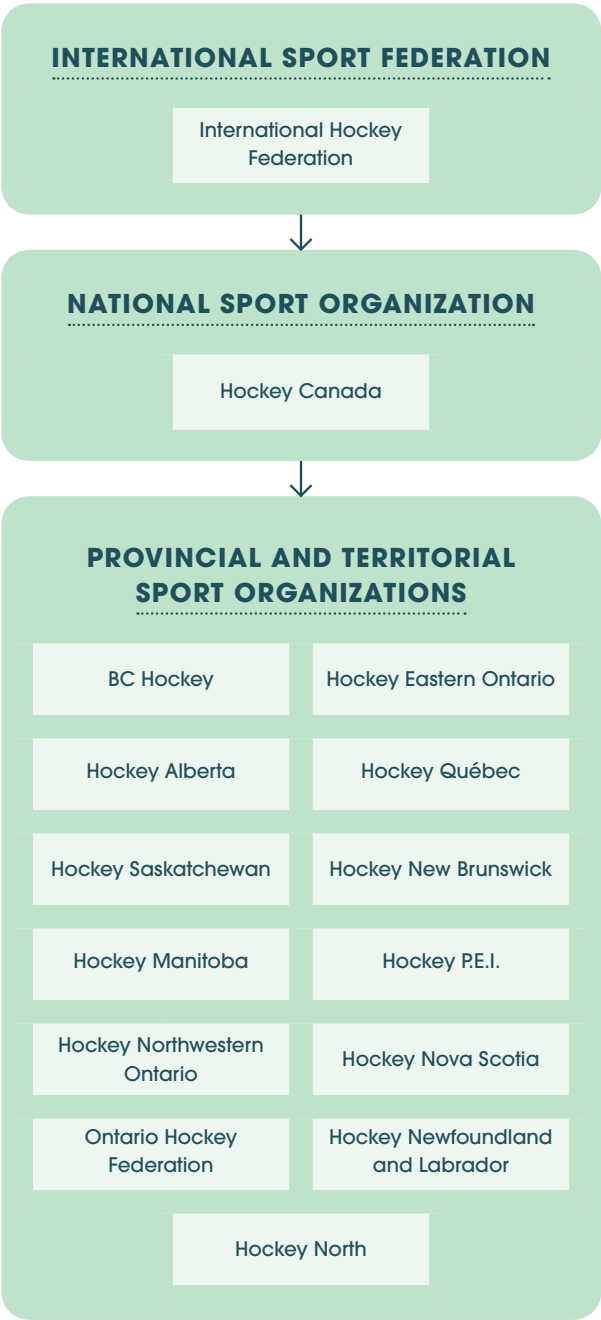
Generally, there is a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization in each province and territory for every sport. This is the case for soccer, for example.

Figure 5.3. Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that are members of Canada Soccer



However, in some cases, there are multiple Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations for a single sport in a province or territory. For example, Hockey Canada has three Provincial Sport Organizations in Ontario: Hockey Eastern Ontario, Hockey Northwestern Ontario, and the Ontario Hockey Federation.<sup>322</sup>

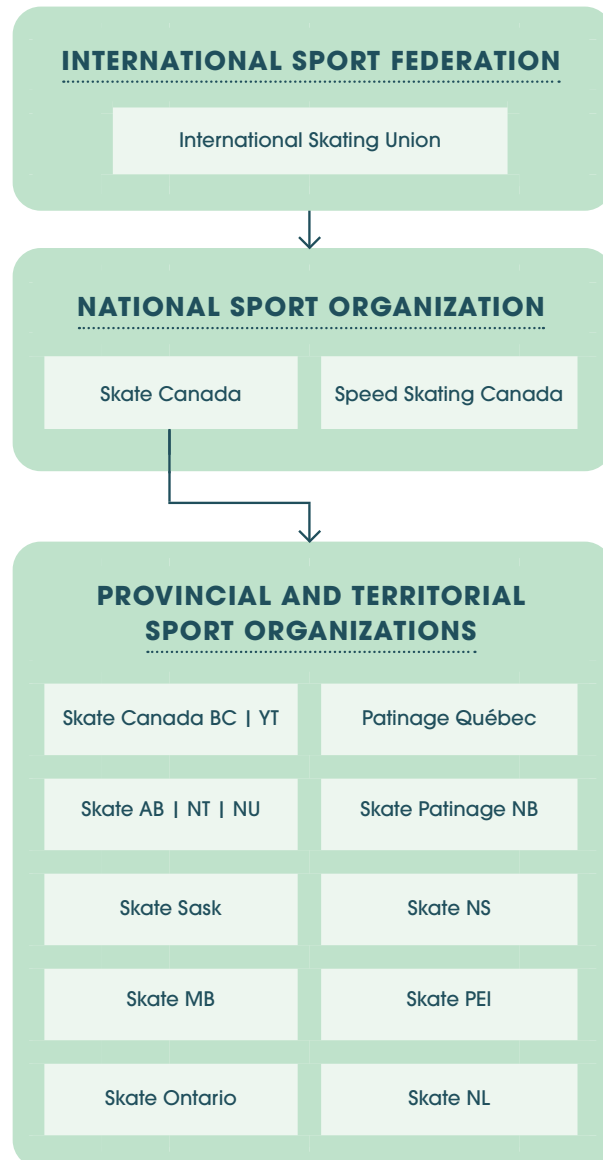
Figure 5.4. Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that are members of Hockey Canada





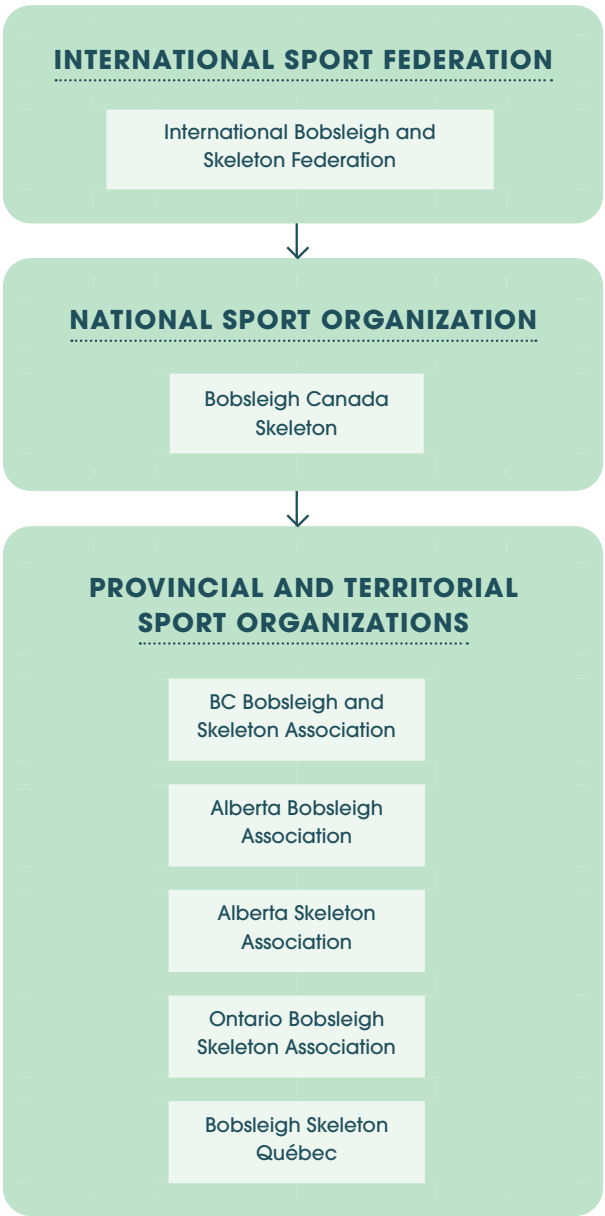
In other cases, a single Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization is responsible for multiple provinces and territories. Notably, one “provincial” counterpart for Skate Canada includes Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, all amalgamated under a single organization called Skate Canada: Alberta – Northwest Territories/ Nunavut Association.<sup>323</sup>

Figure 5.5. Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that are members of Skate Canada



Some sports may not have Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations in every jurisdiction. Bobsleigh and Skeleton, for example, are present in only four provinces, with distinct organizations in Alberta for each sport.<sup>324</sup>

Figure 5.6. Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that are members of Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton



These wide-ranging relationship configurations between National, Provincial, and Territorial Sport Organizations demonstrate the inconsistencies and complexities that are present among Canadian sport structures.

Several provincial and territorial governments require Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to be incorporated as not-for-profit corporations under either provincial, territorial, or federal legislation to qualify for government funding. For example, Ontario and New Brunswick permit Provincial Sport Organizations to incorporate as not-for-profit corporations under either provincial or federal legislation, whereas Quebec and Alberta require them to incorporate under their respective provincial legislation.<sup>325</sup>

Many of the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are associated with clubs at the community level. In those cases, clubs may be members of the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. At the community level, member clubs may offer opportunities for adults and youth to participate in sport.

### **COMMUNITY SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

Community Sport Organizations deliver grassroots sport and physical activity programs. They often offer recreational-level sport programming, and they may also offer a combination of competitive and high-performance programs. In fact, many national-level athletes train with local Community Sport Organizations, which often operate as feeder organizations for high-performance sport. Community Sport Organizations are generally affiliated with a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization.<sup>326</sup>

Many Community Sport Organizations rely on access to municipal or school facilities. They also generally rely heavily on membership or program fees for support, sometimes with the help of local business sponsorships.

At the community level, Para and Disability sport programs are delivered in both integrated and non-integrated environments. Para sport and Disability sport are delivered at the community level by many types of organizations, including conventional Community Sport Organizations, commercial organizations, charitable organizations, and organizations that provide other non-sport services to persons with disabilities.

There is a broad range of delivery organizations at the community level, including non-profit groups and charitable organizations (like the YMCA),<sup>327</sup> for-profit clubs, businesses and training institutions, schools and universities, and municipal governments.

While participation in these organizations frequently overlaps, their governance and operations remain siloed. For example, a coach might work within both the school and club systems, each of which has its own governing structure. Indeed, many sport organizations at the community level and their participants function beyond the oversight of National, Provincial, and Territorial Sport Organizations and other elements of the “conventional” sport system.

Some National Sport Organizations have developed programs to verify or license clubs, associations, and other organizations at the community level (not-for-profit and for-profit organizations). For example, Canada Basketball created the club Verification Program. These programs aim to enhance clubs’ quality and professionalism by

increasing accountability and setting standards to create safe sport environments. For example, they might require safe sport training and the adoption of policy suites.<sup>328</sup> During the first year of the Canada Basketball Verification Program's operation, 38 local basketball clubs were verified.<sup>329</sup>

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Participants' perspectives on financial challenges**

The Commission was informed that the process for sport organizations to qualify and be approved for funding from Sport Canada was difficult. From 2013 to 2017, funding to National Sport Organizations was determined in accordance with the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework. In 2017, the federal government announced that they would be reviewing their funding framework.<sup>330</sup> The new application guidelines for the Sport Support Program were released in 2024 in conjunction with the Sport Integrity Framework. Participants expressed significant frustrations with the lengthy delay in the renewal in the framework. The guidelines were subsequently reviewed in 2025. This is further examined in Chapter 15.

Some participants in our engagement process expressed frustration with the difficulties they encountered in becoming recognized as a National Sport Organization and becoming eligible for funding under the old framework. For example, some non-Olympic or non-Paralympic program sports have experienced challenges in meeting the minimum requirement of 5,000 members. Other sport organizations did not satisfy the requirement of being established in at least eight provinces or territories. Some shared that they were unable to apply because the funding framework was under review and that they had to wait for its publication to apply.

We also understood from some National Sport Organizations that they themselves first needed to be eligible for federal funding before their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations could be eligible to receive public funding within their own provincial or territorial jurisdiction.

As we discuss in greater detail in Chapter 15, sport organizations at all levels are facing significant financial challenges. Participants told us that funding is inadequate to meet organizational needs and/or is provided on a short-term basis, which precludes appropriate long-term planning. In some cases, typically near year end, resources are provided with very short notice, making it impossible to disburse them wisely within a time frame of days or weeks. At a time of limited budgets and fiscal constraints in all sectors, participants informed us of the need to look carefully at the best ways to fund the sport and physical activity sector.

### **Participants' perspectives on sport organizations' proliferation**

There is a proliferation of sport organizations in Canada, including National Sport Organizations. Many participants noted that there are too many sport organizations delivering similar programs and services. For instance, some participants felt that too many clubs exist for a single sport within their community. Many stated that they would prefer to have one organization affiliated with the Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization per community.

Numerous participants told us that there are too many National Sport Organizations in Canada. They commented that each National Sport Organization has its own board of directors, as do all of their provincial and territorial counterparts.

A range of opinions were shared with the Commission on ways to reduce the number of National Sport Organizations. Some participants suggested that sport organizations relating to the same International Sport Federation should amalgamate under one entity. For example, by combining Aquatics Canada, Water Polo Canada, Canada Artistic Swimming, Diving Plongeon Canada, and Swimming Natation Canada, five organizations could be merged into one.

We were advised that it may be appropriate to review the criteria for National Sport Organizations to receive support from Sport Canada. Some participants proposed that federal government funding for them should be focused on a smaller number of sports that have broader participation. They referred to how some National Sport Organizations have fewer than 200 athletes and face significant financial challenges as they seek to train and compete at an international level.

### **Participants' perspectives on misalignment between sport organizations**

A variety of observations were made about the alignment or misalignment of National, Provincial and Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations. The level of alignment and collaboration varies by sport.

In rare cases, there is a high degree of collaboration between the National Sport Organization and its member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and clubs, where uniform membership policies and procedures apply at all levels of sport. We learned that Volleyball Canada, for example, has established alignment within its organizations such that a pan-Canadian abuse policy applies to Volleyball Canada and all its provincial and territorial counterparts.

However, even where there is a high degree of collaboration and alignment, there can be a disconnect between a National Sport Organization's vision and those of their provincial and territorial counterparts. Generally, participants saw National Sport Organizations as focusing on high-performance sport, whereas community organizations prioritize growth and participation, and foster a sense of belonging and well-being.

In most cases, the relationship between National Sport Organizations and their member organizations and clubs is fragmented and was frequently described as broken. On numerous occasions, we were advised that National Sport Organizations are particularly disconnected from clubs and are far removed from the realities of community and grassroots sport. Representatives from provincial and territorial governments explained that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations often did not see themselves as "fitting in" with National Sport Organizations.



National Sport Organizations generally have very little oversight or control over their member organizations. Their limited role in this context is generally not well understood by the public, which contributes to the overall sense of confusion and frustration with the sport system.

Participants noted that under the funding framework, National Sport Organizations are supposed to provide programs and services that extend nationwide beyond a single province or territory. On paper, National Sport Organizations are evaluated on the extent to which they have a systemic approach to the development and support of participants that will positively impact the development of the sport system. However, we heard that many National Sport Organizations are failing in this area and have defaulted to prioritizing their national team for competitions and high performance.

Some suggested that National Sport Organizations should have strategic and support oversight over Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and clubs. This could include setting national standards for inclusion, anti-racism, safe sport, and equity at all levels of sport, and being more involved with athletes' training and advancement opportunities. Some participants suggested that National Sport Organizations should have increased responsibility to ensure that community and high-performance sport have synchronized goals to further ensure that sport is competitive, safe, inclusive, and accessible.

The Commission also heard about the importance of flexibility at the community level to permit organizations to respond to local needs, demographics, and access challenges.

A variety of perspectives were shared with us on how National Sport Organizations cooperate and effectively share best practices, resources, and governance tools and expertise. However, in many cases, a lack of collaboration has led to the fragmentation of resources, inefficiencies, and policy misalignments. It was noted, for example, that many organizations require human resources, information technology (IT), insurance, accommodations, and travel services, all of which could be provided more efficiently by a common provider.

Generally, participants advocated for well-defined collaboration between National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to foster alignment on long-term priorities, including safety in sport, inclusivity, and program accessibility.

Participants voiced concerns that International Sport Federations make decisions and policies that directly impact Canadian sport, particularly for high-performance and elite athletes. The processes by which Canadians are able to participate in these organizations also vary widely.

### **Participants' perspectives on Para sport's integration**

The Commission learned that the structure of Para sport is equally complex and difficult to navigate. The structure of Para sport varies widely across provinces and territories. We learned that this creates challenges in the delivery of sport programs and athlete development. Some participants noted the need for improved system alignment within Para and Paralympic sport in Canada. However, improving alignment cannot be to the detriment of the Para and Paralympic Sport System.

Participants shared that many Para sports were integrated into non-Para sport organizations. However, in some cases, disability-specific sports (e.g., wheelchair basketball) and other sports unique to disability sports (e.g., boccia) were not integrated. Since then, there has been a complex array of integrated and non-integrated sport organizations.

The Commission heard a variety of opinions on the successes and shortcomings of Para sport's integration. Some athletes saw integration as a significant advancement. They enjoyed being recognized as athletes first and foremost and not labelled or segregated by their disability.

Others viewed the integration process and the ongoing lack of oversight to ensure that integrated National Sport Organizations are treating Para athletes equitably as harmful to the disability sport community. We learned that one major consequence of the integration process has been decreased opportunities for early sport participation by participants with disabilities, especially at the community level.

Participants noted that disability-specific organizations either no longer exist or are no longer funded as Multisport Service Organizations (as described below) who can assist with sport development across the system and provide disability-specific expertise. This has resulted in major disconnects in the sport system and sent a mixed message about disability inclusion.

One example cited was the Canadian Blind Sports Association. Historically, this organization served the blind community as a National Sport Organization for multiple sports practised by blind and visually impaired athletes. The organization was recognized as possessing particular expertise regarding the needs and services for those with visual impairments. It worked through a network of provincial and territorial blind sports associations and other non-profit organizations.

We learned that the Canadian Blind Sports Association is now funded by Sport Canada only as the National Sport Organization for goalball. It was not funded as a Multisport Service Organization. Participants explained that narrowing the scope of the operations funded by Sport Canada has detrimentally deprived the Disability sport community of a valuable disability-inclusion resource.

Another consequence of integration that participants highlighted is the absence of oversight to ensure that Para sport and athletes are being treated equitably within integrated National Sport Organizations. Serious concerns were shared with the Commission about the extent to which sport organizations integrated Para sport in their

governance, programming, and budgeting. Concerns were also raised about the lack of disability-specific knowledge, particularly in the context of the impact of disability on athlete performance. This is significant for athletes with high support needs. Many also noted that Para athlete voices and perspectives were lacking in organizational decision making within integrated sports.

The Commission encountered a general view that Olympic teams and athletes got priority over Paralympic teams and athletes in terms of access to training, coaches, equipment, facilities, and funding.

Paralympic sport appears to many individuals to be a secondary focus of National Sport Organizations.

Participants also informed us that, rather than creating Para-specific programming, too many National Sport Organizations model their Paralympic program on their Olympic program. They also suggested forming a Paralympic focus group composed of world-renowned experts to ensure Para programs are developed “the right way.” Disability sport advocates called for Para sport-specific programming and hiring Para sport experts within integrated National Sport Organizations. We heard that whether Para sport should be integrated with non-Para sport ultimately depends on a sport organization’s leadership, capacity, and the level of understanding regarding the needs of athletes with disabilities.

The Commission was made aware of the significant funding and cost inequities experienced by Para athletes and their organizations, as we discuss later.

### **Participants’ perspectives on volunteers and governance**

We heard many remarkable stories of the commitment and dedication of volunteers, without whom sport organizations would not be able to function. However, a number of concerns were shared with us. While volunteers often bring valuable personal experience in sport, either as athletes or parents of athletes, they frequently lack expertise in organizational leadership and governance.

There were also oft-expressed concerns about the potential for real or perceived conflicts of interest. A few observers commented about the allure of travel to national and international meetings and competitions, and the perception that such “perks” are a significant sweetener for sport administrators and board members.

We learned that many individuals, while they are well intentioned, appear to be in a conflict of interest. For example, participants spoke of parents coaching their own children, which can lead to preferential treatment. Others raised concerns about parents on boards of directors for their children’s teams. Many emphasized that conflicts of interest, particularly at the local level, need to be addressed to improve the sport system.

It was also noted that a decline in volunteers has led sport organizations to hire individuals who may not be properly screened or who may not have received safe sport training. We further discuss issues of education and training in Chapter 11.

Athletes and observers also told the Commission that some sport organizations at the national and provincial and territorial levels had been making significant efforts to improve diversity and equity representation in their staff, coaching, and governance structures. Some organizations have also focused on outreach to underrepresented communities. Unfortunately, this was not a universal observation.

### **Participants' perspectives on athlete representation in sport organizations**

Although athletes were often described as the primary actors in Canadian sport, we heard that many felt they are being treated as disposable commodities rather than valued contributors within the sport system.

While many National Sport Organizations have some athlete representation and involvement in their governance, we were advised that athletes' representation on boards of directors is often symbolic and remains limited. We heard of a lack of racialized athletes on boards and that Para athletes have less influence in the sport system.

Some also suggested that an independent association like a union should be created to represent athletes.

### **Participants' perspectives on sport infrastructure**

The Commission was informed of serious concerns about the inadequate sport facility infrastructure in every region of the country. We were told that access to adequate sport facilities is a critical component of providing accessible sport programming in Canada.

Some shared with us that the lack of facilities, including physically accessible ones, also requires attention. They noted that an injection of capital funding is required, either from the government and/or through public-private partnerships. It was suggested that national, provincial, and territorial strategies should be implemented to invest in and improve sport facilities across the country.

We also learned that the lack of facilities was a significant problem in many remote and Indigenous communities, particularly within the Territories. This lack of facilities acts as an additional, fundamental barrier to accessing sport opportunities. These issues are explored further in the chapters that follow.

## **Multisport Service Organizations**

Unlike the sport organizations described earlier, Multisport Service Organizations generally do not directly deliver sport programming to athletes. Instead, they lead or coordinate the delivery of specific services to the sport community.<sup>331</sup> They play a key role in the Canadian sport system by supporting athletes, coaches, and sport organizations at all levels of sport.

Here we explore the structure and roles of Multisport Service Organizations at the international, national, provincial and territorial, and local levels of sport.

## INTERNATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

International Sport Organizations are Multisport Service Organizations responsible for multisport international competitions. Most have national counterparts, for example, the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Paralympic Committee and Commonwealth Sport Canada, and are described further in what follows. Examples of International Sport Organizations that are responsible for competitions include the:

- International Olympic Committee (responsible for the Olympic Games)<sup>332</sup>
- International Paralympic Committee (responsible for the Paralympic Games)<sup>333</sup>
- Commonwealth Games Federation (responsible for the Commonwealth Games and the Commonwealth Youth Games)<sup>334</sup>
- Special Olympics International (responsible for the Special Olympics World Games)<sup>335</sup>
- International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (responsible for the Deaflympics)<sup>336</sup>
- North American Indigenous Games Council (responsible for the North American Indigenous Games)<sup>337</sup>
- Arctic Winter Games International Committee (responsible for the Arctic Winter Games)<sup>338</sup>
- International University Sports Federation (responsible for the World University Games, formerly known as the Universiades)<sup>339</sup>
- Federation of Gay Games (responsible for the Gay Games).<sup>340</sup>

Through their governance rules, qualification processes, and competition regulations, International Sport Organizations, like International Sport Federations, significantly affect National Multisport Service Organizations. In addition to organizing major games, International Sport Organizations can also have vital roles in setting international standards or providing, or assisting with the provision of, broad guidelines for sport in general. They develop rules and requirements related to participating in sport.

Notably, the World Anti-Doping Agency headquartered in Montreal is responsible for developing and coordinating anti-doping rules and policies across all sports and all countries.<sup>341</sup> In particular, it oversees the World Anti-Doping Code and the eight related International Standards, including the List of Prohibited Substances.<sup>342</sup> The implementation of these anti-doping rules in the Canadian context occurs through the Canadian Anti-Doping Program administered by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport,<sup>343</sup> which we discuss further later.



### **NATIONAL MULTISPORT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

Sport Canada defines National Multisport Service Organizations as organizations that provide “sport-related programs, services or activities to [their] members, stakeholders, the national sport community, or the Canadian public.”<sup>344</sup>

The services that National Multisport Service Organizations provide are broad and may include:

- games organization and oversight (e.g., Canadian Olympic Committee, Canadian Paralympic Committee, Special Olympics Canada, Commonwealth Sport Canada [previously known as Commonwealth Games Canada], Canada Games Council, Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association, U SPORTS, Canadian Deaf Sport Association)
- coaching and education (e.g., Coaching Association of Canada, Physical and Health Education Canada, Sport Information Resource Centre)
- engagement and access to sport and physical activity programmes (e.g., KidSport Canada, Motivate Canada, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, Go Le Grand Défi inc., ParticipACTION)
- advocacy (e.g., AthletesCAN, Canadian Women and Sport, Aboriginal Sport Circle)
- dispute resolution and oversight of ethical behaviour in sport (e.g., Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport).

Each National Multisport Service Organization has its own purpose and mandate. Some were created to fill gaps in leadership in the sport landscape, to respond to specific challenges, to address historic inequities, or to improve access to sport for a broad and diverse range of populations.

Through the Sport Support Program, Sport Canada provides funding to 23 National Multisport Service Organizations that lead or coordinate program delivery to the national sport community (see Chapter 15 for details).<sup>345</sup> Although these organizations receive federal funds, most have other sources of funding which can include donations and partnerships. Federally funded National Multisport Service Organizations are not-for-profit organizations.

Appendix 3 contains a list of all 23 federally funded National Multisport Service Organizations. Here, we offer a brief overview of some of them. Others are also examined elsewhere in the report. For instance, U SPORTS and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association are briefly examined in the Sport and school environments section at the end of this chapter. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada are discussed in Chapter 10 because their roles relate to dispute resolution and the administration of safe sport complaints.

### Canadian Olympic Committee

The Canadian Olympic Committee is the representative organization of the Olympic Movement and the recognized representative for Canada at the International Olympic Committee.<sup>346</sup> The current President of the Canadian Olympic Committee has been elected to serve as a member of the International Olympic Committee.<sup>347</sup> The members of the International Olympic Committee are individuals who represent and promote both the interests of the International Olympic Committee and those of the Olympic Movement within their own countries and the organizations in which they serve.<sup>348</sup> The Canadian Olympic Committee is constrained by certain International Olympic Committee policies.

The Canadian Olympic Committee collaborates with different organizations, namely National Sport Organizations, Own the Podium, and the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network, to enhance Team Canada's performance at the Olympic and Pan American Games.<sup>349</sup> In support of its work, in 2024–2025, the Canadian Olympic Committee received \$3,334,160 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.<sup>350</sup> It also receives additional funding from the Canadian Olympic Foundation, as well as from private and corporate donations.

The Canadian Olympic Committee is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.<sup>351</sup> It has different classes of membership: Olympic National Sport Organizations, General Members, International Olympic Committee members, and members of the Athletes' Commission.<sup>352</sup> The Canadian Olympic Committee has more than 3,500 members and represents a variety of individuals and organizations in the Olympic Movement, including all Olympic athletes and coaches.<sup>353</sup>

It has also been working to improve both governance and safe sport in the Canadian sport system. In 2019–2020, the Canadian Olympic Committee established a working group to review other nations' governance codes, research best practices in the sports and business worlds, and draft a governance code.<sup>354</sup> The resulting Canadian Sport Governance Code was presented to National Sport Organizations for feedback before being finalized in April 2021. We discuss this governance code in more detail in Chapter 14.

In 2022, the Canadian Olympic Committee announced a \$10 million investment to advance safe sport.<sup>355</sup> Their 2023 Impact Report highlighted the following developments:

- the investment of over \$4 million directly to National Sport Organizations to advance their safe sport commitments and to address root causes of unsafe sport
- the development of safe sport e-learning modules for people in various roles, including healthcare practitioners, athletes, and volunteers, among others,
- the signing by all National Sport Organizations as program signatories to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. This initiative received funding and legal support from the Canadian Olympic Committee. The Universal Code is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

- the funding of culturally competent training for 40 Canada Summer Games and 40 North American Indigenous Games Mission Team members
- the completion of a safe sport case study, which was published on the International Olympic Committee's website.<sup>356</sup>

### Canadian Paralympic Committee

The Canadian Paralympic Committee is the representative organization for the Paralympic Movement in Canada and the recognized Canadian member of the International Paralympic Committee.<sup>357</sup> It operates in close partnership with 28 National Sport Organizations to foster an inclusive world through Paralympic sport.<sup>358</sup>

The Canadian Paralympic Committee is responsible for Team Canada at the Paralympic Games and works to ensure that Paralympic athletes have equitable access to training, coaching, classification,<sup>359</sup> competition, and facilities. More broadly, it promotes inclusive communities through Paralympic sport.<sup>360</sup> The Committee uses Paralympic sport to drive broader inclusion and opportunity across Canada.

The Canadian Paralympic Committee and the Paralympic Foundation of Canada<sup>361</sup> support Para sport, Para athletes, and National Sport Organizations in various ways.

- Through the Paralympic Sport Development Fund, the Paralympic Foundation of Canada provides grants to support the development of Para sport programming. These funds are used in various projects to further develop Para sport pathways and opportunities for Para athletes.<sup>362</sup>
- The Foundation provides funding to help overcome financial barriers in acquiring adaptive equipment for athletes at all levels.<sup>363</sup>
- Through the Next Generation Athlete Program, the Foundation provides funding for Canada's Next Generation athlete development programming — matched annually up to \$1 million by the Government of Canada.<sup>364</sup>
- Through the Performance Recognition Program, the Foundation provides recognition for medal performances at the Paralympic Games.<sup>365</sup>

The Foundation also provides funding to support high-performance sport through the Performance Recognition Program, Enhanced Excellence funding (for National Sport Organizations), and the Games Performance Planning Fund (also for National Sport Organizations).<sup>366</sup>

The Canadian Paralympic Committee is a not-for-profit incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.<sup>367</sup> It has one class of members: the Paralympic Sport Members. There are currently 28 member National Sport Organizations. These member organizations participate in either the Paralympic or the Parapan American programs.<sup>368</sup>

In 2024–2025, the Canadian Paralympic Committee received \$6,140,700 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.<sup>369</sup> The Committee receives additional funding from the Paralympic Foundation of Canada as well as from private and corporate donations.<sup>370</sup>

### **Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network**

The Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network is a group of designated multisport training centres and institutes.<sup>371</sup> It supports high-performance sport excellence by Canadian athletes by providing world-class training environments, expert leadership, specialized programs, and integrated sport science and sport medicine services.<sup>372</sup> It also drives applied sport science research to enhance athlete development and performance and serves as a key performance partner in implementing the National High Performance Strategy's priorities.<sup>373</sup>

The Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network is recognized and funded (in part) by Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.<sup>374</sup> It is also supported by national and provincial partners, including Own the Podium, the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Paralympic Committee, and the Coaching Association of Canada. This network includes five Canadian Sport Institutes (located in Alberta, Quebec, Ontario, the Atlantic Region, and the Pacific Region) and two Canadian Sport Centres (in Manitoba and Saskatchewan).<sup>375</sup>

In 2024–2025, the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network received \$12.9 million from Sport Canada.<sup>376</sup> In October 2025, the federal government announced a \$3.11 million investment for mental health initiatives, including \$1.5 million that will be distributed to the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network to support mental health initiatives.<sup>377</sup>

### **Own the Podium**

Own the Podium plays a unique role among Multisport Service Organizations and at the national level of the Canadian sport system. It works in partnership with the major national funders for high-performance sport in Canada: Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee, and the Canadian Paralympic Committee.

As an advisory body, Own the Podium reviews athlete, national team, and National Sport Organization performances and makes recommendations on the allocation of funding to Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee, and the Canadian Paralympic Committee, with the objective of increasing Canadian medal counts at Olympic and Paralympic Games.<sup>378</sup> Own the Podium describes itself as working toward making Canada a world leader in high-performance sport at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and to inspire Canadians to participate in sport.<sup>379</sup>

The organization was formed in 2005, in anticipation of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.<sup>380</sup> It was tasked with the following goals:

- win the most number of medals at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games
- place in the top three gold medal count at the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Games.<sup>381</sup>

Own the Podium received considerable recognition for their efforts after Canada won 26 medals at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games. Canada then won 19 medals and ended in the top three nations (gold medal count) in the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Games.<sup>382</sup>

Own the Podium is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.<sup>383</sup> Its members are its directors. Own the Podium receives funding from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program. In 2024–2025, it received \$2,382,275 through this program.<sup>384</sup>

It also receives funding from the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee.<sup>385</sup> The Canadian Paralympic Committee reports providing approximately \$1.5 million annually to Own the Podium, stating that several technical initiatives are delivered by Own the Podium with these funds. These include support for the next generation of athletes, support for coaching development and hiring technical staff, and research and innovation projects.<sup>386</sup>

### Commonwealth Sport Canada

Commonwealth Sport Canada, previously known as Commonwealth Games Canada, is the international franchise holder for the Commonwealth Games and Commonwealth Sport Movement in Canada.<sup>387</sup> Its mission is to strengthen the Commonwealth sport movement in Canada and to support high-performance athletes to achieve excellence at major games.<sup>388</sup>

The Commonwealth Games are fully integrated: they are the only major games to integrate a Para sport program and have all athletes participate in the same games and on the same team.<sup>389</sup> The 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester marked a historic milestone as the first fully integrated games.<sup>390</sup> The Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games are expected to be the largest integrated Para sport program in the Games history, with a record 47 medals to be awarded in Para disciplines.<sup>391</sup>

The Commonwealth Sport Movement has shown leadership in Indigenous reconciliation in sport by adopting the *Commonwealth (Lekwungen) Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples* in 2023.<sup>392</sup> This was later endorsed by Commonwealth Sports Ministers in 2024.<sup>393</sup> The Commonwealth Indigenous Sport Declaration Working Group that developed the Declaration included Canadian Indigenous representatives.<sup>394</sup>



Leadership in Indigenous reconciliation in sport continued at the national level under Commonwealth Sport Canada. In particular, in February 2025, Commonwealth Sport Canada became the first national Commonwealth Games association to become a signatory to the *Commonwealth (Lekwungen) Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples*.<sup>395</sup> The Declaration highlights the comprehensive benefits of sport for Indigenous communities, calling for 10 specific actions by institutions and other entities in the sport sector including:

- promoting the holistic physical, cultural, spiritual, and mental well-being and life skill benefits of sport to Indigenous Peoples
- supporting the development of inclusive and sustainable sport policies and programs
- investing in coaching and mentorship for Indigenous youth
- advancing knowledge on Indigenous Peoples, culture, history, and sports
- integrating Indigenous sports into school and community-based programs.<sup>396</sup>

Commonwealth Sport Canada is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.<sup>397</sup> Its membership is made up of three categories: board of directors, members-at-large and National Sport Organizations. The specific National Sport Organizations that are members may vary, depending on which sport is included in the competition program for the next scheduled Commonwealth Games.<sup>398</sup>

In 2024–2025, Commonwealth Games Canada received \$385,300 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.<sup>399</sup> It receives additional funding from other sources including National Sport Organizations.

### Canada Games Council

The Canada Games Council was created by federal, provincial, and territorial governments to steward the growth of the Canada Games Movement.<sup>400</sup> The Canada Games Council is responsible for the ongoing development of the Canada Games.

Alternating between winter and summer events, the Canada Games span more than 30 different sports and are held under the stewardship of the Canada Games Council which provides ongoing governance oversight.<sup>401</sup> The 2025 Canada Summer Games were successfully completed in St. John's and the 2027 Canada Winter Games will be in Quebec City.<sup>402</sup> The Canada Games bring together more than 2,000 athletes, including athletes with physical and intellectual disabilities. It is the largest amateur multisport event in the country for Canadian athletes.<sup>403</sup>

As the Canada Games move from one host community to the next, the Canada Games Council provides continuity, leadership, and support to host societies in such key areas as sport technology, organizational planning, ceremonies and protocol, marketing, and sponsorship. It also maintains effective long-term partnerships with National, Provincial, Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations, as well as governments and the corporate sector.<sup>404</sup> The Canada Games Council is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. Its members are its directors.<sup>405</sup>

In 2024–2025, the Canada Games Council received \$1,237,820 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.<sup>406</sup> It also received funds from other sources including game fees and sponsorships.<sup>407</sup>

### Coaching Association of Canada

The Coaching Association of Canada is a multisport service organization that educates, certifies, and celebrates coaches. Its programs aim to “empower coaches with knowledge and skills, promote ethics, foster positive attitudes, build competence, and increase the credibility and recognition of coaches.”<sup>408</sup>

The association was established in 1970 as a result of recommendations from the Task Force on Sport for Canadians.<sup>409</sup> Its prime responsibility is to coordinate and set standards for the National Coaching Certification Program which provides standardized training to coaches and coach developers in 65 sports and includes the following three streams:

- **Community Sport.** The Community Sport stream is designed to help participants of any age learn, play, and have fun. Participants in this stream are typically playing for their own enjoyment. Beginner coaches are often developed in these settings.
- **Competition.** The Competition stream helps participants of all ages develop competitive abilities in their sport over the long term. Former athletes and experienced coaches at regional levels often work in this stream.
- **Instruction.** The Instruction stream involves coaches teaching sport-specific skills to participants of various ability levels and interacting with them in a primarily non-competitive situation.<sup>410</sup>

Provincial and territorial partners, such as the Coaching Association of Ontario, along with Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, are responsible for delivering the National Coaching Certification Program training.<sup>411</sup>

The Coaching Association of Canada works with international, provincial, and territorial partners to develop curriculum and coaching excellence. In addition to the core certification program, the association has several courses to foster equity, diversity, and inclusion in sport environments.<sup>412</sup> These include:

- **Coaching Athletes with a Disability.** This e-learning module was designed primarily for coaches who have never coached, or who are new to coaching, athletes with a disability.<sup>413</sup>
- **Creating a Positive Sport Environment.** This e-learning module explains how and why to use participant-centred coaching, explains the harms that can result from misusing power and how to respond to suspicions or knowledge of maltreatment.<sup>414</sup>
- **Anti-Racism in Coaching.** This e-learning module allows coaches to build knowledge of issues related to race and racism in Canada that affect coaching, expands their understanding of how to be an anti-racist coach, and cultivates their skills in supporting racialized participants in sport.<sup>415</sup>

- **Safe Sport Training Module.** This is an accredited education program of the Abuse-Free Sport program. In addition to the online module, the association offers a toolkit to assist sport organizations in implementing the training.<sup>416</sup>
- **Concussion Awareness.** This offers general and sport-specific e-learning modules (“Making Headway in Sport”) on the latest concussion protocols and how to prioritize participant safety.<sup>417</sup>
- **Support Through Sport.** These e-learning modules help coaches recognize the signs of and take action to prevent and address gender-based violence and teen dating violence.<sup>418</sup>
- **Return to Sport.** These e-learning modules are designed to help coaches create a safe and adaptable transition back to sport participation for those who may have experienced illness, injury, or other disruptions. They include advice to apply when creating return-to-sport plans.<sup>419</sup>

As we further discuss in Chapter 11, the Coaching Association of Canada takes part in several other safe sport initiatives including the Quality Coaching Campaign to raise awareness about resources available for coaches, administrators and parents, and the Responsible Coaching Movement, which encourages sport organizations, parents, and coaches to implement responsible coaching practices. It has also created resources to help sport organizations develop their background screening procedures.

The Coaching Association of Canada also delivers several mentorship and apprenticeship programs, as well as research and resources, to encourage diversity among coaches and empower coaches from all backgrounds.<sup>420</sup>

The organization receives funding from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program, in the amount of \$4,359,900 in 2024–2025.<sup>421</sup> In addition to core funding from Sport Canada, it has also received funding from other federal government sources to support specific projects. In this respect, the Public Health Agency of Canada announced \$2.8 million at the end of 2022 to support its work to increase mental health literacy among coaches and community sport leaders,<sup>422</sup> and in 2025 Women and Gender Equality Canada provided over \$1.1 million to enable the launch of the Women and Gender Equality in Coaching Program.<sup>423</sup> Provincial and territorial governments further subsidize costs through their designated program delivery agencies to promote and implement the National Coaching Certification Program.<sup>424</sup>

### AthletesCAN

AthletesCAN is an independent athlete-led organization that represents Canada’s national team athletes. It represents athletes from over 60 different sports from the Olympic, Paralympic, Pan American, Parapan American, and Commonwealth Games as well as from sports funded by Sport Canada that hold annual world championships.<sup>425</sup> Its mission is to unite and amplify the voices of Canadian national team athletes.<sup>426</sup>

AthletesCAN is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. Their membership includes all athletes who are members of national teams or who have retired from a national team within the past eight years.<sup>427</sup> In 2024–2025, AthletesCAN received \$709,926 funding from Sport Canada through

the Sport Support Program.<sup>428</sup>

### Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities

Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities is a nationally registered charity that helps children and their families overcome financial barriers to sport and recreation.<sup>429</sup> Since 2005, the organization has helped more than 3 million Canadian children.<sup>430</sup> In 2023, it awarded 1,016 community development grants and 29,748 individual child grants to improve the affordability of sport.<sup>431</sup>

Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities also provides support to sport organizations to develop resources to improve the quality of sport,<sup>432</sup> and makes available Respect in Sport training modules to successful Jumpstart grantees.<sup>433</sup> The organization works with various partners to produce research examining the landscape of sport and play in Canada. For example, Jumpstart partnered with Canadian Women and Sport to produce the Rally Report<sup>434</sup> and with the Aspen Institute to produce the Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report 2024.<sup>435</sup>

Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. In 2024–2025, it received \$1,909,400 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.<sup>436</sup> It also receives provincial government grants, corporate donations, and other donations. In 2023, Jumpstart reported \$27,663,796 in revenue from Canadian Tire Corporate Ltd and related donors, including employees, dealers, and customers.<sup>437</sup>

### KidSport Canada

KidSport Canada provides financial assistance addressing sport registration fees and equipment costs for children.<sup>438</sup> Through a confidential application process, KidSport provides grants of between \$250 and \$500. In 2024, together with its local and provincial chapters, the organization raised and distributed over \$15 million in sport registration fees and assisted 48,145 children.<sup>439</sup> KidSport Canada has 176 local and provincial chapters. Each chapter raises funds, accepts applications, and distributes grants to children and their families.

KidSport Canada is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.<sup>440</sup> It is currently governed by a 13-person volunteer board of directors.<sup>441</sup> In 2024–2025, it received \$1,304,200 under the Sport Support Program,<sup>442</sup> and other government grants, donations, and corporate support.

### Canadian Women and Sport

Established in 1981, Canadian Women and Sport is a national organization whose mission is to create an equitable and inclusive Canadian sport and physical activity system that empowers girls and women to become active participants and leaders within and through sport.<sup>443</sup> The organization works across the country, engaging with sport organizations, leaders, and governments to advance gender-equity solutions that result in meaningful change.<sup>444</sup>

Canadian Women and Sport has numerous programs, including the Gender Equity Playbook, that teach sport leaders and organizations how to make sport more inclusive.<sup>445</sup> Another is the Retaining Girls in Sport and Physical Activity, a workshop designed to help sport leaders create lasting solutions to keep girls and women in

sport and physical activity.<sup>446</sup> The organization also generates research on gender equity in sport including the “2022 Rally Report: A Call For Better, Safer Sport for Girls” and the “2024 Rally Report: A Call To Reimagine Sport So All Girls Can Play.”<sup>447</sup>

Canadian Women and Sport is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. It has two categories of members: the corporation’s current directors and persons who were directors in the four years preceding its annual meeting.<sup>448</sup>

In 2024–2025, it received \$1,139,400 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.<sup>449</sup> The organization has also received funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada, including \$325,000 in 2023 to support the Commercial Women’s Sport Initiative.<sup>450</sup> Canadian Women and Sport is also supported by some provincial governments and numerous other organizations, including Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities.<sup>451</sup>

### Special Olympics Canada

Special Olympics is a global movement for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Canada advances the movement in the country and has provincial and territorial chapters.<sup>452</sup>

The organization provides programming and services to athletes with intellectual or developmental disabilities at the community and competitive levels. The Special Olympics Canada National Games occur every two years and serve as qualifying events for the Special Olympics World Games. The organization also focuses on training programs for coaches, including the NextGen Coaching Apprentice Program. These training programs are designed to ensure that coaches are able to meet the needs of any athlete involved in their organization.<sup>453</sup>

Beyond sport, Special Olympics Canada works to change attitudes and build more inclusive communities.<sup>454</sup> It created the Healthy Athletes Initiative, which provides health services and education for all Special Olympics athletes.<sup>455</sup>

Special Olympics Canada is incorporated under the Ontario *Corporations Act* as a not-for-profit organization.<sup>456</sup> In 2024–2025, it received \$6,855,760 from Sport Canada.<sup>457</sup> Special Olympics Canada is also supported by corporate and other donations.<sup>458</sup> The Special Olympics Canada Foundation also raises funds to help grassroots and national programs for Special Olympics Canada.<sup>459</sup>

### Canadian Deaf Sports Association

The Canadian Deaf Sports Association was founded as the Canadian Deaf-Mute Sports Federation in 1959.<sup>460</sup> The association and its Provincial Deaf Sports Associations provide a variety of sport opportunities for Deaf and hard-of-hearing athletes. The Canadian Deaf Sports Association, in collaboration with its provincial associations, organizes the Canada Deaf Games. It also supports athlete participation in international events sanctioned by the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf and the Pan American Committee for the Deaf, including the Deaf Olympics.<sup>461</sup>



The Canadian Deaf Sports Association is incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*.<sup>462</sup> In 2024–2025, it received \$381,400 from Sport Canada.<sup>463</sup>

### **Sport for Life Society**

The Sport for Life Society is a not-for-profit organization that aims to create partnerships between the sport, education, recreation and health sectors to improve the quality of sport and physical activity in Canada. Its mission is “to create, share, and mobilize knowledge and programming to improve the quality of sports and develop physical literacy.”<sup>464</sup>

The Sport for Life Society’s Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity Framework is a resource which provides the framework for the development of every child, youth, and adult to enable optimal participation in sport and physical activity.<sup>465</sup> The framework describes what athletes need to be doing at specific ages and states to develop in their sport or activity. Many National Sport Organizations have Long-Term Development Frameworks specific to their sport.<sup>466</sup>

The Sport for Life Society is incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*.<sup>467</sup> In 2024–2025, it received \$885,900 from Sport Canada.<sup>468</sup>

## **PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL MULTISPORT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

Multisport Service Organizations at the provincial and territorial level are typically not-for-profit organizations that provide services to the sport community. There are two types of Multisport Service Organizations that operate at this level of sport.

- In the first category are organizations that are similar to the National Multisport Service Organizations described earlier, except that they operate within a province or territory. Some of these are branch organizations of National Multisport Service Organizations. In some provinces and territories, there are Multisport Service Organizations focusing on specific demographics or communities. For example, as we described earlier, KidSport Ontario — a provincial arm of KidSport Canada — provides financial assistance to children for sport registration fees to address financial barriers to sport participation.<sup>469</sup>
- The second group of Multisport Service Organizations are commonly referred to as federations. Each province and territory, except for Alberta and Ontario, has a sport federation. For example, Sport New Brunswick (also referred to as Sport NB) is the federation in New Brunswick and Sport North is the federation in the Northwest Territories. See Appendix 1 for a table illustrating the federations in each province and territory.

Federations are member-based not-for-profit organizations that promote and advance sport in their province or territory. They primarily support Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations in their respective jurisdiction.<sup>470</sup> Some federations also provide support to Multisport Service Organizations.

Each federation provides services to its member organizations. Generally, federation members are the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations who are the governing body for their sport. In some cases, as in New Brunswick, other Multisport Service Organizations can also be members.<sup>471</sup> Some federations have other categories of membership for other organizations or associations who have sport as a primary objective but are not the governing body for their sport. Some federations also have individuals as members who typically do not have voting rights or receive services.<sup>472</sup>

Although federations' responsibilities vary by jurisdiction, their key activities can include providing administrative support and centralized resources (including resources for safe sport) for their member organizations, as well as learning opportunities and policy guidance. Other examples of services are payroll services, administrative and printing services, and insurance programs.<sup>473</sup> As we discuss in Chapter 10, some federations like Sport NB have contracted Independent Third Parties to administer safe sport complaints for their members. Some governments, like the Government of Saskatchewan, have delegated the administration of funding and grants to their federations.<sup>474</sup>

### **COMMUNITY MULTISPORT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

Although the Commission was not able to examine all Multisport Service Organizations operating at the community level of sport, we acknowledge that many such organizations exist throughout Canada. Local and community sport councils are examples of Multisport Service Organizations. These organizations can provide services to their communities, including support to sport participants. For example, they:

- develop and share learning opportunities
- develop education programs
- advocate for high-quality sporting participation experiences
- provide grants and funding.

Other examples of Multisport Service Organizations at the local level include sport award organizations and sport "Halls of Fame."

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON MULTISPORT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **Participants' perspectives on duplication and overlaps**

Some participants commented that there are too many Multisport Service Organizations with overlapping functions and unclear mandates. This has led to inefficiencies and duplication of services, including education, training, certifications, and other administrative services.

We were advised that the roles and responsibilities of many Multisport Service Organizations are ambiguous, which is further complicated by the fact that some of these organizations operate with self-determined mandates and performance metrics. This leads to accountability challenges and misalignment with national objectives.

Many told us that too many Multisport Service Organizations are delivering similar education programs. The multiplicity of programs makes it difficult to know which program people must complete. For example, the Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport and the Coaching Association of Canada both deliver education for safe sport. This can lead participants to question which organization is the true leader in the field and the definitive source of authoritative information.

Others questioned the model of having different organizations responsible for international games like the Olympics, Paralympics, and Commonwealth Games. They emphasized that there is little to no collaboration between these organizations, which have similar functions. Participants also noted that there is an overlap between the athletes, coaches, and other individuals who participate in these games. They suggested that these Multisport Service Organizations could be consolidated into a single organization.

In this respect, we learned of Major Games Canada, a collective that brings together the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Paralympic Committee, Commonwealth Games Canada, U SPORTS, Canadian Heritage (for the Games of La Francophonie) and the Canada Games Council. We understand that Major Games Canada serves as a platform for alignment, engagements and finding efficiencies for Canada's participation in multisport games.<sup>475</sup>

Additionally, we were informed that collaboration between Multisport Service Organizations is difficult and that while some efforts have been made to increase such collaboration, limited resources have made such attempts challenging because organizations often find themselves competing for the same funding.

Other participants commented that, in some cases, there is excessive duplication in the work done by Multisport Service Organizations, National Sport Organizations, and provincial and territorial bodies. They noted that there needs to be better collaboration between these organizations, and suggested that efficiency could be found through the potential amalgamation of some of these organizations.

### **Participants' perspectives on Multisport Service Organizations' role and structure**

We heard concerns that Multisport Service Organizations have too much influence over the delivery of sport programs. Many agreed that the delivery of sport programs should fall to National Sport Organizations, and that Multisport Service Organization should be supporting the operations of National Sport Organizations. Similarly, some participants stated that Multisport Service Organizations receive a disproportionately high amount of funding given their impact on the sport system.

Overall, the Multisport Service Organizations model was described as disjointed, inefficient, and overly complex. The system is administratively heavy because all these organizations are required to have their own governance structures, services, and staff. As we discuss in greater detail in Chapter 12, these persisting issues related to the fragmented nature of the sport system led some participants to suggest these organizations should be centralized or consolidated into a single entity.

At the local level, some municipalities have Community Sport Councils. Participants shared that sport councils play an important role in the sport system to help reach the grassroots.

### **Participants' perspectives on Own the Podium**

Own the Podium was heavily criticized by numerous individuals and organizations from all levels of sport. A prevailing culture of winning at all costs and the prioritizing of performance is largely attributed to Own the Podium. There is a sense that the organization has changed the culture of sport and how sport is developing in Canada.

We heard that since Own the Podium's funding is tied to performance, National Sport Organizations are prioritizing performance at the national and international levels to the detriment of increasing participation and engaging with the grassroots.

We were told that the intense competition for funding is detrimental to sport in Canada. It can cause sport organizations to focus excessively on high performance, potentially neglecting other priorities within their sport, such as providing leadership in sport development across the nation.

Many suggested that Own the Podium should focus on promoting wellness and growth, fostering a sport culture from the ground up, and placing more emphasis on grassroots and entry into sport.

We also heard that Own the Podium has shifted its purpose to “winning well,” as opposed to simply winning. We understand that this is meant to emphasize safety and well-being in achieving excellence. However, there were mixed opinions on this “winning well” concept. Some questioned whether it was the true vision of Own the Podium or only a change on paper without practical applications.

We were also advised that while the name “Own the Podium” may have been appropriate at one time, it now leaves the impression that winning medals is the only priority in sport. Participants suggested that it does not reflect the current beliefs of Canadians, who also value increased participation in sport and creating inclusive and safe sport environments.

Others have criticized Own the Podium for placing a disproportionate emphasis on Olympic athletes, to the detriment of Paralympic athletes. The vast majority of its resources are focused on Olympic performance, while Paralympic sport appears to be a secondary focus. We were informed that there was approximately an 80/20 split in the funding provided by Own the Podium for the Olympics versus the Paralympics.

For many, this significant disparity in funding underscores a fundamental lack of understanding of Para sports and athletes with disabilities at Own the Podium. Some called for more Paralympic expertise at Own the Podium, and a better understanding of the needs of athletes with disabilities.

Many expressed concerns that Own the Podium and the Canadian Olympic Committee often interfere with the authority and independence of National Sport Organizations, leading to confusion about who staff must report to and how decisions are made. They explained that this is a dangerous structure that undermines National Sport Organizations' ability to support their athletes and maintain accountability.

Both the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee provide funding to Own the Podium. This funding is allocated to, among other things, assessing opportunities for enhanced excellence, identifying those who merit targeted support before the games, and next-generation support. Own the Podium ultimately makes recommendations to others regarding the provision of support.

Additionally, some participants raised questions of accountability, noting that Own the Podium's decision-making processes lack clear oversight and transparency in the eyes of the broader public and many of its interested parties. It was also noted that there was no clear transparency about how the funds were allocated or applied.

### **Participants' perspectives on conflicts of interest**

We heard significant concerns about the prevalence of real and apparent conflicts of interest within the Canadian sport system. Participants described the sport system as a “closed loop” with limited independent oversight where a few interconnected actors are influencing policy, funding, and the delivery of sport.

Participants noted that the proximity between some Multisport Service Organizations and Sport Canada created apparent conflicts of interest. For example, some organizations receiving public funds also held advisory or board positions in other organizations that decide how public funds should be allocated. Some believe that organizations who make decisions on the distribution of public funds should not also be recipients of public funds.

Participants spoke of the need to rebuild the Canadian sport system. Importantly, they also said that it is imperative to start with a clean slate. They advised that these structural problems need to be remedied to avoid perceived conflicts of interest and to rebuild trust and credibility. They also advocated for the creation of an independent oversight body.

## **Other Sport and Non-sport Organizations**

During our engagement activities, many expressed the view that a significant proportion of organizations in Canada fall outside of the “sport system” described here. Here we briefly outline other organizations that have an impact on amateur sport and were raised during our engagement process. These organizations include schools and postsecondary learning institutions, not-for-profit sport-for-development organizations, for-profit sport organizations, and professional leagues.



## SPORT AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Sport plays an important role in Canadian educational institutions at all levels. Many organizations and individuals described the importance of elementary school physical education classes and playground recreational sport as a critical introduction to sport for children.<sup>476</sup>

### Schools and school boards

Schools play a particularly critical role in the sport world. They introduce children to positive and healthy physical activity habits, team building, cooperation, and skills in learning new sports. Different institutions influence the delivery of school sport. These include the ministries of education, school boards, and sport organizations like Physical and Health Education Canada.

Elementary and postsecondary education in Canada is regulated at the provincial and territorial level. Each province and territory has a ministry or department responsible for education which, among other responsibilities, develops the curriculum.<sup>477</sup> In some provinces and territories, physical education is offered as a stand-alone course according to the curriculum, while, in others it is combined with health education. The desired learning outcomes and time allocated to physical education are inconsistent across the provinces and territories. Some provinces and territories also have requirements for daily physical activity.<sup>478</sup>

In 2024, ParticipACTION reported that only 35% of children from Kindergarten to grade 8 received 150 minutes of physical education per week and only 69% of high school students (in grades 9 to 12) took physical education.<sup>479</sup> To improve physical education, the organization recommends that physical education and daily physical activity should be prioritized with the same respect as core subjects such as math, science, and social studies. ParticipACTION also recommended making further efforts to increase physical education frequency and enhancing the physical education curriculum.<sup>480</sup>

School boards are important actors in the sport system<sup>481</sup>. They are the legal creations of their provincial and territorial governments.<sup>482</sup> School boards are responsible for operating school within legally prescribed parameters.<sup>483</sup> We note that some school boards have introduced specialized schools and programs. They allow students already engaged in high-performance athletic training programs to attend school with adapted schedules and with specialized support.<sup>484</sup> Private schools and academies focusing on athletic training and excellence have also emerged and have been on the rise in recent years.<sup>485</sup>

Regional school boards own and manage sport facilities across the country.<sup>486</sup> Some school boards have programs and policies to grant community access to school sport facilities. School equipment and facilities, such as gyms, playing fields, and pools, are critical parts of the Canadian sport environment that millions of Canadians use daily.

In certain regions, school boards and schools offer after-school or extracurricular sport programs. Some of these programs are offered by sport organizations. According to a survey completed by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 48% of schools offered supervised after-school programs for students specific to physical activity.<sup>487</sup> Schools have also developed special sport programming.

Teachers are responsible for delivering physical education programs, like other courses taught in schools. However, in addition to the regular curriculum, many teachers also volunteer to coach sport teams and deliver after-school sport programs. Teachers are hired, trained, supervised, and potentially disciplined and dismissed by school boards. They may also be subject to discipline through provincial or territorial teacher disciplinary bodies. Some but not all physical education classes are taught by specialized physical education teachers.<sup>488</sup>

Physical and Health Education Canada is a National Multisport Service Organization that promotes and advances physical education opportunities in schools. The organization offers programs, teaching tools, professional development services, and community activations.<sup>489</sup> It also invests in physical education through various grants that support equipment acquisition, professional development, and physical and health education programming and initiatives.<sup>490</sup>

### Universities and colleges

Universities and colleges are among the largest employers of coaches in Canada and represent the single largest sector within the Canadian sport world. Universities and colleges generally offer students a combination of recreational (“intramural”) and competitive sport programming. While some universities and colleges appear to collaborate with National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, thereby linking them to the broader sport system, universities and colleges also have their own rules, policies, and procedures.

Some competitive sport programming at the postsecondary level is overseen by U SPORTS for universities and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association for colleges. Both organizations are National Multisport Service Organizations and receive funding from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program. In 2024–2025, U SPORTS received \$903,700 and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association received \$397,700 through this program.<sup>491</sup> Through these organizations, these university and college sport programs are integrated within the broader sport system.

That said, not all universities and colleges are members of these governing bodies. It remains that these other university and college-level sport programs are therefore not subject to the same policies or procedures.

U SPORTS is the national governing body for Canadian university sport. It oversees 21 annual national championships. Its members are Canadian universities, divided into four regional conferences: Canada West, Ontario University Athletics, Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec, and Atlantic University Sport.<sup>492</sup> There are currently 58 member universities, representing approximately 15,000 athletes and 700 coaches.<sup>493</sup>

As the Canadian franchise holder of the International University Sports Federation, U SPORTS offers student athletes the opportunity to represent Canada at the World University Games.<sup>494</sup> It also provides scholarship opportunities to assist student athletes to fund their studies.<sup>495</sup> While U SPORTS does not oversee all sports, it does oversee basketball, cross country, curling, hockey, soccer, swimming, tennis, track and field, volleyball, wrestling, men's football, women's field hockey, and women's rugby.<sup>496</sup>

The Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association is the national coordinating body for college sport in Canada. It provides leadership, programs, and services that foster student athlete development through intercollegiate sport. It is the largest intercollegiate sport organization in Canada with 98 member institutions representing six regional member conferences:

- the Pacific Western Athletic Association in British Columbia
- the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference in Alberta and Saskatchewan
- the Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference in Manitoba
- the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association in Ontario
- the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec in Québec
- the Atlantic Collegiate Athletic Association in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.<sup>497</sup>

In total, the association caters to 7,500 intercollegiate athletes, over 900 coaches, and more than 150 sport administrators.<sup>498</sup> Its membership consists of a wide variety of postsecondary institutions, including community colleges, universities, university-colleges, CEGEPs<sup>499</sup> and technical Institutes.<sup>500</sup>

The association does not oversee all collegiate sport. It oversees soccer, volleyball, basketball, golf, cross country, curling, and badminton.<sup>501</sup>

### **NOT-FOR-PROFIT SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE ORGANIZATIONS**

There are countless not-for-profit organizations that utilize sport for development and peace, aiming to address social challenges and promote positive changes in communities. For these organizations participation in sport is a means to an end, rather than the final goal.

Given our mandate, the Commission did not specifically examine not-for-profit sport-for-development and peace organizations but notes that such organizations exist in Canada and internationally at all levels of sport. They typically address “the organization and mobilization of sport to meet non-sport goals of international development, such as health promotion, gender empowerment, education, and peace building and conflict resolution.”<sup>502</sup>

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights that “sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development.”<sup>503</sup> It recognizes the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace, noting its promotion of tolerance and respect. It also acknowledges the contributions that sport makes to individuals, communities, health, education, and social inclusion objectives.<sup>504</sup>

A notable example at the international level is Commonwealth Sport Canada (discussed earlier). Among its range of more traditional responsibilities, it also provides sport-for-development programming to promote individual and community social development. The organization shares Canadian sport knowledge, expertise, and resources, and participates in Commonwealth Sport programs and initiatives.<sup>505</sup> Commonwealth Sport Canada has led over 125 international initiatives that focus on empowering women and girls, promoting gender equity, developing youth leadership, raising awareness about and preventing HIV/AIDS, and building sport capacity.<sup>506</sup> Through sport for development, Commonwealth Sport Canada contributes to 10 of the 17 United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>507</sup>

Domestically, many sport organizations utilize sport for development and peace at the community level. These organizations generally focus on creating supportive and safe environments and building resilient communities. In the youth context, sport for development is about fostering an environment where “youth can develop as people.”<sup>508</sup> For example, MoreSports in Vancouver offers neighbourhood-based sport programs and leadership courses for children and youth.<sup>509</sup>

### **OTHER NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

We recognize that many other organizations in Canada operate outside the traditional sport ecosystem. These organizations offer single or multisport services at the community level and include 2SLGBTQI+ led initiatives, Indigenous-led sport and recreation organizations and programs, and volunteer-run programs.

### **PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT CLUBS AND INSTITUTES**

There is a growing number of private for-profit clubs and institutes worldwide. Like their not-for-profit counterparts, private clubs and institutes offer sport programs for youth and adults. The number of for-profit organizations has grown for various reasons, including in response to a rising demand from parents and young athletes who aspire to “specialize” in sport with a focus on elite and professional sport. Basketball, for example, has significantly grown in popularity over the last decade, which has resulted in an increased demand for opportunities to join private basketball clubs — often because of a lack of community basketball opportunities.

Although not specific to private for-profit clubs, the Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report 2025 notes that a higher proportion of youth participate in organized sports at a local association/club compared to at a school (on a team), at a recreation centre or at an afterschool program.<sup>510</sup>

For-profit clubs and institutes generally operate at the community level of sport, but are prohibitively expensive for many. For example, an institute outside of Toronto offers high-performance sport training at the high-school

level for nearly \$30,000 per year. This fee includes boarding, books, athletic fees, and other additional expenses. The institute also offers summer academy camps, with options for day and overnight stays at varying prices.

These private for-profit clubs and institutes are largely disconnected from National, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. A few National Sport Organizations such as Basketball Canada (discussed above) and Canada Soccer have programs to accredit or license clubs. For instance, Canada Soccer's Club Licensing Program is a principles-based initiative that promotes best practices for organizational development both on and off the field. The program is available to traditional not-for-profit soccer clubs, private academies, and any other member soccer organizations. The organization's status as not-for-profit or private is not relevant to its eligibility for inclusion in the program.<sup>511</sup>

### **PROFESSIONAL SPORT LEAGUES**

Although professional sport leagues fall outside the Commission's mandate, they are a critical part of the sport environment. For many Canadians, they are woven into the fabric of Canadian culture and community. Their presence and profile have a profound impact on the aspirations and activities of Canadian youth.

Professional sport leagues include, to name a few: the National Hockey League and Professional Women's Hockey League, Major League Baseball, the Women's National Basketball League, the National Basketball Association, the National Lacrosse League, the Canadian Football League, Major League Soccer, the Canadian Premier League (men's soccer), and the Northern Super League (women's soccer).

The growing appeal of professional sports has had a significant impact on sport organizations, schools, and coaches, as young people in Canada and elsewhere are inspired by dreams of success, fame, and fortune.<sup>512</sup> That said, such aspirations only become a reality for a minuscule number of athletes.

Women's professional sport leagues in Canada have grown with the introduction of the Women's National Basketball Association, the Northern Super League, and the Professional Women's Hockey League. As women's professional sport continues to grow, so too does the percentage of girls involved in sport and physical activity.<sup>513</sup>

We did not examine the world of professional sport in Canada but are aware of the financial status and size of some professional sport organizations. Despite their substantial resources, it is unclear whether professional sport entities make any significant financial contributions to National Sport Organizations. We are sure that there may be exceptions.

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON OTHER SPORT AND NON-SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **Participants' perspectives on university and college sport**

Throughout our engagement activities, many participants highlighted the importance of scholastic and varsity sports, including student athletes. In particular, we learned there is an increased focus and importance placed on competitiveness and training for high-performance athletes at the college and university levels.



Yet, we heard that for the most part, universities and colleges exist outside of the federated sport system. In many cases, their relationships with National Sport Organizations are limited. We learned that certain sports in Canadian universities are not “recognized” despite offering high-quality competition and that these sports exist only as “clubs.” We learned that few universities and colleges with athletic departments collaborate comprehensively with the high-performance sport system.

Participants believe that university and college sport should become more integrated with National Sport Organizations and their programs to ensure greater accountability. Others suggested that Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes could collaborate with universities and colleges to develop sport scientists, elite sport leaders, and administrators to professionalize the development and operations of sport organizations.

During our engagement activities, participants expressed concerns that student athletes are leaving the country to attend foreign colleges and universities on athletic scholarships, particularly in the United States. By some accounts, approximately 2,000 Canadian student athletes relocate to the United States each year to pursue professional careers.<sup>514</sup> Some participants believe that the ill-defined role of universities and colleges in the Canadian sport system and the lack of collaboration with high-performance sport have contributed to this mass exodus of Canada’s teenage athletes. They called for better strategies to keep Canadian athletes in the country.

Participants noted that a more comprehensive collaboration between universities, colleges, and National Sport Organizations could help to combat the exodus of student athletes to the United States. We heard that many of the best high-school athletes leave their schools to enter sport academies with the hope of enhancing their profile and exposure to American college scouts. Subsequently, many of them attempt to leave for the United States where there may be better academic and sporting opportunities.

The absence of Para sport in university and college sport was also noted. Participants recommended that programming in postsecondary sports should be expanded to include Para and Disability sports.

Since the publication of the Preliminary Report, participants reiterated the importance of post-secondary sport. Universities and colleges are seen as the biggest employers of coaches, officials, and medical professional in the sport ecosystem. They also provide vital sport infrastructure like swimming pools, turf fields, and arenas, that benefit communities across the country.

University and college sport were seen as crucial to the retention of athletes and coaches. Many post-secondary sport participants gain valuable high-performance experience, namely through U SPORTS and Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association programming. University and college sport were described as vehicles that feed all other groups within the sport system, including National Sport Organizations. For example, some university athletes also compete on national teams. We heard that there is a clear need for a greater focus on university and college sport in Canada.

Additionally, various participants disagreed that university and college sport is disconnected from the Canadian Sport system. They noted that it is connected to the broader sport system through U SPORTS and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association. These organizations receive funding from Sport Canada and are subject to the same standards as other National Multisport Service Organizations.

We were informed that U SPORTS and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association regularly collaborate and aim to align with National Sport Organizations and Provincial Sport Organizations. For example, the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association has partnership agreements with National and Provincial Sport Organizations in its seven sports pertaining to playing regulations and the assignment of officials at national championships. These organizations and their members institutions are also integrated within their own communities.

However, participants also highlighted that the purview of U SPORTS and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association is limited to the sports they oversee. Many universities and colleges have varsity sport teams and offer other sport activities that are not affiliated with U SPORTS or the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association.

Furthermore, it has been noted that U SPORTS' oversight of its member universities is limited, and its governance role is often unclear.<sup>515</sup> Universities each have their own policies and procedures, and scholars observed that "policies and frameworks are not parallel across all [U SPORTS' member] institutions."<sup>516</sup>

For university athletes that also compete for National Sport Organizations, we understand that there is oftentimes confusion about when university policies apply versus others (such as the National Sport Organization's policies or U SPORTS's policies). As a result, many student-athletes are uncertain about where to report maltreatment. Which body has precedence when harm occurs is also unclear.<sup>517</sup>

Some participants suggested that U SPORTS and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association should be amalgamated to form a single organization responsible for the oversight of both university and college sport. They explained that amalgamating these organizations could also improve governance and create efficiencies, given that they have similar mandates. Some recommended that the college and university system should be brought under a single entity, with subdivisions for the conferences.

### **Participants' perspectives on sport in schools**

Schools have historically been important sources of free or low-cost youth sport opportunities. We learned that for an overwhelming majority of Canadians, schools are where they learn and play sports. Schools often provide children with their first exposure to a wide range of team sports, rules, and sporting culture.

School sports tend to be more affordable and accessible because they take place within the school context. However, there are fewer school sport team opportunities, in part because teachers lack the capacity to take on the additional and unpaid role of coaching a school team. In some cases, programs offered in schools are becoming less accessible because only youth who are athletically gifted or who have received specialized

training in clubs are earning spots on teams. Where school sport is not available, the alternative is often club sports which can be costly.

Participants identified the important role of intramural sport in school settings. They see it as an untapped opportunity to provide enjoyable, meaningful levels of sport and physical activity for large numbers of otherwise uninvolved but interested students who do not wish to participate in more competitive settings.

The Commission also heard from people across many parts of the sport world who regretted the diminishing hours of mandatory physical education in elementary schools and the lack of consistent mandatory physical education in secondary schools. Although sport programs offered by schools still exist, we were advised that these programs are dwindling. We also heard that the quality of physical activity programs in some regions has declined.

Many participants believe that physical education should remain a part of the curriculum for elementary and secondary schools. Some suggested that mandatory physical education should be extended to grade 12. In addition to recommending the reinstatement of these programs and increasing physical education hours, some suggested that schools could be used to increase access to sport by, for example, providing after-hours programs and activities for youth.

We were informed that the number of trained physical education teachers has fallen dramatically. Consequently, most physical activity and extracurricular sport opportunities in school systems are provided by regular teaching staff who lack specialized training. This often results in poorly organized sport and physical activity with unstructured approaches. Many noted that regular teaching staff do not necessarily have the pedagogic, sport, coaching knowledge or experience required to teach sport and create safe sport environments in schools. We were also made aware of the unrealistic pressures on teachers to volunteer in sport settings.

On numerous occasions, we were advised that there are very few partnerships and collaborations between the school system and the sport system. Although some Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations assist with high-school sport events, participants emphasized that there could be tremendous benefits from closer collaboration with sport organizations. Community sport leaders were seen as an untapped resource to improve school sport.

Some participants advocated for creating pathways and increasing collaboration between the sport system and the education system. The goal would be to create resources to support teachers, principals, and other staff in schools who are on the front lines of delivering sport programs in these settings. We also heard suggestions that there should be forums for collaboration between teachers and coaches, where teachers can learn how to teach sport and receive crucial education on safe sport.

We were advised that the foundational role of physical education and school sport must be recognized and prioritized as a cornerstone of equity and inclusion.

Physical education and school sport provide opportunities for youth to access sport and movement, foster lifelong benefits, and ensure that everyone starts on a level playing field.

On a similar topic, participants recommended that Para sport should be included in the physical education curricula for all children and that the necessary equipment should be made readily available, such as sport chairs and storage space for personal adaptive equipment.

Participants suggested that the federal government and the provincial and territorial governments should, through the Council of Ministers for Education, discuss and agree on the collective role of schools and the education system in supporting the sport system. Participants also called for the creation of a Canada-wide introduction to sport programs for children under the age of 13. They argued that it would encourage wide exposure to different sport opportunities under the leadership of trained coaches.

More generally, a lack of facilities was identified as a barrier to clubs' and other organizations' ability to provide opportunities to participate in sport. Participants noted that without access to school facilities, some sport organizations would not be able to offer programs. This was especially the case for basketball.

Some suggested that partnering with school boards to provide after-hours access to school facilities could be a viable solution to this problem. We were advised that this is particularly important in rural communities, where schools are sometimes the only available indoor spaces that can accommodate sport programs. Many felt that gyms in schools should be considered community gyms and that schools should facilitate community access to them.

Typically, school boards control access to schools and their sport facilities. In some communities, appropriate partnerships between school boards and Community Sport Organizations develop and they successfully share facilities. Some boards have policies that allow local clubs and associations to use the fields and gyms after school hours during evenings, weekends, and the summer.

However, for the most part, schools remain empty after hours and over the summer. We were told that the process to get school board approval was often too complicated, and in many instances, access was denied. That said, we were also informed that some school boards have concerns related to safety, liability, and the maintenance costs associated with opening their facilities to the public.

### **Participants' perspectives on sport-for-development organizations**

Participants recognized that sport-for-development programs improved well-being, employability, and education. Sport for development makes communities more inclusive and resilient.

Participants spoke of the importance of distinguishing between grassroots or community-level sport and sport for development. In their view, sport for development should be recognized as a value to society. They told us that it should be given the same attention as competitive sport. Participants also noted that various federal ministries currently oversee and fund sport for development.

We heard that there needs to be greater awareness of and focus on sport for development. It could also be incorporated into existing related legislation, programs, and outcomes. For example, it could be incorporated into policies and programs for newcomers. Some believe that sport for development and community building should be the sport system's guiding purpose.

### **Participants' perspectives on other not-for-profit organizations**

The Commission was frequently told of the invaluable nature of not-for-profit organizations that bring communities together and offer opportunities to members of marginalized communities to participate in sport. We were advised that innovative programs are more trusted and effective at the community level, especially among equity-deserving populations.

Because they exist outside of the "sport system," this segment of the sport community is beyond the purview and oversight of National, Provincial, and Territorial Sport Organizations. That said, for many, it is crucial that these organizations retain their autonomy. We were advised that these organizations should not be forced into the formal dynamic that usually exists between National Sport Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and clubs. This is especially the case for cultural or community-based organizations.

Instead of "formalizing" these not-for-profit organizations, participants suggested that they should be recognized and respected as essential parts of a pluralistic sport ecosystem, and that they should be engaged as partners. To promote alignment with the sport system, not-for-profit organizations would benefit from standards regarding safety, coaching, and accessibility to guide and support them without forcing conformity.

A consistent issue raised by not-for-profit organizations, which also applies more broadly throughout the sport system, was the insufficient number of facilities. Many of these organizations rely on school and municipal facilities to deliver their sport program, but these are in short supply while demand is high.

### **Participants' perspectives on private for-profit clubs and associations**

We heard about the challenges posed by the increasing number of private for-profit clubs and associations operating throughout the country. There has been significant growth in academies associated with professional and semi-professional sport teams. A growing number of private clubs has been observed in gymnastics, martial arts, cheer, hockey, figure skating, golf, and equestrian. The sheer scale and growth of this sector are not necessarily apparent to many, and they present both challenges and opportunities for the Canadian sport community.

Many participants in our engagement process expressed skepticism regarding these private organizations. Their primary motivation, we heard, is financial gain rather than providing access to safe and inclusive sport and



supporting athletes, many of whom are youth. Indeed, we were advised of the high costs associated with such organizations. For this reason, participants affirmed that the goals of these private associations are incompatible with what is known to be best for children. They also asserted that community-focused, not-for-profit clubs and organizations and schools were often better suited to provide overall sport programming for children.

We also heard about issues related to the governance of private clubs. On several occasions, we were told that these organizations' boards of directors are frequently made up of athletes' parents and others who lack the necessary knowledge, experience, expectations, and approaches to appropriately govern the organization. Others told us of unchecked favouritism in team selections and rampant conflicts of interest.

Participants also expressed concerns about the lack of oversight over these for-profit associations because National, Provincial, and Territorial Sport Organizations have no leverage over them. The need for increased accountability and transparency from these organizations was also emphasized on numerous occasions.

We learned that National Sport Organizations have neither the resources to monitor or oversee, nor the mechanisms to collaborate or communicate with them. The lack of relationship between National Sport Organizations and private clubs, and the increasing numbers of private clubs, threaten to further fragment the sport system. Participants also noted that private organizations create confusion and increase risks for Canadian families attempting to navigate a complex sport system.

Participants noted that private organizations may be owned by coaches who impose rules and conditions that are restrictive, that limit parental participation, and that mandate non-disclosure agreements. This can result in the arbitrary expulsion of children whose parents express concerns over problematic behaviours or practices occurring in such settings.

We also heard concerns about the degree to which parents contribute to problems in these private settings, often as a result of unrealistic or disproportionate expectations of their children's athletic potential.

There is a consensus among a majority of participants that these organizations must be held to the same high standards as registered sport entities. It would bring private organizations out of the shadows operationally (with respect to safe sport and governance) and it would add funds to the federated/structured sport system. Others suggested a buyer-beware approach where parents and participants would be responsible for deciding whether to assume the risk of participating in private settings.

Various suggestions were brought forward to improve the oversight of private clubs. Some believe that provincial and territorial governments need to do more to prohibit clubs from existing if they are not a part of the provincial or territorial sport ecosystem. Others told us that private clubs should have to be licensed or verified by National, Provincial, or Territorial Sport Organizations. Some suggested that there could be a verified club program where benefits are derived from adherence to policies and training.

There were also calls for municipalities to play a bigger role in governing these private organizations. Since municipalities own a majority of the sport infrastructure, participants explained that municipalities should impose minimum requirements on organizations who seek to rent their facilities, which could capture some private organizations. For example, municipalities and schools could only rent their facilities to either “verified” private organizations and other organizations, or to National, Provincial, Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations that are a part of the sport system.

Another suggestion to improve oversight was to create legislative requirements that local sport organizations must be a member of National, Provincial, or Territorial Sport Organizations. We heard that this legislation should extend to private clubs and academies.

## **Conclusion: Canada’s sport system is broken**

As we saw in this chapter, the Canadian sport system is complex, inconsistent, and fragmented. We heard about a lack of federal government leadership to lead the sport system, insufficient intergovernmental collaboration, erratic policy development, inadequate funding, and political cycles that lead to short-term thinking. The sport system, such as it is, effectively evolved over decades of responding to various crises, pressures, and shifting political priorities.

Many participants struggled to describe or paint a picture of a cohesive Canadian sport system. The proliferation of organizations and overlapping mandates led to inefficiencies, duplications, a lack of alignment, and confusion, while conflicts of interest, a lack of transparency, and limited oversight of sport organizations has further undermined trust in the sport system and contributed to the safe sport crisis.

In many of our conversations, participants told us, that while important for national pride, there was a disproportionate emphasis on high-performance and elite sport, which often came at the expense of developing sport at the community level and increasing access to sport and physical activity. Participants called for a rebalancing of priorities between high-performance and participation in sport to reflect the values and wishes of Canadians.

The Commission’s findings and Calls to Action to address these concerns and others can be found in the chapters that follow.

# **CHAPTER 6:**

## **Indigenous-led sport and the Canadian sport system: structures, interactions and reconciliation**





## Chapter 6:

# Indigenous-led sport and the Canadian sport system: structures, interactions and reconciliation

Our review of Canada's sport ecosystem would not be complete without considering the realities of Indigenous-led sport as well as Indigenous people's interactions with the "mainstream" sport system in Canada.

We took steps to meaningfully engage with Indigenous people throughout our activities to ensure their voices, insights, and perspectives were heard. As a result, the Commission had the privilege to meet with Indigenous athletes, leaders, governments, and community representatives. We recognize the contributions of all the people who welcomed the opportunity to share with us their experiences, perspectives, and insights on the sport system and safe sport.

This chapter examines the relationship between Indigenous people and sport in Canada. It begins by highlighting sport's significance for Indigenous people, noting how sport is deeply interwoven with Indigenous cultures and history. Subsequently, we consider colonialism's impacts on Indigenous people and sport before exploring the various Indigenous sporting bodies and structures. We then outline four key documents relevant for discussions regarding Indigenous communities and sport in Canada.

Next, we present participants' perspectives on Indigenous sport gathered during our engagement process (gathered via meetings, written submissions and other documents shared with the Commission) and at the National Summit organized by the Commission. Finally, the chapter details the Commission's findings related to Indigenous sport and concludes with Calls to Action to foster a more equitable, respectful, and inclusive sport system for all Indigenous people in Canada.

## Role of sport in Indigenous cultures

Sport has always been important in Indigenous cultures.<sup>518</sup> Competitions that showcased skill, strength, and endurance were a prominent feature in many Indigenous communities.<sup>519</sup> Hunting abilities were often central to these competitions. Each Indigenous nation, community, and family had its own sports and games, with practices that were sometimes shared across groups and regions as people travelled, met, negotiated, and engaged in competition and ceremony.<sup>520</sup>



Sport and physical activity for Indigenous people is “holistic, community oriented, land based, and purposeful.”<sup>521</sup>

This view and approach to sport are illustrated by the benefits associated with sport and physical activity for Indigenous people outlined in Chapter 2. As we saw in that chapter, sport can be healing for Indigenous people. Movement is described as medicine: it brings communities together, it fosters a sense of pride in Indigenous identity, and it provides a vehicle for language and knowledge transmission.

Indigenous athletes serve as powerful role models within their communities. Their journeys exemplify strength and resilience. The celebration and representation of Indigenous athletes in sport are crucial because they allow for Indigenous people to see themselves reflected in sport.

### IMPACTS OF THE COLONIZATION OF SPORT

An understanding of the context in which the Canadian sport system emerged, and continues to operate, is important to facilitate a better understanding of the challenges and struggles that Indigenous people and communities face when engaging with the Canadian sport structures.

When European settlers arrived in Canada, they introduced an approach to sport that has been described as “calisthenics, gymnastics, military drill, and competitive sports.”<sup>522</sup> This way of engaging with sport and physical activity was, and still is, very different from the Indigenous approach just outlined.<sup>523</sup> The colonial structures that were imposed on Indigenous people aimed for assimilation and caused profound harm that continues to be experienced today.<sup>524</sup>

We learned that one such harm is the Canadian sport system’s historical view and treatment of Indigenous sport and physical activity through a lens of cultural superiority. It tends to see Indigenous sport as “uncivilized,” “less than,” and “beneath” the Canadian sport system, further contributing to anti-Indigenous racism.

The Commission understands that many non-Indigenous people still today perceive traditional Indigenous sport as being cultural practices rather than sport. Indigenous people and communities have continued to resist these views, advocating for the advancement of an Indigenous-led sport system, organizing Indigenous-led games and tournaments, and reasserting Indigenous Peoples’ cultural identity, traditions, practices, and self-determination.<sup>525</sup>

## Indigenous governments and communities

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis governments, councils, communities, and organizations deliver sport and physical activity programs in their communities. They administer sport programs, provide education and resources, and fund athletes, programs, and events. The details of such programs, services, and policies vary by community.

Some Indigenous governments support their communities through sport and recreation grants. Some also host and sponsor sport-related events. Others have a ministry and minister specific to sport and physical activity. In some cases, they work collaboratively with their respective Provincial or Territorial Aboriginal Sport Body and Association of Friendship Centres.

Some Indigenous communities also have a dedicated sport and recreation department that provides community members with the opportunity to engage and participate in physical activity, organized sport, interactive community events, and cultural activities. As a result, they enjoy year-round programming aimed at enhancing quality of life through community-driven sport, recreation, and other physical activities.

### **THE ABORIGINAL SPORT CIRCLE AND PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL ABORIGINAL SPORT BODIES**

In the late 1980s, the concept of an Indigenous secretariat in the federal government responsible for advancing Indigenous sport in Canada emerged and gained momentum within Indigenous communities.<sup>526</sup> In 1992, the Minister's Task Force entitled "Sport: The Way Ahead" supported the creation of an Aboriginal Secretariat.<sup>527</sup> This led to the establishment in 1995 of the Aboriginal Sport Circle.<sup>528</sup>

Sport Canada categorizes the Aboriginal Sport Circle as a National Multisport Service Organization.<sup>529</sup> The Aboriginal Sport Circle describes itself as Canada's national voice for Aboriginal sport and recreation, bringing together the interests of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.<sup>530</sup> Initially created to address the need for more accessible and equitable sport and recreation opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples, the Aboriginal Sport Circle's mandate has since evolved to include physical activity, health, nutrition, physical education, and wellness.<sup>531</sup>

#### **Structure and mandate**

The Aboriginal Sport Circle is a member-based, not-for-profit organization that operates as a collective composed of its member Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies. It guides national priorities and coordinates interjurisdictional collaboration. It does not deliver community-level sport directly.<sup>532</sup>

The organization has 13 member Provincial or Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies.<sup>533</sup> The respective structures of the Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies, mandates and the services they provide to their communities may vary in nature to meet the specific needs, governance contexts, and cultural priorities of their region. As members of the Aboriginal Sport Circle, they represent the community interests of the Aboriginal Peoples in their respective jurisdictions.<sup>534</sup>

We were informed that, through its activities and initiatives, the Aboriginal Sport Circle engages and mobilizes Indigenous sport leaders and communities both within the Indigenous sport system and elsewhere in the Canadian sport system to advocate for the advancement of Indigenous-led governance. Below we outline some of the Aboriginal Sport Circle's initiatives in terms of programming, sporting events and advocacy.

## Programming

Working in partnership with other National Multisport Service Organizations, the Aboriginal Sport Circle developed and delivers programming, including the following:

- **The Athlete Support Program**, which aims to increase physical literacy in Indigenous children and increase the number of Indigenous people who remain active for life. It also seeks to create a pathway into high-performance sport for Indigenous athletes. This program, developed in collaboration with Sport for Life, recognizes that Canada's mainstream sport pathways do not reflect the needs and cultural priorities of Indigenous people.<sup>535</sup>
- **The Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development**, designed as a roadmap for developing sport and physical activity among Indigenous people.<sup>536</sup>
- **The Aboriginal Coaching Program**, was created in partnership with the Coaching Association of Canada. The program is offered to coaches of First Nation, Métis, or Inuit descent and non-Indigenous coaches working with Indigenous communities or Indigenous participants.<sup>537</sup>
- **The Aboriginal Apprentice Coaching Program**, was created in partnership with the Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies, Provincial and Territorial coaching representatives, the Canada Games Council and the Coaching Association of Canada. Through this program, each province and territory can send two coaches of First Nations, Métis and Inuit ancestry to the Canada Games in apprentice coach roles.<sup>538</sup>

## Sporting events

The Aboriginal Sport Circle also hosts sporting events.<sup>539</sup> The National Aboriginal Hockey Championship is an example of an Indigenous-led event established by the Aboriginal Sport Circle in 2002.<sup>540</sup> It is a Hockey-Canada-sanctioned event that the Aboriginal Sport Circle co-hosts each year with a host community. The Aboriginal Sport Circle describes it as:

“[...] a forum for elite U15 and U18 aged Indigenous youth to not only compete for sport glory, but to also come together in ceremony and comraderies. This annual event fosters cultural unity and pride as it celebrates Indigenous athletes from across the country.”<sup>541</sup>

The Aboriginal Sport Circle is also the franchise holder for the North American Indigenous Games.<sup>542</sup> These Games are discussed in more detail below.

### Advocacy and leadership

We understand that as it relates to its role in advocacy, leadership, and national strategic direction, the Aboriginal Sport Circle was involved in the following:

- The Maskwachees Declaration (2000).<sup>543</sup>
- The creation of the Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport (2005).<sup>544</sup>
- The creation of "The Spirit of Sport: Active Together — A National Strategy for Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada" (2025).<sup>545</sup> This recently released strategy is discussed in more detail later.

The Commission also understands that the Aboriginal Sport Circle regularly presents to federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of sport. It has been involved with negotiating the North American Indigenous Games Funding Framework, securing federal funding for Indigenous sport through Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities, and working on bilateral funding agreements with provinces and territories.

We have also been informed that the Standing Working Group for Indigenous Sport Development was created following advocacy efforts by the Aboriginal Sport Circle. This working group falls under the Federal and Provincial/Territorial Sport Committee and reports to Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation. This working group was established to identify priorities and co-develop action plans in response to the Calls to Action found in the 2015 Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (discussed in more detail later).<sup>546</sup>

### Sources of funding

The Aboriginal Sport Circle and the 13 Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies receive funding as part of Sport Canada's Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities program which is a component of its overall Sport Support Program.<sup>547</sup> Funds are available annually and can cover multi-year expenses. In 2024–2025, the Aboriginal Sport Circle received \$ 2,120,000 from Sport Canada's Sport Support Program.<sup>548</sup>

The Commission also understands that Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies may also receive other sources of funding, including through bilateral agreements between their respective province or territory and the Government of Canada. We were informed that this funding is typically provided on a yearly basis which makes it difficult to plan or implement strategic planning. Often, the funding received through bilateral agreements does not get released until mid-year, which adversely affects the Aboriginal Sport Body's operations.

## INDIGENOUS GAMES

Indigenous games preserve and revive cultural heritage and can also serve as a vehicle for reconciliation in Canada. Some observers feel that the revival of traditional games and practices is linked to the survival of Indigenous people and nations<sup>549</sup> and is integrated into community life. These games and practices teach important skills and values.<sup>550</sup>

There are several Indigenous games, either multisport events or sport-specific events, for Indigenous athletes. Although we recognize there are other Indigenous games, events, and organizations that conduct important work in the context of Indigenous sport, the North American Indigenous Games and the Arctic Winter Games were the events most often identified throughout our engagement process as being highly significant to Indigenous people.

### North American Indigenous Games

The North American Indigenous Games are a multisport event for Indigenous North American athletes.<sup>551</sup> They are one of the largest sporting and cultural gatherings of Indigenous Peoples in North America.<sup>552</sup>

This event grew out of an Indigenous-led process and without government support.<sup>553</sup> Some participants told us that these games are also unique in ensuring that Indigenous culture is “infused” into all aspects of the Games.

The North American Indigenous Games Council serves as the international governing body of the North American Indigenous Games. It is made up of 26 members representing the 13 provinces and territories in Canada and 13 regions in the United States.<sup>554</sup> The council is an incorporated, non-profit organization.<sup>555</sup>

These games were created to promote healthy lifestyles, strengthen self-image, and highlight Indigenous role models through sport and culture. The Games program features 16 sports, including three traditional Indigenous sports: canoe/kayak, lacrosse, and 3D archery.<sup>556</sup> The vision of the Games is as follows:

“[...] to improve the quality of life for Indigenous Peoples by supporting self-determined sports and cultural activities which encourage equal access to participation in the social / cultural / spiritual fabric of the community in which they reside and which respects [sic] Indigenous distinctiveness.”<sup>557</sup>

### Arctic Winter Games

The Arctic Winter Games are a multisport event founded in 1969 to provide athletes from the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions a place to compete within their own cultural context.<sup>558</sup> Their mission is to “provide a meaningful Arctic Winter Games Experience.”<sup>559</sup>

Until recently, the Arctic Winter Games occurred on a biennial basis. In early December 2025, the Arctic Winter Games International Committee announced that the games would now take place on a three-year cycle.<sup>560</sup>



The Arctic Winter Games (also known as the Arctic Winter Games International Committee) is a corporation under the *Canada Corporations Act*.<sup>561</sup> They are governed by a board of directors from each of its permanent members: Alaska, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Northern Alberta, Nunavut, and Greenland.

Through a bidding process, the Arctic Winter Games organization selects a hosting community with whom they develop a formal contract. This host community then in turn establishes a not-for-profit host society for the event. The host community, through the society, stages the games in accordance with the Arctic Winter Games requirements.<sup>562</sup>

The Arctic Winter Games organization's key activities include selecting a host community, overseeing the games' preparation, and ensuring their technical and cultural integrity. Through these activities, the event fosters the development of young athletes, promotes cultural exchange, and strengthens the bonds among Circumpolar North communities.<sup>563</sup>

The Commission understands that the Arctic Winter Games generally do not receive any funding from the federal government of Canada. However, we understand that when games are hosted in Canada, the host society typically receives funding from Sport Canada and Infrastructure Canada. As such, funding for the Arctic Winter Games typically comes from a combination of provincial/territorial government contributions, corporate sponsorships, grants, and in-kind donations. For example, in 2024, the Games' budget was supported largely by grants, sponsorships, and in-kind donations.<sup>564</sup> In addition, the Government of Yukon committed \$4 million in funding and an additional \$350,000 in in-kind contributions for the 2026 Games.<sup>565</sup>

### **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDSHIP CENTRES**

The National Association of Friendship Centres, referred to as the Friendship Centre Movement, is a network of member Friendship Centres and Provincial and Territorial Associations.<sup>566</sup> While it is not a sport organization and does not have any specific policy or program initiatives related to sport or physical activity, it plays a significant role in the sport context for urban Indigenous Communities.

It promotes and advocates for its members and supports them in achieving their missions and visions within urban Indigenous communities. It also shares urban Indigenous perspectives with municipal, provincial, territorial, and federal governments, and non-Indigenous civil society organizations.<sup>567</sup>

The National Association of Friendship Centres defines urban Indigenous people as:

“First Nations, Inuit, and Métis living in small, medium and large communities, including rural, isolated and remote communities, which are off-reserve; outside of their home community, community of origin or settlement; or outside of Inuit Nunangat (Inuit Homelands).”<sup>568</sup>

As a not-for-profit association incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, the National Association of Friendship Centres is governed by a volunteer board of directors and an executive committee of

five members drawn from the board. The board is made up of 11 regional representatives, including members from the Indigenous Youth Council <sup>569</sup> and the Association's senate.<sup>570</sup> Board members are selected by the Provincial and Territorial Associations.<sup>571</sup>

The Association receives funding in accordance with various agreements with the Government of Canada and other contributors. It distributes funds to its members across Canada and to other organizations that carry out the projects intended to fulfill its mandate.

In 2023, the Association's revenues totaled \$49,921,261, most of which came from government contributions (\$48,445,884).<sup>572</sup> These government contributions came from Indigenous Services Canada, Canadian Heritage (Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program<sup>573</sup>), Department of Justice, Employment and Social Development Canada, Department for Women and Gender Equality, Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Safety Canada, Environment Canada, and Canadian Institutes of Health Research.<sup>574</sup>

The National Association of Friendship Centres, while providing through its members culturally appropriate services for Indigenous people, is not a recipient of any sport-specific funding from Sport Canada. Moreover, it is not eligible to receive funds from the Aboriginal Sport Circle because it is not a Provincial or Territorial Aboriginal Sport Body. In some cases, the Association represents and provides services to Indigenous people who may not be represented by Provincial or Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies.

## Indigenous rights and reconciliation

Throughout the Commission's engagement process, four key documents were noted as being highly relevant for discussions regarding Indigenous communities and sport in Canada:

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (2008 to 2015)
- The Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2016 to 2019)
- The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2021)
- The *Commonwealth (Lekwungen) Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples* (2023).

Below, we provide context surrounding each of these key documents and government responses to them.

### THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION'S CALLS TO ACTION

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in 2008, through a legal settlement between the Residential Schools Survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives, and the parties responsible for creating and operating the schools, namely the federal government and church bodies.<sup>575</sup>

The Commission was broadly mandated to promote truth, healing, and reconciliation for Indigenous people impacted, directly or indirectly, by the unfortunate legacies of the residential school system. It was also intended to educate all Canadians about the history and enduring effects of these schools.<sup>576</sup> Over the course of its mandate, the Commission conducted extensive research and gathered testimonies from Residential School Survivors, their families, community members, former residential school staff, and others.<sup>577</sup>

In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued their multi-volume Final Report which included Ten Principles for Reconciliation and 94 Calls to Action. These Calls to Action were directed to all sectors of Canadian society with the objective of promoting and advancing reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous Peoples.<sup>578</sup>

Among these Calls to Action, five focused on fostering reconciliation through sport and physical activity — Calls to Action 87 to 91.<sup>579</sup> In response, the federal government has committed to support specific Indigenous sport initiatives, including funding First Nation, Métis, and Inuit governments in support of various programs.<sup>580</sup> We provide below an overview of that response to these five Calls to Action based on the data available on the Government of Canada's Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. At the time of writing this Report, the webpage was last updated in June 2024.<sup>581</sup>

### Funding for sport and physical activity

To support the implementation of Calls to Action 87 to 91, the Government of Canada made the following financial investments. In the 2017 federal budget it allocated \$18.9 million over five years, starting in 2017-2018, along with \$5.5 million in ongoing funding on a four-year cycle thereafter to support Indigenous sport leadership and culturally relevant programming.<sup>582</sup> The 2022 budget reaffirmed that investment with \$20 million allocated over five years, commencing in 2022 – 2023.<sup>583</sup>

### Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 87 (public education)

**“87.** We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.”<sup>584</sup>

With respect to Call to Action 87, the Government of Canada reports that it is making progress.<sup>585</sup> A part of the investments noted above supports the Aboriginal Sport Circle for their operations and programming, including the delivery of the Tom Longboat Award and the National Indigenous Coaching Awards. The Tom Longboat Award recognizes Indigenous athletes for their outstanding contributions to sport in Canada,<sup>586</sup> and the National Indigenous Coaching Awards is presented each year to two Indigenous coaches, one man and one woman, who demonstrates exemplary integrity in their approach to coaching.<sup>587</sup>

The Government of Canada indicates that the recipients received awards at the 2022 Canada's Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and at the 2022 Coaching Association of Canada Petro-Canada Sport Leadership Gala.<sup>588</sup> The next steps the Government outlined in response to this Call to Action refer to the 2024 awards.<sup>589</sup> We understand that the 2024 awards have now been received.

In addition to managing these awards, the Aboriginal Sport Circle also engages with Canada's Sports Hall of Fame (the Tom Longboat Awards) and the Coaching Association of Canada (the National Indigenous Coaching Awards) to promote these awards and other relevant recognition projects.<sup>590</sup>

### **Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 88 (development, growth, and support)**

**"88.** We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel."<sup>591</sup>

The Government of Canada considers the implementation of Call to Action 88 complete. In response to Call to Action 88, the Government of Canada refers to the continued support for the North American Indigenous Games team preparation and travel (through bilateral agreements) as part of the investments noted above,<sup>592</sup> and the ongoing funding and the funding framework in place for hosting the North American Indigenous Games. A new funding framework and hosting rotation has been approved by the federal and provincial/territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity, and recreation.<sup>593</sup> The ministers agreed that this framework would apply beginning in 2024, and every four years thereafter given that the games will be hosted in Canada every four years.<sup>594</sup>

The standard operating budget for the North American Indigenous Games is between \$10 to \$14 million.<sup>595</sup> The federal and provincial/territorial governments have agreed to contribute a matching 35% of the budget.<sup>596</sup>

### **Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 89 (amendment to the Physical Activity and Sport Act)**

**"89.** We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples."<sup>597</sup>

The Government of Canada notes that Call to Action 89 will require a longer-term effort given that changes to legislation require consultation with other federal government departments in collaboration with the Aboriginal Sport Circle and Indigenous Peoples in Canada.<sup>598</sup> As a first step, in 2022, the Government of Canada invested \$3.1 million over two years with the Aboriginal Sport Circle for the development of a national Indigenous sport strategy following a national consultation process.<sup>599</sup> It is intended that the strategy will provide a framework for the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action focused on sport - Calls to Action 87 to 91.<sup>600</sup>

The Commission was informed that the National Strategy for Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation in Canada was in fact made possible following advocacy efforts that began in 2016 following the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (and prior to the investment noted above).

The Aboriginal Sport Circle was tasked in the fall of 2021 to develop the National Strategy for Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation in Canada. To do so, it initially conducted extensive consultation and research which resulted in the formal report "Phase 1: Reimagining Our Future" that was shared with Sport Canada. Phase 2 was called "The Spirit of Sport: Active Together — A National Strategy for Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada."<sup>601</sup>

The Commission was informed that the National Indigenous Sport Strategy, "The Spirit of Sport: Active Together" was officially submitted to Sport Canada on March 31, 2025, and presented to the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation at their meeting in August 2025. At the time of writing this report, the Commission understands that the Aboriginal Sport Circle continues to engage with Sport Canada but no formal written response to the National Strategy has been provided.

The National Strategy for Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation in Canada provides the framework for achieving a self-determined Indigenous sport, physical activity, and recreation system that prospers alongside, and at times interacts with, an inclusive Canadian system. The 2025 National Strategy provides a ten-year initiative, vision, and roadmap. It is structured in five strategic focus areas with a total of 19 priorities and 49 corresponding action items.<sup>602</sup> The document lays out how:

"Indigenous communities and organizations may adopt the elements that best suit their needs, while non-Indigenous partners are called to support — not supplant — Indigenous leadership in each area. As a living document, this National Strategy will evolve as we address emerging challenges and shifting priorities, and adjust to lessons learned. We welcome ongoing collaboration and dialogue to ensure it remains responsive to the needs of Indigenous peoples, communities and organizations."<sup>603</sup>

The Aboriginal Sport Circle expressed its hope that once implemented, the 2025 National Strategy will serve as a framework of collaboration to build alliances, share best practices, and enhance operational capacity.



### Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 90 (national sport policies, programs, and initiatives)

“90. We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:

- i. In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal Peoples.
- ii. An elite athlete development program for Aboriginal athletes.
- iii. Programs for coaches, trainers, and sports officials that are culturally relevant for Aboriginal Peoples
- iv. Anti-racism awareness and training programs.”<sup>604</sup>

In response to Call to Action 90, the federal government in its 2017 budget invested in the support of Indigenous youth and sport initiatives in the following areas:

- Indigenous sport leadership
- culturally relevant programming
- the North American Indigenous Games
- Sport Canada's data and research efforts.<sup>605</sup>

Funding was also allocated to the Aboriginal Sport Circle to assume a leadership role in Indigenous sport development in order to:

- support the Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies
- support national sport organizations and multisport service organizations to align their programming with the Indigenous Long-Term Participation Development Pathway
- ensure the development of a data strategy.<sup>606</sup>

Through bilateral agreements, funding was allocated to provincial and territorial governments to enhance their capacity to support the leadership of Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies. This funding is also intended to support culturally relevant sport programming, including the North American Indigenous Games team preparation and travel.<sup>607</sup>

Funding was also allocated to National Sport Organizations and National Multisport Service Organizations to promote the long-term development of Indigenous athletes through culturally relevant programs.<sup>608</sup>

Furthermore, a section on reconciliation initiatives was added to the 2023–2024 Sport Support Program guidelines, to ensure that initiatives aimed at advancing reconciliation were eligible for funding under federal programs.<sup>609</sup>

The Government of Canada also identifies in its response to Call to Action 90 that a Standing Working Group was established to identify priorities and co-develop action plans in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. The Working Group is co-chaired by the Aboriginal Sport Circle and Sport Canada, and is dedicated to the Indigenous Sport Development under the Federal and Provincial/Territorial Sport Committee which, in turn, reports to the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation.<sup>610</sup> This working group recommends federal and provincial/territorial government actions to promote the participation of Indigenous athletes, coaches, and officials in the Canada Games across all sports as well as the inclusion of lacrosse as a permanent sport on the Canada Summer Games program.<sup>611</sup>

### **Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 91 (international sporting events)**

**"91.** We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am, and Commonwealth games to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events."<sup>612</sup>

In response to Call to Action 91, the Government of Canada noted that it reminds partners of this Call to Action by including it in the document it shares with bid and host organizations as well as other partners responsible for developing and supporting major sport event bids both domestically and internationally.<sup>613</sup> It also states that this Call to Action is included in Sport Canada's ongoing work coordinating and developing a national bidding and hosting framework for major sporting events.<sup>614</sup>

The Government of Canada also made investments to support programs and initiatives responding to Call to Action 91. The 2017 budget investment included funding to provincial and territorial governments, through bilateral agreements, to increase Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies' operational capacities. It aimed to increase their offerings of culturally relevant sport-programming and support the North American Indigenous Games team preparation and travel.

The 2018 budget announced an investment of \$9.5 million per year to expand the use of sport for social development in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.<sup>615</sup> As a result, in May 2019, Sport Canada launched the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component of the Sport Support Program. According to Sport Canada, four of the intended goals of this program for Indigenous people are:

- improved health
- improved education
- reduction of at-risk behaviours
- improved employability.<sup>616</sup>

The 2022 budget included continued support for North American Indigenous Games team preparation and travel through bilateral agreements.<sup>617</sup> With respect to events, Sport Canada invested \$2.5 million in support of the 2023 Arctic Winter Games and \$1.68 million to facilitate the addition of lacrosse to the 2025 Canada Summer Games.<sup>618</sup>

### **NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS, RECLAIMING POWER AND PLACE**

Following publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, in 2016, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls began its work investigating the mass disappearance of Indigenous women and girls. It concluded that their disappearances and Canada's inaction in responding was genocide.<sup>619</sup>

The inquiry released its final report in 2019 with 231 individual Calls for Justice directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries, and Canadians generally.<sup>620</sup> Two of the Calls to Justice related to sport and physical activity:

**“3.1 [...] ensure that the rights to health and wellness of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are protected.”<sup>621</sup>**

**7.3 [...] support Indigenous-led prevention initiatives in the areas of health and community awareness [...].”<sup>622</sup>**

According to the Government of Canada's Reporting on the Calls for Justice webpage, Stream Three of the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities was created in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and more specifically Calls to Justice 3.1 and 7.3.<sup>623</sup> To qualify for this funding, projects must propose activities that create opportunities for Indigenous women, girls, and/or 2SLGBTQI+ people to participate in sport. Projects must also address one or more of the following social development goals:

- physical and mental health
- suicide prevention
- sexual trafficking awareness and prevention
- safe and healthy relationships
- sex positivity (2SLGBTQI+).<sup>624</sup>

## UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

In addition to these two commissions, Canada has taken steps toward implementing the 2007 United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.<sup>625</sup> This declaration is a comprehensive, international human-rights instrument addressing the rights of Indigenous people around the world.<sup>626</sup>

It affirms and sets out a broad range of collective and individual rights that constitute the minimum standards necessary to protect the rights of Indigenous people and to contribute to their survival, dignity, and well-being.<sup>627</sup> It also affirms the need to respect and promote the rights of Indigenous peoples set out in treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements.<sup>628</sup>

The following milestones led to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* receiving Royal assent as an act in Canada:

- In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on all levels of governments to adopt the United Nations Declaration as the framework for reconciliation in Call to Action 43.<sup>629</sup>
- In 2016, the Government of Canada fully endorsed the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and committed to its implementation.<sup>630</sup>
- In 2019, the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls called on Canada to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
- In 2021, following continued collaboration with Indigenous people toward implementing it, the *United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* received royal assent and came into force.

The Act provides a roadmap for the Government of Canada and Indigenous people to work together to fully implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.<sup>631</sup>

## COMMONWEALTH (LEKWUNGEN) SPORT DECLARATION ON TRUTH, RECONCILIATION AND PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Following the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, and building on the reconciliation work started at the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Australia, an international working group co-chaired by Ava Hill, former elected chief of Six Nations of the Grand River, was created to draft what became the *Commonwealth (Lekwungen) Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples*.<sup>632</sup> The Government of Canada supported its creation by providing funding to Commonwealth Sport Canada to assist the working group in its development.<sup>633</sup>

This international declaration on advancing truth and reconciliation aims to respect, protect and promote the rights and opportunities of Indigenous Peoples through sport.<sup>634</sup> It was approved by acclamation at the Commonwealth Games Federation General Assembly in 2023.<sup>635</sup> Within this declaration, there are 10 calls to action related to:

- promoting sports and physical education for Indigenous people
- promoting Indigenous sport development
- developing a better understanding of traditional games
- strengthening partnerships with Indigenous people and communities to plan and host sport events
- including traditional Indigenous games in sporting events
- creating pathways to high performance for Indigenous athletes and coaches
- celebrating Indigenous athletes' achievements
- strengthening inclusive sport networks.<sup>636</sup>

Sport organizations, institutions, governments, game organizers, individuals, and Indigenous Peoples are encouraged to work together to support and implement the spirit and actions of the declaration.<sup>637</sup>

## Participants' perspectives on Indigenous sport

The Commission had discussions with a range of Indigenous people and communities, including sport organizations and Indigenous community organizations engaged with sport both on and off reserve. We recognize that a large population of Indigenous people live off reserve and away from Métis homelands, often in urban settings.

Although their views identify challenges, gaps, and barriers that Indigenous people and communities encounter, many success stories were also shared with the Commission. Indigenous communities celebrated their athletes and those involved in sport.

Indigenous people and communities proudly shared successes with the Commission, whether describing a young Indigenous athlete being selected to play with Team Canada or dedicated Indigenous coaches who support youth athletes in their communities to reach milestones such as high-school graduation.

Participants' perspectives on the benefits of sport for Indigenous people have also been reported in Chapter 2.

A synopsis of the input we received is outlined in six themes: anti-Indigenous racism, barriers to participation, the Aboriginal Sport Circle, Indigenous Games, Friendship Centres, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM IN SPORT**

Every Indigenous organization and community the Commission engaged with shared experiences of anti-Indigenous racism and taunting in mainstream sport settings. Indigenous children, youth, and adult athletes shared experiences of being targeted and bullied during games and in sporting events. We also heard that existing sport structures often act as systemic and racist barriers to participation for Indigenous people.<sup>638</sup>

Many parents from Indigenous communities we engaged with shared that their children were excluded from activities, experienced racial slurs and differential treatment illustrating the presence of racism. We learned that parents themselves were also subjected to racism and faced discrimination and marginalization.

Despite the presence of racism, individuals from these communities reiterated that sport serves as an important historical and cultural foundation for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit athletes and communities. We were told on numerous occasions about the importance of honouring this history and recognizing the contributions of Indigenous people to Canadian sport. Indigenous athletes who achieved national success described receiving enormous support and encouragement from their communities and the creation of an immense sense of pride.

Through sharing, we learned that the Indigenous sport system was created because Indigenous people were not included in the “mainstream” sport system. This resulted in two parallel sport systems that operate independently from each other.<sup>639</sup>

The Commission was informed of the need for an Indigenous sport system that is intentional, well researched, culturally safe, grounded in Indigenous values and culture, and accountable. The need for Indigenous-led sport programming and games was highlighted. In fact, we were told that an Indigenous sport system that empowers communities and nations to administer their own programs would align with the principle of self-determination. Participants also raised the need for the “mainstream” sport system to be intentional and culturally aware to ensure safe sport environments for Indigenous people.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Although Chapter 7 addresses the many barriers to participation in sport and physical activity, which also apply to Indigenous people, here we focus specifically on perspectives shared with the Commission from the Indigenous perspectives.

Throughout the Commission's activities, Indigenous people shared with us that affordability and geography, lack of facilities and infrastructure, lack of culturally safe environments, and lack of Indigenous athlete representation and celebration were among the barriers to their participation in sport. Such challenges, we were told, are even more pronounced in small, remote and Northern communities where even access to limited numbers of volunteers may be prominent.

### **Affordability and geography**

Chapter 7 discusses the expense associated with participating in sport and engaging in physical activity. Indigenous people and communities also raised these costs as a barrier. Some highlighted how, given the economic difficulties that some Indigenous people in Canada face, many families simply cannot afford the cost of registration fees, equipment, and competition travel associated with sport.

The question of affordability is further exacerbated by other factors such as geography, especially when an individual lives in a remote location or on reserve. Participants told us that because sport programs frequently do not involve Indigenous communities, individuals must travel, sometimes for hours, to play with a team. Travel leads to additional costs for transportation (if it is even available). Some recollected having to hitchhike to make their way to a sporting activity. Participants also shared examples of the costs of training and travel fees at all levels of sport. As a result, we were told that many Indigenous athletes who could have played at elite levels dropped out simply because they could not afford to do so.

### **Lack of facilities and infrastructure**

The lack of facilities and infrastructure within Indigenous communities is another factor affecting Indigenous people's sport participation.

On numerous occasions, the Commission was informed of the lack of facilities such as arenas and pools within their communities and the lack of appropriate infrastructure or resources, which results in individuals having to travel if they want to participate in swimming or skating. We also heard about community members bringing their vehicles to a field and turning on their headlights to provide a source of light so the game could continue once the sun had set.

According to those we engaged with, it was important that there not only be facilities available within a community, but that the facilities be accessible, well maintained and strategically placed. Some pointed to the link between the lack of adequate facilities within reserves and Indigenous communities and the lack of Indigenous athletes' representation at the higher levels of sport.

*As some participants expressed, many Indigenous athletes dream of going to the Olympic Games. However, the facilities, coaches, funding, and training centres necessary to make this dream a reality do not exist.*

As Chapter 7 indicates, Indigenous people also encounter challenges when wanting to make use of schools or community centres for sport or physical activities, especially in more remote locations. Participants explained that, in remote or northern locations, the same facility is often used for multiple purposes. For example, the space will be used as a community hall, a courtroom, and the legislature, resulting in less access for sport and recreational purposes.

The Commission was also informed that for on-reserve Indigenous communities, capital projects such as schools, roads, and housing take precedence over sport or recreation facilities. This limits community access to daily recreation or physical activity programs, including sport.<sup>640</sup>

### **Lack of culturally safe environments**

Over the course of the Commission's activities, Indigenous people and communities identified (the presence of) anti-Indigenous racism as another barrier to their participation in sport, leading to culturally unsafe sporting environments. They also noted that a lack of Indigenous coaches and non-Indigenous coaches with a sensitivity to the cultures and traditions of Indigenous people hinder Indigenous peoples' participation in sport. In fact, difficulties in accessing coaching-certification courses and appropriate training materials were identified as factors impeding the development of Indigenous coaches.

### **Lack of Indigenous athlete representation and celebration**

Participants told us how important it is to highlight the success of Indigenous people and athletes in sport especially because Indigenous people are less likely to participate when they cannot see themselves represented in sport settings. Some articulated that Indigenous athletes need to be involved at international events while others would like to see land acknowledgements at all sporting events.

As Chapter 2 details, sport and physical activity afford multiple significant benefits to Canada's population, yet there are few or limited sport program opportunities available in many Indigenous communities and for urban Indigenous youth.

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE ABORIGINAL SPORT CIRCLE**

The Commission heard from many people who recognized the Aboriginal Sport Circle's pivotal role in promoting an Indigenous sport system and infusing spiritual and cultural practices into sport. Some saw it as the national voice for Indigenous sport. However, they also highlighted that the organization is underfunded.

A number of Provincial and Territorial Sport Bodies that the Commission met with expressed their support for the 2025 National Strategy, "The Spirit of Sport: Active Together," developed under the organization's leadership and advocated for its implementation.

Some explained that Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies are distinct, insofar as matters of funding are concerned, from the Aboriginal Sport Circle. While they have a good relationship with the Circle, some stated that they do not depend on this organization.

Others noted that the Aboriginal Sport Circle reflects a colonial approach. It follows a model akin to a National Sport Organization with its 13 Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Body members. To that effect, some commented that the Aboriginal Sport Circle was established within the constraints of colonial structures and sport systems. Some opined that the Aboriginal Sport Circle is recognized by the Government of Canada as the voice and gatekeeper of Indigenous voices. Some participants raised questions regarding the organization's accountability to Indigenous communities. With respect to the 2025 National Strategy, some individuals voiced concerns as they believe that there was a lack of meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations, including urban Indigenous populations, Friendship Centres and diverse Nations before the 2025 National Strategy was developed.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS GAMES**

A recurring theme throughout our engagement with Indigenous sport organizations and communities was the importance of Indigenous games to Indigenous athletes and communities. Some shared that youth involvement in the North American Indigenous Games was life changing. They said it removed barriers and provided youth support. We heard that these games are special given the central role that culture plays in that setting, from smudging and ceremonies to language integration throughout the event. Participants described the games as providing children with an opportunity to reconnect with and reclaim their culture.

Others shared with the Commission that participation in the North American Indigenous Games resulted in positive lifestyle changes, leading to healthier behaviours like nutrition choices and the pursuit of postsecondary education. More importantly, we heard that participation in these games gave youth self-confidence and self-worth. It also led some to see themselves as role models in their communities.

Additionally, the success and substantial economic impact of the North American Indigenous Games were recognized despite a lack of funding. There were calls for the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to re-open funding discussions reflecting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 88. We understand that the funding framework for the North American Indigenous Games was last addressed in 2019.

In addition to the support voiced for the North American Indigenous Games, we heard similar sentiments expressed about other Indigenous Games such as the Arctic Winter Games, the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships, and provincially or territorially based Indigenous Games. These events were described as major healing events of intergenerational trauma. They provide opportunities for Indigenous youth to compete and play together, creating a sense of pride and community. Participating in the Arctic Winter Games was described as a great opportunity for Indigenous youth, its safe space contributing to a sense of belonging.

We heard from many Indigenous people that non-Indigenous people tend to not know about or even acknowledge the existence of Indigenous Games and that scouts attend these events infrequently resulting in Indigenous athletes' accomplishments going unnoticed. However, at the provincial level, we were informed that the Alberta Indigenous Games have a scholarship program for their youth and that college scouts attend these Games. In fact, the Alberta Indigenous Games reported with pride that a dozen former Alberta Indigenous Games athletes are pursuing their education in schools in the United States.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON FRIENDSHIP CENTRES AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDSHIP CENTRES**

Despite not being sport organizations, the National Association of Friendship Centres and individual Friendship Centres play important roles. Participants described how, in many urban settings, some Indigenous children access sport through a Friendship Centre while others participate in a 'mainstream' sport organization. Many shared that such mainstream sport organizations are not set up to provide a safe and inclusive environment for Indigenous people.

For this reason, participants strongly recommended to the Commission that consideration be given to provide funding to the National Association of Friendship Centres for sport and recreation activities. This funding could then be distributed to local Friendship Centres.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION'S CALLS TO ACTION RELATED TO SPORT**

Throughout the Commission's activities, Indigenous people and communities shared with us their thoughts on progress made by governments and Canadians in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 87 to 91 as they relate to sport. Although the Government of Canada committed in December 2015 to address all Calls to Action, the Commission heard that Sport Canada has not yet mandated National Sport Organizations to respond to them.

Although a number of successes were identified, the Commission also heard criticisms, many related to a lack of funding and the need for more work toward reconciliation.

### **Examples of progress**

Many participants gave examples of progress. They identified the development and implementation of the Aboriginal Coaching Modules which specifically contribute to addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 88 with its emphasis on long-term Aboriginal athlete development. They also noted that a specific module dealing with anti-Indigenous racism in sport contributes to a response to Call to Action 90.

Additionally, the Commission was informed of the Indigenous Sport Heroes Education Experience. This free, bilingual resource highlights the inspiring stories of Indigenous Hall of Famers through rich storytelling, videos, artifacts, and educational activities. Featuring 12 ready-to-use lesson plans that offer entry points to Indigenous ways of knowing and being into classrooms, this resource serves as a powerful tool for educators, supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action 62. Some also noted that this initiative aligns with Call to Action 87.



The Commission also learned of a collaborative initiative between a National Sport Organization, the Aboriginal Sport Circle and its associated Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies to host an inaugural National Indigenous sport camp. It brought together Indigenous athletes, coaches, and facilitators resulting in a powerful and transformative experience. The successful event provided a safe and inclusive environment fostering learning, growth, and cultural connectivity leaving a lasting impact on everyone involved.

At the national level, the Commission also heard that in the context of swimming at the Canada Games for seniors, a memorial swim was held between races to commemorate the unmarked graves that were discovered at a former Residential School. The swim had two empty lanes with orange shirts at their start line in memory of the missing children.

At the provincial level, we heard of efforts being made by a Provincial Sport Organization to re-introduce lacrosse, an Indigenous-origin sport within the Indigenous community. To do so, the organization has two Indigenous liaison positions on its board of directors who act as advisors and assist with re-integrating this sport within the community.

We were also informed of some positive steps toward reconciliation. For example, Canadian football games are being broadcast in Blackfoot language and orange-shirt-day games have been held, where athletes wear orange shirt warm up jerseys as a commitment to the ongoing process of reconciliation and to create awareness around the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

### **Examples of opportunities for improvement**

#### **Funding**

Some noted that Sport Canada has dispensed no additional funds to National Sport Organizations to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Participants and literature have stated that that by failing to allocate such funds, resources, and support, Sport Canada is reinforcing settler colonialism.<sup>641</sup>

It was reiterated that governments have a duty to support programs by and for Indigenous communities and act on the Calls to Action as they relate to sport. Participants also insisted that these Calls to Action must be fully resourced through a mandate from the Government of Canada, including Sport Canada. Funding these Calls to Action, we were told, does not mean giving amounts of money "here and there." It requires commitment and coordination for these to be implemented systemically and sustainably.

The lack of permanent funding for the North American Indigenous Games remains an issue in addition to the need for sustained support for regional and national Indigenous games.

### **The *Physical Activity and Sport Act***

Some advocated that the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* (2003) ought to be revised to align with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and Canada's Act (2021). This would be needed to affirm the Government of Canada's commitment to Indigenous rights and self-determination in sport and physical activity consistent with Call to Action 89.

### **Sporting events**

As a condition of federal support, participants identified that all national and international sport events held in Canada should include Indigenous representation, protocols, and partnerships with local Indigenous Communities and Nations. This would be a required next step in response to Call to Action 91.

### **National and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and reconciliation**

On numerous occasions, participants reminded the Commission of the importance of relationship building when engaging with Indigenous people and communities. Such relationships require time and effort to get to know the community members the sport organization is trying to serve. It must go beyond simply providing funding.

Many participants raised the issue that sport organizations, whether at the national or provincial and territorial level, could and should be doing more in addressing reconciliation. Some Indigenous communities informed the Commission that when they reach out to national sport organizations to assist with developing a sport within their community, sport organizations tend to favour a "hands off" approach, rather than actively assisting them engage with that sport in their province or territory. We also heard of a lack of buy-in from Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations when it came time to running the Aboriginal Coaching Program.

## **Calls to Action: Indigenous people and sport**

The Commission recognizes the described context of settler colonialism in which the Canadian sport system emerged and continues to operate. Indigenous people continue to face racism in their daily lives and sport is no exception.

The Commission acknowledges the complexity of the Indigenous-led sport system and its relationship with the "mainstream" sport system. We also recognize the lack of research, information, and data specific to Indigenous people and sport in Canada. The need for additional funding to support research specific to Indigenous people and sport is addressed in Chapter 12. Our Calls to Action related to the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component of the Sport Support Program are also outlined in Chapter 15.

The Commission recognizes the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, as well as their respective Calls to Action and Calls for Justice. Although some progress has been made by the Government of Canada toward fulfilling these calls, ten years have passed since the Calls to Action and six years since the Calls for Justice. This work must be continued.

Recognizing the Commission's scope and framework and the importance for Indigenous people to exercise control over how sport serves them and their communities — and that such decisions must be made by and for Indigenous people — the Commission urges all governments to continue to meaningfully engage with Indigenous Peoples when decisions are made with respect to Indigenous sport.

All involved within the “mainstream” sport system have an important role to play for true and meaningful reconciliation to occur by constructively engaging and collaborating with Indigenous people. The Commission engaged with Indigenous people and communities who shared with us their realities of Indigenous-led sport and Indigenous people's interactions with the “mainstream” sport system. This discussion informed our understanding of the systemic barriers and challenges Indigenous people faced and still face today.

The findings and Calls to Action relating to Indigenous people and sport made in this Report reflect the scope of engagement and work we were able to achieve within the parameters of the Commission's mandate and timeline. In contrast, we recognize the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's extensive work and its recommendations, including those relating to sport, and we call on the government to continue advancing their implementation. Further, to continue and build on this important work and carry the dialogue forward, we call on the Government to take steps to pursue further engagement with Indigenous people. Indeed, we have determined that all measures taken by the Government of Canada in response to the calls to action made in this report must be inclusive of Indigenous perspectives.

## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**1. The Government of Canada continue the work to fulfill its commitment in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 87 to 91 relevant to sport included below:**

**“87. We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.”<sup>642</sup>**

**88. We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.”<sup>643</sup>**

**89. We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples.”<sup>644</sup>**

**90. We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:**

- i. In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal Peoples.**
- ii. An elite athlete development program for Aboriginal athletes.**
- iii. Programs for coaches, trainers, and sports officials that are culturally relevant for Aboriginal Peoples.**
- iv. Anti-racism awareness and training programs.”<sup>645</sup>**

### **Calls to Action (continued)**

**91. We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am, and Commonwealth games to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events.”<sup>646</sup>**

**2. All levels of government respect the principle of Indigenous self-determination in their decision-making process as it relates to Indigenous people in sport, meaning that such decisions should be made by Indigenous Peoples and for Indigenous Peoples.**

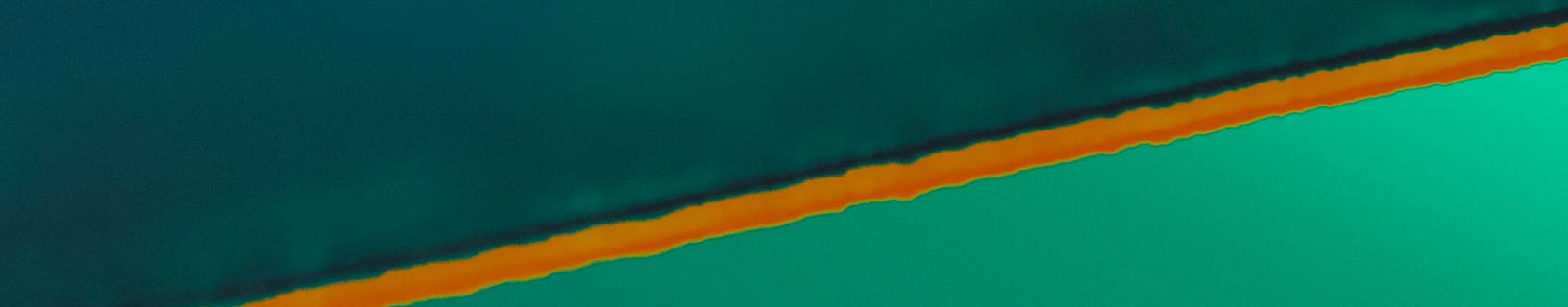
**3. All levels of government take proactive steps to engage with Indigenous people and ensure they meaningfully participate in decision-making processes related to all aspects of sport, including but not limited to, policies, programming, funding allocation, and governance, so that the Canadian sport system is inclusive of Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and cultures. They must also encourage other sport participants within their jurisdiction to do so by meaningfully engaging with Indigenous people to ensure their voices are present and heard.**

**4. The Government of Canada in implementing the Calls to Action in this report must ensure they are inclusive of Indigenous perspectives.**



# **CHAPTER 7:**

## **Barriers to sport and physical activity in Canada**





## Chapter 7:

# Barriers to sport and physical activity in Canada

Sport and physical activity are fundamental to Canadian society and catalysts for improving mental and physical health, fostering personal growth and development, and promoting social inclusion — to name just a few of their benefits. Unfortunately, many Canadians face barriers that prevent them from participating in and benefitting from sport and physical activities.

Throughout the Commission's engagement activities, we consistently heard and read about the persisting barriers that limit participation in sport and physical activity in Canada, relegating many to the sidelines. These well-known barriers include the rising cost of participation, insufficient sport facilities throughout the country, and a lack of suitable programs. These concerns were repeatedly expressed across a broad range of age groups, backgrounds, and communities, highlighting the systemic nature of these challenges within the Canadian sport system.

While sport can be a powerful equalizer — building bridges and bringing communities together — access to sport in Canada is anything but equal.

Equity-deserving groups such as women and girls, persons with disabilities, racialized people, newcomers, those who identify as 2SLGBTQI+,<sup>647</sup> and Indigenous people continue to face additional barriers to participation, namely the lack of culturally safe environments, and ongoing systemic and individual discrimination.

Despite previous commitments from all levels of government to make all levels of sport barrier free and accessible,<sup>648</sup> Canada has yet to meaningfully address these barriers.

We heard strong calls for change. Canadians believe that everyone should have equal opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, culture, Indigeneity, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background.

This chapter focuses on the barriers that prevent countless individuals from participating in an activity that could positively transform their lives. We begin with an examination of physical activity and sport participation trends in Canada. We find that a significant proportion of the Canadian population, including children and youth, are not meeting the recommended amount of physical activity to promote health and well-being.



This is followed by an overview of common barriers to participation, namely financial barriers and the lack of facilities and programs. We also examine the challenges that influence under-represented groups' participation in sport.

In this chapter, we present our Calls to Action to improve the accessibility of sport and physical activity in Canada.

## Missing the goal: low participation trends in sport and physical activity

While the federal, provincial, and territorial governments promote sport and physical activity in Canada, broad sport participation continues to elude us. Recent data reveals that the rates of sport and physical activity participation are below desired levels for adults, children, and youth. Equity-deserving groups continue to be significantly under-represented in sport and physical activity programs.

### PARTICIPATION AMONG THE CANADIAN POPULATION

As Statistics Canada has documented, only about half (46%) of Canadian adults met the recommended 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each week from 2022 to 2024.<sup>649</sup> Statistics Canada's 2023 Survey Series on People and their Communities identified that:

- Only approximately 55% of people aged 15 years or older reported participating in organized sport.<sup>650</sup>
- Men participate at a higher rate than women (62% compared to 49%).<sup>651</sup>
- Just over 80% of respondents who participated in sport did so recreationally, outside of a club or league, sometimes in combination with more structured recreational programs, such as group fitness, intramural sports, or sport clubs.<sup>652</sup>
- The most common motivations for Canadians participating in sport are physical health and fitness, fun, recreation and relaxation, mental health, and time with friends.<sup>653</sup>

In contrast, the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's Physical Activity and Sport Survey found lower participation rates in 2024. They noted that just 27% of Canadian adults 18 years and older participate in organized sport, including structured sport activities with a focus on competition, rules, and skill development.<sup>654</sup> The lower rate reported by this survey reflects a specific focus on organized sport participation compared to the broader definition of sport used by Statistics Canada.

In general, sport participation rates decline with age and are lower among girls and women. Only a small portion of Canadian adults participate in sport. Only 18% of men aged 65 and older reported participating in sport, compared to 28% of men aged 45 to 64.<sup>655</sup> The trend is even more pronounced among women, with only 9% of those aged 65 and older participating, compared to 13% in the 45 to 64 age group.<sup>656</sup>

Many children and youth are not participating in any sport. In a report from the Aspen Institute examining the governance of 12 leading sport systems, including Germany, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, and Norway, Canada ranked behind these other countries in sport participation among youth.<sup>657</sup> Based on an average 57% of children and youth who participate in organized sport programs (as reported by ParticipACTION in the 2022 Report Card), Canada received the grade of C+ in youth sport participation.<sup>658</sup>

The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's 2025 Physical Activity Monitor Parent Survey reported that 72% of children and youth aged 5 to 17 reported participating in sport in 2025, with boys participating at a slightly higher rate than girls.<sup>659</sup> There were variances in the regularity and frequency of reported sport participation, with some youth only participating 1 to 5 months per year (24% of boys and 23% of girls) and others participating 12 months out of the year (37% of boys and 35% of girls).<sup>660</sup>

Perhaps more concerning is the data documenting depressingly low levels of physical activity in Canada's school-aged children. While the percentage of adults (46%) and children aged 5 to 11 years (52%) who met the recommended physical activity levels from 2022 to 2024 remained relatively unchanged since the period of 2018 to 2019, a recent Statistics Canada report found that there was a decline in physical activity among teenagers.<sup>661</sup> From 2022 to 2024, only 21% of youth aged 12 to 17 across Canada met the recommended physical activity level, compared to 36% from 2018 to 2019.<sup>662</sup> Four out of five teenagers are not getting enough physical activity. Experts expressed concerns, noting that this pattern is likely to persist, as physical activity is increasingly being overshadowed by preoccupations with screens and social media.<sup>663</sup>

According to the same Statistics Canada report, disparities in physical activity participation rates between girls and boys persist. Only 8% of girls aged 12 to 17 met the physical activity recommendations from 2022 to 2024, compared to 33% for boys in the same age group.<sup>664</sup> Data with respect to children in the lowest income households from 2024 reveals that 46% of children 5 to 11 years old met the physical activity recommendations, compared to 57% of children in the highest-income households.<sup>665</sup>

### **PARTICIPATION AMONG EQUITY-DESERVING GROUPS**

Several reports highlight the notably lower sport participation rates among equity-deserving groups in Canada, who represent a significant proportion of the population. Unfair treatment, racism and discrimination are more prevalent among the racialized population, Indigenous people, persons who identify as having a disability, and people who are 2SLGBTQ+, among others.<sup>666</sup> The disparities in access, opportunity, and engagement that individuals from diverse backgrounds experience underscore the need for more inclusive systems and practices within the Canadian sport system.



### Women and girls

In 2021, women and girls accounted for just over half of the population (approximately 50.6%) with approximately 18.4 million women and girls in private households in Canada.<sup>667</sup> They are less active than men and boys at every stage of life. On average, women aged 15 and older have lower sport participation rates than men in the same age range, with 49% percent of women reporting participating in sport compared to 62% of men.<sup>668</sup> Women are also under-represented in senior staff roles, decision-making and leadership positions, and as board members in sport organizations in Canada.<sup>669</sup>

The disparity is less pronounced for children with 73% of girls aged 5 to 11 reporting participating in sport compared to 77% of boys in the same age range.<sup>670</sup> The disparity becomes more pronounced for youth aged 12 to 17, with 74% of boys participating in sport compared to 64% of girls.<sup>671</sup> Girls access almost all forms of sport and physical activity at lower rates than boys.<sup>672</sup> And when girls do participate, they drop out sooner.

According to the 2024 Rally Report published by Canadian Women and Sport, the rate at which girls drop out of sport increases at age 16 and accelerates through their teens. More than one in five leave sport during this time. Young women are much more likely to miss out on the benefits of continued sport involvement.<sup>673</sup> Male participation remains consistent through their late teens and into their twenties, resulting in a sizable participation gap between men and women.

### Persons with disabilities

A 2024 survey found that persons with disabilities reported lower participation in sport (21%) than adults without a disability (30%).<sup>674</sup> Statistics Canada reported in 2025 that individuals who identified as a person with a disability were more likely to experience unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in community sport (9%), compared to others (6%).<sup>675</sup>

According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, 27% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older have one or more disabilities.<sup>676</sup>

### Racialized people and new Canadians

Self-identified visible minorities in Canada reported participating in sport at a slightly lower rate than the rest of the Canadian population (25.2% versus 26.7%).<sup>677</sup> According to a 2025 Statistics Canada report, the racialized population, however, was three times as likely to report experiencing unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in community sports compared to the non-racialized population (12% in comparison to 4%).<sup>678</sup> A report from Statistics Canada indicates that in 2021, one in four people in Canada were from a racialized population (26.5%).<sup>679</sup>

Overall, immigrants and new citizens are less likely to participate in organized sport than those born in Canada.<sup>680</sup> In 2021, 23% of the population was or had been landed immigrants or permanent residents.<sup>681</sup> From 2022 to 2023, close to 98% of the population growth in Canada came from international migration.<sup>682</sup>

### **Non-cisgender, 2SLGBTQI+**

Research reveals that non-cisgender youth and those reporting non-heterosexual attraction tended to participate less in organized sports than their counterparts.<sup>683</sup> According to a 2025 Statistics Canada report, 2SLGBTQ+ people were four times as likely to experience unfair treatment in community sport (21%), compared to others (5%).<sup>684</sup>

Between 2019 and 2021, approximately 4.4% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older reported being 2SLGBTQ+.<sup>685</sup>

### **Indigenous people**

Indigenous sport participants are under-represented at all levels of sport in Canada.<sup>686</sup> Limited data makes it difficult to accurately determine sport participation rates among Indigenous people in Canada, particularly for adults. Most reports provide only broad statistics for Indigenous populations without distinguishing between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

The 2022 Rally Report by Canadian Women and Sport indicates that 30% of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis girls aged 13 to 18 years old participated in sport at least weekly, compared to 52% of “White girls.”<sup>687</sup>

## **FINDINGS ON PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

These participation trends reveal significant gaps in access and engagement across different groups notwithstanding the importance of sport and physical activity for Canadians. Participation in sport remains a serious area of weakness despite continuing recommendations that it be meaningfully addressed. As the new Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 noted, while both the 2002 and the 2021 Canadian Sport Policy aimed to increase participation in sport, neither succeeded.<sup>688</sup>

During the 2025 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, the attending ministers acknowledged the importance of promoting physical activity across the country to support Canadians’ mental health. They agreed on the need to increase the rates of physical activity given all the social, health, and economic benefits that active lifestyles promote.<sup>689</sup>

To ensure meaningful progress, the Commission is of the view that coordinated and sustained commitments are needed to translate these priorities into tangible outcomes and to achieve meaningful progress. It is crucial to address the barriers that limit access to sport and physical activity and prevent optimal participation for many Canadians.

Sport is a core pillar of Canadian society. For the benefits of sport to be fully realized and to nourish and promote our Canadian identity, investments and attention are needed to address the barriers to sport opportunities at every level.

The following sections examine the multifaceted barriers that prevent countless Canadians from benefitting from sport and physical activity.

## Financial barriers to sport and physical activity

To be accessible, sport needs to be affordable. The costs associated with sport, including the cost of registration, equipment, and travel, are among the most significant barriers to sport participation in Canada.

As Statistics Canada reported in 2023, only approximately 55% of people aged 15 and older reported participating in organized sport.<sup>690</sup> According to the same report, 11% of people who did not participate in sport reported the cost of participating as a barrier.<sup>691</sup> Racialized groups were more likely than non-racialized Canadians to cite the cost of participating as a barrier.<sup>692</sup> As for youth, the 2025 Jumpstart State of Play Youth Sport in Canada report indicates that the primary reasons why youth chose not to play sports is because sports are too expensive.<sup>693</sup>

Socioeconomic status distinctly affects rates of sport participations. Indigenous people, single women, members of immigrant families, and Canadians with lower income and education levels are disproportionately affected by financial barriers.<sup>694</sup> According to the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's 2025 Physical Activity Monitor Parent Survey, 74% of children and youth from households with an income of more than \$60,000 per year participated in sport, compared to 63% of children and youth from households with an income of less than \$60,000 per year.<sup>695</sup> Similarly, the ParticipACTION 2025 Adult Report Card identified that adults earning higher incomes were more likely to report participation in sport than those earning lower incomes (32% compared to 22%).<sup>696</sup>

While Canadians face increasing financial pressure, the costs of sport participation are also increasing. The privatization of sport organizations, linked to the expansion of the “pay-to-play” model, further accentuates cost pressures.<sup>697</sup>

For many Canadian families and athletes, participating in sport is now unaffordable. The 2023 Jumpstart State of Sport Report indicates that 58% of parents reported that recreational fees were on the rise, representing an increase from 17% in December 2021.<sup>698</sup> The same report notes that 44% of parents said that they cannot afford to register their children in organized sport.<sup>699</sup> The 2025 Jumpstart State of Youth Sport report notes that 32% of parents indicated stress about affordability.<sup>700</sup> To manage the cost of sport and provide access to their children, Jumpstart's Cost and Barriers to Sports Participation Study indicates that nearly six in ten parents use at least one cost-management strategies, such reducing spending in other areas, using credit or loans, or taking extra work.<sup>701</sup>

Inequitable access to sport has negative impacts on children. Parents reported signs of their children being less physically fit, and experiencing feelings of loss, resentment, and anxiety from reduced participation.<sup>702</sup>

High transportation costs are a potential barrier to sport participation, including for high-performance athletes. This is particularly the case in northern and remote communities.

### **EFFORTS TO REDUCE FINANCIALS BARRIERS**

To address financial barriers, governments and sport organizations have put in place various initiatives that target both community-level and high-performance sport. As Chapter 15 on funding discusses in further detail, the federal government supports community-sport initiatives for under-represented groups through the Community Sport for All Initiative, a component of the Sport Support Program.<sup>703</sup>

In order to minimize financial barriers, organizations such as KidSport Canada and its local chapters provide financial assistance to pay for registration fees and equipment for youth.<sup>704</sup> Some Community Sport Organizations also endeavour to offer low or no-cost sport programming. Still, affordability remains a significant barrier to participation across income, race, gender, ability, and geography.<sup>705</sup>

Some provincial and territorial governments have implemented tax credits to provide relief for the costs associated with participation. The federal government used to offer the Children's Fitness Tax Credit. This non-refundable tax credit allowed individuals to claim eligible fitness expenses.<sup>706</sup> The Children's Fitness Tax Credit was eliminated for the 2017 and subsequent taxation years, given evidence of significant shortcomings in terms of its effectiveness, fairness, and efficiency.<sup>707</sup> Some provinces and territories continue to provide similar tax credits.<sup>708</sup>

### **HIGH-PERFORMANCE ATHLETES' COSTS**

High-performance athletes often face significant financial barriers that can limit their ability to train and compete at elite levels. They include high costs of training, travel, equipment, and coaching.<sup>709</sup> A survey conducted in 2023 by Leger Marketing for the Department of Canadian Heritage revealed that the principal obstacle to high-performance sport in Canada is financial. Indeed, 72% of national-level high-performance athletes surveyed indicated cost as a barrier to participation.<sup>710</sup>

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments provide financial assistance to high-performance athletes. As we discuss in Chapter 15, the federal government provides financial assistance to national-level high-performance athletes through the Athlete Assistance Program.<sup>711</sup> We consistently heard, however, that funding allocated through this program is insufficient.

Recent media reports indicate that high-performance athletes who compete for Canada often need to resort to crowdfunding and donations to compete internationally, support their athletic careers, and meet their basic needs.<sup>712</sup> This applies to high-performance athletes who receive support from Sport Canada through the Athletes Assistance Program and those who do not. Financial barriers to participation for high-performance athletes persist.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON FINANCIAL BARRIERS**

The results of the public online survey conducted by the Commission supported the significance of financial barriers. Respondents who answered questions about improving the sport system in Canada were asked to indicate what they considered to be the most pressing issues impeding participation in organized sport in Canada. Multiple responses were possible. Two issues stood out from the rest. An overwhelming majority of respondents (89.0%) selected high financial costs to participate. This was identified as the most pressing issue by respondents across every demographic group in the Commission's survey.

The distance to sport facilities and infrastructure was the second most-selected issue in the Commission's survey, selected by 55.9% of respondents. A greater proportion of racialized respondents (61.3%) and those residing in the Atlantic (60.7%) selected this response.

Participants in our engagement activities told us that organized sport is already too expensive for many Canadians, and the costs continue to rise. More people and families need financial support to participate in sport. In the past, athletes from low-income backgrounds often reached the Olympics and professional sport on the basis of public programs. Substantial family resources and costly private training are typically necessary to achieve the same level of success today. In many cases, participation in sport at all levels is limited to those who can afford it. Sport is becoming more exclusive and less accessible.

We learned that financial barriers are particularly significant for Disability sport organizations and athletes with disabilities given the high costs associated with equipment, the cost of support attendants, and the economic pressures faced by those with disabilities in general.

Overall, the increasing cost of sport participation was attributed by many to rising fees, equipment costs, and transportation costs. We were advised that the escalating registration and membership fees and other costs are being downloaded onto sport participants in the absence of new revenue sources for sport organizations. This reality exists at all levels of sport, from the grassroots to the elite. Such increases impact the affordability and accessibility of sport programs. The privatization of sport further contributes to the unaffordability of sport programs. Financial barriers were identified as significant challenges by provincial and territorial governments.

Participants noted that certain popular sports such as skating and hockey have higher participation costs and are increasingly generally restricted to the affluent.<sup>713</sup> Hockey has particularly high equipment costs. To make skating and hockey more accessible, some have suggested that arenas could have equipment available for all. However, there have been no substantial investments in this regard. Others have suggested direct subsidies to provide financial assistance to families.

Transportation was identified as a significant barrier to sport participation in northern communities, where sport organizations and athletes encounter high costs associated with travel. These costs make it difficult for children to participate in sport beyond their immediate communities. Similar challenges also exist in remote areas across Canada, especially where transit is not available.



While recognizing that many barriers to participation exist, many supported widening opportunities for participation in sport. Participants in our engagement activities agreed that more needs to be done to improve sport's affordability. They emphasized the need for continued investments in sport to promote accessible and affordable sport programming at every level. Financial subsidies for low-income populations can be effective in increasing sport participation. Others emphasized that support programs like those offered by KidSport and the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities must be encouraged.

### **CALL TO ACTION: REDUCING FINANCIAL BARRIERS**

Sport and physical activity in Canada are not accessible to all those who wish to participate. Canada continues to fall short on its aspirations to eliminate barriers to participation and to make sport and physical activity accessible for all.

The cost of participating in sport remains one of the most significant obstacles for athletes of all levels. Transportation costs are particularly prohibitive for northern and Indigenous communities. Despite ongoing efforts from governments and sport organizations to assist with lowering the cost of participation, sport in Canada is becoming more exclusive. This concerning trend runs contrary to Canadian values and the desire to ensure that sport is accessible and inclusive. More needs to be done to improve sport's affordability, particularly for equity-deserving groups who are disproportionately affected by financial barriers.

An unreasonable emphasis on competitive sport for children and youth, and early sport specialization have contributed to the growth of private and expensive sport programs, further reducing the affordability of sport.

To address the growing financial barriers to sport participation, the Commission is of the view that the federal government must continue to support broad participation and excellence in sport.

Some participants suggested that funding should be allocated to subsidize the cost of sport participation for participants of all ages, noting that the only way to provide assistance is to subsidize the activities themselves, as opposed to providing a tax credit. The federal Children's Fitness Tax Credit, for example, was shown to have limited, to no impact, in promoting physical activity among Canadian children, particularly those experiencing low income, and was subsequently discontinued.<sup>714</sup> Some argued that because of inflation and the cost of living, the availability of support should be broadened beyond low-income families.

Participants affirmed that the federal government should continue to fund the Community Sport for All Initiative and other funding initiatives that support community-level participation and inclusion. We heard clear expression of the pressing need to increase the Athletes Assistance Program, which supports high-performance athletes, and the urgency of addressing the funding crisis facing many National Sport Organizations.

The Commission's full Calls to Action on funding the sport system can be found in Chapter 15.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**5. The Government of Canada, with the provinces and territories, explore all possible fiscal, program, and administrative mechanisms to address barriers and increase participation by Canadians in sport and physical activity. This could include possible tax exemptions on sport equipment and a subsidy program for Canadian youth.**

## Lack of adequate sport facilities and programs

Most sport facilities in Canada — including gyms, pools, and arenas — are publicly owned, built and maintained by municipalities and regional school boards.<sup>715</sup> According to a Statistics Canada's survey, municipalities owned 99% of the 78,717 publicly owned culture, recreation, and sports facilities in Canada in 2018.<sup>716</sup> In 2020, local, regional, provincial and territorial governments in Canada provided 5,060 aquatic facilities, 7,569 ice facilities as well as other indoor and outdoor sports fields.<sup>717</sup>

Such facilities including community centres and multi-purpose facilities are crucial to the delivery of sport and physical activity programs for all Canadians. More specialized Olympic and Paralympic installations and training facilities are equally important to support high-performance athletes as they train and compete at the highest levels.

### SHORTAGE OF HIGH-QUALITY SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Canada does not have enough sport and recreation facilities. Their availability and accessibility are additional shortcomings. A lack of pool facilities, for example, explains why there are at least 8,000 people on waitlists for swim programs in Vancouver alone.<sup>718</sup> In regions lacking infrastructure, residents frequently travel long distances to reach sport facilities,<sup>719</sup> which is both time-consuming and costly.

New sport and recreation facilities are needed across the country, especially in Indigenous communities. Facilities meeting the high technical standards for high-performance athletes in the pursuit of excellence are scarce.<sup>720</sup> According to a survey conducted by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute in 2020–2021, additional or new indoor facilities were the most pressing infrastructure needs reported by almost one half of the sport organizations in Canada.<sup>721</sup>

Canada's sport facilities are aging. Many existing indoor sport and recreation facilities need significant repairs and maintenance, and others require updates to make them more accessible for people with disabilities.<sup>722</sup> A 2019 report examining public infrastructure across Canada found that 30 to 35% of culture, recreation, and sport facilities were only in fair condition or worse. A large proportion of facilities were more than 50 years old.<sup>723</sup>

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association maintains a comprehensive inventory of sport, recreational, and parks infrastructure in the country.<sup>724</sup> The inventory describes the nature and state of facilities across Canada, including location, size, amenities, and age. It provides a common and open data repository for adding, managing, and accessing relevant information on infrastructure.<sup>725</sup> As of 2025, 400 organizations had joined the infrastructure database, adding information from more than 10,000 community sport and recreation facilities and sites.<sup>726</sup>

During their 2025 Ministers Conference, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation discussed the importance of sport and recreation facilities and the challenges associated with their deteriorating state in every region. Ministers asked officials to continue discussions of the importance of sport infrastructure and opportunities to collaborate on solutions to address these challenges.<sup>727</sup>

### **FUNDING FOR SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as many municipalities, invest in sport and recreation infrastructure. Such investments involve the direct contribution of funds for the development, construction, repair or maintenance of sport facilities, and the purchase of necessary equipment.<sup>728</sup> The federal government provides funding for sport infrastructure through a variety of programs such as the Canada Community Building Fund and the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (both under Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada).

- The Canada Community Building Fund is a transfer-based program that delivers over \$2.4 billion to communities across Canada annually. Funds are transferred from the federal government to the provinces and territories who, in turn, redistribute the funding to their communities. It is important to note that “sport” is one of the categories of eligible projects.<sup>729</sup>
- The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program is an additional mechanism that the federal government employs to deliver funding to communities. Such funding is delivered through bilateral agreements with provinces and territories. The program’s Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure stream allows the federal government to invest in projects that support upgrades to recreational facilities, like arenas and both indoor and outdoor recreational spaces. This program uses a cost-sharing model — the federal government contributes up to a specified percentage of costs depending on the type of project.<sup>730</sup>

Other programs at the federal level provide funding for sport infrastructure, including programs administered by Indigenous Services Canada.<sup>731</sup> Funding for sport and recreation infrastructure is discussed in further detail in Chapter 15.

### **LACK OF ADEQUATE SPORT PROGRAMS**

As Chapter 5 describes, various sport organizations and other institutions like schools, municipalities, for-profit private organizations, and not-for-profit community-based organizations deliver sport programming.

The availability of sport programs is influenced by various factors, including financial resources and the availability of suitable facilities. Because sport organizations are also facing significant financial difficulties, some have had to reduce their program offerings. In different regions, a lack of accessible or culturally appropriate programming can also impact the accessibility of sport.

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE LACK OF FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS**

The Commission heard that there is a critical shortage of adequate, safe, and accessible sport infrastructure across Canada. This was reiterated on countless occasions during our engagement activities by sport participants, sport organizations, and representatives and officials from federal, provincial and territorial governments. The lack of available and adequate sport facilities prevents the delivery of accessible and safe sport programming at every level of sport.

We learned of grassroots organizations who could not find available facilities due to insufficient infrastructure. We were told that some athletes were required to relocate between provinces to advance in their sport. Some National Sport Organizations have also had to relocate their national teams abroad in response to the lack of appropriate training facilities within Canada.

Participants shared serious concerns regarding the insufficiency of sport facilities in every region of the country.

#### **Participants' perspectives on the shortage of facilities and aging facilities**

We were consistently advised that there are not enough facilities to ensure that all who want to play can play. Population growth has added additional needs for the expansion and renewal of sport infrastructure. Representatives of Community, Provincial, Territorial, and National Sport Organizations told us of the significant challenges they encountered in securing physical spaces to run their programs. We were told that in some cases, the only available time slots were very late at night, which was not always appropriate or safe. There was also a serious lack of facilities in many remote and Indigenous communities, particularly within the territories.

Sport infrastructure, including legacy facilities from hosting the Commonwealth, Olympic, and Paralympic Games, is aging and needs to be upgraded for continued use. Some of the dated sport facilities are not accessible to athletes with disabilities and do not have gender-inclusive washrooms. For instance, there have been many requests for financial support to refurbish the Calgary sliding track and the Olympic speedskating oval, but these calls remain unanswered. Others emphasized that many ice facilities are in poor shape and need to be repaired or replaced.

We consistently heard of the urgent need for investment in sport and recreation Infrastructure throughout the country. Various suggestions were shared with the Commission on ways to upgrade existing facilities and build the necessary infrastructure to increase sport's accessibility.

In their 2025 Fall Budget submission, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association recommended that the federal government create a \$100 million per year federal program to revitalize Canada's aging recreation and parks infrastructure. They noted that such an approach would "promote public health, strengthen climate resilience, serve equity-deserving communities, and foster national unity by investing in community-driven spaces where Canadians connect, belong, and thrive."<sup>732</sup>

Other suggestions include the creation of an open infrastructure fund with a dedicated stream for sport and recreation, like the Build Canada Program. Others proposed that funding for infrastructure should be tied to immigration. Participants also suggested that the federal government should collaborate with its provincial and territorial counterparts to develop a national strategy on sport facilities investment and development. It was emphasized that new facilities should be designed and constructed for multiple uses and as appropriate, multiple sports. We were reminded that well-designed facilities can support both community-based programming and high-performance sport.

The important role of major multisport games such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games in infrastructure development was noted by many. Participants emphasized that hosting strategies for such competitions should include dedicated infrastructure planning and funding that emphasize the creation and endowment of legacy facilities to support both high-performance and community sports. We note that the Federal Policy for Hosting International Sport events dates from 2008.<sup>733</sup>

### **Participants' perspectives on access to existing facilities**

In addition to new sport facilities, participants told us that the accessibility of existing facilities must be improved. During our engagement process, we often heard about the challenges people face in accessing existing municipal and school facilities. Some participants told us that there were no incentives for municipalities to grant access to their facilities for grassroots sport organizations. Others questioned the high fees municipalities charged for organizations to use their infrastructure.

As Chapter 5 noted, participants emphasized the importance of partnering with school boards to improve access to sport facilities. In some communities, particularly in remote areas, schools are the only available indoor facility suitable for sport activities. Yet, we learned that many schools are not used after hours or during the summer, and accessing these facilities can be a cumbersome and complicated process.

The process to access school facilities varies by school board which adds to the complexity. Sport and non-sport organizations need to pay fees to access these school facilities. We heard that private sport organizations may be better able to pay fees to access municipal and school facilities. Participants noted that this further impeded access for community sport organizations — particularly for the periods and time slots of highest demand.

We also learned of the obstacles experienced by school boards as they attempt to provide better access to facilities. Concerns related to safety, liability, insurance and the maintenance costs associated with opening their facilities to the public were frequently cited.



Participants reminded us that data on sport infrastructure in Canada is essential to inform decision-making processes relevant to infrastructure development.

### **Participants' perspectives on the private sector's impact on accessibility of sport programs**

As Chapter 5 noted, we heard about challenges posed by the increasing number of private sport clubs and associations. Participants described how these private organizations have been growing in numbers in recent years and told us that a disproportionate focus on performance and sport specialization has contributed to the growth of this sector. An increased reliance on private sport organizations to deliver sport programs was identified by many as contributing to the inaccessibility of sport. The lack of affordable community and school programs makes it more difficult for children and adults to participate in sporting activities. Ironically, we were told that private sport organizations may more easily meet the costs of accessing public sport facilities.

We were told that National Sport Organizations have responsibilities to develop and grow their sport, and to do so, in part, by developing imaginative programs to be delivered at the community level. Participants noted that this would help to combat the privatization of sport in Canada and provide opportunities to participate at the community level. Conversely, we were informed that it can be difficult for National Sport Organizations to meet these responsibilities, particularly where they are experiencing funding challenges or have very limited relationships with their provincial, territorial or community counterparts.

Some participants also observed that sport organizations from the grassroots to the national level are now focusing on performance and downplaying the virtues of participation. Concerns were expressed that the focus of these organizations has shifted to winning at all costs and making a profit. At the community level, we heard serious concerns that accessible programs in municipalities and schools have been impoverished, as pay-for-play models and privatization have become more prevalent.

### **Participants' perspectives on the decreasing availability of municipal and school programs**

Municipalities and public schools are generally the main providers of affordable opportunities to participate in sport. On average, the cost of participation in schools and recreation centres is much lower than in sport clubs.

For example, data from the 2024 Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report indicates that the average cost of participation in schools (\$70 per person) and recreation centres (\$85 per person) is much lower than the average cost of participation at a sports club (\$1,122 per person).<sup>734</sup> The average cost of participation included the initial cost of registration fees, travel, uniforms, and all other associated expenses.

For many children and youth, school is the first and only place where they participate in organized sport. In some cases, municipal recreational centres offer programs free of charge for sport participants. However, we heard that municipalities' and schools' ability to offer cost-effective sport activities has been decreasing.

We learned that the depressingly low rates of physical activity for school-age children and youth could be explained, in part, by the declining availability of sport and physical activity programs in Canada's schools. We learned that this troubling reality stems from a combination of factors, including physical activity not being a priority within the school curriculum, teachers' working hours, and a lack of teachers with training in the delivery of physical activities. Restricted access to equipment also makes it difficult for schools to offer physical activity to children every day. Instead of having their children participate in school sport, some parents are spending thousands of dollars for their children to participate elsewhere, including private sports clubs and associations.

We learned that programs offered in schools are becoming less accessible. Some participants told us that school sport is becoming more exclusive. They are concerned that only youth who are either athletically gifted or who have received specialized training in clubs are earning spots on school teams. In some cases, the decline in the accessibility of school sport programs was most pronounced in low-income communities. Consequently, fewer students are being afforded opportunities to participate. Many saw increasing participation in school sport and a renewal of physical education programming as a clear opportunity to increase physical activity and improve access to sport among Canadian youth.

### **CALLS TO ACTION: IMPROVING SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS**

A significant barrier to increasing sport participation is Canada's critical lack of appropriate sport infrastructure. Many existing facilities are in urgent need of repairs and upgrades to ensure that they are accessible, safe, and meet modern-day standards. Underserved, remote, and Indigenous communities experience even greater challenges accessing sport facilities.

Existing school facilities such as school gymnasiums are not being leveraged efficiently to promote sport participation. The lack of access to facilities can increase local sport clubs' costs, which are passed on to athletes and their families, further limiting sport's accessibility.

The accessibility of sport programs is closely tied to the availability of facilities and funding. Budget constraints, limited space, and a growing reliance on private sector models have reduced the number of affordable programs. Culturally appropriate programming is also lacking in many regions, affecting participation among diverse groups. Schools, the primary venues for youth sport, also face challenges in offering daily physical activity due to budget cuts, changes in the curriculum, and limited access to equipment and qualified staff.

Canada needs to increase its investment in sport infrastructure. Sport facilities are critical infrastructure and vital community assets that stimulate the local economy, improve public health, and serve as spaces where communities can come together.

The vital importance of sport infrastructure cannot be overstated. It is the foundation that enables participation in sport, which is a pillar of Canadian identity.

By investing in sport infrastructure, we can meaningfully remove barriers to enhance opportunities for athletes of all ages and abilities, support their sport development and ensure that communities across Canada can access the full benefits of sport. Sport facilities foster social connections and well-being, and deliver lasting health, social, and economic benefits to entire communities.

Recently, Canada has emphasized building infrastructure in other sectors to build a stronger and more prosperous Canada. In light of the extensive benefits of sport, the enormous untapped potential of sport and sport infrastructure has clearly been overlooked. Investing in sport infrastructure is not an expense, but an investment in Canada's youth.

### **Infrastructure development and revitalization**

The Commission is of the view that significant reconsideration and reinvestment in sport infrastructure are needed, not only to support the pursuit of excellence and medals, but also to support a healthier, safer, and wealthier nation.

Throughout our engagement activities, we heard numerous calls for funding to address critical infrastructure gaps. The federal government's last significant and comprehensive investment in sport facility buildings was in 1967 for the centennial. Many of these facilities have not been upgraded, refurbished, or replaced, and have deteriorated to the point of becoming a barrier to participation.

Additionally, population growth has added strain to the existing sport infrastructure. More sport facilities are therefore required to meet the demands of a growing population. There is also a significant need for sport facilities in Indigenous, northern, and remote communities.

Some participants called on the federal government to establish a dedicated program for sport infrastructure. This is not a new proposal. In 2006, provincial and territorial governments urged the federal government to collaborate with provinces and territories to develop a national sport, physical activity, and recreation infrastructure program.<sup>735</sup> This concept is even more relevant today. Participants reiterated this proposal during our engagement activities.

In their submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance in advance of the 2025 Fall Budget, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association recommended that the Government of Canada create a \$100 million per year federal program to revitalize Canada's aging recreation and parks infrastructure.<sup>736</sup>

Other participants questioned whether a new program dedicated to sport infrastructure was necessary. They recognized that the federal government is already transferring money to the provinces and territories for infrastructure development. The problem, we were told, is that these funds are not being directed to improve sport infrastructure. Similar concerns emerged in the context of the evaluation of Sport Canada Programs from 2015–16 to 2019–2020, which noted that while Infrastructure Canada provided funding to municipalities for infrastructure, such funding was often used for purposes other than sport facilities.<sup>737</sup> Participants suggested adding a condition that a certain percentage of the funds transferred by the federal government to provinces and territories for infrastructure, which is then allocated to municipalities, must be invested in sport infrastructure.

Regardless of the form of the program to invest in sport infrastructure, one thing is clear — all levels of governments must reinvest in sport infrastructure. We note that ahead of the 2025 Fall Budget, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance recommended that the Government of Canada “[reinvest] in parks, sport, and recreation infrastructure to ensure the health and well-being of the population.”<sup>738</sup>

Participants also emphasized the need to incentivize and encourage private companies to invest in sport infrastructure. They described private-equity funding as severely underutilized, especially for large infrastructure projects. Some participants were disappointed that sport infrastructure is not eligible for funding by the Canada Infrastructure Bank. They also stated that regulatory barriers were preventing further investment from the private sector and that all levels of government would need to act to enable private-equity funders to invest.

### **National collaborative infrastructure strategy**

The Commission is strongly of the view that the federal government must collaborate with its provincial and territorial counterparts to create a national sport infrastructure strategy. We noted an absence of vision and strategy with respect to sport infrastructure in Canada. We emphasize the importance of a collective strategy, to determine which facilities need to be built or renovated. The strategy should include cooperative data-collection mechanisms to monitor and evaluate sport infrastructure needs. A planned, collaborative approach to the funding of these projects is needed. We also recognize the importance of distinct provincial and territorial sport infrastructure strategies.

Given the central role of municipalities in the development of sport infrastructure and the delivery of sport programs, it is important that they be involved appropriately in the development of strategies to further enable effective collaboration. Governments should also work in distinct collaboration with Indigenous groups to improve access to facilities in Indigenous communities.

The national collaborative strategy should address the following concerns related to sport infrastructure:

- Some regions have more wealth and infrastructure than others. Remote and Indigenous communities face even higher challenges with fewer sport facilities suitable for training and competition.
- Many sport facilities are inaccessible for people with disabilities.
- The allocation of time and space for using sport facilities is not equitable.
- Significant challenges are encountered in accessing school and municipal facilities. School facilities in particular are community assets that are underused to facilitate participation in sport and physical activity. Coordinated approaches to the use of municipal and school facilities would optimize the use of such facilities in community settings.

Improving access to sport facilities creates the physical spaces needed for programs to operate. Better infrastructure makes programs more accessible and inclusive, allowing more Canadians to participate and benefit from sport and physical activity. Funding of the sport system also has an impact on the accessibility of sport programs. The Commission's Calls to Action on funding can be found in Chapter 15.

### Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**6. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, develop a national sport infrastructure strategy. The strategy should include cooperative mechanisms to monitor and evaluate sport infrastructure needs and contemplate improving access to existing facilities, particularly schools, to facilitate sport participation.**

**7. The Government of Canada increase the funding it allocates to the development and revitalization of sport infrastructure.**

**8. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, create a dedicated sport infrastructure program.**

**9. The Government of Canada require that a percentage of the funding it provides to the provinces and territories for the development of infrastructure be dedicated to the development and revitalization of sport infrastructure.**



## Barriers to sport and physical activity for equity-deserving groups

Many individuals in Canada face additional barriers to participation rooted in systemic and individual discrimination. According to academics, Canadian sport was historically made by and for cisgender, heterosexual, non-disabled, white men.<sup>739</sup> Sexism, ableism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia continue to limit who is afforded the opportunity to participate and succeed in sport.

Members of equity-deserving groups, including women, people with disabilities, racialized persons, Indigenous people, and persons who identify as 2SLGBTQI+, do not have the same access to sport as the dominant group.

In the Commission's survey, a notable portion of respondents who answered questions about improving the sport system in Canada selected barriers limiting participation of equity-deserving groups (32.3%) and a lack of inclusive environments that promote belonging and respect (29.9%) as the most pressing issues related to participation in organized sport in Canada.

A greater proportion of Indigenous respondents (42.0%), racialized respondents (50.2%), respondents who identify as a person living with a disability (48.6%), and those from 2SLGBTQI+ communities (52.0%) identified barriers limiting participation of equity-deserving groups as the most pressing issue. A lack of inclusive environments was selected by almost half of respondents from 2SLGBTQI+ communities (48.6%), respondents who identified with a disability (45.7%), and those who reside in Canada's territories (47.4%).

Below, we discuss barriers to sport participation faced by equity-deserving groups. Although we discuss the barriers separately, we recognize that participation rates are shaped by diverse intersecting factors, including geographic location and economic situation, as well as other factors including gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability.

### **BARRIERS THAT WOMEN AND GIRLS FACE**

Gender-based discrimination persists and continues to limit women's participation in sport.<sup>740</sup> Many women and girls encounter barriers to participating in sport, including discrimination because of their gender and the prevalence of stereotypes that prevent their participation and advancement in sport organizations.<sup>741</sup> Many aspects of sport and physical activity also default to the preferences of boys and men, like equipment design and coaching approaches.<sup>742</sup> Women, belonging to historically marginalized groups, may experience additional discrimination and reduced access based on their origin, language, and identity.<sup>743</sup>

Over the years, various initiatives and organizations have aimed to increase the participation of women and girls in sport. For example, Canadian Women and Sport, a Multisport Service Organization, works with sport and other organizations to enhance women's participation in sport.<sup>744</sup> Some Community Sport Organizations also offer sport programs specifically for women and girls. Various governments, including the federal government, have also instituted different programs and grants over the years to support participation by women and girls.<sup>745</sup>

### **Participants' perspectives — Girls and women**

The Commission heard of the various challenges that women and girls face in sport. Many told us that sport environments can be unwelcoming to women and girls because sport settings continue to be male dominated. The absence of quality experiences for girls was identified as a barrier to participation. It was also noted that sport leaders are not equipped to address the needs of girls. Fewer than half of coaches receive training on how to create quality opportunities for girls in sport.<sup>746</sup>

We learned that sport organizations are ill-equipped to support athletes and high-performance athletes who want to start a family and athletes who are parents. Many female athletes shared that pregnancy was not welcomed in the sport world. Others noted how it was difficult for women with families to make time to participate in sport and there was a lack of understanding of their situations. Additionally, while there is an increasing number of sport programs for girls, we were told that there are very few grassroots programs for women aged 18 and older.

### **BARRIERS THAT PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FACE**

Persons with disabilities face long-standing and systemic barriers which prevent access to safe, welcoming, and disability-inclusive sport. Persons with disabilities lack opportunities to participate, compete, and coach. They remain under-represented in the Canadian sport system.

Systemic barriers include inaccessible facilities and transportation, the unavailability of adapted equipment, and a lack of organizations providing disability-inclusive programs. Parents of children with a disability and adults with a disability may be unsure of what sport programming is available to them, and whether there are disability-inclusive programs.<sup>747</sup> It has also been noted that specialized coaches are not easily accessible to athletes with disabilities.<sup>748</sup> There is also a lack of disability confident sport leaders. Discrimination, ableism, exclusion, and the persistence of negative stereotypes also reduce opportunities for participation.<sup>749</sup>

Disability sport in Canada is delivered through a vast network of Para and disability sport organizations. Disability sport organizations include Special Olympics Canada and its provincial and territorial chapters, and the Canadian Deaf Sports Associations and its Provincial Deaf Sports Associations. We discuss disability and Para sport organizations in further detail in Chapter 5.

The Canadian Paralympic Committee advocates for meaningful disability inclusion within the Canadian Sport System and promotes inclusive communities through the power of Paralympic sport.<sup>750</sup> The Canadian Paralympic Committee provides financial assistance to local Para sport organizations across the country through the Paralympic Sport Development Fund.<sup>751</sup>

The Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability's mission is to support communities and organizations to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in physical activity, recreation and community sport.<sup>752</sup> The Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability advocates for systemic change to remove barriers to physical activity, recreation and community sport.<sup>753</sup> This work includes advocating for disability-inclusive planning, policymaking, programs, and services.

### **Participants' perspectives — Persons with disabilities**

We were told that ableism and the presence of widespread harm have led to lower levels of sport participation for those with disabilities. Athletes with disabilities experience higher levels of harms than athletes without disabilities, including harms related to ableism.

Inaccessibility constitutes a significant barrier to participation. We were informed that people with disabilities are often forced to train, compete, travel, work and are housed in inaccessible facilities either because there are insufficient alternatives, as in small towns, or because of the decisions of mostly non-disabled coaches and administrators. This can lead to physical harms of athletes with disabilities and to being left behind.

A lack of choice related to programs, coaches, and training staff constitutes another barrier for athletes with disabilities. Participants noted that rural athletes with disabilities rarely have access to appropriate disability programs locally. We heard that those with disabilities sometimes cannot leave unsafe environments because alternative programs may not be available.

Participants reiterated on multiple occasions that people with disabilities have the right to safe, meaningful access to what they called “mainstream” and integrated sport programs. Although “mainstream” sport programs may offer a greater choice of sport, there is concern that there is little consideration or attention to the safe participation of people with disabilities in such settings. Participants remarked that many National Sport Organizations do not create Para specific programs and prioritize athletes without disabilities insofar as access to training, coaches, facilities, and funding are concerned.

We were advised that programs for athletes with disabilities are generally run by non-disabled decision-makers. In both the “mainstream” and the disability sport context, the majority of administrators, board members, and coaches who make decisions that affect the safety of persons with disabilities do not themselves have disabilities. We heard how this can result in well-meaning sport practices and policies that inadvertently decrease athlete safety and participation because they may not be based on the actual needs of athletes with disabilities.

## **BARRIERS THAT RACIALIZED PEOPLE FACE**

Racialized individuals continue to face significant barriers that limit their access to and participation in sport. It has been recognized that individuals from racial and ethno-cultural communities are disproportionately under-represented in sport and physical activity. Structural or procedural barriers, including the fact that these activities are not always culturally meaningful, contribute to this reality. It cannot be denied that racial discrimination is present in sport and physical activity spaces and acts as a barrier to participation.

A 2024 Statistics Canada report indicates that 25% of Canadians felt that racism and discrimination were problems in community sports. Among those who participated in community sport, 18% said that they experienced or witnessed unfair treatment, racism, or discrimination in sport, with race or skin colour as the most common reason cited for discrimination.<sup>754</sup> The evidence is clear that racialized groups are at a higher risk of experiencing various forms of harm and discrimination.<sup>755</sup> The Change the Game Research Project launched by the MLSE Foundation demonstrated that more than one out of every three Black youth, one of four Indigenous youth, and one of five BIPOC youth (i.e., Black, Indigenous, and people of colour) report having directly experienced racism in sport in Ontario.<sup>756</sup> The Change the Game Research 2.0 project completed the following year found that 82% of youth reported not having anyone they feel they can talk to about experiences with racism or discrimination in sport.<sup>757</sup>

Systemic issues in sport, such as the under-representation of racialized individuals among coaches and in positions of authority, have been clearly identified.<sup>758</sup> The 2025 Jumpstart State of Youth Sport report noted that approximately 25% of Black, Indigenous, and Mixed Race youth report that their coach “almost never” looked like them, compared to 13% for White youth.<sup>759</sup> Hiring and recruitment can be unfair, and racialized athletes, coaches, and administrators can be overlooked.<sup>760</sup> There is a lack of institutional policies to combat racism, compounded by a general lack of training and awareness among coaches and leaders on how to prevent and address racist and discriminatory incidents.<sup>761</sup>

Several initiatives have been implemented across the country to promote participation and address racism. Some grassroots organizations offer opportunities to members of racialized communities to participate in sport and physical activity at the community level.

Other organizations seek to address anti-racism by raising awareness and offering anti-racism education and resources. The Coaching Association of Canada, for example, has an e-learning module and resources on anti-racism and coaching. The association worked with a team of expert advisors to develop the Anti-Racism in Coaching e-learning module, which launched in 2022.<sup>762</sup> Anti-Racism in Sport offers resources, a model anti-racism policy template, and a workshop called “Sport Is Not an Equal Playing Field: An Introduction to Anti-Racism Literacy and Action.”<sup>763</sup>

In 2024, the Inclusion in Canadian Sports Network launched the Play Fair: Anti-Racism in Sport toolkit. The toolkit was created in collaboration with a group of experts in diversity and inclusion, athletes who have experienced racism first-hand, and sport organizations committed to change.<sup>764</sup> It includes a variety of resources to support organizations in their work toward anti-racism, Indigenous inclusion and reconciliation, and 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Sport Canada has previously acknowledged the deep and long-lasting impacts of systemic racism on sport in Canada. During their 2025 Conference, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation directed officials to examine how governments can further address racism and discrimination in sport in Canada.<sup>765</sup>

Sport Canada has previously offered funding to sport organizations to support equity, diversity, and inclusion.<sup>766</sup> This was short-term project funding that has been the subject of criticism. See Chapter 15 for further information on funding.

More broadly, the Government of Canada developed the Changing Systems, Transforming Lives: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024–2028. This strategy aims to tackle systemic racism and make communities more inclusive.<sup>767</sup>

### **Participants' perspectives — Racialized people**

Participants recounted their experiences of racism and discrimination in sport environments, which sometimes led them to withdraw from their sport.

Racism takes various forms, not all of them obvious. Participants recounted their experience of being verbally abused. We heard of discriminatory remarks, the use of slurs, and micro-aggressions. Some participants were told that they were selected for the team or a leadership position only because of “the need for diversity.” Tokenism was identified as a significant issue. Participants shared that in predominantly white sports, they were confronted with assumptions about how they did not fit the perceived mold of what an athlete should look like.

Many noted that racism is not being sufficiently addressed. Mandatory anti-racism education for all sport participants, increasing anti-racism awareness, and addressing structural inequities related to poverty and access were all suggested by participants as actions to meaningfully address racism in sport. Some suggested that all sport organizations should adopt zero-tolerance anti-racism policies. Others noted the importance of collaborating with grassroots community organizations that work in diverse communities. Many emphasized the need to combat racism from a systemic perspective, at both the local and national level. They suggested that there should be access to information on how organizations can address racism, including anti-Black racism.

A lack of representation of racialized sport participants, including athletes, coaches, and leaders, was apparent to many participants. They explained it is difficult to look around the room and not see anyone who looked like them. Racialized individuals on boards recalled having their experience and skills dismissed because of the colour of their skin. We were told that people of colour are being pushed out of boards.



On the other hand, we heard that when leadership is representative, it encourages others to enter the sport and can build welcoming environments. Having a seat at the decision-making table was seen as an effective means to effect change.

Additionally, while there is known interest among minority populations in participating in sport and recreation, this often remains unattainable due to a lack of existing facilities, programs, and services that adequately address their cultural, social, and religious needs.<sup>768</sup>

### **BARRIERS THAT NEWCOMERS FACE**

Sport can be an important, welcoming vehicle for the integration of newcomers into their local communities.<sup>769</sup> Newcomers face several barriers when considering participation in sport and physical activity. Multiple factors, including language barriers, racism, discrimination, social exclusion, and cultural differences, add to the challenges. Financial barriers, transportation challenges, unfamiliarity with sport, and a lack of information may also serve as barriers to engagement.<sup>770</sup> Despite these barriers, research indicates that newcomers are interested in participating in sport and physical activity.<sup>771</sup>

Many sport and non-sport national, provincial, territorial, and community organizations across Canada have reached out to newcomers and found ways to enable their successful participation in sport and physical activity.<sup>772</sup> Numerous organizations provide resources, assistance, and information to make sport and physical activity more accessible.<sup>773</sup>

Some Community Sport Organizations and local organizations offer culturally relevant sport programming. Others provide guidance and leadership to help others reduce the barriers that newcomers experience. The Sport for Life Society published a resource in 2024 that outlines the barriers newcomers may face in participating in sport and physical activity and provides examples of solutions to improve accessibility.<sup>774</sup> Nevertheless, more engagement is needed from all in order to appropriately engage, include and welcome newcomers.<sup>775</sup>

### **Participants' perspectives — Newcomers**

Sport is important for newcomers. We learned how it creates connection and community, which blossoms into a sense of belonging. Nonetheless, for most newcomers, the likelihood of getting into competitive sport is very low as a result of racism and discrimination within the sport system, and other barriers to participation.

Newcomers informed us of the obstacles they face, including financial barriers presented by the fees required for youth sport activities, challenges of distance and transportation, and a reliance on public transportation. Other newcomers noted how they must navigate unfamiliar new systems and social norms in Canada. We were told that the process to register for sport can be complicated and frustrating. Language barriers can also contribute to sport's inaccessibility.<sup>776</sup>

To address these barriers, participants suggested that sport organizations should simplify their registration processes, collaborate with settlement agencies, and work with interpreters to overcome language barriers. Still, we were advised to recognize that there is no “one size fits all” approach.

Some suggested that sport policy and programs should become more closely aligned with immigration services and programs in order to help newcomers understand the opportunities afforded by sport and how to enroll their children in different programs. We heard that that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations might work more closely with sport organizations who serve marginalized groups to increase accessibility to the sport while becoming more active in supporting newcomers. We were told that additional resources should be allocated to sport organizations and programs that facilitate integration, social cohesion, and well-being among refugee and newcomer populations.

### **BARRIERS THAT 2SLGBTQI+ INDIVIDUALS FACE**

Access to sport for 2SLGBTQI+ individuals remains unequal due, in part, to a lack of inclusive and safe spaces. They face unique barriers to participating in sport and physical activity, from a lack of safe and accessible changerooms and washrooms, to exclusion, discrimination, hostile language, and violence.<sup>777</sup>

As Egale Canada highlighted, 2SLGBTQI+ people continue to experience exclusion and violence within sport environments at all levels.<sup>778</sup> The 2024 IOC Consensus Statement on Interpersonal Violence and Safeguarding in Sport, published by the International Olympic Committee, noted that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer+ athletes experience more interpersonal violence in sport.<sup>779</sup> Implicit and explicit acts of homophobia are common across sport organizations and prevent sport participation from 2SLGBTQI+ individuals.<sup>780</sup> A 2017 study surveying 1,008 Canadian athletes reported that 30% of heterosexual athletes, 67% of lesbian, gay and bisexual athletes, and 85% of transgender athletes experienced at least one homophobic episode.<sup>781</sup>

Sport and non-sport organizations have created opportunities, tools, and resources to support 2SLGBTQI+ individuals' inclusion in sport.<sup>782</sup> Egale Canada seeks to specifically advance equality for 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada. They created the “2SLGBTQI Sports Inclusion: Playbook to Breaking Down Barriers” which identifies specific barriers and discrimination that exist in sport and provides tips and tricks to promote inclusion.<sup>783</sup> They also provide a list of sport leagues and clubs all over the country that actively include and create space for 2SLGBTQI+ people.<sup>784</sup>

In British Columbia, viaSport created the “Inclusion in Sport Coaching Resource,” designed to help coaches create safe spaces for their participants, especially those who identify as 2SLGBTQI+.<sup>785</sup> Meaningful opportunities for participation in sport are provided by 2SLGBTQI+ led grassroots sport organizations and clubs.<sup>786</sup>

### Participants' perspectives — 2SLGBTQI+ individuals

We learned that many 2SLGBTQI+ sport participants have left sport after facing homophobia and transphobia. Some participants shared that homophobia was normalized in sport and it continues to be a systemic problem.

We heard of the homophobic and transphobic language frequently used in locker rooms and other sport-related spaces. Athletes told us that they were often the focus of homophobic slurs. Transgender and gender-diverse people experienced forms of transphobia, including policing<sup>787</sup> in facilities and changerooms, discriminatory comments, and violence. We heard from participants who did not feel safe being out in sport, and others who were asked to conceal their sexual orientation. Ultimately, many 2SLGBTQI+ participants shared that they did not feel safe in sport settings.

Grassroots organizations and leagues have been created by and for queer athletes. Participants shared that these organizations focus on inclusivity, socialization, and providing a safe environment for 2SLGBTQI+ athletes. We learned that there was something unique and empowering about these leagues where participants feel seen and can be their authentic selves. Participants told us it was difficult for these organizations to obtain funding and access to quality facilities. Other organizations experienced challenges in finding referees, umpires, and officials who were willing to participate in their leagues.

### BARRIERS THAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLE FACE

In previous chapters, we outlined how sport plays a critical role in the identity of Indigenous communities. We learned from Indigenous people that sport brings communities together and supports community health, wellness, and pride. Sport was noted to be a tool for reconciliation and cultural resurgence.

Although access to sport and physical activity for Indigenous people, including participants' views on access to sport, is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, it is important to recognize that numerous barriers specifically limit access to sport for Indigenous people.

Research demonstrates that Indigenous people continue to experience overt and systemic racism within sport. Indigenous youth are subjected to racial slurs, stereotypes, alienation, institutional discrimination, and other forms of racism which are barriers to their participation in sport.<sup>788</sup> The lack of culturally relevant programming or sport facilities in most Indigenous communities, the cost of participation, and the high costs of travel (many need to travel outside the community to play sport) also limit access to sport. Indigenous communities have highlighted these barriers for years.

In their examination of the Canadian sport system, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage reported that “there is still work to be done before Indigenous people can participate fully in the Canadian Sport System.”<sup>789</sup>

Chapter 6 presents the participants' perspectives on barriers to participation in sport and physical activity for Indigenous people.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON EFFORTS TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY FOR EQUITY-DESERVING GROUPS**

Opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity are not equitable. While important progress has been made in making sport more accessible, sport participants in Canada continue to face structural, systemic barriers that limit or prevent participation. Many noted that the inequalities and barriers to participation and opportunity are growing. We heard that a greater focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion is necessary to ensure that sport is accessible to all.

Growing inequities in sport are contrary to the broad consensus among participants that all Canadians — regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, culture, Indigeneity, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background — should have equal access to sport and physical activities. Many participants believe that access to sport and recreation should be a right for all citizens. They also told us that the right to participate should shape government policies and interventions, including the allocation of funds. We clearly heard of the fundamental importance of ensuring that members of equity-deserving or under-represented groups feel welcomed and safe in the sport environment.

We consistently heard that governments and sport organizations need to ensure that sport is more inclusive and accessible for marginalized groups. We were also told that it was particularly important to focus on removing barriers at the community level because this is where most Canadians participate in sport and where virtually all athletes begin their sport journeys.

We were pleased to note that steps are being taken to provide funding to increase sport and physical activity participation for under-represented communities. The federal government provides funding programs that seek to reduce barriers to participation, namely the Community Sport for All Initiative (Sport Canada) and the Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund (Public Health Agency Canada).<sup>790</sup>

Many applauded the Community Sport for All Initiative and urged the continuation of such programs. The need for culturally relevant and welcoming spaces was noted. Participants emphasized the need to further invest in community-led sport programs tailored to people with disabilities, Indigenous, racialized, female, and 2SLGBTQI+ participants. Others supported the need for low-cost targeted programs for vulnerable populations that could benefit greatly from sport experiences.

We also heard that a greater focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion within the sport system is necessary to ensure that sport is accessible to all. Participants suggested that ensuring marginalized groups have more access to leadership opportunities would promote a healthier and more accessible and diverse sport environment in Canada.

We learned that while meaningful meaningful equity, diversity, and inclusion policies can demonstrate a genuine commitment to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion, these policies often lack concrete plans or actions to fulfill commitments to improve inclusivity. In some cases, exclusion is reproduced through policy. People from equity-deserving groups continue to experience exclusion as well as “erasure, denial, and ignorance when engaging within Canada’s sport system, not despite such policies, but sometimes because of them.”<sup>791</sup>

Others noted that Sport UK has a dedicated equity, diversity, and inclusion strategy for sport.<sup>792</sup> Equity, diversity, and inclusion requirements for National Sport Organizations are tied to funding and enshrined in the Code for Sports Governance. We explore this model in further detail in Chapter 14. Others noted that the sport system in New Zealand is more welcoming for women and girls, and inclusive of Indigenous people, than Canada’s sport system.

### **CALLS TO ACTION: IMPROVING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY IN SPORT**

The Commission recognizes that many newcomers and Canadians from equity-deserving groups continue to face additional intersecting barriers to sport participation. Harassment, discrimination, and systemic inequalities all contribute to creating unsafe sport environments and limit access. A continued focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion is therefore required to ensure that sport and physical activity are safe and accessible for all.

In light of our work, the Commission is of the view that racism, discrimination, and unfair treatment persist in Canadian sport and remain largely unaddressed. Opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity are not equitable.

While there is general recognition that important progress has made sport more accessible, sport participants in Canada continue to face structural, systemic, and social barriers that limit or prevent participation. The inequalities and barriers to participation and opportunity are growing. This reality was universally acknowledged by governments, sport organizations, and sport participants.

We commend the federal, provincial and territorial governments for their decision to direct officials to examine how governments can further address racism and discrimination and sport in Canada.<sup>793</sup> This work must be advanced as a priority, with the development and implementation of a concrete strategy to achieve meaningful and sustained change. Sport Canada does not have a dedicated anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion strategy.



Improving inclusivity and accessibility of sport is a complex problem that requires a multi-pronged approach. Participants spoke of the importance of education, having appropriate policies in place, providing funding to support equitable access to sport, improving governance practices, and — most importantly — creating safe and welcoming sport environments.

### **Equity, diversity, and inclusion policies, education and governance**

The Commission believes that equity, diversity and inclusion are crucial to create safe, welcoming, and accessible sport environments.

Although some National Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations, and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations have adopted anti-racism, and equity, diversity and inclusion strategies, there are currently no accountability or reporting structures in place. These strategies often have very few, if any mention of how they will assist or support members of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Many participants emphasized the importance of education as a tool to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in sport. Some suggested that anti-racism and inclusion training should be mandatory for members of boards of directors, coaches, staff, and athletes.

The Commission recognizes the fundamental importance of diversity in sport leadership structures. We consistently heard about the importance of representation in sport leadership, including among coaches, staff, and boards of directors. In Chapter 14 which explores the governance of sport organizations, we have made Calls to Action regarding board diversity.

Diversity and inclusion need to be reflected in measurable outcomes. Clear direction is needed from the federal government on diversity, equity and inclusion. Standards need to be set for sport organizations, and they must be held accountable to these standards. Therefore, the federal government should establish standards and ensure that all sport organizations receiving federal funds follow best practices in equity, diversity and inclusion. In addition to the Calls to Action outlined in Chapter 14 on sport organization governance, consideration should be given to staff representation, training and education, and equity, diversity, and inclusion policies.

### **Funding equitable access**

We consistently heard of the importance of providing equitable funding in sport to ensure its accessibility. We recognize that the sport system needs ongoing, stable, and equitable funding to ensure it serves equity-deserving groups, including persons with disabilities, Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities. The Commission's Calls to Action on sport and physical activity funding can be found in Chapter 15.

Additionally, the Commission acknowledges the recommendation of the Standing Committee of the Status of Women 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.<sup>794</sup>

In response to this recommendation, we understand that Sport Canada will fund eligible projects that seek to recruit, train, and develop individuals in equity-deserving populations which will lead to increased participation and retention of individuals in those communities. This will also prepare them to take on leadership roles within the sport system. We note that past funding to support these initiatives for federally funded sport organizations has been provided as project funding, which was found to be insufficient to make meaningful changes in sport organizations.

### Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**10. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provincial and territorial governments, and equity-deserving groups, create a national strategy on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in sport and physical activity. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

**11. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with equity-deserving groups, create and implement mandatory standards on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility for federally funded sport organizations. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

**12. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with equity-deserving groups, continue to support and expand initiatives to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport and physical activity, including initiatives that seek to remove barriers and increase participation in sport and physical activity. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

# **CHAPTER 8:**

## **Improving safe sport in Canada: the Commission's proposed approach**





# Chapter 8:

## Improving safe sport in Canada: the Commission's proposed approach

### Defining safe sport

Although the term “safe sport” emerged internationally and in Canada in recent years, the principles underlying the concept have existed for decades. As we discussed in Chapter 3, in 1996, Sport Canada adopted the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework that required National Sport Organizations to develop and adopt a policy addressing harassment and abuse and to appoint harassment officers.<sup>795</sup>

In 2007, the International Olympic Committee issued the first consensus statement on sexual harassment and abuse in sport.<sup>796</sup> The consensus summarized scientific knowledge on sexual harassment and abuse in sport and provided a set of recommendations aimed at raising awareness, strengthening policy development, enhancing education, and promoting good practice.

It was followed in 2016 by the updated consensus statement on “Harassment and Abuse (Non-accidental Violence) in Sport,”<sup>797</sup> which enhanced the 2007 statement by identifying additional types of harassment and abuse in sport, namely psychological, physical, and neglect.<sup>798</sup> Despite a heightened focus on creating safer sporting environments since the release of the first consensus statement, experts consider that progress in advancing safe sport has been slow.<sup>799</sup> In their view, this is partially due to the “absence of a generally accepted definition of Safe Sport or a framework for understanding and advancing Safe Sport.”<sup>800</sup>

Different international interpretations of safe sport highlight the range of existing definitions:

- The 2016 International Olympic Committee consensus statement on harassment and abuse defines safe sport as “an athletic environment that is respectful, equitable and free from all forms of non-accidental violence to athletes.”<sup>801</sup>
- Safe Sport International, a global advocacy organization, is dedicated to advancing safe, inclusive sporting environments free from all forms of abuse, harassment, and violence against athletes of all ages.<sup>802</sup>
- The US Center for SafeSport refers to safe sport as “building a sport community where participants can work and learn together free of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and misconduct.”<sup>803</sup>



Within the Canadian context the definition of safe sport also varies:

- The Coaching Association of Canada defines safe sport as a collective responsibility “to create, foster and preserve sport environments that ensure positive, healthy and fulfilling experiences for all individuals” and to “recognize and report acts of maltreatment and prioritize the welfare, safety and rights of every person at all times.”<sup>804</sup>
- Sport for Life defines safe sport as providing “a training and competitive environment for athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteers that is free of abuse, harassment, and discrimination.” It adds that “safety includes the physical aspect of the equipment and training practices.”<sup>805</sup>
- The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, which we review in greater detail in Chapter 9, stipulates that individuals should have the reasonable expectation to participate in sport in Canada “in an environment that is free from all forms of maltreatment and that treats every individual with dignity and respect.”<sup>806</sup>

These definitions reveal differences in both the populations they target (from athletes to all sport participants) and their focus (from safeguarding against harm to protecting individual well-being and human rights).

Another word that is gaining in popularity is “safeguarding.” The word has roots in child protection legislation and is used in sporting contexts in several countries, including the United Kingdom and Ireland.<sup>807</sup> Safeguarding is generally defined as an “action that is taken to promote the welfare of an athlete and protect them from harm.”<sup>808</sup> According to experts, safeguarding, like safe sport, aims to create safe sport environments but it can also be used to encourage the sport community to “use sport as a vehicle to advance human rights.”<sup>809</sup>

### ACADEMIC DEFINITION OF SAFE SPORT

In 2022, Canadian researchers constructed a conceptual framework for safe sport informed by diverse stakeholders’ perspectives (including athletes, coaches, administrators, officials, and support staff) in the Canadian sport system.<sup>810</sup> This study was undertaken in response to reports of maltreatment and toxic cultures in Canadian sport. It followed the implementation of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport among federally funded sport organizations and the creation of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (which we discuss in Chapter 10).<sup>811</sup>

The results of this study suggested that stakeholders’ understanding of safe sport includes three components:

- **Environment and physical safety:** “a safe environment that is free from issues of physical danger from equipment and doping”<sup>812</sup>
- **Relational safety:** “relationships that are free from sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional or psychosocial abuse”<sup>813</sup>
- **Optimizing sport:** “programs that prioritize positive development, rights of inclusion, accessibility, fairness, and safety.”<sup>814</sup>

However, the researchers noted that how sport stakeholders understand safe sport is continuously evolving amid changes in sport, broader societal influences and social concerns.<sup>815</sup>

### GOVERNMENT DEFINITION OF SAFE SPORT

In February 2019, ministers responsible for sport, physical activity, and recreation from the federal, provincial, and territorial governments adopted the Red Deer Declaration — For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport.<sup>816</sup> Under the Red Deer Declaration, all governments recognized that:

- “All Canadians have the right to participate in sport in an environment that is safe, welcoming, inclusive, ethical and respectful, and one that protects the dignity, rights and health of all participants.”<sup>817</sup>
- “Sport must be free from harassment, abuse, unethical behaviour, and discrimination, regardless of sex, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion, language, age, sexual orientation, ability, or any other basis.”<sup>818</sup>

As we discuss in Chapter 9, the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport was developed as a direct response to the Red Deer Declaration. It is the core document that sets harmonized rules to be adopted by sport organizations funded by the Government of Canada. Its purpose is to advance “a respectful sport culture that delivers quality, inclusive, accessible, welcoming and safe sport experiences.”<sup>819</sup>

The Universal Code of Conduct affirms that individuals should have the reasonable expectation to participate in sport “in an environment that is free from all forms of maltreatment and that treats every individual with dignity and respect.”<sup>820</sup>

The Universal Code of Conduct defines maltreatment as “a volitional [i.e. voluntary] act and/or omission described in Sections 5.2 to 5.6 that results in harm or has the potential for physical or psychological harm.”<sup>821</sup> Section 5 of the Code outlines conduct that constitutes “prohibited behaviours.”<sup>822</sup> Sections 5.2 to 5.6 of the Code respectively prohibits the following forms of maltreatment:

- psychological maltreatment
- physical maltreatment
- neglect
- sexual maltreatment
- grooming.<sup>823</sup>

The Universal Code of Conduct also identifies a range of behaviours that, while not maltreatment themselves, are also prohibited. These include:

- boundary transgression
- discrimination
- subjecting a participant to the risk of maltreatment
- aiding and abetting maltreatment or other prohibited behaviour
- failing to report possible maltreatment or other prohibited behaviour
- intentionally reporting a false allegation
- interfering with or manipulating an investigation or disciplinary process
- retaliating.<sup>824</sup>

## Participants' perspectives on safe sport

Participants we spoke with during our engagement process highlighted the absence of a commonly agreed-upon definition of safe sport. We learned that the meaning of safe sport differs for Indigenous people and equity-deserving groups because their experiences, histories, and cultural contexts affect how they understand safety and well-being. Other participants noted a connection between injury and maltreatment. Some also observed that the concept of safe sport has recently taken on negative connotations.

### LACK OF CONSENSUS ABOUT SAFE SPORT

Participants generally agreed on the overarching characteristics of a safe sport environment. They frequently described such environments as inclusive, respectful, and welcoming spaces that contribute to better mental health for all those involved — as environments that support athletes performing to the best of their abilities. Athletes and researchers also frequently associated safety with qualities like trust and respect and indicated that the concept of safe sport should reflect positive values.

However, the lines became blurred when assessing whether particular behaviours in specific contexts can be characterized as appropriate or inappropriate. Many stressed the importance of having an agreed-upon or a revised definition of safe sport. Some participants also cautioned us that safe sport was nuanced and subjective. They said that actions intended to push athletes to perform in the context of high-performance sport may not always constitute maltreatment. For instance, some parents believed that coaches yelling and pushing athletes beyond certain limits was essential for improving performance and advancing children in their sport.

Most participants recognized that high-performance sport is challenging and can be gruelling. We were told, for example, that athletes sometimes choose to compete when injured or to complete extremely demanding training programs to achieve excellence. This, for some athletes, does not necessarily reflect maltreatment. Athletes can be challenged and still be safe. For many high-performance athletes, it is appropriate to be challenged in a way that preserves their dignity and autonomy. It can be difficult to draw the line between acceptable and

unacceptable behaviour, particularly when considering personal experiences, cultural expectations, and the pursuit of excellence.<sup>825</sup>

Many participants also noted that as the meaning of safe sport has evolved, so have the norms in sport environments. What once may have been considered as a normal coaching practice is now considered to be a form of maltreatment. Practices such as weighing athletes in artistic sports, imposing onerous and inappropriate physical challenges as punishment for errors, using verbal abuse or berating them after errors, isolating or neglecting athletes as a form of discipline, and forcing them to train or compete while injured are no longer considered acceptable coaching methods.

Despite conflicting perspectives on what constitutes acceptable coaching methods and unacceptable behaviours, participants generally agreed that safe sport and all that it encompasses remains unclear. The Commission heard many different terms, including “safeguarding” and “eliminating maltreatment” and a call for clearer definitions.

### SAFE SPORT FOR INDIGENOUS SPORT PARTICIPANTS

Indigenous participants in our engagement process informed us that, for Indigenous people, safe sport goes beyond preventing physical and psychological harm. For Indigenous people, safety is holistic and grounded in physical, cultural, social, psychological, and spiritual well-being. We were informed that sport is not simply a place to gather and play or to compete in environments free from abuse and harm; it is a living practice of identity, belonging, and healing. We came to understand that for Indigenous Peoples, safe sport is inseparable from cultural safety. Some have told us that safe sport meant building a properly resourced and sustainable ecosystem where Indigenous participants — athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, and administrators — can thrive in environments that are culturally grounded, free from racism, and accountable to the communities they serve.

Safe sport for Indigenous Peoples includes several components:

- **Indigenous self-determination:** Indigenous Peoples must have the authority to lead, govern, and manage sport according to their own values.
- **Culture as protection:** Ceremony, language, and land-based practice are forms of safety.
- **Trauma-informed practices:** Practices must recognize colonialism's intergenerational impacts and favour healing over punitive responses.
- **Restorative justice:** Resolution processes must prioritize culturally grounded healing and ensure that accountability is fostered through relationships and learning.
- **Representation:** Indigenous leadership at all levels of sport is critical to restoring confidence and accountability in the sport system.
- **Community capacity:** Indigenous communities must have the resources to deliver safe sport in ways that reflect their own priorities.

### **SAFE SPORT FOR EQUITY-DESERVING SPORT PARTICIPANTS**

Several participants reflected critically on current definitions of safe sport, particularly as it relates to equity-deserving groups. More specifically, they questioned whether safety can truly be realized for those groups. For example, participants suggested that a Black athlete may experience harms beyond those that a white athlete experiences. So certain concepts of safe sport do not adequately reflect the safety and well-being of all sport participants.

We were told that safe sport must go beyond protecting athletes' physical and psychological well-being. It must also uphold inclusion, ensure fairness, and promote acceptance to create an environment where every participant feels valued, respected, and supported.

### **CONNECTION BETWEEN MALTREATMENT AND INJURY**

Participants in the Commission's processes, including experts, noted the connection between physical injury and maltreatment. For instance, allowing or pressuring an athlete to play while experiencing concussion symptoms is considered a form of maltreatment. Similarly, allowing an athlete to train or compete when they are physically injured can also be maltreatment.

Connections were also made between premature sport specialization and maltreatment. Participants observed that when athletes focus on one sport to the exclusion of others at a very young age, flawed personal and athletic development can follow, along with an increased risk of injury. Both current and former athletes noted that while frequent training, competition, and high-performance expectations are important in sport, they can also heighten the risk of both immediate and long-lasting injuries. They must be balanced appropriately and thoughtfully considered.

Participants also emphasized the importance of allowing enough time for psychological, mental, and physical recovery from sport's demands. They insisted that recovery must be a holistic process, not just physical healing.

### **NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS OF SAFE SPORT**

Participants told us that in recent years, the term safe sport has taken on a negative connotation. We heard that there is a growing sense of fatigue associated with the concept. It is increasingly perceived as a source of stress and fear, and sometimes even as a weapon. As a result, the original purpose of the concept — to create sport environments where everyone feels safe, respected, and welcomed — has been weakened and the sense of urgency to prevent maltreatment is lost.

For some, particularly coaches, the term safe sport now causes anxiety and a sense of dread. Several described a feeling of constantly walking on eggshells and being afraid of making mistakes. They were concerned that the concept has become “weaponized.” Many told us that the phrase is even being used as a verb — as in “we are going to safe sport you” — in a threatening or punitive way. In many respects, safe sport has become a contentious and emotionally charged expression.



We also recognize that there is a growing resentment among sport organizations regarding safe sport. This is partly a result of the high administrative burden involved in an environment where funding for sport organizations has remained stagnant, as Chapter 15 describes. This is especially true for smaller sport organizations with limited resources.

## Safe sport in this report

For the Commission's mandate, we adopted the definition of safe sport that is articulated in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. A safe sport environment is one that is "free from all forms of maltreatment and that treats every individual with dignity and respect."<sup>826</sup>

The Universal Code of Conduct defines maltreatment as psychological, physical, and sexual maltreatment, as well as neglect and grooming.<sup>827</sup> However, in this Report, the term "maltreatment" is used more broadly to encompass not only these forms of maltreatment, but also all other behaviours which may not constitute maltreatment but are nonetheless prohibited under the Universal Code of Conduct. These include boundary transgressions, discrimination, subjecting a participant to the risk of maltreatment, aiding and abetting, failing to report maltreatment or other prohibited behaviours, intentionally reporting a false allegation, interfering with or manipulating an investigation or disciplinary review process and retaliating against a person for making a good faith report of possible prohibited behaviour or for participating in a report process.<sup>828</sup>

## Why safe sport is important

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Commission's work revealed that maltreatment in sport is pervasive. Its harms can cause long-term psychological, cognitive, social, and physical impacts that go beyond the playing field.

Abuse and maltreatment have devastating impacts on victims and survivors. Countless athletes shared with us that, because of maltreatment, they felt forced to leave a sport they still loved and to which they had dedicated their whole life.

Victims and survivors shared that they continued to deal with the life-altering consequences of abuse years after it had occurred.

They described lasting feelings of shame, embarrassment, and guilt along with thoughts of suicide and self-harm that continued long after the periods of abuse and maltreatment.

Victims and survivors framed abuse as a virus and highlighted how it can “infect” not only themselves but also other athletes, their families, and an entire community. The Commission heard from many parents whose children were victims and survivors of abuse. They repeatedly shared that both the abuse and the reporting process had impacted the entire family, describing it all as “devastating.” Many participants in our engagement process expressed deep disappointment and even “disgust” with the sport system.

Through our work, we came to realize that the impact of maltreatment in sport extends far beyond individual harm: it strikes the very foundation of the sport system. When athletes experience or witness abuse, harassment, or neglect — whether physical, psychological, or emotional — it undermines their sense of safety and belonging in sport environments. This, in turn, reduces public trust in sport institutions and governing bodies, particularly when allegations of abuse are ignored, denied, or handled inappropriately or without transparency.

Parents become less willing to enroll their children in organized sport, and young athletes may withdraw entirely, leading to a measurable decline in participation across age groups and disciplines.

Moreover, we learned that maltreatment disproportionately affects marginalized groups, thereby making issues of equity and access worse.

As trust in the system decreases, so does the pipeline of future athletes, coaches, and volunteers. This not only weakens the likelihood of competitive success but also the social and community-building power of sport itself.

A truly safe sport system is one in which every participant, regardless of age, gender, background, or level of ability, feels safe, respected, included, and supported.

A safe sport environment is one in which individuals can engage fully, learn new skills, develop friendships, grow in confidence, and experience the joy of movement without fear of harm or discrimination. As we discuss in Chapter 2, the social value of sport is immense: it builds character, strengthens communities, improves physical and mental health, and fosters national pride.

However, these benefits can be fully realized only when safety and human rights are a fundamental requirement, not an option. If we are to protect and preserve the positive power of sport in Canadian society, we must commit to creating systems that prioritize safety, dignity, equity, and accountability for all.

## **The Commission's proposed approach to improving safe sport: prevention, response, and support**

As we outlined earlier in this report, the Commission's mandate was two-fold. We were instructed to review the sport system and make recommendations on concrete and effective actions to:

- Improve safe sport in Canada, including trauma-informed approaches to support sport participants in the disclosure of and healing from maltreatment.
- Improve the sport system in Canada, including actions relating to policy, funding structures, governance, reporting, accountability, conflicts of interest, systems alignment, culture, and legal considerations.<sup>829</sup>

Later in this report, we review the sport system and make Calls to Action that, if implemented, will improve the Canadian sport system so that all Canadians have trust in it.

Building a robust, well-governed sport system is necessary for creating and maintaining safe sport environments. Without good governance in the organizations that form the system, no safe sport initiatives can succeed, no matter how good people's intentions may be.

In Chapters 9 to 11, we focus on safe sport. The Commission recognizes that completely eliminating maltreatment in sport is not possible. Sport is a microcosm of society and reflects its values, power dynamics, and flaws. Just as abuse, harassment, and discrimination exist in society at large, these issues manifest themselves in sport as well. However, it is crucial to put effective preventive measures in place to reduce how often maltreatment occurs and to have mechanisms to respond appropriately when it does occur. Sport can set an example for society and model what positive change looks like.

Given the interconnected nature of Canada's sport system, and how powers are divided across federal and provincial jurisdictions (discussed in Chapter 4), improving safe sport in Canada requires meaningful collaboration between both levels of government and within the structures of sport organizations themselves. While the Government of Canada must take the lead in driving change, active collaboration from its provincial and territorial counterparts is essential.

The Commission's proposed approach to improving safe sport in Canada is structured around three key priorities: prevention, response, and support:

- Prevention focuses on proactive measures to create safer sport environments and reduce the risk of maltreatment.
- Response addresses the need for harmonized and effective mechanisms to respond to maltreatment and hold individuals accountable.
- Support emphasizes the appropriate support for those affected, namely in the complaint management and investigation processes.<sup>830</sup>

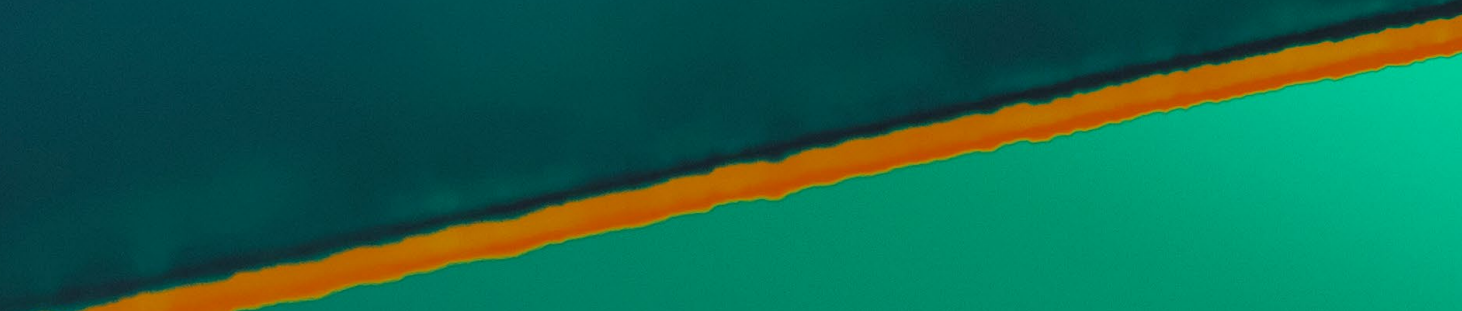
The Commission believes that together, these pillars form the foundation for a comprehensive and sustainable safe sport strategy. They constitute the basis for our Calls to Action to the Government of Canada. While all three priorities are equally important, we believe that harmonized and effective mechanisms for responding to maltreatment in sport can strengthen and reinforce prevention efforts. Strong response mechanisms serve as a powerful preventive tool by establishing clear expectations and consequences.

Complaint mechanisms also gather critical data and insights into risks and systemic gaps within the sport system. This information is essential for grounding prevention initiatives in evidence, enabling targeted interventions, policy improvements, and education efforts that address root causes and reduce the likelihood of future harm.

In Chapters 9 and 10, we examine the safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms implemented across the sport system, focusing on the response and support priorities. Chapter 11 then addresses the prevention priority.

# **CHAPTER 9:**

## **Safe sport standards in Canada: structure, limitations and gaps**







## Chapter 9:

# Safe sport standards in Canada: structure, limitations and gaps

In the previous chapter, we defined safe sport environments. In this chapter, we focus on the safe sport policies that various sport organizations have adopted across the country. These policies are generally designed to protect athletes, coaches, officials, and the public from various forms of maltreatment like abuse, harassment, and discrimination.

We begin by discussing the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (the “Universal Code of Conduct,” also called the “UCCMS”). This Universal Code of Conduct is the principal safe sport policy at the national level. We also review provincial and territorial safe sport policies and briefly touch on those adopted by National Sport Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and Community Sport Organizations. Throughout this discussion we incorporate feedback we received during our engagement process.

This chapter lays the foundation for Chapter 10, which addresses the various complaint mechanisms created to administer these policies. Because our findings and Calls to Action on safe sport policies and codes of conduct are closely intertwined with those concerning complaint mechanisms, we present them together, in a single set of findings and Calls to Action, at the end of Chapter 10.

## Global Policy Standards for Inclusive, Equitable and Safe Sport and Physical Education

Before examining the safe sport policies and codes of conduct developed by various governments and sport organizations across our country, we note that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is currently leading the development of the *Global Policy Standards for Inclusive, Equitable and Safe Sport and Physical Education* to help countries make sport and physical education safer, more inclusive, and more equitable.<sup>831</sup> UNESCO, the United Nations’ lead agency for sport and physical education, is the custodian of the *International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport*, first adopted by Member States in 1978. The Charter affirms that access to quality sport is a fundamental human right.<sup>832</sup>

The development of the Global Policy Standards was initiated at the request of more than 110 Ministers of Sport who participated in the 7th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport in 2023.<sup>833</sup> While Canada did not have an official government representative at the conference, one representative of the former Abuse Free Sport Program attended. The Global Policy Standards aim to “guide national governments in preventing harm, promoting accountability, and ensuring dignity and safety for all.” It will

also provide practical guidance across all phases of the policy cycle to build more inclusive, equitable, and safe sport and physical education systems.<sup>834</sup>

The development process included two rounds of consultations: an online consultation with 138 participants from 50 countries, and an in-person consultation with persons affected by violence in sport, held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.<sup>835</sup> UNESCO and the Sport & Rights Alliance are preparing a final report to inform the Global Policy Standards, which will be presented for endorsement by UNESCO Member States at the 8th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport in 2027. Additionally, a piloting phase will be launched in 2026 to test the real world applicability of the framework and refine implementation methodologies.<sup>836</sup>

## National-level policies and codes of conduct

The national safe sport policy is the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. Published by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport<sup>837</sup> in 2019, it aims to create a safe, respectful, and inclusive sport environment.

The Universal Code of Conduct defines and prohibits various forms of maltreatment in sport. It applies directly to all federally funded National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations, who are required to adopt it as a condition for receiving federal funding. In addition to the Universal Code of Conduct, some of these organizations have implemented their own codes of conduct or safe sport policies to address issues related to safe sport.

### EFFORTS THAT LED TO THE UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT

In February 2019, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments' ministers responsible for sport, physical activity, and recreation adopted the Red Deer Declaration — For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport. This declaration commits both levels of government to eliminating abuse, discrimination, and harassment in sport.<sup>838</sup>

The Coaching Association of Canada then hosted a series of provincial and territorial safe sport summits that culminated in a National Safe Sport Summit in May 2019. During this national summit, there was a consensus to develop a single and harmonized code governing safe sport in Canada, and an agreement on which elements it should include.<sup>839</sup> Attendees also agreed that an independent body would be chosen to implement this harmonized and universal code.<sup>840</sup>

In response, Sport Canada asked the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, which we discuss in Chapter 10, to draft the key components of a universal code of conduct. This included guiding principles, definitions of maltreatment, prohibited misconduct and related sanctions.<sup>841</sup> The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport then partnered with the Sport Information Resource Centre to lead an extensive multi-step consultation process for the initial drafting and review of the code.<sup>842</sup>

### Drafting timeline

- The first version of the Universal Code of Conduct was published by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport in 2019 (version 5.1).<sup>843</sup>
- A revised version was published by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada on May 31, 2022, and came into effect on November 30, 2022 (version 6.0).<sup>844</sup>
- The current version was published by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport on January 17, 2025, and came into effect on April 1, 2025 (version 7.0).<sup>845</sup> It was amended on October 15, 2025 to reflect Bill C-291,<sup>846</sup> which amended the *Criminal Code* to replace the term “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse and exploitation material.”

Our understanding is that there have been no substantive changes between versions 6.0 and 7.0 of the Universal Code of Conduct and that version 7.0 merely reflects the transfer of its administration from the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport through the Canadian Safe Sport Program, as we discuss further in Chapter 10. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport has also published an annotated version of the Universal Code of Conduct, which provides guidance for the interpretation of its provisions.<sup>847</sup>

### CONTENT AND PURPOSE OF THE UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Universal Code of Conduct 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>848</sup>

The Universal Code of Conduct defines and prohibits various forms of maltreatment. It refers to these as prohibited behaviours. It also outlines additional behaviours that, although not considered maltreatment, are nonetheless prohibited. It then provides a framework for applying appropriate sanctions once such prohibited behaviours are identified.<sup>849</sup>

The various forms of maltreatment under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport are:

- psychological maltreatment<sup>850</sup>
- physical maltreatment<sup>851</sup>
- neglect<sup>852</sup>
- sexual maltreatment<sup>853</sup>
- grooming.<sup>854</sup>



The list of other prohibited behaviours includes:

- boundary transgressions<sup>855</sup>
- discrimination<sup>856</sup>
- subjecting a participant to the risk of maltreatment<sup>857</sup>
- aiding and abetting the commission of maltreatment or other prohibited behaviour<sup>858</sup>
- failing to report possible maltreatment or other prohibited behaviour<sup>859</sup>
- intentionally reporting a false allegation<sup>860</sup>
- interfering with or manipulating an investigation or disciplinary review<sup>861</sup>
- retaliation.<sup>862</sup>

The possible sanctions are:

- verbal or written apology<sup>863</sup>
- verbal or written warning<sup>864</sup>
- education<sup>865</sup>
- probation<sup>866</sup>
- suspension<sup>867</sup>
- eligibility restrictions<sup>868</sup>
- permanent ineligibility<sup>869</sup>
- other discretionary sanctions (for example, loss of the right to attend sport events, a fine or a monetary payment to compensate for direct losses, or no-contact directives).<sup>870</sup>

Because the Universal Code of Conduct defines rules and violations for “participants,” only individuals are subject to the Code. In other words, it does not apply to organizations.

The Universal Code of Conduct requires the creation of a searchable database or registry of individuals whose eligibility to participate in sport has been restricted.<sup>871</sup> This registry is currently maintained by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.<sup>872</sup> Chapter 11 further addresses the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry.

The annotated version of the Universal Code of Conduct provides that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is responsible for its administration.<sup>873</sup> However, the Universal Code of Conduct does not contain procedural provisions, such as how to file or investigate complaints. These issues are addressed by the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules, which we discuss in Chapter 10.



### **The Universal Code of Conduct's applicability to national-level sport organizations**

As Chapter 15 mentions, all National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes must adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program to receive federal funding from Sport Canada's Sport Support Program.<sup>874</sup>

As Chapter 10 details, through the Canadian Safe Sport Program, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport independently administers and enforces the Universal Code of Conduct. The Centre does this by receiving and responding to reports of prohibited behaviours, and by developing and carrying out education, prevention, and policy activities.<sup>875</sup>

The Canadian Safe Sport Program requires participating sport organizations to sign an adoption contract. This contract requires them to formally accept and include the Canadian Safe Sport Program and the Universal Code of Conduct (including any future amendments) in their internal policies and procedures.<sup>876</sup>

As Chapter 10 also details, the Canadian Safe Sport Program applies to only a limited group of individuals within a sport organization,<sup>877</sup> and only in specific situations.<sup>878</sup>

### **The Universal Code of Conduct's applicability to sport organizations below the national level**

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport can apply to sport organizations below the national level. This is due to the hierarchical nature of sport in Canada, where a “flow-through” system allows rules from the national level to extend to every level of sport, down to the grassroots.<sup>879</sup>

For example, many National Sport Organizations require their provincial and territorial members to adopt and follow national-level sport policies. This could include endorsing the Universal Code of Conduct. In turn, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations can do the same with their members, which are generally local clubs and associations.<sup>880</sup>

Organizations outside of this hierarchy and not federally funded, like universities (further discussed later), can choose to voluntarily adopt the Universal Code of Conduct and then require their participants to follow it.

We note that some organizations choose to only partially adopt it. For example, Trent University's Department of Athletics has done this. Their Student-Athlete Handbook states that the Department of Athletics adopted sections 1 to 5 of the Universal Code of Conduct,<sup>881</sup> which means that it has not adopted the Code's rules about sanctions. The handbook also states that student athletes and coaches are expected to follow the values, principles, and guidelines of the Universal Code of Conduct.<sup>882</sup>

## **OTHER POLICIES AND CODES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL OF SPORT**

National Sport Organizations and National Multisport Service Organizations generally have their own policies and codes of conduct and ethics. These documents outline expected behaviours for individuals involved with the organization and when disciplinary action might occur.<sup>883</sup> These policies and codes typically apply to athletes, coaches, officials, board and committee members, staff, and volunteers. They often cover behaviours beyond safe sport issues, such as the use of recreational drugs during sport programs and activities.<sup>884</sup>

We also note that many elements of a sport organization's code of conduct might overlap with its workplace harassment and violence prevention policy. This is because both aim to create a safe and respectful environment.

In addition to a code of conduct and ethics, certain National Sport Organizations maintain specific policies dedicated to safe sport. Usually, the code of conduct or safe sport policy outlines the disciplinary process and corrective measures for a violation. In some cases, they may refer to a separate internal disciplinary policy. These disciplinary processes often involve complaints being referred to Independent Third-Party Mechanisms. We explore this type of process further in Chapter 10.

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport handles reports of maltreatment and other prohibited behaviours that arise within federally funded National Sport Organizations or Multisport Service Organizations and that fall within the scope of the Canadian Safe Sport Program. See Chapter 10 for more detail on the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

We also note that, particularly since the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, many National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations have adopted anti-racism and equity, diversity, and inclusion policies or strategies.<sup>885</sup>

## **Provincial- and territorial-level policies and codes of conduct**

Provinces and territories across Canada are currently at different stages in developing their safe sport policies. To date, no provincial or territorial government has required all sport organizations within its jurisdiction to adopt the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

On one hand, some provincial and territorial governments impose safe sport policies on sport organizations receiving government funding within their jurisdiction. On the other hand, some National Sport Organizations mandate their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to adopt the Universal Code of Conduct or other safe sport policies as a condition of their membership. This generally happens when there is a high degree of vertical alignment between the National Sport Organization and its provincial and territorial counterparts. Only one province has adopted safe sport legislation that applies to all sport organizations within the province.

Considering this landscape, provinces and territories have implemented one of four approaches to safe sport policies or standards:

- **The government adopts safe sport legislation.** Sport organizations in the province or territory must comply with the safe sport legislation and its regulations.
- **The government or the provincial or territorial sport federation develops a universal code of conduct.** Sport organizations in the province or territory are then required to adopt that code to receive funding or to become a member of the provincial or territorial sport federation.
- **There is no universal code of conduct or safe sport policy, but Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are required to develop and adopt their own.** This requirement comes as a condition to receive funding or become a member of the provincial or territorial sport federation.
- **There is no universal code of conduct or safe sport policy and no general requirement that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations adopt their own.** Sport organizations can decide whether or not to implement their own code of conduct or safe sport policy.

### QUEBEC, THE ONLY PROVINCE WITH SAFE SPORT LEGISLATION

Quebec is the only province that passed a law regarding safety in recreation and sports. Bill 45 — *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*<sup>886</sup> received royal assent on June 7, 2024. Section 21 of the Act provides that the minister may (i) “approve (...) the safety regulations of a sports federation or unaffiliated sports body” and (ii) “establish, by regulation, standards for ensuring the safety and integrity of persons during the practice of a recreational activity or sport.”<sup>887</sup> Section 26 of the Act requires sports federations and unaffiliated sports bodies in the province to adopt safety regulations concerning the matters prescribed by regulation of the government and ensure that they are observed.<sup>888</sup>

In October 2025, the Minister Responsible for Sports, Recreation and the Outdoors published, in the *Gazette officielle du Québec* (the official Gazette in Quebec), the draft *Regulation to ensure the integrity of persons during the practice of a recreational activity or a sport*.<sup>889</sup> If adopted, this regulation will establish standards to ensure the integrity of individuals when they practise a recreational activity or a sport organized by a recreational organization, a sport organization, or a federation of sport organizations.

### PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES WITH A UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT

#### British Columbia

The Government of British Columbia and viaSport created the British Columbia Universal Code of Conduct. All provincially funded sport organizations in British Columbia must comply with either this code or the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.<sup>890</sup> The option to adopt the Universal Code of Conduct instead of the British Columbia Universal Code allows them to align their safe sport system with

that of their National Sport Organization. The British Columbia Universal Code notably incorporates key elements of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.<sup>891</sup>

The enforcement of the British Columbia Universal Code is currently decentralized. Each sport organization is responsible for investigating violations and handling the disciplinary process. This has to be done as outlined in their Discipline and Complaints Policy (or equivalent).<sup>892</sup>

However, as we discuss in Chapter 10, the Government of British Columbia is currently in the process of establishing Sport Safeguarding BC, an independent not-for-profit organization that will administer an independent complaint management system for amateur sport organizations in British Columbia.<sup>893</sup>

### Nunavut

Nunavut's Sport and Recreation Grants and Contributions Policy,<sup>894</sup> which was issued in 2022, provides that Territorial Sport Organizations must adopt a Code of Conduct and Ethics as a condition of government funding. However, in June 2025, NU Sport, Nunavut's territorial sport federation, adopted a Code of Conduct and Ethics which applies to "any Registrants' conduct during the sanctioned programs, business, activities, and events of NU Sport and its Members including, but not limited to competitions, practices, evaluations, treatment, or consultations [...], training camps, travel associated with organizational activities, the office environment, and any meetings."<sup>895</sup> In certain circumstances, the Code applies outside of the sanctioned programs.<sup>896</sup> Of note, NU Sport's Code of Conduct and Ethics incorporates by reference the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.<sup>897</sup>

### PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES WITHOUT UNIVERSAL SAFE SPORT POLICIES OR CODES OF CONDUCT

Many Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations operate in provinces and territories without safe sport legislation or a universal safe sport policy or code of conduct. These organizations are generally required to implement their own as a condition of funding or membership in the provincial or territorial sport federation.

### Saskatchewan

Sask Sport's membership conditions require its members, the Provincial Sport Organizations, to develop and implement comprehensive and effective safe sport policies and processes for preventing and addressing all forms of misconduct or maltreatment.<sup>898</sup> With that in mind, Sask Sport mandated Sportlex to develop the "Safe Sport Manual and Procedures." This template assists Provincial Sport Organizations to align their standards with those of the Universal Code of Conduct and consequently with those of their affiliated National Sport Organization.<sup>899</sup> To be eligible for funding, Provincial Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations are required to be members of Sask Sport.<sup>900</sup>

### Manitoba

Provincial Sport Organizations recognized by Sport Manitoba are currently required to incorporate safe sport principles into their policies.<sup>901</sup> However, on March 6, 2025, the Government of Manitoba introduced Bill 21 —

*The Protecting Youth in Sports Act.*<sup>902</sup> If enacted, the Act would require Sport Manitoba to establish a safe sport policy “that is designed to ensure that all young athletes have a safe and positive experience when participating in sports.”<sup>903</sup>

The policy would establish procedures for complaints and investigations. It would also outline the disciplinary measures that could be imposed if an individual is found to have engaged in maltreatment or behaviour contrary to the policy.<sup>904</sup> All Provincial Sport Organizations recognized by Sport Manitoba would be required to adopt and implement this policy.<sup>905</sup> We further note that under the Act, Sport Manitoba would have to appoint an Independent Third Party to hear and adjudicate complaints of maltreatment involving young athletes.<sup>906</sup>

### **Other provinces and territories**

Other jurisdictions, including Ontario,<sup>907</sup> Nova Scotia,<sup>908</sup> New Brunswick,<sup>909</sup> Prince Edward Island,<sup>910</sup> Yukon,<sup>911</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador<sup>912</sup> and Alberta,<sup>913</sup> require that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations adopt a code of conduct or safe sport policy that supports safe sport environments as a condition of membership of the provincial or territorial sport federation or receiving government funding.

We understand that Yukon is in the process of developing a safe sport policy applicable to all Territorial Sport Organizations within the territory.

In 2022, the Northwest Territories adopted a safe sport framework that outlines its safe sport strategy.<sup>914</sup> While Territorial Sport Organizations are currently not required to implement safe sport policies as a condition of funding, we understand that this requirement should be introduced in the near future.<sup>915</sup>

Finally, some Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations may need to adopt safe sport policies because of their affiliation with a National Sport Organization, rather than because of provincial or territorial requirements.<sup>916</sup> These multi-level safe sport policies sometimes directly refer to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. For example, Volleyball Canada has a pan-Canadian abuse policy that applies to Volleyball Canada and all its provincial and territorial counterparts.<sup>917</sup>

Like National Sport Organizations, many Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations have integrated anti-racism and equity, diversity, and inclusion policies into their rules, in addition to their existing codes of conduct.<sup>918</sup>

## **Safe sport policies and codes of conduct in Community Sport Organizations, universities, and colleges**

### **COMMUNITY SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

At the local and grassroots level of sport, clubs, associations, and community sport programs often have their own safe sport policies. However, they are generally not required to adopt safe sport policies or the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. There are two notable exceptions to this.



First, the *Act Respecting Safety in Recreation and Sports*<sup>919</sup> in Quebec requires that sports federations and unaffiliated sports bodies adopt safety regulations. The Act defines a “sports body” as “a group of natural persons who are individual members of a federation, or a body, association, league or club formed to organize or practise a sport.”<sup>920</sup> This means that community-level sport organizations in Quebec are either subject to the safety regulations of their respective sport federation or required to adopt their own.

Second, some grassroots and local organizations may need to adopt safe sport policies because of their affiliation with a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization. As we discussed earlier, they may even have to adopt the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

Even without these requirements, grassroots and local sport organizations sometimes still choose to voluntarily implement their own codes of conducts or policies. Naturally, the content of such policies and codes of conduct at the grassroots level varies from one organization to another.

According to a survey conducted by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute in 2020–2021, which asked administrators to report which, if any, written policies were available on a variety of topics, 74% of sport organizations, including National Sport Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and Community Sport Organizations, reported that they have written policies or guidelines on abuse and harassment in sport, while slightly more than half reported having policies that address discrimination.<sup>921</sup>

## UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Generally speaking, each university and college has its own set of safe sport policies, procedures, and enforcement mechanisms but there are many common themes and shared best practices among them.

Each university and college can voluntarily decide to adopt the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. The fact that they are not obliged to adopt it partly explains why its application varies and is generally limited within their sport programs.

Nevertheless, the Universal Code of Conduct may still apply to post-secondary athletes, coaches, staff, and other designated participants if they take part in certain university and college sporting activities organized by national governing bodies who have adopted it.<sup>922</sup>

For instance, the Universal Code of Conduct applies in certain national championships organized by U SPORTS and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association. As National Multisport Service Organizations that receive federal funding, these institutions are required to adopt and implement the Canadian Safe Sport Program and the Universal Code of Conduct.<sup>923</sup>

That said, not all universities and colleges are members of these governing bodies. As of June 2025, U SPORTS had 58 member universities,<sup>924</sup> and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association had 98 members.<sup>925</sup> The Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association’s members include colleges, universities, technical institutes, and CEGEPs located in nine provinces.

Aside from safe sport policies, student athletes, coaches, and support personnel are also subject to their respective post-secondary institution's rules and policies. These include student athlete codes of conduct and policies against violence, harassment, and discrimination, all of which may address various aspects of safe sport.

Not all universities and colleges adopt sport-specific policies. In such cases, only generally applicable policies would apply. Other workplace policies and collective agreements might take precedence for employees such as coaches and members of faculty and staff.

## Participants' perspectives on safe sport policies and codes of conduct

Here we summarize participants' perspectives on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, as well as on safe sport policies and codes of conduct that sport organizations have adopted across all levels of sport and outside of the sanctioned sport system.

### CONTENT OF THE UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Sport organizations, athletes, coaches, and other participants have criticized the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. They find it too complicated and difficult to understand. They noted that it is written in dense legal language, which makes it difficult for the average reader to understand, and they called for it to be rewritten in easily accessible, plain language. We were told that the Universal Code of Conduct needs to be understood not just by professionals but also by a twelve-year-old athlete.

Participants also stated that the Universal Code of Conduct should:

- be regularly reviewed and modernized. They noted that some forms of maltreatment like cyberbullying and digital exploitation and violence over social media are missing.
- be modified to address the unique role of physicians within sport and consider their own codes of ethics
- better address issues related to the governance of sport organizations
- include mechanisms to hold sport organizations accountable when they enable or fail to prevent harm
- be revised to ensure that the definitions of abuse and maltreatment are contextually specific, including considerations of Para sport. For example, Para athletes have specific needs, so the rules must be interpreted contextually to ensure that the unique requirements of athletes with high support needs are not overlooked.
- be revised to include additional sanctions for individuals who have breached their original sanction.

Other participants argued that governance should not be incorporated into the Universal Code of Conduct, and that safe sport and governance should remain covered by two separate codes. They also shared the view that both the Universal Code of Conduct and the Canadian Sport Governance Code, which we discuss further in Chapter 14, are overly complex and wordy.

Many participants also commented that the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport was too broad in scope. They noted that it addresses “grievances” and “trivial matters” rather than issues of maltreatment or abuse.

We heard that the “one size fits all” definitions do not reflect the realities of the high-performance environment. High-performance athletes, for instance, told us that while they need to be pushed to succeed, this must always be done with respect and dignity. They explained that a grey zone exists between pressure to perform and what could be considered abuse.

Conversely, other participants felt that the Universal Code of Conduct was designed specifically for the high-performance context and could not be readily applied to community or recreational sport, or to younger athletes.

Scholars also observed that the Universal Code of Conduct is not structured in a way that fosters learning and progress but instead mirrors traditional court systems’ procedures.<sup>926</sup> They noted that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (which administered and implemented the Universal Code of Conduct before the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, and which we discuss in Chapter 10), was oriented toward private dispute resolution and individual responsibility for wrongdoing but should have focused on prevention instead of punishment. They noted that maltreatment is a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon that requires careful and comprehensive reflection to be fully understood.

Participants further noted that the Universal Code of Conduct lacks appropriate references to child protection and safeguarding. In their view, child abuse should result in the sanction of a lifetime ban.

Finally, in 2024, at the request of Sport Canada, Léger Marketing conducted three surveys on ethics, equity, and safety in sport.<sup>927</sup> One of the surveys was conducted among a sample of 39 National Sport Organizations representatives. It revealed that 36% of respondents identified gaps in the content of the Universal Code of Conduct and that more than half (59%) had identified or were anticipating challenges or barriers in implementing the Universal Code of Conduct in their sport.

### **THE UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT’S LIMITED REACH**

Participants consistently raised concerns about the limited reach of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. Although we understand that it was intended to be a single policy that could apply to all levels of sport, we were advised that very few organizations below the national level of sport have actually adopted it.

Participants noted that the Universal Code of Conduct essentially does not apply at the local and grassroots level of sport. This was particularly concerning for participants who believed that a significant majority of maltreatment occurs at the grassroots level, where there are a lot of minors involved.

Along the same lines, we learned that the Universal Code of Conduct's application to Multisport Service Organizations is limited to major games and to a subset of individuals associated with these sport organizations.

Some participants believed that the Universal Code of Conduct could apply at all levels of sport if federally funded National Sport Organizations, which are required to adopt it as a condition of funding, were also required to impose the Code on their members, the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations could, in turn, require their own members, the Community Sport Organizations, to adopt it.<sup>928</sup> Other participants, mostly representatives of National Sport Organizations, explained that they simply do not have the authority over their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to impose such requirements because any changes to membership conditions would require a vote by the members.

Other participants believed that safe sport policies (and also funding and training) should not flow exclusively through National Sport Organizations. In their view, government bodies should work directly with Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to develop safe sport initiatives that reflect the needs of provincial, territorial, and grassroots sport participants. They argued that this would ensure consistent protection and support for all athletes, regardless of the National Sport Organization's affiliation. These participants called for better collaboration between provincial and territorial governments and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

At the National Summit organized by the Commission, several participants highlighted the need for uniform federal and provincial legislation establishing safe sport and standardizing sanctions across the entire sport system. They noted that the current contract-based model, under which sport organizations must obtain consent from sport participants to be bound by the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules (as Chapter 10 discusses), is highly problematic. They argued that legislation is the only way to reach all sport participants.

### **CUSTODY OF THE UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

While there was unanimous agreement that the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport should be regularly updated, participants differed on who should be responsible for its ownership and maintenance.

As we discuss further in Chapter 10, under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, custody of the Universal Code of Conduct rested with the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada because the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner was responsible for administering and enforcing it until 2025.

Following the launch of the new Canadian Safe Sport Program on April 1, 2025, its custody was transferred to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. The Centre now serves as the body responsible for administering

and enforcing the Universal Code of Conduct for federally funded, national-level sport organizations under the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

On one hand, some participants believed that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport should retain custody and responsibility for the Universal Code of Conduct, given its current role in administering and enforcing it. As a reminder, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport also led the development of the first version of the Universal Code of Conduct that was published in 2019. These participants believed that the Centre possesses the necessary expertise and knowledge to update the Universal Code of Conduct, and that Sport Canada would lack the capacity to do so effectively.

On the other hand, several participants argued that the organization tasked with administering and enforcing the Universal Code of Conduct should not also be responsible for owning and updating it because this would present a conflict of interest.

### **A CLEAR NEED FOR UNIFORM SAFE SPORT STANDARDS**

Participants highlighted that safe sport policies vary across sport organizations, levels of sport, provinces and territories, and sport settings. They noted a lack of alignment between policies that share similar objectives in different sport settings.

One of the clearest messages that emerged from our engagement process is that it is crucial for sport organizations across all levels of sport and all provinces and territories to have a shared understanding of what constitutes maltreatment in sport and clear guidelines on which behaviours are inappropriate. We were told that the sport community wants a consistent safe sport policy “across the board, from coast to coast to coast” and that any individual in any sport at any level should have access to the same safe sport expectations and remedies.

A large majority of participants at the National Summit organized by the Commission reiterated the need for clear and consistent safe sport and sanctioning standards across the system.

While we heard mixed opinions from participants regarding the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, it was generally welcomed as a positive advancement because it provides standard definitions of maltreatment.

We were informed that the Universal Code of Conduct has influenced the development of safe sport policies among provincial and territorial governments, as well as sport organizations, and that this helped harmonize the definitions of prohibited behaviours in sport. However, significant variations between safe sport policies still exist across the Canadian sport system.



### **OVERLAPPING SAFE SPORT POLICIES AND CODES OF CONDUCT**

Overall, participants found it difficult to understand when, or if, the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport is applied. This was complicated because most sport organizations also have their own policies, which allows multiple codes of conduct to apply at the same time to one individual.

Arbitrators also noted that it is difficult to adjudicate safe sport disputes when multiple codes of conduct apply concurrently. This occurs when, for example, a club, a Provincial Sport Organization, and a National Sport Organization each have their own code.

### **LACK OF EXPERTISE TO DEVELOP SAFE SPORT POLICIES AND CODES OF CONDUCT**

Throughout our engagement process, sport organizations emphasized their lack of training and expertise in developing safe sport policies. Many noted that creating comprehensive and effective policies requires knowledge and resources that they simply did not possess. As a result, they said that they would welcome external assistance in the form of expert guidance or support in policy development.

In that respect, many have recognized the outstanding work that Sport'Aide was doing in supporting Quebec sport organizations with the development of their safe sport policies and codes of conduct. Sport' Aide is a Quebec-based independent not-for-profit organization whose mandate is to offer support and guidance to various actors involved in Quebec sport, including sport organizations.<sup>929</sup>

Some sport organizations suggested that it might be more efficient for governments or sport governing bodies to take responsibility for developing and maintaining these policies for them. Such an approach would relieve them of a task they feel ill-equipped for.

### **LACK OF AWARENESS OF SAFE SPORT POLICIES AND CODES OF CONDUCT**

Participants expressed serious concern that, except for the Universal Code of Conduct, no one reads safe sport policies and sport organizations do not enforce them. We also heard that there is a general lack of reporting structures to hold individuals and organizations accountable for violations of anti-racism or equity, diversity, and inclusion policies. In many instances, sport organizations have safe sport policies, but these are not communicated to the lower levels of sport.

There is also generally a lack of understanding of safe sport policies. A recurring comment we heard was that various safe sport policies need to extend beyond the field of play, which is not always the case. For example, participants argued that these policies should apply to all team and sport organization activities including, but not limited to, team travel and virtual communications between coaches, staff, officials, and athletes.

### **LACK OF CONSIDERATION FOR UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

We were told by participants, including governments, that sport organizations and governments need to be able to look at safe sport policies through an Indigenous lens and that current safe sport standards do not mesh well with the realities of Indigenous communities and people. In the same vein, participants also argued that safe sport policies should be developed specifically for athletes with a disability.

## **Public online survey conducted as part of the Commission's activities<sup>930</sup>**

The Commission's public online survey results revealed that 48.6% of the respondents who answered questions about safe sport and identified as participating in organized sport were familiar with the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. Another 45.9% were unfamiliar with it and 5.5% did not know.

Unsurprisingly, the results show that the higher the level of sport at which an organized sport participant most often interacts with, the more likely they are to be familiar with the Universal Code of Conduct:

- 81.7% of survey respondents who most interact with sport organizations at the national level were familiar with the Universal Code of Conduct.
- 54.7% of survey respondents who interact most with sport organizations at the provincial/territorial level were familiar with the Universal Code of Conduct.
- 35.8% of survey respondents who interact most with sport organizations at the local/community level were familiar with the Universal Code of Conduct.

The organized sport participants who answered questions about safe sport and who indicated that they were familiar with the Universal Code of Conduct were then asked to select a statement that best reflects their opinion on it. The most commonly selected statement was that the list of prohibited behaviours under the Universal Code of Conduct is comprehensive (39.0%).

In addition, 21.9% of respondents indicated that the Universal Code of Conduct is too broad and is applied to situations that do not constitute cases of maltreatment in sport, whereas a smaller proportion of respondents (8.8%) indicated that it is missing key types of prohibited behaviours. Nearly a quarter of respondents (23.5%) reported that they did not know enough about the Universal Code of Conduct, and 6.8% selected "None of the above."

The Commission's survey results align with the views shared by participants in its engagement process. The survey results indicate that a majority of national-level athletes are familiar with the Universal Code of Conduct and its content, that the broader sport community consider it comprehensive and that many believe it is drafted in overly broad language, and as a result it captures trivial interpersonal disagreements.

# **CHAPTER 10:**

## **Safe sport complaint mechanisms: responding to maltreatment and supporting those affected**





# Chapter 10:

## Safe sport complaint mechanisms: responding to maltreatment and supporting those affected

In the previous chapter, we reviewed the existing safe sport policies and codes of conduct in Canada. These policies and codes of conduct are generally administered and enforced through complaint mechanisms and processes that are usually described in a separate set of procedural rules.

In this chapter, we first review the national-level complaint mechanisms that were created to administer and enforce the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and other national-level safe sport policies. These include:

- **The Abuse-Free Sport Program**, through which the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner administered the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport until August 1, 2025.
- **The Canadian Safe Sport Program**, through which the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport<sup>931</sup> currently administers the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport for federally funded national-level sport organizations.
- **Independent Third-Party Mechanisms**, hired by national-level sport organizations to administer safe sport complaints arising within their organizations that fall outside the jurisdiction of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program and the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

Although the Abuse-Free Sport Program is no longer in operation, we believe it is worthy of review. It was the first centralized initiative implemented at the national level for reporting incidents of abuse, harassment, and discrimination in sport environments. The program's three years of operation provide valuable insights and important lessons.

We then review complaint mechanisms that exist at the provincial and territorial level, including centralized complaint mechanisms established by provincial and territorial governments, as well as Independent Third-Party Mechanisms employed by Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations. We also examine complaint mechanisms operating at the local, community level. We share participants' perspectives throughout our discussion.

Next, we present the results of the Commission's public online survey as they relate to safe sport complaint mechanisms and consider how other countries approach safe sport. We conclude this chapter by presenting our final findings and Calls to Action for (a) a coordinated pan-Canadian response to maltreatment in sport and (b) enhancing complaint mechanisms and their resolution processes to better support those affected.



## The road to an independent national-level complaint mechanism

The consensus to develop what would become the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport emerged at the National Safe Sport Summit in 2019. On that occasion, participants agreed that an independent body would need to be identified to implement such a code.<sup>932</sup>

Later, as the development of the Universal Code of Conduct approached its final stage, a leadership group was created to conceptualize a structure for its implementation. This group was an informal partnership of athletes and representatives from National Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations, the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network, subject-matter experts and Sport Canada.<sup>933</sup>

In June 2020, the leadership group, with support from the Sport Information Resource Centre, hired a private contractor. This contractor was asked to independently analyze existing complaint-mechanism models and to identify the most appropriate and effective mechanism to independently administer the Universal Code of Conduct for federally funded sport organizations.<sup>934</sup> The firm McLaren Global Sport Solutions was chosen to complete the analysis, develop recommendations, and deliver a final report.<sup>935</sup>

Its final report, titled “Aiming High: Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada” was published on October 5, 2020. It included 101 recommendations addressing a broad range of topics from the organizational structure of the independent mechanism to its procedures and funding. A list of the recommendations from the Aiming High report appears in Appendix 4. The Aiming High report eventually led to the creation of the Abuse-Free Sport Program.

## The Abuse-Free Sport Program: creation, implementation, and function

In November 2020, the Government of Canada officially launched an initiative to create an independent mechanism for administering the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.<sup>936</sup>

In July 2021, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (also called “SDRCC”) was chosen to establish and run this new independent mechanism for federally funded sport organizations.<sup>937</sup>

On May 17, 2022, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada announced that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (also called the “OSIC”) would launch in June 2022 and receive reports of Universal Code of Conduct violations as part of the new Abuse-Free Sport Program.<sup>938</sup> The new Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner officially began operations three months later, on June 20, 2022.

As we discuss later in this chapter, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner eventually transferred its operations to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport on April 1, 2025, and ceased operations on August 1, 2025.

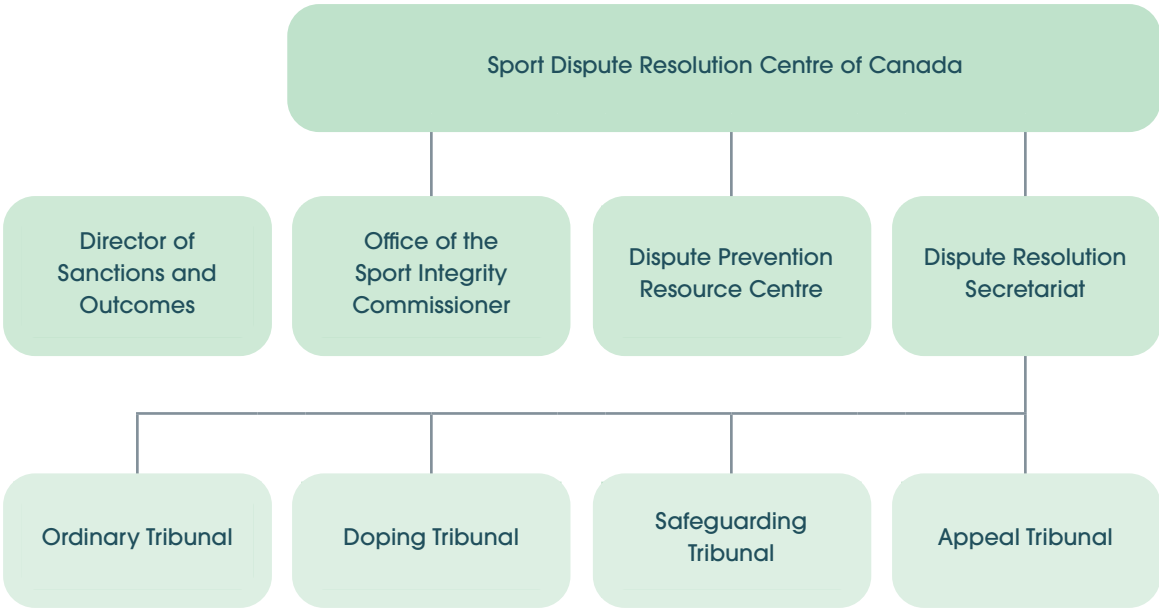
In what follows we introduce the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, focusing on its mandate and structure. We then discuss the former Abuse-Free Sport Program's scope, its complaint-management process, and its sport-environment assessments.

**ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF THE SPORT DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTRE OF CANADA**

The Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada is a not-for-profit corporation created in 2003 under the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.<sup>939</sup> Its legislative mandate is to provide the sport community with a national alternative sport-dispute-resolution service, outside of traditional court systems. It also provides expertise and assistance in alternative dispute resolution.<sup>940</sup>

Prior to the launch of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada was already operating two core services in accordance with the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* — the Dispute Resolution Secretariat and the Dispute Prevention Resource Centre — and continues to do so as of the date of drafting this report.

Figure 10.1. Structure of the Sport Dispute Resolution Secretariat (before August 1, 2025, which marks the closing of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner)



### Dispute Resolution Secretariat

The Dispute Resolution Secretariat offers alternative dispute-resolution services to the sport community. They include facilitation, mediation, mediation/arbitration, and arbitration.

The Secretariat has four tribunals: the Ordinary Tribunal, the Doping Tribunal, the Safeguarding Tribunal, and the Appeal Tribunal.<sup>941</sup>

- **Ordinary Tribunal.** The Ordinary Tribunal serves as a final appeal mechanism for sport-related decisions made by organizations that have their own internal appeal processes. Most cases at the Ordinary Tribunal are about team selection and athlete carding, but it also receives disputes related to eligibility, general discipline, and governance.
- **Doping Tribunal.** As its name suggests, the Doping Tribunal is a specialized division. It is the first decision-making body to rule on doping violations asserted by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport under the Canadian Anti-Doping Program.
- **Safeguarding Tribunal.** The Safeguarding Tribunal was created to review decisions made by the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. Since August 1, 2025, it exclusively reviews decisions made by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport under the Canadian Safe Sport Program.
- **Appeal Tribunal.** The Appeal Tribunal hears appeals from the Doping Tribunal and the Safeguarding Tribunal.

The Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code outlines the procedural rules that apply to all disputes submitted to the Sport Disputes Resolution Centre of Canada.<sup>942</sup>

### Dispute Prevention Resource Centre

The Dispute Prevention Resource Centre focuses on dispute prevention, education, awareness, and policy support. It offers a wide variety of information, tools, and documents to assist all members of the sport community in preventing disputes or minimizing their severity.<sup>943</sup>

Among other resources, the centre provides:

- templates for clauses and policies, that is, template mediation agreements and template contractual arbitration clauses<sup>944</sup>
- a database of decisions of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada arbitrators<sup>945</sup>
- relevant articles and other publications<sup>946</sup>
- a list of lawyers and pro bono resources.<sup>947</sup>

### **OFFICE OF THE SPORT INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER AND THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM**

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, which ceased to operate on August 1, 2025, was independent but housed within the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. We were told that structural safeguards had been established to ensure its independence and that of the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes.<sup>948</sup>

Broadly speaking, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner had the authority to administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, but only when a sport organization was a program signatory to the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.<sup>949</sup>

#### **Program signatory agreement**

To become a program signatory, a sport organization had to sign a contract called a signatory agreement with the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.<sup>950</sup> By signing this agreement, the sport organization retained the services of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada to implement their safe sport program. These included the services of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes, and the Dispute Resolution Secretariat.<sup>951</sup>

Under the signatory agreement, the sport organization had to:

- Adopt the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and ensure that all of its other internal policies and procedures were consistent with it.
- Obtain consent from individuals affiliated with the program signatory to be subject to the Universal Code of Conduct, its administration, and enforcement process.
- Cooperate in good faith with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. This applied to any process related to the administration and enforcement of the Universal Code of Conduct.
- Implement the sanctions and measures that were imposed by the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes, the Safeguarding Tribunal, and the Appeal Tribunal.<sup>952</sup>

Although sport organizations from all levels of sport could opt in to the former Abuse-Free Sport program, most signatories were federally funded National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations.<sup>953</sup> These organizations were required, as of April 1, 2023,<sup>954</sup> to be program signatories in order to receive funding from the Government of Canada.

Volleyball was the only sport in which the former Abuse-Free Sport program applied across all levels of the sport, namely at the national, provincial, territorial and community levels.<sup>955</sup> This is because of the high degree of program and policy alignment within the sport.

We understand from the press release that followed the 2022 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation that provinces and territories could choose to use

the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner as their independent complaint mechanism.<sup>956</sup> In February 2023, the federal Minister of Sport reiterated its call for provinces and territories to either join the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner or create their own independent complaint mechanism.<sup>957</sup> Nova Scotia was the first and only province to be a signatory of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.<sup>958</sup> The first Provincial Sport Organizations from Nova Scotia were expected to be “onboarded” by the end of 2023.<sup>959</sup> At the time, there was hope this would encourage other provinces and territories to join the program. However, this expectation never materialized; no other province or territory became a program signatory.<sup>960</sup>

As of March 2025, 90 organizations had signed onto the former Abuse-Free Sport Program:

- 63 national level sport organizations
- 21 Multisport Service Organizations
- 6 Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.<sup>961</sup>

### Participants of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program

Participants under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program could include athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators, directors, employees, trainers, parents, and guardians.<sup>962</sup> The categories of participants for each adopting sport organization were determined in their program signatory agreement.<sup>963</sup> This led to inconsistencies in the categories of participants across adopting organizations. For instance, officials of one program signatory qualified as program participants, while officials of another program signatory did not.

### Consent form

Each program signatory had to obtain consent from their relevant participants as defined in their program signatory agreement to ensure that they agreed to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. This consent was obtained using a consent form.<sup>964</sup> We understand that for minors under the age of 13, the consent form had to be signed by their parent or guardian.

According to the consent form, participants specifically agreed to:

- be subject to the terms of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport
- be subject to the jurisdiction of the program signatory and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada regarding the administration and enforcement of the Universal Code of Conduct
- the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information by the program signatory and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, for the purpose of receiving, processing, and adjudicating admissible complaints against them
- the disclosure of personal information in a public registry created to support the Universal Code of Conduct’s objectives when appropriate. This information included their full name, their affiliated organizations, and the nature of allegations and any findings or disciplinary actions against them.<sup>965</sup>



Several decisions of the Safeguarding Tribunal and the Appeal Tribunal of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada have addressed whether participants, by signing the consent form, agreed to have the Universal Code of Conduct apply to historical conduct. Historical conduct refers to conduct that occurred prior to a participant executing the consent form and agreeing to be bound by the Code.

In March 2025, a panel of the Appeal Tribunal determined that by signing the consent form, participants agreed to be bound by the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport from the date they signed it — and not prior. This arbitral tribunal therefore ruled that the Universal Code of Conduct was inapplicable to “historical conduct.”<sup>966</sup>

We also note that the consent form under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program was eventually revised to clarify that “events which occurred prior to the implementation of the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport], or prior to the signing of an Abuse-Free Sport Participant Consent Form, may also fall within the jurisdiction of the [Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada and Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner] if such events fall within the scope of the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport] and the applicable Policies and Procedures.”<sup>967</sup>

We were advised that, in early 2026, a single arbitrator of the Safeguarding Tribunal ruled that the revised consent form was valid and enforceable such that, by signing the form, the participant had consented to having their historical conduct subject to the Universal Code of Conduct and the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.

### **THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM’S COMPLAINT-MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

The former Abuse-Free Sport Program administered and enforced the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in accordance with the procedures set out in policies available on the Abuse-Free Sport website.

The program’s complaint-management process proceeded as follows:

- The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would first review complaints to ensure they fell within the Abuse-Free Sport program’s jurisdiction.
- They would then proceed with either a mediation (if the parties consented) or an investigation.
- When proceeding with an investigation, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would appoint an investigator.
- Once an investigation was complete, the investigation report and the parties’ submissions would be transferred to the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes, who would determine whether violations of the Universal Code of Conduct had occurred, then impose sanctions if they were appropriate.
- The Director of Sanctions and Outcomes’ decision could be reviewed by the Safeguarding Tribunal of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. Further appeal to the Appeal Tribunal was also available.<sup>968</sup>

A detailed summary of the complaint-management process under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program can be found in Appendix 5. A flow chart illustrating this process is also available on the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner's website.<sup>969</sup>

### **SPORT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENTS**

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner could conduct Sport Environment Assessments for Program Signatories. They followed the Guidelines Regarding Safe-Sport Environment Assessments.<sup>970</sup>

Such assessments were intended to identify and address systemic issues related to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, and to improve the sport environment for current and future participants.<sup>971</sup> They sought to understand problems and their root causes, and to explore possible solutions. Each assessment was made public and published in a report by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner.

The reports from Sport Environment Assessments were comprehensive and included, among other items:

- analyses of information that was gathered in the assessment and any concerns relating to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport
- identification of systemic or other issues
- recommendations to address any identified issues
- recommendations to improve current and future participants' experience
- other observations and recommendations in support of the assessment's objectives.<sup>972</sup>

Individuals and sport organizations could request a Sport Environment Assessment if they wished to raise concerns about systemic issues related to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport within a particular sport environment.

If it became aware of alleged systemic issues related to the Universal Code of Conduct in a specific sport environment, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner could also initiate an assessment on its own.<sup>973</sup>

The Sport Environment Assessment process generally involved these steps:

- A Sport Environment Assessment was either requested by individuals and sport organizations or initiated by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner.
- If a request was accepted, the assessment's scope was defined, including its objectives and timeframe.
- An independent assessor or assessment team was appointed. They conducted the assessment and prepared a report.

- The completed report was shared with the specific sport organization and published on the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner's website.
- Finally, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would monitor the sport organization's implementation of the recommendations and publish a report about that monitoring on its website. This monitoring report had to be published no later than one year after the assessment report's publication.<sup>974</sup>

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner maintained the Sport Environment Assessment Index. This index provided information about the assessments that had been initiated. As assessments progressed through the Sport Environment Assessment process, the index made general updates available.<sup>975</sup>

### **TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH**

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner committed itself to administering the Abuse-Free Sport Program in a trauma-informed manner.<sup>976</sup> According to the Office, a trauma-informed process “[reflects] an understanding of how trauma impacts individuals psychologically, emotionally and physically, and aims to prevent re-traumatization using safe and respectful practices.”<sup>977</sup> Such processes were also described as being compassionate, efficient, and “[providing] fairness, respect and equity to all parties involved.”<sup>978</sup>

### **LEGAL AID PROGRAM**

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner established the Abuse-Free Sport Legal Aid Program. This program provided eligible individuals, both complainants and respondents, with free and confidential access to legal advisors.<sup>979</sup> These legal advisors could provide advice at every step of the complaint-management process, from intake to the final appeal. They could also assist during the first stage of a Sport Environment Assessment undertaking.

### **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT PROGRAM**

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner had a mental-health support program that ensured access to competent mental-health support to eligible individuals before, during, and after the complaint-management process or the Sport Environment Assessment Process.<sup>980</sup>

### **HELPLINE**

The former Abuse-Free Sport Helpline was available to all Canadians who had questions about discrimination or maltreatment in a sport environment.<sup>981</sup> We understand that the helpline was operated by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada and not the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner.

## The Canadian Safe Sport Program: creation, implementation and function

On May 2, 2024, the Government of Canada announced that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would no longer administer the Abuse-Free Sport Program.<sup>982</sup> Instead, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport would take over responsibility for the independent mechanism implementing the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

The reason for this change was to preserve the independence of both the program and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, which housed the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner.<sup>983</sup>

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport began to administer and enforce the Universal Code of Conduct through the Canadian Safe Sport Program on April 1, 2025. Following a transition period, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner stopped operating the Abuse-Free Sport Program on August 1, 2025.

In what follows we describe the mandate and structure of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. We then discuss the transition from the Abuse-Free Sport Program to the Canadian Safe Sport Program and the changes made to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to permit the administration and enforcement of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in sport. We continue with a description of the scope of the Canadian Safe Sport Program and of its report process.

### ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ETHICS IN SPORT

#### Role

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (also called the “CCES”) is an independent, National Multisport Service Organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.<sup>984</sup> Its mission is to “serve the public interest by protecting integrity in sport through:

- Regulation of maltreatment and abuse, doping and competition manipulation;
- Education for awareness and understanding of strategic priorities; and
- Identification of and response to emerging opportunities and threats.”<sup>985</sup>

On November 25, 2025, the organization issued a news release announcing its official name change to Sport Integrity Canada effective January 1, 2026.<sup>986</sup> Because our Preliminary Report referred to the organization by its former name, and because the news is so recent, we continue to use the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport in our Final Report.

Since April 1, 2025, the Centre has been responsible for the Canadian Safe Sport Program. Under this program, the Centre independently administers and enforces the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport for federally funded National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations.<sup>987</sup>

In addition to safe sport, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's areas of activity include anti-doping and competition manipulation. With respect to anti-doping, it is tasked with deterring and detecting the use of "prohibited substances and methods." It pursues this through the Canadian Anti-Doping Program,<sup>988</sup> a national initiative designed to "prevent, deter and detect doping in sport."<sup>989</sup>

Regarding competition manipulation, the Canadian Centre for Ethic in Sport's role is primarily to provide education and increase awareness regarding competition manipulation and gambling in sport and to advocate for sport's integrity.<sup>990</sup> The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is currently preparing to launch the Canadian Program to Prevent Competition Manipulation, a program that will provide the tools and resources to ensure prevention, deterrence, and detection of manipulation of sport competitions in Canada.<sup>991</sup>

### **Governance and organizational structure**

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is governed by an independent board of directors. This board is made up of 12 individuals from various fields, including Canadian and international sport, medicine, academia, business, law, ethics, and governance.<sup>992</sup> Board members are selected and elected by existing members of the board following a nominating committee's recommendations.<sup>993</sup> They are selected based on their skills, experience, and expertise, ensuring a diverse and knowledgeable leadership rather than affiliations with specific sport organizations. These individuals volunteer their time and expertise to support the Centre's mission.<sup>994</sup>

Directors of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport are also its members.<sup>995</sup> In accordance with its bylaws, one of these members must be a retired elite-sport participant.<sup>996</sup>

The board's responsibilities include strategic oversight, financial stewardship, policy development, and ensuring compliance with international and national standards. Additionally, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport has a series of working groups and committees that focus on many topics, such as ethical issues, anti-doping operations, medicine and sport physiology.<sup>997</sup>

The Centre operates under a multiyear strategic plan that guides its priorities and goals.<sup>998</sup> On July 31, 2025, it released its Sport Integrity, Strategic Plan 2025–2028<sup>999</sup> which reflects its new safe sport mandate. We provide an overview of Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's 2025–2028 strategic plan in the section that follows.

The president and chief executive officer is appointed by the board of directors and are responsible for implementing the organization's strategic plans and policies.<sup>1000</sup> The executive directors, who report to the president and chief executive officer, lead departments focused on different aspects of the Centre's work.



### **TRANSITION FROM THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM TO THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM**

On May 2, 2024, the then-Minister of Sport and Physical Activity of Canada announced that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport would administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as of April 1, 2025.<sup>1001</sup> The Centre was chosen to take over the national safe sport program and its complaint mechanism to preserve the independence of both the program and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (which housed the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner).<sup>1002</sup>

During the first phase of the transition, from February 1, 2025, to March 31, 2025, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner continued to accept complaints of maltreatment under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program but did not start any new investigations. They reviewed complaints and issued interim measures when required. Complaints that did not require immediate action were held until April 1, 2025.

When the Canadian Safe Sport Program launched on April 1, 2025, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport began to handle reports of maltreatment and provide support services. At this point, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner stopped accepting new complaints, though it was still able to handle complaints it had received before February 1, 2025.<sup>1003</sup> Complaints that had been received but not processed during the transition period were shared with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, as long as the parties consented and the complaints were within the jurisdiction of the new Canadian Safe Sport Program.

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner closed on August 1, 2025. When cases it handled remained unresolved at that time, the parties were informed that their case could not be resolved under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. With their consent, these outstanding cases were transferred to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, which determined their eligibility under the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

### **THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ETHICS IN SPORT CONSULTATION PROCESS**

Between May and December 2024, prior to launching the Canadian Safe Sport Program, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport completed a multiphase consultation process with the Canadian sport community, including athletes, victims and survivors and advocates, subject-matter experts, and sport organizations. The goal was to gather feedback on the former Abuse-Free Sport Program and inform revisions and enhancements of the new Canadian Safe Sport Program.<sup>1004</sup>

Those consultations highlighted the need for a single document that would capture all the procedural rules for administering the Universal Code of Conduct, as well as details regarding a trauma-informed approach, clear standards of delivery (with defined timelines and greater expediency), and transparent communication.<sup>1005</sup>

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport developed and revised the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules in light of the feedback gathered during the consultation process, and the final Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules were published on January 17, 2025.<sup>1006</sup>

### **CHANGES TO ABSORB THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

To prepare for its new role in safe sport, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport made changes to its governance, organizational structure, and strategic direction. It added two new members to its board of directors who possess expertise in both law and medicine, areas crucial to safe sport and the administration of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.<sup>1007</sup>

On January 31, 2025, the board of directors also approved a Resolution on Independence, to formalize its independence from sport.<sup>1008</sup> Here are this resolution's key principles:

- Despite collaborating with numerous National Sport Organizations, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport asserts that these organizations have strictly no decision-making authority or influence on its policies.
- The Centre does not endorse, certify, or sponsor any sport organization or their participants.
- The Government of Canada has no involvement or authority regarding the selection or election of the members of the Centre's board of directors, nor on how the Centre implements the Canadian Anti-Doping Program, the Canadian Safe Sport Program, or the Canadian Program to Prevent Competition Manipulation.
- Directors adhere to a conflict-of-interest policy. Members of the board of directors are selected and elected by existing members of the board of directors following the recommendations of a nominating committee.

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport also welcomed a new executive director of safe sport. This individual is responsible for overseeing the administration of the Canadian Safe Sport Program. The organization publicly announced that it had brought on a team with a background in addressing maltreatment issues and “experience working on the front lines of a reporting mechanism.”<sup>1009</sup>

The Centre has reviewed its organizational strategy in order to focus on the integrity issues of safe sport, anti-doping, and competition manipulation.<sup>1010</sup> It also ended its involvement with the True Sport Program (which we discuss in Chapter 11), citing the need to focus on its mandate as an independent regulator for sport integrity.<sup>1011</sup> In this respect, and as noted above, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport engaged with victims, survivors, athletes, and the broader sport community when it was announced as the new national safe sport administrator. These engagements revealed a perceived bias or conflict of interest due to it being responsible for both the True Sport Program and the administration of safe-sport matters.

On July 31, 2025, the Centre published its new strategic plan: the Sport, Integrity, Strategic Plan 2025–2028.<sup>1012</sup> According to its website, this strategic plan was guided by the input and knowledge gathered during extensive consultations with experts and researchers across sport as well as individuals and organizations impacted by their programs. It outlines four key objectives:

- **Making Sport Safe** (preventing and addressing maltreatment and abuse in sport through the Canadian Safe Sport Program)<sup>1013</sup>
- **Making Sport Fair** (preventing and addressing competition manipulation in sport through the Canadian Program to Prevent Competition Manipulation)<sup>1014</sup>
- **Making Sport Clean** (preventing and addressing doping in sport through the Canadian Anti-Doping Program)<sup>1015</sup>
- **Proactive Monitoring and Engagement** (monitor the national and global sport environments to identify emerging opportunities and threats with respect to integrity).<sup>1016</sup>

In its commitment to Making Sport Safe, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport listed four strategic objectives:

- **An effective, trauma-informed safe sport program.** The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport aims to ensure that the Canadian Safe Sport Program is “human-centric, trauma-informed, effective, responsive, accessible, consistent, and predictable.”<sup>1017</sup>
- **Education.** The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport wants “[the] Canadian sport community [to have] a clear and comprehensive understanding of maltreatment, abuse, the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport], and the [Canadian Safe Sport Program].”<sup>1018</sup>
- **System alignment.** The Centre is “committed to advancing the regulation of safe sport at all levels to ensure a consistent, safe, and respectful environment for all participants. This approach will strengthen trust, accountability, and integrity across the Canadian sport system.”<sup>1019</sup>
- **International leadership.** The Centre “will pursue opportunities to establish itself as an international leader, driving advancement of safe sport standards and practices.”<sup>1020</sup>

On November 25, 2025, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport announced it would change its name to Sport Integrity Canada effective January 1, 2026.<sup>1021</sup> According to the chair of the board, the name change would “reflect (the organization’s) evolution over the past couple of years into a broader independent sport integrity agency.”<sup>1022</sup> The news release also indicates that the name change is consistent with their “bold, new future direction as outlined in [their] 2025–2028 Strategic Plan,”<sup>1023</sup> which we discussed earlier.

## **JURISDICTION OF THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ETHICS IN SPORT AND THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM’S SCOPE**

As we discuss in Chapter 15, to receive funding through Sport Canada’s Sport Support Program, National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes must comply with certain mandatory conditions that are included in the sport organization’s funding agreement. One of these mandatory conditions involves adopting the Canadian Safe Sport Program.<sup>1024</sup>

Through this program, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport independently administers and enforces the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport<sup>1025</sup> by receiving and responding to reports of prohibited behaviour.<sup>1026</sup>

Its authority to administer the Canadian Safe Sport Program is contract based, much like the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada's previous authority to administer the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.

### **Adoption contract**

The program applies to sport organizations that adopt it through a formal agreement called an adoption contract.<sup>1027</sup> The program is available to only National Sport Organizations, National Multiport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centers and Institutes that receive funding from Sport Canada.<sup>1028</sup> Under the program's current framework, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations cannot decide to voluntarily adopt it.

We include the list of National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes who have adopted the Canadian Safe Sport Program in Appendix 6.

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is adopting a staged approach to implementing the Canadian Safe Sport Program. It has indicated plans to expand the program's scope and reach as it gains experience and secures stable funding.

### **Participants in the Canadian Safe Sport Program**

The Canadian Safe Sport Program applies to national-level participants within the organizations that adopt the program. Rule 3.1 of the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules lists the people it covers:

- board members and employees of federally funded national-level sport organizations who have adopted the Canadian Safe Sport Program (referred to as "Sport Organizations")
- any athlete who receives Athlete Assistance Program support, is part of a Sport Organization's national team program, or is otherwise included in a Sport Organization's National Athlete Pool
- any athlete support personnel under a Sport Organization's authority directly involved with, or who provide services to, the Sport Organization's national-team program. This includes coaches, trainers, agents, team staff, and medical and paramedical personnel. any other individual who competes, participates, or is otherwise involved in sport under the authority of a Sport Organization that has adopted the Canadian Safe Sport Program, and whom the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport has authorized to designate as a participant for the purpose of the Canadian Safe Sport Program
- any Canadian official, judge, umpire, or referee accredited by a Sport Organization, as designated by each Sport Organization and authorized by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, who is involved in any international and/or national-level competition held under the authority or governed by the rules of a National Sport Organization.<sup>1029</sup>

Adopting organizations can also designate national-level events in which participants are subject to the Canadian Safe Sport Program and the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. In these cases, the Canadian Safe Sport Program applies only for the duration of the individual's participation in the designated event.

Rule 3.2 of the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules applies to this type of short-term coverage. It lays out how the rules can apply to other individuals (i.e., who are not already identified as participants under Rule 3.1) while they are participating in certain events designated by each Sport Organization. To be authorized as a participant in these cases, individuals must agree or consent, as part of the event registration process, to the application of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and of the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

### Consent form

The Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules provides that individuals affiliated with adopting sport organizations and covered by Rule 3.1, or those participating in a specific event, must sign a consent form. Under the Canadian Safe Sport Program, participants are also required to complete the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's safe sport e-learning module before signing the consent form.<sup>1030</sup> Sport Organizations who fail to meet these requirements risk being suspended from the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

Similar to that of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, the consent form of the Canadian Safe Sport Program asks that participants acknowledge and agree that any events occurring prior to the implementation of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and the Canadian Safe Sport Program, or prior to signing the consent form, may fall retroactively within the Canadian Safe Sport Program's jurisdiction.

### REPORT PROCESS UNDER THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM

The Canadian Safe Sport Program's report process is set out in the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules.<sup>1031</sup> They empower the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to determine whether a participant engaged in a prohibited behaviour contrary to the Universal Code of Conduct or in violation of the Canadian Safe Sport Program rules. If such a determination is made, the Centre can impose sanctions according to the framework set out in the Universal Code of Conduct.

The rules cover every step of the report process, from receiving the report of prohibited behaviour to investigating it, issuing a decision on violation and, if applicable, sanctions, and the potential review and any appeal of a decision made by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

The report process under the Canadian Safe Sport Program proceeds as follows:

- The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is responsible for receiving reports of alleged behaviours that are prohibited by the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.<sup>1032</sup>
- Any individual or sport organization can report a prohibited behaviour through the Centre's reporting platform, which is accessible online, or by telephone.<sup>1033</sup>



- Once a report is received, the Centre determines whether it has jurisdiction to proceed with the complaint.<sup>1034</sup>
- At any stage after it has received a report of alleged prohibited behaviour, the Centre has the authority to impose provisional measures<sup>1035</sup> (that is, temporary actions or restrictions that it can put in place while the report process is ongoing) such as modifying training schedules or locations or imposing travel restrictions or a suspension from the sport.
- The Centre provides a written notice (a “Notice of Report”) to the respondent (i.e., the person alleged to have engaged in one or more prohibited behaviour) informing them that a report has been made against them. The Centre also informs the relevant sport organization about the report.<sup>1036</sup>
- Within the 30 days following the Notice of Report being provided to the respondent, the Centre initiates one or more resolution procedures that are set out in Rule 13 of the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules. These procedures can include letters of concern,<sup>1037</sup> a remedial resolution,<sup>1038</sup> the acceptance of violation, mediation facilitated by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, and a formal resolution.<sup>1039</sup>
- At any time after assuming jurisdiction over the report, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport appoints someone to investigate the reported behaviour.<sup>1040</sup>
- The investigator generally interviews the parties and witnesses and collects evidence.
- The investigator then delivers their investigation report to the Centre. This report summarizes the relevant evidence, the findings of fact and credibility, and the reasons for those findings.<sup>1041</sup>
- The Centre provides the investigation report to the reporting person (the individual who has made the report) and/or impacted person (the person who has experienced the alleged prohibited behaviour), as well as the respondent. All parties have 10 days from receiving the report to make written submissions to the Centre.<sup>1042</sup>
- After receiving all written submissions, the Centre determines whether a violation has been committed.<sup>1043</sup> If a violation is confirmed, the Centre imposes appropriate sanctions.<sup>1044</sup>
- The Centre imposes sanctions on respondents according to Section 15 of the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules. Sanctions must align with those outlined in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.<sup>1045</sup>
- The Centre notifies the reporting person and/or impacted person, the respondent, and the relevant sport organization(s) of its decision. This notification, called a “Notice of Decision,” includes the reasons for the decision.
- Certain decisions of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (discussed below) can be reviewed by the Safeguarding Tribunal, a specialized division of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.<sup>1046</sup>
- If they participate in a review hearing before the Safeguarding Tribunal, the respondent, the reporting person, and/or impacted person, and the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport can appeal the Tribunal’s decision about a sanction. This appeal would go to the Appeal Tribunal of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.<sup>1047</sup>

Finally, under the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules, sport organizations are responsible for enforcing sanctions. These sanctions are imposed either by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, or by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, after reviews and/or appeals of the Centre's decisions.<sup>1048</sup>

A flow chart illustrating the report process under the Canadian Safe Sport Program is available on the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's website.<sup>1049</sup>

### **SAFEGUARDING TRIBUNAL OF THE SPORT DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTRE OF CANADA**

According to the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules,<sup>1050</sup> the Safeguarding Tribunal of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada can review the following decisions made by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport:

- a decision to issue a letter of concern under Rule 13.1 (at the request of a reporting person, an impacted person, or a respondent)<sup>1051</sup>
- a decision to set aside an investigation and order a new investigation under Rule 15.3(b) (at the request of a reporting person, an impacted person, or a respondent)<sup>1052</sup>
- a decision containing a finding on whether the respondent committed a violation of the Universal Code of Conduct or the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules and, if applicable, a sanction under Rule 15.3(c) (at the request of a reporting person, an impacted person, or a respondent)<sup>1053</sup>
- a "Remedial Resolution"<sup>1054</sup> under Rule 13.2 (at the request of reporting person and/or impacted person)<sup>1055</sup>
- an "Acceptance of Violation and Sanction"<sup>1056</sup> under Rule 13.3 (at the request of reporting person and/or impacted person)<sup>1057</sup>
- a decision to impose provisional measures under Rule 12.1 (at the request of the respondent).<sup>1058</sup>

All other decisions and orders that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport makes will be final and binding on all parties.<sup>1059</sup>

### **INTRODUCING FEES FOR REVIEWS AND APPEALS TO THE SAFEGUARDING TRIBUNAL**

On July 30, 2025, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada's board of directors announced new conditions of service for its Dispute Resolution Secretariat.<sup>1060</sup> In its announcement, the Centre indicated that certain services previously offered free of charge would remain free but would now be subject to a filing fee. These include a respondent's request to the Safeguarding Tribunal for a review of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's decision ordering a provisional measure (Rule 16.1 (c)) or a final sanction involving a full and unconditional suspension (Rule 16.1(a)).

The announcement also stated that other free services would now be provided exclusively on a fee-for-service basis, including requests to the Safeguarding Tribunal for reviews of the Centre's decisions other than those just mentioned, as well as requests for appeals of Safeguarding Tribunal decisions to the Appeal Tribunal. For example, a victim or survivor seeking a review of the Centre's decision on sanction would have to pay for this service.

In its announcement, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada indicated that these new conditions “are rendered necessary due to insufficient funding to maintain the same range of services traditionally offered at no charge by the [Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada] over the last two decades” and that the board of directors “remains open to reverting these new service conditions to their prior free-of-charge status, should sufficient federal funding or other revenue-generating opportunities allow for it.”<sup>1061</sup>

On August 11, 2025, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport issued a press release expressing concern over this recent decision to introduce fees for review and appeal processes related to the Safeguarding Tribunal.<sup>1062</sup> It warned that this change could have a significant impact on individuals who report or are affected by maltreatment, as well as on respondents who are subject to sanctions other than a full and unconditional suspension, who may now face financial barriers that could hinder their right to appeal and undermine procedural fairness.

On November 7, 2025, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada essentially reversed its decision and announced that, subject to a fixed filing fee of \$300, all requests for reviews to the Safeguarding Tribunal and all appeals to the Appeal Tribunal under the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules would now be offered without service fees.<sup>1063</sup> In its press release, the Chief Executive Office of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada indicated that they had “always intended to offer these services at no cost” and that “through close collaboration with [their] partners and feedback from the sport community, [they] now [have] the resources to do so while maintaining the sustainability and quality of [their] services.”<sup>1064</sup>

### **SPORT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENTS**

The Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules include Sport Environment Assessments.<sup>1065</sup> We understand that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is not currently offering this service though it may in the future.

### **TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH**

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is committed to administering the Canadian Safe Sport Program in a trauma-informed manner. This commitment is explicitly stated in the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules.<sup>1066</sup>

The Centre defines trauma-informed practice as a “strengths-based, people-focused framework rooted in an understanding of, and sensitivity to the impact trauma has on individuals.”<sup>1067</sup> This practice also “emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone intersecting with or working within the program.”<sup>1068</sup>

With this commitment in mind the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport offers support services. They have a support team that can, for example, answer questions about the Canadian Safe Sport Program and share information about the report process.<sup>1069</sup>

## LEGAL AID

The Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport does not offer legal aid. Its website indicates that Sport Canada is exploring options to provide legal aid services to individuals involved in the Canadian Safe Sport Program's report process.<sup>1070</sup>

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PROGRAM

The Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport has engaged the Canadian Centre for Mental Health in Sport to provide independent mental-health services to participants involved in the Canadian Safe Sport Program's report process. Support is available both for those who have experienced maltreatment and those who have been reported to the Canadian Safe Sport Program for potentially engaging in a prohibited behaviour.<sup>1071</sup>

## SUPPORT TEAM

The Canadian Safe Sport Program support team is available to anyone to:

- share information about what can be reported and what to expect after they submit a report
- connect individuals with mental health and other services
- assist with redirecting reports that fall outside the Canadian Safe Sport Program's jurisdiction
- answer questions about the Canadian Safe Sport Program.<sup>1072</sup>

The support team is available by email or phone or through RealResponse, a secure and anonymous online platform that allows two-way communication to report sensitive issues.<sup>1073</sup>

## Participants' perspectives on the former Abuse-Free Sport Program

Before we review participants' perspectives, the Commission must emphasize that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the former Abuse-Free Sport Program were created and expected to be fully operational in an extremely short time. We understand that the compressed timeframe was necessary because of the urgent need for an independent complaint mechanism, given the ongoing safe sport crisis.

We learned from many that less than a month away from the former Abuse-Free Sport Program's official launch, there were no policies or procedures in place. The revision of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport had not yet been finalized, and the program lacked facilities and sufficient support. Overall, several participants compared the rolling out of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program to "flying a plane while building it."

Within three months of its creation, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner began its operations. It assumed a significant mandate, which included receiving reports of violation of the Universal Code of Conduct, initiating the scoping for Sport Environment Assessments, and offering education, preventative tools, resources, and other services like mental health and legal aid.<sup>1074</sup>

The Commission recognizes that creating the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and implementing the former Abuse-Free Sport Program in such a short period of time with insufficient resources was a significant undertaking.

We also note that the McLaren Global Sport Solutions report entitled “Aiming High: Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada” recommended a “phasing-in” approach to the development and introduction of the complaint mechanism over a period of three years.<sup>1075</sup> Under this proposal, among other elements, the complaint mechanism would have gradually included sport organizations in its activities, beginning with twelve National Sport Organizations and two provincial federations of sport organizations such as Sport Manitoba and Sask Sport. Others would have been added in successive years of the pilot program.<sup>1076</sup>

The rationale behind the recommendation for a phased-in approach was that creating a complaint mechanism of this scope is a significant undertaking. Without proper planning, the development and introduction of the mechanism could be overwhelmed and lead to “a lack of trust, dissatisfaction, and poor adoption of the mechanisms provided by [the Independent Complaint Mechanism].”<sup>1077</sup> In hindsight, requiring the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner to fully deploy in such a short timeframe, without a gradual phase-in of the program, likely contributed to its weaknesses. This must be understood when reading the following participants’ perspectives.

#### **THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM WAS LIMITED IN SCOPE**

We were told that, when the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner was first announced, it was presented to the public as the solution to the safe sport crisis. However, we were advised that, in practice, the Office lacked the authority to help in most circumstances because of its limited jurisdiction. This limitation is illustrated by the low rate of complaints it accepted.

For example, in its first year of operation, between June 20, 2022, and June 30, 2023, the Office received 193 complaints but only 66 were deemed admissible (approximately a 34% acceptance rate).<sup>1078</sup> In the second year, from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, the Office received 299 complaints. Of these, only 134 complaints were deemed admissible.<sup>1079</sup> The remaining complaints were inadmissible, typically as a result of issues related to jurisdiction. Specifically:

- In 63% of these cases, the respondent was not an Abuse-Free Sport Program participant.
- In 26% of inadmissible cases, the complaint was not related to an issue addressed by the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.
- In 1.4% of these cases, the organization was not a program signatory.<sup>1080</sup>



We heard that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner's inability to hear complaints because of its limited jurisdiction was particularly frustrating for victims, survivors, and parents. Many shared countless stories of trying to file complaints only to be turned away, sometimes with no explanation other than being told that the Office "did not have jurisdiction."

However, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner was not designed to have such limited jurisdiction. We were informed that the Office could, in theory, hear complaints emerging from every level of sport.

We were told that volleyball was the only sport in which the former Abuse-Free Program was consistently applied at all levels, including to its clubs. This was reportedly a result of the uniquely strong relationship and alignment between Volleyball Canada, its member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and the local clubs. This relationship permitted the development of a set of pan-Canadian policies that apply uniformly to Volleyball Canada and its provincial and territorial counterparts. We also learned that this alignment allowed them to implement a structure in which individuals need to be members of Volleyball Canada to be members of Provincial or Territorial volleyball organizations, and vice versa.

#### **THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM WAS COSTLY**

One of the factors limiting the former Abuse-Free Sport Program's scope was that most sport organizations below the national level chose not to participate. When asked why, most non-national sport organizations told us that it was too expensive because the former Abuse-Free Sport Program operated on a fee-for-service model. They felt that it was more affordable to use an Independent Third Party to address safe sport complaints.

We understand that the annual cost of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program for National Sport Organizations could range from \$60,000 to \$100,000, depending on the size of the organization and how many complaints they were receiving.

#### **THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM WAS CONSENT BASED**

As we discussed earlier, participants had to provide explicit consent to be bound by the former Abuse-Free Sport Program and the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

Sport organizations below the national level also indicated that this requirement to obtain explicit consent from all their participants was prohibitive given the complications associated with its management. They explained that they did not have the time, resources, or capacity to meet this requirement.

National Sport Organizations likewise told us that they struggled with the administrative burden of collecting the former Abuse-Free Sport consents from their participants. It also came to our attention that National Sport Organizations found the consent forms too broad, and that in some cases, coaches had to be dismissed because they refused to sign the consent form.

We were also informed that many complaints were rejected by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner because the respondent had not consented to be bound by the former Abuse-Free Sport Program and the Universal Code of Conduct.

We were also told that participants for each program signatory were to be designated by the program signatory itself and therefore that the number of participants for each program signatory was small.

### **PARTICIPANTS' CONCERNS ABOUT THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM'S COMPLAINT-MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

We repeatedly heard that people were frustrated with the complaint process that was part of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. More specifically, participants identified the process's lack of clarity, timeliness, transparency, and fairness, as well as the lack of supports available to assist the parties through the process. These factors led to a loss of trust in the process.

#### **Lack of clarity**

We repeatedly heard from complainants, respondents, sport administrators, and organizations that the complaint process was too complicated, confusing, and obscure. Participants told us that the policies detailing the complaint process were difficult to understand because they were written in complex "legal language." On numerous occasions, participants commented that they did not understand the steps involved nor how they would unfold. They did not know how to navigate the system and told us that there was no support available to help them.

Many individuals cited the absence of a clear, initial step to report maltreatment as an example of a fundamental shortcoming of the overall complaint process. They said it was not evident where or how to file a complaint with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. We also heard that the online complaint-filing system was difficult to use and that the forms to file a complaint were confusing.

#### **Lack of timeliness**

We heard numerous concerns that the complaint process took too long. It was often described as an endless process, especially when someone appealed a decision to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. On several occasions, we were advised that complaints were taking anywhere from several months to years to resolve.

Participants told us about delays at every step of the process, noting that extensions were frequently granted, often without a good reason. These delays were also poorly communicated to all parties. This left them with the impression that timeframes were not being enforced, which eroded their trust in the system. In other cases, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner provided no timelines to the parties at all.

### **Lack of transparency and communication**

Participants frequently told us about a lack of communication between the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and all interested parties. We heard that this poor communication increased confusion and contributed to a sense of helplessness among those trying to navigate the complaint process.

Complainants and respondents told us they rarely received updates on their cases. Participants described feeling unsure of what steps were being taken to address their case, or if any progress was being made at all. They noted that this lack of communication, especially when cases remained unresolved for extended periods of time, added to significant stress and caused uncertainty in an already challenging situation.

Some National Sport Organizations also expressed dissatisfaction with the transparency of the process. They explained that they were sometimes unaware that a complaint against one of their members had been filed. The lack of communication meant they had no visibility on the process once a complaint was made. They were often completely unaware of the nature or the seriousness of the allegations made about their members.

The Commission was advised that this posed a problem when, for example, appointing a new national-team coach. National Sport Organizations explained that in these circumstances, they needed to accept the liability and risk of appointing (or not appointing) a person against whom a complaint had been made, without having any information regarding the matter.

### **Lack of trauma-informed expertise and processes**

Many participants emphasized that the complaint-management process needs to be trauma informed for all parties. Victims and survivors told us that they did not feel safe when reporting maltreatment to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. The complaint process was described as difficult and traumatizing by many, including victims, survivors, and parents. The process could also be harmful for respondents.

Victims and survivors noted a lack of protection throughout the process. They said they were made to relive their trauma on multiple occasions when they had to write submissions, go through an investigation process, participate in mediation, and attend hearings — frequently without any support or advice. For example, while the cross-examination of the complainant at the hearing is important for testing evidence, participants emphasized that there should be processes and procedures in place to support complainants during such cross-examination.

We also heard that the complaint-management process was not responsive to the specific needs and realities of victims and survivors. The Commission heard from victims, survivors, and witnesses who were hesitant to come forward and disclose certain types of maltreatment. They were concerned that those in power or those hearing the complaint would not understand the significance of their experiences.

For example, in cases of racial abuse, a barrier to disclosure may be created if there is no racialized person to hear the complaint. We learned that there were no individuals with a disability on the roster of arbitrators and mediators. Concerns were expressed that, without lived experience or a deep understanding of disability-related issues, the realities of athletes with disabilities and their experiences were often overlooked or misunderstood.

### **Lack of procedural fairness**

The universal sentiment among participants was that the process needs to be procedurally fair and provide fairness to all parties. We heard the former Abuse-Free Sport Program lacked procedural fairness, particularly for respondents.

Participants told us how evidence that would typically be inadmissible in court was allowed during the complaint process, and that the rules of evidence were not consistently applied. Others highlighted that decisions were made without transparency, and that evidence was sometimes excluded from an investigation and final reports without proper explanation.

Concerns were also raised that respondents were not consistently given the right to respond to allegations of maltreatment or provided with enough information to do so effectively. Some respondents, for example, stated that decisions to impose provisional (i.e., temporary) measures were made without giving them the opportunity to respond or make submissions. We were advised that formal submissions were not always considered when provisional measures were contemplated. In some circumstances, we were told, respondents may not have even been aware of the complaint against them when provisional measures were imposed.

Some respondents also shared that they felt treated as if they were “guilty” before any formal determinations were made. Similarly, we heard stories of ongoing complaints being shared with the media, leading the public to judge the respondent before the process concluded.

Confidentiality rules are expected to govern the complaint-management process, preventing the inappropriate and highly unfair disclosure of ongoing matters. However, participants reported that many complainants would breach these confidentiality rules by disclosing the complaint to the media and there were no consequences for breaching these rules. Some respondents told us that even where ultimately no wrongdoing was found, their reputation was already ruined.

### **Limited mental health and legal support**

The Commission heard numerous accounts of complainants and respondents going through the complaint-management process without mental health or legal support. Many participants were either not aware of the mental health and legal aid programs offered by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, or they noted that it was too difficult to access these resources.

Participants advised us that the list of legal-aid lawyers was not updated, and that many of the lawyers on the list were unable to take on new cases. In these circumstances, parties were left to find a lawyer on their own

and many of them went through the complaint process unrepresented. We heard that hiring a lawyer was too expensive and that there was a limited number of pro bono lawyers who were willing to take complex and lengthy cases.

We were informed that despite the existence of the mental health support program, limited mental-health support was available to the parties when complaints were handled by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner.

In addition to mental health and legal support services, both complainants and respondents expressed a need for guidance through the complaint-management process. We heard it was important to be able to speak with someone able to clearly explain the process, particularly someone with trauma-informed skills and experience. The value of human contact was highlighted in contrast to receiving only digital correspondence about next steps, which participants described as feeling impersonal and cold.

### **Missed opportunity for restorative practices**

Multiple participants noted that there was a lack of opportunity to engage in restorative practices under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. They were seeking alternatives to resolve disputes beyond the formal complaint process, which involves an investigation and a full hearing. Many suggested that restorative practices should have been a part of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.

Restorative practices are rooted in restorative justice. They “emphasize repairing the harm done to people and relationships, rather than punishing people.”<sup>1081</sup> Restorative justice is based on an understanding that crime harms people, relationships, and communities. It seeks to “repair harm by providing an opportunity for those harmed and those who take responsibility for the harm to communicate”<sup>1082</sup> about causes, circumstances, and impacts of crime, and to address their needs. Restorative justice seeks to foster healing, reparation, and reintegration while also seeking to prevent future harm.<sup>1083</sup>

We were informed that participants in the former Abuse-Free Sport Program did not freely consent to the consent form they had to sign. Many indicated that they felt compelled to sign it as a condition of participation in sport. We were advised that the web of contracts underpinning the former Abuse-Free Sport Program should have instead focused on a set of shared commitments agreed to by all participants.

We were reminded that restorative approaches are not only about addressing harm after the fact. Restorative principles include educating individuals about the basic principles of sport, including fun, health, and community, to create safe spaces and strengthen relationships before issues occur — or to prevent them from happening in the first place. Participants felt that punishment without education, especially in the case of minors, would not bring a change in culture.

In terms of response to maltreatment, we were told that the idea is to move away from “rule breaking” and “contract breaching” and instead focus on how to react when a set of expectations is not met.



Participants suggested that the focus should be on working together rather than investigating and then going through an adversarial process. According to them, a restorative approach should be pursued first before any adversarial judicial process.

Participants in our engagement process told us that many of the issues that arose in sport would not have escalated to the level of formal complaints if a restorative approach had been taken from the outset. They suggested that the processes in place did not address healing from maltreatment. Participants suggested that, in reporting maltreatment, people are frequently not seeking punishment but rather understanding, learning, and a change in behaviour.

One example of restorative practice that was shared with us involved bringing a sport team together to address hazing issues collectively, rather than isolating individuals after the behaviour had been reported. The focus, it was noted, must be on confronting the underlying team culture as a group.

Many participants believed that restorative practices are what will bring about real change in sport culture, rather than attempting to impose culture change from the top of the system.

Participants also suggested that a restorative lens is one way to adapt the sport system to better reflect the realities and values of Indigenous communities.

We were told that restorative justice should seek to restore peace and harmony in a way that is consistent with Indigenous worldviews grounded in community rather than individualism.

In contrast, others were hesitant to support restorative justice in the sport system. They felt that there is not a clear understanding of the concept. They wanted the focus to be on victims and survivors and perceived a risk that restorative justice would lead to revictimization and not be “worth it.” Some participants believed that restorative justice might be useful in “less severe” non-sexual or non-physical misconduct. We were told that a system that offers restorative justice for the worst cases of sexual abuse is a system that does not understand the abuse. Some were emphatic in noting that restorative justice would be unacceptable to them in such cases. Others noted that cases of severe psychological abuse could likewise render restorative justice unsuitable.

We also heard that sport organizations would likely be unable to implement restorative justice practices given that they are “human-resource intensive,” would require significant capacity building, and create significant costs.

#### **PARTICIPANTS’ CONCERNS ABOUT SPECIFIC STEPS IN THE COMPLAINT-MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

Participants informed the Commission on specific issues related to the triage of complaints, the investigation process, and the enforcement of sanctions. These issues further eroded confidence in, and the effectiveness of, the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.

### Limited triage of complaints

Although most participants agreed that a formal complaint is not always appropriate, opinions varied on whether complaints should meet a certain threshold in order to proceed formally. Under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, complaints underwent a triage process. However, this process aimed only to determine issues related to jurisdiction, if a complaint was criminal in nature, or if mandatory reporting obligations were triggered.

Some participants called for better triaging or screening of complaints, suggesting that “less serious” or “administrative” complaints could be returned to the National Sport Organization or other sport organizations to be handled at their level. Others called for better mechanisms to triage complaints of retaliatory behaviour (actions taken against a person for making a report of possible prohibited behaviour or for participating in a complaint process). They noted that without established thresholds and a proper triaging system, there was a risk that the complaint mechanism would become overwhelmed.

Others noted the risks associated with triaging complaints. Although some complaints may be more administrative in nature, such as those about playing time, they could still involve elements of maltreatment. Additionally, a pattern of “less serious” complaints originating from the same sport organization could reveal systemic problems. An initial triage of a complaint might not always reveal the entire story or broader issues.

### Deficiencies and inconsistencies in the investigation process

We heard serious concerns about the investigation component of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program’s complaint-management process. Many noted a lack of regulation and oversight of investigations, along with the absence of standard protocols when it came to managing evidence. Concerns relating to the investigation process and investigators included:

- the length of the investigation process (such as investigations taking several months to complete)
- the investigation being incomplete or factually deficient (such as investigators failing to interview key witnesses)
- investigators not having the proper education or experience, especially when the allegation was criminal in nature and involved, for example, child or sexual abuse
- investigators not understanding the impact of an investigation on concurrent criminal proceedings, potentially jeopardizing those proceedings
- investigators not protecting the confidentiality of investigations.

In short, and to varying degrees, participants did not trust the investigators. Some believed that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner should have conducted the investigations, rather than relying on external investigators.

### Challenges in enforcing sanctions

Complainants advised us that a significant problem with the former Abuse-Free Sport Program was that sport organizations did not always enforce sanctions, and that there was no oversight from the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner to ensure they did so. While the Office of the Sport Integrity could impose sanctions, it lacked authority to enforce them.

We also heard that sanctions were not effectively communicated across all levels of the sport in which the sanctioned individuals participated. When they were communicated, we heard that National Sport Organizations generally had very little control or oversight over Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. This created a lack of consistency and accountability when dealing with sanctioned individuals. We learned that provisional measures were not consistently enforced by sport organizations.

## Participants' perspectives on the Canadian Safe Sport Program

The vast majority of participants welcomed the transition to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. They believed that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, as an organization fully independent from the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, is in a good position to build trust with the sport community. They expressed hope that the Centre will learn from the challenges that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner faced and make improvements in the report process. Participants believed that the sport community needed to give the Canadian Safe Sport Program an opportunity and time to develop. In their view, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner was not given that opportunity. On the other hand, some participants still feared that nothing would change and that the multiplicity of issues we described earlier would persist.

At the outset, we wish to highlight that most of the issues we described with respect to the former Abuse-Free Sport Program had been identified as areas requiring improvement in the consultation process led by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to inform its revisions of the Safe Sport Program in 2024.

As we mentioned earlier, those consultations underscored the need for a single document capturing all the procedural rules for the report process, a trauma-informed approach, clear standards of delivery (including defined timelines and greater expediency), and transparent communication.<sup>1084</sup> The Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules were drafted with the aim of addressing each of these issues.

On launching the Canadian Safe Sport Program, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport made four key commitments:

- to adopt a people-first approach that treats everyone with compassion, dignity, and respect
- to meet established timelines throughout the reporting process
- to communicate transparently and consistently
- to actively listen to those the system is designed to support.<sup>1085</sup>

At the time of preparing this report, the Canadian Safe Sport Program has been operational for only a few months. However, the feedback received by the Commission, including during the National Summit, has been largely positive and promising.

### **THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM HAS A BROADER SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

Participants in our engagement process noted that the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules apply to all national-level participants who are specifically identified in the rules,<sup>1086</sup> thereby providing more consistency across adopting organizations. Under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, the participants were determined by the adopting sport organization,<sup>1087</sup> which led to inconsistencies in defining participants across adopting organizations.

Despite this significant improvement, we heard repeated concerns regarding the limitations of the Canadian Safe Sport Program's jurisdiction, which is currently restricted to participants of federally funded national-level sport organizations.

On August 14, 2025, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport released a snapshot of the Canadian Safe Sport Program's first three months of operation. The Centre reported that it had received 111 reports between April 1 and June 30, 2025. Only 11 of those fell within the scope of the Canadian Safe Sport Program.<sup>1088</sup> Of the 100 reports that were outside of the Canadian Safe Sport Program:

- 82% were not at the federally funded, national level of sport, but occurred in the following settings: 65% club, 10% provincial, 3% university, 2% private organization, and 2% other
- 13% did not meet the threshold for a Universal Code of Conduct violation
- 3% were not accepted because of the time that has lapsed since the reported incident
- 2% involved concerns already addressed through other processes.<sup>1089</sup>

That said, we were advised that the Canadian Safe Sport Program is being introduced in phases, and the Centre hopes to extend the program beyond the national level in the coming years.

However, we were also informed that the Centre will require additional funding to expand the Canadian Safe Sport Program's scope. This funding might come from the government or through a fee-for-service model. We recall that the former Abuse-Free Sport Program operated on a fee-for-service model and experienced significant difficulties in getting sport organizations to join, partly because of the prohibitive cost.

### **THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM IS ENTIRELY FUNDED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA**

Participants welcomed the fact that, under the Canadian Safe Sport Program, the Government of Canada now fully covers the cost of services. By contrast, under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, these costs were previously shared among users.

Although the Canadian Safe Sport Program is offered at no cost, it is available to (and mandatory for) only National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes receiving federal funding. By contrast, under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, sport organizations at all levels could opt in and share the program costs with other users, though this rarely occurred.

### **THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM REMAINS CONSENT BASED**

Like the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport also relies on a network of contracts to administer and enforce the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in sport through the Canadian Safe Sport Program. These include the adoption contract between the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the adopting sport organization and the consent form to be signed by each participant to the program.

We were told that participants to the Canadian Safe Sport Program must complete the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's safe sport e-learning module and sign the consent form as part of the National Sport Organization's "onboarding" process. For example:

- Employees and support staff are required to complete the e-learning module and sign the consent form when they are assigned to a national team.
- Board members must complete these requirements prior to accepting their appointment and participating in their first board meeting.
- Officials assigned to national events must do so once their assignments for the season are confirmed.
- Athletes who are selected for the national program must complete the Canadian Safe Sport Program requirements before participating in any official activities.

We were also informed that, under the Canadian Safe Sport Program, consent forms are not distributed and collected by adopting sport organizations. They are instead captured by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's online platform, as participants complete the online e-learning module. The role of adopting sport organizations is to direct its participants to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's online platform. They are also required to submit to the Centre and update a complete list of participants. We understand that the Centre's employees are in regular contact with adopting sport organizations to verify that the Canadian Safe Sport Program's requirements are met.

Many participants in our engagement process expressed the view that Parliament should amend the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*<sup>090</sup> to:

- establish the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (Sport Integrity Canada) as Canada's independent national safe sport agency, with a legislative mandate to administer the safe-sport program



- authorize information sharing between the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and relevant government agencies to support the administration of the Canadian Safe Sport Program
- grant the Centre the appropriate investigative authority and the power to sanction sport organizations and individuals.

These participants believed that this would not only relieve National Sport Organizations of the financial and administrative burden of collecting consent forms but would also help prevent jurisdictional challenges arising when a respondent has not signed the consent form. Others suggested that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's legislative mandate should be broader and include responsibility to administer compliance programs related to anti-doping and competition manipulation as well.

Other participants believed that the federal government lacks the constitutional authority to enact legislation that would empower the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to receive and decide reports of prohibited behaviours in sport.

## **PARTICIPANTS NOTED SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS WITH THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM'S REPORT PROCESS**

### **Streamlined and clearer process**

We were told that to reduce confusion, the Canadian Safe Sport Program created a single point of contact for all of the services it offers. Individuals can call, email, or text the support team for assistance with reporting concerns, understanding the report process, or accessing mental health support and the other services available. Under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada operated the former Abuse-Free Sport Helpline while the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner was responsible for administering the complaint mechanism.

Participants also appreciated that reports could now be submitted online or by phone. Under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, complaints had to be submitted online only.

### **Established timelines**

During our engagement process, including while at the National Summit, participants noted that report-process delays had been significantly reduced under the Canadian Safe Sport Program compared to the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.

They emphasized that the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules include specific timelines for each step of the report process. For example, the rules make it clear that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport must inform a reporting person whether it has jurisdiction and can proceed with the report within 14 days of receiving it. The Rules also provide that the respondent and sport organization must receive notice of the report within 7 days of the Centre's decision on jurisdiction, and that investigations shall be completed within 75 days.<sup>1091</sup> The rules also allow the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to issue procedural orders to ensure efficiency, timeliness and fairness in the report process.<sup>1092</sup>

Although the former Abuse-Free Sport Program rules also required that certain steps would be completed within specific timelines, they generally allowed for more flexibility. For example, the guidelines regarding investigations said that they had to be “performed without undue delay, considering the circumstances of the Complaint, the scope and complexity of the investigation, the availability of the parties and witnesses, and the preparation required for the investigation to proceed.”<sup>1093</sup>

In the “snapshot” of the Canadian Safe Sport Program's first three months of operation released by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport on August 14, 2025, the Centre reported that all confirmations of report, notices of report and resolution method determinations were completed within the established timelines. In addition, 84% of notices that a report was beyond the scope of the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules were completed within the prescribed timelines.<sup>1094</sup>

### **Increased transparency and communication**

Participants, including National Sport Organizations, noted that the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules include clear guidelines on the role of sport organizations and how they take part in the report process. For example, the rules specify that a sport organization must be informed of a report at the same time as the respondent and that it must also be notified when provisional measures or sanctions are issued.<sup>1095</sup>

National Sport Organizations representatives welcomed such improvements. However, they also indicated that they needed to be kept informed throughout the reporting process because they often felt uncertain about how to handle a respondent while awaiting an outcome, especially in cases where no provisional measures were issued.

### **Trauma-informed expertise and processes**

In the “snapshot” of the Canadian Safe Sport Program's first three months of operation, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport reported that it had 15 full-time staff supporting the program and that the team had over 75 years of cumulative experience in maltreatment and over 40 years addressing matters of sport integrity.<sup>1096</sup>

During the National Summit, participants expressed appreciation for the case managers responsible for receiving, processing, and following up on reports submitted to the Canadian Safe Sport Program. They believed that case managers play an important role in ensuring that all aspects of the process are trauma responsive.

### **Increased procedural fairness**

Both the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules and the former Abuse-Free Sport procedural rules allow respondents and impacted persons to be heard before a decision is issued regarding a violation or sanction.<sup>1097</sup> However, the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules now go further by allowing these parties to be heard before the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport makes a decision on a provisional measure — an option that was not previously available.<sup>1098</sup>

Participants also noted that the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules provide for better oversight of the investigation process. Under the new rules, if the parties raise issues of procedural fairness in the conduct of an

investigation or in the investigation report, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport can order further investigation or initiate a new one.<sup>1099</sup> Under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, if someone had an objection during the investigation they could raise it only by challenging the Director of Sanctions and Outcome's decision before the Safeguarding Tribunal at the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.<sup>1100</sup>

### **A broader range of resolutions**

We were told that, to address the backlog of complaints at the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, and to make sure that the Canadian Safe Sport Program responds appropriately to different types of allegations, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport added options other than a full investigation. These options include letters of concern and remedial resolutions.<sup>1101</sup> Under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, the only resolutions available were mediation and investigation.<sup>1102</sup>

The broader range of resolutions under the Program Rules was widely welcomed by participants, who observed that a formal investigation and resolution were not always the most appropriate and effective ways to respond to a report.

### **Restorative practices**

During the National Summit, participants noted that the remedial resolutions under the new Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules did offer approaches to resolve reports of prohibited behaviours beyond investigation and sanctions. They said that the available approaches might foster understanding, learning, and a change in behaviour.

For example, Rule 13.1 of the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules says that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport can determine that a report is best resolved by issuing a letter of concern.<sup>1103</sup> This letter, which does not constitute a finding of violation of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport or of the Canadian Safe Sport Program, requires the respondent to undertake educational or remedial measures.<sup>1104</sup>

### **A single independent administrator**

Another significant improvement that participants highlighted is that under the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is responsible for all steps of the process, from receiving the complaint to deciding on violation and sanction under the Universal Code of Conduct. We were informed that this approach provides greater uniformity and independence than was possible in the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. Under the former program, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner handled all steps except the decision on violations and sanctions, which was made by the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes. Both offices were part of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre, which would hear appeals from the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes.

### **Dual responsibility for anti-doping and safe sport**

Some athletes perceive that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's dual responsibility in anti-doping and safe sport is a conflict of interest. They see the Centre as working "against" athletes in the anti-doping space while supporting them in safe sport.

That said, many athletes appeared to have positive views of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and believe that it works to protect them from doping and cheating in the sport system.

### **SPORT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENTS**

We understand that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is not currently conducting Sport Environment Assessments. Participants, including those at the National Summit, expressed concern about the absence of this resource, emphasizing that Sport Environment Assessments are an essential tool to identify and address root causes of unsafe sport cultures within organizations.

We were advised that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport would like to provide Sport Environment Assessments in the future. Participants noted that the Centre cannot conduct such Assessments without receiving adequate funding. In the interim, we understand that Sport Canada has taken responsibility for ensuring the continuity of the monitoring phase of assessments conducted by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. This is outlined in the Office's Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments.<sup>1105</sup>

### **RISK OF MISUSE OF THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM**

Several participants voiced concern that the Canadian Safe Sport Program could be “weaponized,” and believed this occurred within the former Abuse Free Sport program. To mitigate that risk and prevent program abuses, they recommended incorporating deterrents for frivolous or bad-faith complaints.

## **National-level Independent Third-Party Mechanisms**

As we noted earlier in this chapter, the former Abuse-Free Sport Program had important limitations in its jurisdiction. It frequently received complaints of maltreatment unrelated to program signatories or their participants, which it could not address. The Canadian Safe Sport Program faces similar challenges.

Because of these jurisdictional issues, most National Sport Organizations maintain other complaint mechanisms to handle reports of maltreatment that currently fall outside the Canadian Safe Sport Program's jurisdiction. This happens, for example, when complaints involve an alleged violation of a National Sport Organization's code of conduct that does not amount to a violation of the Universal Code of Conduct.<sup>1106</sup> For these issues, most National Sport Organizations employ Independent Third-Party Mechanisms. As we discuss later, several provinces and territories use Independent Third-Party Mechanisms as their “centralized” complaint mechanism, and many Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations also employ them as their “private” complaint mechanism.

Independent Third-Party Mechanisms generally refer to external individuals or agencies hired to independently review complaints and conduct investigations, or to direct complaints to a competent authority.<sup>1107</sup> The jurisdiction of an Independent Third Party is generally set out in the sport organization's discipline and complaints policy (or its equivalent).<sup>1108</sup>

For example, Hockey Canada's Maltreatment Complaint Management Policy (2023) recognized the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner's jurisdiction over complaints involving the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport that occurred after Hockey Canada became a signatory<sup>1109</sup> on October 27, 2022.<sup>1110</sup>

The policy further spells out how the Independent Third Party, namely Sport Complaints,<sup>1111</sup> would be responsible for administering all complaints,<sup>1112</sup> including:

- accepting and screening the complaints
- determining jurisdiction over the complaints, and referring them to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner when applicable
- determining the procedure for each complaint
- selecting the adjudicative chair or adjudicative panel responsible for assessing whether a violation has occurred and what discipline would be appropriate, if any.<sup>1113</sup>

Once a decision is made by an Independent Third Party, any applicable sanction is generally implemented by the National Sport Organization.

We note that complaint mechanisms other than Independent Third Parties may also exist at the national level of sport. For instance, Athletics Canada has created its own independent office, the Athletics Canada Commissioner's Office, specifically to resolve complaints within its organization.<sup>1114</sup>

Certain National Sport Organizations that do not receive funding from Sport Canada and therefore are not required to adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program have also resorted to Independent Third-Party Mechanisms to address maltreatment in sport and other issues, as directed by their policies.<sup>1115</sup>

We also note that the policies of National Sport Organizations frequently provide the right to seek a review before the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada for any decision made by an Independent Third Party or another decision maker.<sup>1116</sup>

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON INDEPENDENT THIRD-PARTY MECHANISMS**

The complaint mechanisms in National Sport Organizations are complex and inconsistent because each organization follows its own set of rules and procedures. Nevertheless, it is common practice across the sport system to refer complaints to Independent Third Parties, whether agencies or individuals.

Most National Sport Organizations have an Independent Third Party. As we discuss in greater detail in what follows, provincial and territorial governments, as well as Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, also use Independent Third Parties. In fact, governments and sport organizations often resort to the same agencies, individuals, and law firms. The perspectives we describe on Independent Third-Party Mechanisms are general observations that apply not only at the national level but across all levels of the Canadian sport system.



Despite the widespread presence of Independent Third-Party Mechanisms in the sport system, many participants shared serious concerns about them. However, they also noted that without these entities, the sport system would face significant challenges because the former Abuse-Free Sport Program (and within its current reach, the Canadian Safe Sport Program) could not handle all the complaints alone.

### **Costs**

The sport community's heavy reliance on Independent Third Parties has led to the creation of what amounts to a new industry for lawyers and investigators. Some National Sport Organizations told us that it is expensive to hire Independent Third Parties to manage and investigate their complaints, creating additional financial burdens on organizations who are already struggling to make ends meet.

We were told that the annual costs for Independent Third-Party Mechanisms can be extremely high, sometimes reaching up to \$3.5 million per organization. As a result, National Sport Organizations are considering cutting programs and staffing to reduce their expenses.

### **Lack of oversight**

We heard that there is no oversight or licensing body for Independent Third Parties, and many expressed concerns about this lack of regulation. We heard serious questions raised about whether Independent Third-Party staff have the requisite experience and knowledge to administer safe-sport complaints. We were told that many investigators working for Independent Third Parties often lack the required expertise to deal with complex and sensitive issues, such as cases of maltreatment involving children. Some observed that Third-Party investigators have an insufficient understanding of the sport environment and the significant power imbalances found within it.

There are currently no mandatory qualifications or certifications to legitimize or authorize an Independent Third Party within the sport system. Many participants agreed that specific training and standards are needed for those who investigate maltreatment in sport.

### **Conflicts of interests**

Some participants expressed their distrust in the existing Independent Third-Party Mechanisms' independence given that these contractors are hired and paid by National Sport Organizations. This relationship between the contractors and the organizations that hire them causes a potential for conflicts of interest to exist — or at least the perception of such conflicts of interest. Participants worried that Independent Third Parties may be influenced to make determinations that are favourable to the organization that pays them. We heard the system described as “very incestuous.”

Other conflicts of interests were noted because Independent Third Parties are often hired by sport organizations to develop policies, then to investigate and render decisions in accordance with those very same policies. These Independent Third Parties sometimes also provide other services for the organization.

Participants argued that Safe Sport Officers (often understood to be the Independent Third Parties) within National Sport Organizations should primarily focus on promoting safe sport practices and providing education. They should not be involved in receiving or managing complaints because of the potential conflict of interest inherent in assigning a Safe Sport Officer to handle reports of misconduct. Given that these officers may have existing relationships or affiliations with the parties involved — the complainant, respondent, or others — there is a significant risk, or at least a perception, of bias.

### **Ineffectiveness**

While some participants reported positive experiences with Independent Third Parties' processes, the majority of those who spoke to us did not. Some believed that Independent Third Parties are ineffective and that they do not lead to satisfactory complaint resolutions. We also heard that Independent Third Parties typically do not assist with prevention or education to ensure that maltreatment does not reoccur.

### **Independent Third-Party Mechanisms' complaint-management process**

Overall, we heard that the procedures of Independent Third Parties are inconsistent and complicated. Part of the confusion stems from the fact that there are different Independent Third-Party agencies who operate in different ways. The lack of consistency in their procedures is a source of confusion for many.

### **Clarity and communication**

The Independent Third-Party process was frequently described as unclear, unpredictable, complicated, and obscure. Many Independent Third Parties have case managers who act as intermediaries between the parties and the investigators or decision makers. These case managers can answer procedural questions and mitigate potential conflicts of interests. Adjudicators and legal professionals highlighted the importance of this role, especially when parties are self-represented. Nevertheless, we heard that some case managers were unresponsive and too slow to answer questions. This underlines the need for better communication with the parties.

### **Timeliness**

We were advised that the Independent Third-Party processes are generally lengthy and frequently delayed. The process was described to us as “never ending” and we were told that timelines were not being imposed or enforced.

We also heard that the appeal process before the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada takes too long. Participants recounted instances where the right to appeal a decision was granted months after the deadline to do so had expired.

### **Procedural fairness**

Participants were concerned about a lack of due process within Independent Third-Party Mechanisms. The policies that sport organizations adopt, which are intended to guide these mechanisms, are generally entirely inadequate to guarantee procedural fairness and ensure due process. In many cases, participants told us that there simply was no due process.

Some of the important concerns shared with us include:

- provisional measures that are imposed on respondents without providing them with an opportunity to make submissions
- problems with the inconsistent interpretation and application of policies
- bias of investigators and decision makers
- long hearing days
- investigation reports that are factually deficient
- investigation notes and reports that are not disclosed to the parties
- issues of procedural fairness, for example, witnesses not being shown a transcript ahead of time.

### **Support and legal services**

Complainants and respondents both called for better support services during Independent Third-Party processes. They described difficulties in finding legal representation. Many were resigned to going through the process without any legal assistance because retaining legal counsel is too expensive.

The limited number of lawyers willing to handle long and complex cases pro bono (free of charge) was identified as an issue. We were advised that some National Sport Organizations provide financial support for the complainant's legal fees but offered no such support to respondents (who may be their coaches, officials, staff, or athletes).

### **Interference with criminal investigations**

We heard that some Independent Third Parties investigate complaints even while a criminal investigation is ongoing, without seeming to understand that this could interfere with the conduct of the criminal case.

For this reason, it was suggested that there should be a duty to report allegations of a criminal nature to the police, and that any administrative investigations should be suspended until a criminal investigation is completed.

### **Enforcement of sanctions**

There were concerns that no one, including the National Sport Organizations, is monitoring the enforcement of sanctions imposed by Independent Third Parties. Participants felt that there is a general lack of accountability or transparency about whether sport organizations enforce sanctions.

We heard of numerous situations where coaches and other individuals continue to work and volunteer in sport despite being actively suspended. This highlights the lack of monitoring to ensure sport organizations are enforcing sanctions.

### Confidentiality

Participants expressed concerns about the confidentiality practices of Independent Third Parties. We heard of cases involving minors where the process was not kept confidential, despite promises that it would be. Privacy concerns were also raised about the storage of sensitive case information using unsecured cloud services such as OneDrive and SharePoint.

### Lack of cultural awareness

Participants from Indigenous communities were reluctant to use Independent Third-Party Mechanisms because they felt these mechanisms lack an Indigenous perspective. They felt it was inappropriate for a stranger to assess alleged incidents of maltreatment within their community.

In their view, it is crucial that culturally relevant policies and processes are in place for both investigations and resolutions. These should use Indigenous approaches to justice, including restorative justice models. We were advised that resolution processes must allow for culturally grounded healing and not involve only punitive measures. This will ensure that accountability is achieved through relationships, respect, and learning rather than just punishment. Finally, participants stressed that Independent Third Parties must be culturally trained and guided by Elders and community representatives.

## Provincial- and territorial-level complaint mechanisms

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation met in 2019 to endorse the Red Deer Declaration – For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport. They met again in August 2022, this time to discuss the next steps toward eliminating abuse, harassment, sexual violence, and discrimination in sport. They agreed to implement an Independent Third-Party Mechanism in their jurisdiction or to sign on to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner by 2023.<sup>1117</sup>

As of the date of drafting this report, some provinces and territories still have no formal and centralized complaint mechanism for addressing maltreatment in sport.

In jurisdictions where such systems do exist, they are generally administered by the province's federation of sport organizations (not the government) and they rely on Independent Third Parties who receive and adjudicate safe sport complaints emerging within Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that receive government funding.

Quebec is the only jurisdiction that has chosen to enact legislation to establish a centralized complaint mechanism. The *Act respecting safety in recreation and sport*<sup>1118</sup> requires the government to appoint a recreation and sports integrity ombudsman (the "Protecteur de l'intégrité"), who is responsible for receiving and investigating integrity matters in the province.

British Columbia is also in the process of developing an independent complaint mechanism that will be operated by a not-for-profit organization, similar to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's model.

A table summarizing the centralized safe sport complaint mechanisms in each Canadian province and territory can be found in Appendix 7.

### **QUEBEC, THE ONLY PROVINCE WITH A STATUTORY COMPLAINT MECHANISM (THE RECREATION AND SPORTS INTEGRITY OMBUDSMAN)**

Quebec is currently the only jurisdiction with a statutory safe sport framework. On February 6, 2024, the Government of Quebec introduced Bill 45 — *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*.<sup>1119</sup> It reinforces the measures for protecting the integrity of persons in recreation and sports and appoints the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman. Bill 45 received royal assent on June 7, 2024 and the provisions of the *Act respecting safety in recreation and sports*<sup>1120</sup> regarding the ombudsman came into force on June 7, 2025.<sup>1121</sup> We outline below the legislative framework developed by Quebec, which we believe offers a model that could be replicated in other provinces and territories.

The Act describes sport as “a physical activity engaged in at the beginner or expert level, for competition or recreation and involving a form of training, the observance of rules of practice, supervision, technical content or a period of practice.”<sup>1122</sup> It makes the ombudsman responsible for “receiving complaints in matters of integrity and for making recommendations in that regard, in particular to a sports federation, sports body or recreation body.”<sup>1123</sup>

The Act itself does not prohibit any behaviours, except that it prohibits reprisals against a person who, in good faith, makes a report or files a complaint; cooperates in the processing of a report or complaint; or accompanies a person who makes a report or files a complaint.<sup>1124</sup> It also prohibits reprisal against a person to dissuade them from making a report or filing a complaint, cooperating, or accompanying as we just described.<sup>1125</sup>

#### **Prohibited behaviours**

As we discuss in Chapter 9, the Minister of Sports, Recreation and the Outdoors can, according to section 21 of the Act, establish by regulation “standards for ensuring the safety and integrity of persons during the practice of a recreational activity or a sport; such standards may pertain, in particular, to behaviours that are prohibited”.<sup>1126</sup> In October 2025, the minister published the draft *Regulation to ensure the integrity of persons during the practice of a recreational activity or a sport* in the Gazette officielle du Québec.<sup>1127</sup> Section 3(1) of the draft regulation specifies that “every person must act in such a way so as not to compromise the physical or psychological integrity of another person by showing respect, courtesy and moderation, and by striving to create and maintain an environment that is conducive to the practice of a recreational activity or a sport in a healthy and safe environment.”<sup>1128</sup>



Section 3(2) spells out what that means. In other words, a person is likely to compromise the integrity of another person when they:

- compel another person to commit an act against their will
- use their influence or authority to incite another person to engage in a practice or perform an act that constitutes a risk to their health
- organize or tolerate the organization of initiation or another activity involving degrading, humiliating or dangerous acts
- inflict bodily injuries on another person
- ridicule, humiliate, or disparage another person
- use language or perform acts that are abusive, offensive, or threatening toward another person
- express excessive frustration or anger or display excessive aggression toward another person
- have interactions with another person that are incompatible with the nature of their relationship or exceed its appropriate boundaries
- show negligence or carelessness in carrying out their responsibilities for another person or during the practice of a recreational activity or a sport
- subject another person to unfair treatment
- engage in a discriminatory behaviour or practice toward another person
- discourage another person from making a report or filing a complaint with the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman or other competent body.<sup>1129</sup>

### Who can file a complaint or a report

The Act requires the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman to “process any complaint filed by a person.”<sup>1130</sup> Aside from noting that a complaint or a report is filed by a “person,” the Act provides no further guidance on who can file a complaint or a report, or on the difference between a complaint and a report.

According to the ombudsman’s website, a complaint can be filed by “anyone, of any age, whose physical or psychological integrity has been harmed in the context of a recreational or sports activity.”<sup>1131</sup> It also indicates that a report can be filed by “anyone, of any age, who has witnessed harm being done to a person’s physical or psychological integrity in the context of a recreational or sports activity.”<sup>1132</sup>

### Who can be the subject of a complaint or a report

The Act authorizes the ombudsman to make recommendations to a “sports federation, sports body or recreation body.”<sup>1133</sup> It defines a “Sports body” as “a group of natural persons who are individual members of a federation, or a body, association, league or club formed to organize or practise a sport.”<sup>1134</sup>

This definition means that the Act applies to a broad range of organizations beyond just sport federations and organizations. It applies to all levels of sport and recreation (except for professional sports which are expressly excluded).<sup>1135</sup> According to its website, the ombudsman typically intervenes in cases of complaints or reports that concern recreation and sports federations and organizations, but it can also intervene in cases where the complaints or reports concern other organizations involved in the practice of sports and recreation. For example, other organizations listed on the website include:

- universities, CÉGEPs, and educational organizations
- municipalities
- transportation providers
- private companies offering recreational or sports activities.<sup>1136</sup>

While the Act does not establish which individuals can be the subject of a complaint, section 2 of the draft *Regulation to ensure the integrity of persons during the practice of a recreational activity or a sport* says that it applies to “every person involved in the practice of a recreational activity or a sport organized by a recreation body, sports body or sports federation, in particular the person practising a recreational activity or a sport, a parent of that person, a coach, monitor, instructor, activity leader, an official such as a referee or judge, a volunteer, spectator, or a manager or administrator of such a body or federation.”<sup>1137</sup>

### Basic requirements to examine a complaint or a report

According to the Act, the ombudsman can refuse to examine a complaint or report — or stop reviewing it — if it is “frivolous, vexatious or made in bad faith.”<sup>1138</sup> The ombudsman can also refuse or cease to examine a complaint or a report if:

- the complainant refuses or neglects to provide information that the ombudsman considers relevant
- the ombudsman has reasons to believe that its intervention would serve no purpose
- the time lapsed between the facts that the complaint is based on and the receipt of the complaint makes it impossible to examine the complaint.<sup>1139</sup>

### Complaint-processing procedure

The Ombudsman’s complaint process under the Act can be summarized like this:

- The ombudsman receives a complaint in writing.<sup>1140</sup>
- The ombudsman examines the complaint within 45 days of receiving it.<sup>1141</sup> In the context of the examination:

- The ombudsman must inform the concerned sport federation, sports body, or recreation body and send them the content of the complaint, unless doing so could impede the investigation.<sup>1142</sup>
- The ombudsman must give the complainant and the person directly concerned by the complaint the opportunity to be heard.<sup>1143</sup>
- If the ombudsman considers it appropriate, and if the complainant and other parties consent to it in writing, the ombudsman may meet with them to attempt to bring the parties to an agreement.<sup>1144</sup> The complaint process is suspended for the duration of this process.
- The ombudsman may conduct an investigation or entrust it to a person they designate.<sup>1145</sup>

To conduct investigations, the ombudsman and other authorized persons are granted the powers and immunity of commissioners appointed under the *Act respecting public inquiry commissions*<sup>1146</sup> to conduct an inquiry, except the power to order imprisonment.<sup>1147</sup> These include the power to subpoena anyone who has information needed for the investigation, the power to take evidence under oath or affirmation, and the power to demand that parties provide documents.<sup>1148</sup> Finally, any person who hinders an investigation is liable to fines of \$500 to \$5,000 in the case of a person, and \$1,000 to \$10,000 for organizations.<sup>1149</sup>

In addition to receiving complaints, the ombudsman receives reports from witnesses and can commence action on his own initiative.<sup>1150</sup> The ombudsman does so following the process described earlier and can make any necessary modifications.<sup>1151</sup>

The Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports can make regulations detailing the procedures for filing complaints with the ombudsman.<sup>1152</sup> At the time of writing this report, no such regulations have been published.

### **Ombudsman's conclusions and recommendations**

Within 45 days of receiving a complaint, the ombudsman must determine their conclusions and, if applicable, their recommendations to make to the sports federation, sports body, or recreation body.<sup>1153</sup> After sending their conclusions and recommendations to the appropriate body, the ombudsman may send them to the person directly concerned by the complaint and to the complainant.<sup>1154</sup>

Within 15 days of receiving conclusions or recommendations, the sports federation, sports body, or recreation body must inform the complainant and the ombudsman in writing of what action it intends to take on those recommendations or conclusions or, if applicable, the grounds for refusing to take action.<sup>1155</sup>

If the sports federation, sports body, or recreation body does not act on the recommendation or implement another appropriate measure, the ombudsman must send their findings and recommendations — along with the federation or body's reasons for not acting — to the Minister responsible for Sports, Recreation and the Outdoors. If the sport is target shooting,<sup>1156</sup> the information must be sent to the Minister for Public Security.<sup>1157</sup>

**Order by the minister**

If the minister considers it is necessary to protect people's integrity, they can require the federation or body to take specific actions as directed.<sup>1158</sup> The Act does not provide further detail on this process, including whether anyone can send comments or arguments to the minister. The Act also does not specify the types of measures that the minister can order.

According to section 60 of the Act, any person who refuses to obey an order from the minister “is liable to a fine of \$1,000 to \$10,000 in the case of a natural person and \$2,000 to \$20,000 in any other case.”<sup>1159</sup>

**PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES WITH A CENTRALIZED COMPLAINT MECHANISM**

The most common centralized complaint mechanisms identified at the provincial and territorial level are Independent Third-Party Mechanisms which, as we noted before, are external individuals, agencies, or law firms mandated to independently administer reports of safe sport policy violations and to conduct investigations.

In some cases, governments have delegated the responsibility of creating a centralized safe sport complaint mechanism to their provincial or territorial Multisport Service Organization (also referred to as provincial or territorial sport federations). In turn, these federations have contracted Independent Third-Party agencies. See Table 10.1 below which identifies provincial and territorial governments that contracted an Independent Third-Party agency to handle safe sport complaints within government funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

Table 10.1 Provincial and territorial governments that have contracted an Independent Third Party to handle safe sport complaints

| Provincial and territorial governments | Provincial and Territorial Multisport Service Organizations | Independent Third Parties      |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| New Brunswick                          | Sport NB                                                    | ITP Sport <sup>1160</sup>      |
| Newfoundland and Labrador              | Sport NL                                                    | ITP Sport <sup>1161</sup>      |
| Saskatchewan                           | Sask Sport                                                  | ITP Sport <sup>1162</sup>      |
| Nova Scotia                            | Sport Nova Scotia                                           | Alias Solution <sup>1163</sup> |
| Nunavut                                | NU Sport Federation                                         | Unknown <sup>1164</sup>        |

For example, Nunavut, through NU Sport Federation, has recently implemented its Sport Integrity and Complaints Policy applicable to all its members (the Territorial Sport Organizations).<sup>1165</sup> The policy gives the intake officer of NU Sport Federation the authority to determine whether a complaint falls within the policy's jurisdiction and, if so, how it should be handled.<sup>1166</sup> If a complaint relates to a violation of NU Sport's Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy, then the intake officer will appoint a dispute resolution officer to hear and adjudicate the complaint.<sup>1167</sup> If the complaint instead relates to fair play, the intake officer will notify the Territorial Sport Organization, which will appoint a fair play chair<sup>1168</sup> who will then hear and adjudicate the complaint.<sup>1169</sup>

Whenever the intake officer accepts a complaint, they also determine whether the incident(s) should be investigated.<sup>1170</sup> If it goes forward, the investigation follows the procedure set out in Appendix A of the Sport Integrity and Complaints Policy.

We note that access to these provincial and territorial Independent Third-Party Mechanisms is limited to individuals who are registered with sport organizations. In addition, these sport organizations must be members of a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization that holds membership in these federations. As a result, individuals registered with sport organizations who are not members of a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization, or are members of a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization that is not recognized or funded by the province or territory will not fall under the jurisdiction of these mechanisms.

### **PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES WITHOUT A CENTRALIZED COMPLAINT MECHANISM**

There are currently no centralized complaint mechanisms for maltreatment in sport in Ontario, Yukon, Prince Edward Island, Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Manitoba and British Columbia.

Because there are currently no centralized complaint mechanisms in these provinces and territories, the sport organizations where complaints originate are responsible for handling them according to their own internal procedures (if such procedures exist). As a result, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations often choose to work with Independent Third-Party Mechanisms.

That said, we were informed that the following provinces and territories are currently setting up Independent Third-Party Mechanisms to act as their provincial or territorial centralized complaint mechanism:

- Prince Edward Island, through Sport PEI (with Alias Solutions as their Independent Third-Party Mechanism)
- Alberta, through the Alberta Sport Leadership Association (with Alias Solutions as their Independent Third-Party Mechanism)
- Northwest Territories, through Sport North (with Alias Solution as their Independent Third-Party Mechanism)
- Manitoba, through Sport Manitoba (with ITP Sport as their Independent Third-Party Mechanism).



In addition, British Columbia, through viaSport (BC's Multisport Service Organization), has created Sport Safeguarding BC, an independent not-for-profit society tasked with establishing and maintaining a centralized complaint management system for amateur sport organizations in BC, similar to the Canadian Safe Sport Program's model.<sup>1171</sup> Sport Safeguarding BC was formed in July 2025, but it has not started operations as of the date of drafting this report. Its services will initially be available to members of sport organizations designated by viaSport and will cover both local and provincial level sport within these organizations.<sup>1172</sup>

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COMPLAINT MECHANISMS**

### **The former Abuse-Free Sport Program**

We heard that some provincial and territorial governments considered becoming signatories to the former Abuse-Free Sport Program but there were several factors that made adopting this program difficult, if not impossible, at the provincial and territorial level. One of the most common factors we heard about was cost. Many felt that the former Abuse-Free Sport program was too expensive.

Some representatives from provinces and territories felt that the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, which underpinned the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, was designed for only National Sport Organizations and national team athletes. They believed that the language used in the Universal Code of Conduct was not well adapted to the provincial and territorial and grassroots levels of sport.

They also considered the requirement to track all participants' consent forms as administratively burdensome and too complex. The level of tracking required to ensure informed, expressed consent was beyond the capacity of many Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner needed a separate consent form to be read and signed by each sport participant, and they would not accept a "check the box" option applied during registration for sport participation.

To further complicate matters, some Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations still track their registrations manually on paper or using spreadsheets and may not even be aware of all the coaches and officials operating in their sport.

A further consideration for some provinces was that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner did not differentiate between allegations made against youths and against adults. This was inconsistent with approaches that emphasize restorative processes for minors.

### **Provincial and territorial complaint mechanisms**

Several provinces and territories have set up their own centralized complaint systems. We heard of different reasons for this choice, including wanting to reduce the number of complaint mechanisms in the province or territory. Otherwise, each Provincial Sport Organization would have its own complaint system.

The rationale that governments provided for establishing independent complaint mechanisms was to standardize the procedures and limit the variety of mechanisms across the sport system. In some jurisdictions, these mechanisms are intended to be "a one-stop shop" for complaints arising within Provincial and Territorial Sport

Organizations. Government officials stated that there was support for such a centralized complaint mechanism. In some cases, they said that sport organizations were “eager” to have access to a centralized system for dealing with complaints. These centralized mechanisms remove complex responsibilities from a resource-strapped sector, largely reliant on volunteers who are exhausted and reluctant to address significant and often unfamiliar issues like managing safe sport cases.

Independent complaint mechanisms at the provincial and territorial level operate on an implied-consent basis, making awareness of the safe sport policies and the complaint processes extremely important. With greater awareness, however, comes an increased use of the independent complaint mechanisms. Some provinces and territories managed this issue by providing additional funding for more resources, including staffing.

However, provincial and territorial complaint mechanisms have limited reach. Much like provincial and territorial safe sport policies, only government-funded sport organizations are required to adopt them. This means that several levels of sport fall outside the scope of the complaint mechanisms. These include community sport, private sport organizations, university and college sport, school sport, and professional sport. In some instances, cases involving parents and spectators also fall outside the system.

Some provinces and territories have established an electronic resource or helpline that gives access to information or can facilitate a referral to the appropriate complaint mechanism.

### **Independent Third Parties contracted by provincial and territorial governments**

The most common type of centralized complaint mechanism at the provincial and territorial level is the Independent Third-Party Mechanism. While third parties maintain administrative control over these mechanisms, governments retain some form of influence over them through the funding they provide to the provincial federation of sport organizations.

We heard that provincial and territorial governments and National Sport Organizations often hire the same agencies, individuals, and law firms to act as their Independent Third Party. (We summarized participants’ perspectives on Independent Third-Party Mechanisms earlier in this chapter.) However, we wish to add that, like National Sport Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations also face challenges with the costs of Independent Third Parties. We were informed that the cost for a single case handled by an Independent Third Party can range from \$10,000 to \$50,000, and that one case could bankrupt a Provincial and Territorial Sport Organization.

## **Local- and grassroots-level complaint mechanisms**

Many different complaint mechanisms operate at the local and grassroots level of sport. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, Quebec is the only jurisdiction with a statutory centralized complaint mechanism that operates at this level. Specifically, Quebec has appointed the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman who is empowered to hear complaints from all levels of sport, including those that arise at the local and grassroots level.<sup>1173</sup>

As discussed earlier, the Independent Third Parties contracted by the provincial or territorial Multisport Service Organizations of New Brunswick,<sup>1174</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador,<sup>1175</sup> Saskatchewan,<sup>1176</sup> Nova Scotia<sup>1177</sup> and Nunavut<sup>1178</sup> have limited reach at the local level. Their jurisdiction is limited to individuals registered with sport organizations who are members of a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization that holds membership in the provincial or territorial Multisport Service Organization. Otherwise, there is currently no centralized complaint mechanism available to clubs, community associations, or other organizations at the grassroots level of sport.

In some cases, local-level sport organizations may be required to refer their complaints to the Independent Third-Party hired by the Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization they are affiliated with. Clubs, community associations, and organizations may also choose to create their own complaint mechanisms. Some of these organizations have hired Independent Third Parties. We further note that universities and colleges generally have complaint processes in place,<sup>1179</sup> and that these mechanisms are sometimes required by statute.<sup>1180</sup>

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON LOCAL AND GRASSROOTS COMPLAINT MECHANISMS**

We were informed that the vast majority of safe sport issues occur locally, which underscores the need for appropriate complaint mechanisms in such settings. Although some complaint mechanisms and reporting procedures exist at the grassroots level, they are not widely known or effectively publicized. There is little to no oversight of clubs and community associations, meaning that procedures may not be developed, followed, or enforced.

Grassroots organizations typically do not have the resources to administer complex complaint mechanisms. Their complaints are usually handled internally, and many participants emphasized that these organizations are primarily run by volunteers who have neither the expertise nor the experience for such tasks.

We heard numerous stories of safe-sport complaints that were mismanaged at the grassroots level. In some cases, victims and survivors told us that their complaints of abuse went unanswered or that they were not taken seriously by an organization's administrators, staff, or board of directors.

Participants also noted that universities, colleges, and schools were mostly outside of the jurisdiction of the national complaint mechanism (that is, the former Abuse-Free Sport Program). This created confusion when reporting maltreatment.

We were advised that a simple, one-stop, transparent, and consistent complaint process was needed for the grassroots level of sport. Such a process must ensure ease of communication, appropriate oversight, and procedures that are sensitive and trauma informed.

## Participants' perspectives on centralizing complaint mechanisms

The majority of participants asserted that safe-sport complaints cannot be handled internally by sport organizations or by Independent Third Parties who are hired by sport organizations. Throughout the Commission's work we heard that complaint mechanisms for safe sport need to be fully independent from sport organizations.

Participants suggested that the existing complaint mechanisms across the country need to be simplified and made consistent. They also requested new legislation to ensure safe sport requirements are uniform within jurisdictions.

On multiple occasions, we were told that the existing decentralized approach to complaint mechanisms for safe sport is not working. Participants explained that it is too complicated to navigate the complaint mechanisms, and that they do not know who has jurisdiction to hear safe-sport complaints. Some shared that they filed their complaints with multiple organizations at once because they did not know who could help them.

Many participants shared with us that they would like to see a unified, national complaint mechanism to administer a common set of rules with the ability to hear complaints from all levels of sport. They advised that the complaint process needs to be simple and clear.

This sentiment was echoed by numerous smaller sport organizations who generally depend on volunteers and do not have the resources or the support to manage complaints internally.

Some participants expressed the opinion that a complaint mechanism with a single point of access where anyone could file a complaint was desirable. We also heard that there needs to be a uniform approach to sanctions, given that sanctions are not applied consistently.

Many provincial and territorial governments were open to the idea of a national complaint mechanism. They acknowledged that all governments have the same goal of creating a safe sport environment for all. They also noted that a national complaint mechanism would create alignment across Canada, which was particularly important for tracking and monitoring the prevalence of maltreatment, as well as measuring and identifying trends. It would also ensure that sanctions are applied consistently across jurisdictions.

Other governments viewed a unified complaint mechanism as idealistic. While they generally recognized a need for national oversight, government representatives and other participants emphasized the importance of regional and local input and representation. They also noted a need for flexibility to allow provinces and territories to determine how to implement agreed-upon general principles within their own jurisdictions.

Both advantages and disadvantages were raised regarding local-level participants using a national complaint mechanism. Some participants believed that a national system would provide increased anonymity and confidentiality in small communities. However, others were of the view that a lack of trust in this level of

hierarchy, or the distance to a national service, could constitute a barrier to reporting. During our engagements some participants commented on the reach of the Canadian Anti-Doping Program as a model, noting that anti-doping issues are referred to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. They wondered if the Canadian Safe Sport Program could be similarly expanded to have a larger scope of application.

While the Canadian Anti-Doping Program rules do allow for National, Provincial, and Territorial Sport Organizations to adhere to the program, we were informed that funding limitations posed a challenge. The funding provided to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to administer the Canadian Anti-Doping Program permits its implementation in a broad, meaningful, and effective manner at only the national and international levels of sport.

Finally, some participants questioned why safe sport disputes were not being referred to existing systems, like the criminal justice system, occupational health and safety tribunals, and human rights tribunals. Others viewed these systems as working alongside but separate from safe sport complaint mechanisms. These parallel systems have different outcomes. For example, the criminal justice system imposes penal sanctions, while safe sport complaint mechanisms offer administrative responses that range from an apology to a permanent ineligibility to participate in any sport in any capacity.

## Public online survey conducted as part of the Commission's activities

The Commission's public online survey was designed to collect data across several key areas, including complaint mechanisms and other safe sport topics. The following results reflect the views of respondents who answered questions about improving safe sport in Canada.

The survey results revealed that 22.0% of the survey participants who reported participating in organized sport indicated having personally experienced maltreatment in the past ten years — 50.3% reported that they had witnessed it.

### **BARRIERS TO REPORTING MALTREATMENT**

When asked whether they had reported maltreatment, fewer than half (47.1%) of organized sport survey participants who experienced or witnessed maltreatment indicated having filed a complaint as a result of the most recent incident. This can indicate the prevalence of a culture of silence and other barriers to reporting maltreatment in sport.

### **COMPLAINANTS' EXPERIENCE**

Respondents who were organized sport participants that experienced or witnessed maltreatment in sport in the past ten years were asked who they made their complaint to. We learned that they were most likely to make complaints to a board member (41.5%), their organization's safe sport or harassment officer (38.9%), or another staff member in their sport organization (38.1%). Only 5.9% made a complaint to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. Notably, only 3.2% made a complaint with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. This low figure



is likely due to the organization's recent launch of the Canadian Safe Sport Program in April 2025, which was two months prior to the start of the survey. Due to the small sample size for this category, disaggregated results regarding the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport are not included in this report.

The survey results also reveal that more than half of those survey respondents who reported an incident (54.3%) noted that they submitted their complaint to more than one person or entity. These results align with what the Commission learned during its engagement process about the confusion caused by the current decentralized approach to complaint mechanisms across the country and various levels of sport. It also speaks to the need for a harmonized and streamlined approach to safe sport.

### **COMPLAINANTS' DEGREE OF SATISFACTION**

Organized-sport survey participants who reported having filed a complaint were then asked to rate their satisfaction with how their complaint was handled. In cases where they had made complaints to multiple people or organizations, they had the possibility to rate their experience with each. The results show that the majority of respondents who complained to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (68.6%) reported being dissatisfied with this national-level complaint mechanisms.

Of respondents who had filed a complaint to the Independent Third Party hired by their sport organization, 39.8% reported being dissatisfied with the complaint process.

Because we wanted to understand why complainants were dissatisfied with the complaint process, those who reported being partially satisfied or not satisfied were then asked to select among multiple reasons. Here are their most frequently chosen reasons related to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and Independent Third Parties:

- Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner
  - 72.7% indicated that their complaint did not lead to any meaningful change
  - 69.7% indicated that the process took too long
  - 51.5% indicated that the process was difficult to understand
  - 51.5% indicated that they were not kept informed about the status or outcome of their complaint.
- Independent Third-Party Mechanisms hired by a sport organization
  - 60.2% indicated that their complaint did not lead to any meaningful change
  - 54.2% indicated that the process took too long
  - 33.7% had concerns that the person handling their complaint lacked neutrality or expertise.

The numbers outlined here align with participants' perspectives from the Commission's engagement process and highlight the need for improved timeliness, clarity, transparency, support, independence, and expertise in complaint-management processes.

### **RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE**

Organized-sport survey participants were asked if they had been the subject of a complaint about maltreatment, and 5.2% indicated that they had. They were then asked who handled the most recent complaint against them. Results show that complaints were most frequently handled by their sport organization's Independent Third-Party Mechanism (28.6%), a board member (27.7%), or their sport organization's safe sport or harassment officer (26.8%).

Among organized-sport survey participants who reported having been the subject of a complaint, 13.4% indicated that it was handled by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, and 3.6% reported that it was managed by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. Again, this could be explained by the fact that the Centre began administering the Canadian Safe Sport Program in April 2025.

Results showed that 29.5% of organized-sport survey participants who were the subject of a complaint about maltreatment indicated that the complaint against them was handled by more than one person or entity. In other words, the same complaint was simultaneously filed with various entities or persons. These results again highlight the need for a harmonized approach to responding to maltreatment in sport.

### **RESPONDENTS' DEGREE OF SATISFACTION**

Organized sport survey participants who reported having been the subject of a complaint were then asked to rate their satisfaction with how various entities handled the complaint against them. However, given the limited number of respondents that provided feedback for some of the entities that handled the complaints in the past ten years, certain results have sample sizes that are too low to be included in this report.

Nevertheless, we can report on the leading category for handling the complaint process among subjects of a complaint: the sport organization's Independent Third-Party Mechanism. Among respondents who were the subject of a complaint filed before the independent third party contracted by their sport organization, 53.3% indicated being dissatisfied with the complaint process. To understand why subjects of a complaint were dissatisfied with the complaint process, the survey then asked those who reported being partially satisfied or not satisfied to select among multiple reasons. Their most frequently chosen reasons, as they relate to Independent Third Parties, are as follows:

- 71.4% indicated that they felt the complaint was unfounded
- 61.9% indicated that the process took too long
- 57.1% indicated that they experienced other negative consequences that were not formal retaliation
- 52.4% indicated that they were not offered adequate support during the process.

### WHAT IS MISSING IN COMPLAINT-MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

The survey asked both complainants and subjects of complaints to identify qualities missing from complaint-management processes. Survey respondents could select multiple responses, which were not linked to any specific complaint mechanism. Results show that more than half of surveyed complainants and subjects of a complaint felt that the following qualities were lacking from complaint processes (the first numbers represent complainants, the second are subjects of a complaint views):

- clear procedures (58.8% and 50.7%)
- fairness (53.7% and 54.9%)
- transparency (54.2% and 56.3%)
- timeliness (53.4% and 63.4%).

Based on the survey results, both complainants and subjects of a complaint generally agree on the shortcomings of complaint-management processes.

Surveyed subjects of a complaint also identified due process (54.9%) and support (49.3%) as qualities that were lacking from complaint processes. As for surveyed complainants, more than half (53.1%) felt that inconsistent sanctions were an issue.

### THE LARGER SPORT COMMUNITY'S VIEWS OF THE OFFICE OF THE SPORT INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

Finally, the survey asked all respondents familiar with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner to share their views about its process. For respondents who indicated that, to the best of their knowledge, the complaint mechanism administered by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner was not effective in addressing complaints about maltreatment, the results are as follows:

- 67.3% reported that it lacked timeliness
- 52.1% reported that it lacked clear procedures
- 43.9% reported that it lacked transparency
- 37.7% reported that it lacked support.

The shortcomings specific to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (which ceased its operations on April 1, 2025), including a lack of timeliness, of clear procedures, of transparency and of support, align with those identified by complainants and subjects of complaints across all complaint-management processes in the Commission's public online survey.

## How do other countries approach safe sport?

Like Canada, many countries have thoroughly examined the policies and procedures for handling complaints of maltreatment in sport. Their extensive studies were driven by high-profile cases of athlete abuse,<sup>1181</sup> as well as cases of child abuse and maltreatment in institutional settings.<sup>1182</sup> This led to major reforms related to governance and substantial improvements in safe sport initiatives.

During the Commission's activities, several countries were highlighted as potential models for their approach to safe sport, including Australia, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. While we recognize the importance of the reforms undertaken in other jurisdictions and the valuable lessons that can be learned from them, we focused our attention on these three countries first because our research revealed that each had recently undertaken extensive study and reform. They were also the jurisdictions that participants in our engagement process most frequently identified as relevant international comparators. We deliberately chose not to include the United States, given the scale of privatization and the dominance of professional leagues in its sport system.

The Commission recognizes that Canada's specificities such as its constitution and geographic footprint must be taken into account when considering best practices from other countries.

### AUSTRALIA

As we discuss in Chapter 12, Australia, like Canada, is a federal state. It is composed of six states and two major territories. Powers are divided between the central federal government and regional governments in the states and territories.

Reforms to the Australian Sport system were driven by two major inquiries: the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Review of Australia's Sports Integrity Arrangements (the "Wood Review").

Volume 14 of the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse specifically examined sport and recreation institutions and made four recommendations:<sup>1183</sup>

- that all sport and recreation institutions that provide services to or for children implement the Commission's Child Safe Standards
- that the National Office for Child Safety create a child safety advisory committee for sport and recreation, with members of government and non-governmental organizations
- that Play by the Rules be expanded and funded to develop resources for sport and recreation sector<sup>1184</sup>
- that oversight bodies responsible for implementing the Child Safe Standards share information with the sport and recreation sector via email.

The Wood Review was commissioned by the Government of Australia as a response to major doping scandals, convictions for match-fixing in several sports, and increased international pressures related to integrity threats.<sup>1185</sup> The Final Report contained 52 recommendations, including the creation of a national sports integrity commission for the purpose of regulation, monitoring, policy, and program delivery.<sup>1186</sup>

Three years after the release of the Wood Review's report, Netflix released "Athlete A," a documentary detailing the abuse of athletes by USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar. After watching this documentary, former athletes and parents of athletes in Australia came forward with maltreatment stories via social media.<sup>1187</sup> This led Gymnastics Australia to request an independent review of the culture of gymnastics at all levels of the sport. That report made 12 recommendations, including that Gymnastics Australia adopt the National Integrity Framework and its related policies and complaints procedures.<sup>1188</sup>

### The National Integrity Framework

Launched in 2021, the National Integrity Framework is a set of rules pertaining to behaviour and conduct in sport.<sup>1189</sup> These rules are outlined in four policies:

- the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- the Member Protection Policy
- the Competition Manipulation and Sports Gambling Policy
- the Improper Use of Drugs and Medicine Policy.

Through a fifth policy, the Complaints, Dispute and Discipline Policy, the National Integrity Framework also lays out the processes to be followed for addressing allegations related to a breach of those rules.<sup>1190</sup>

The National Integrity Framework was developed by Sport Integrity Australia in consultation with sport organizations.<sup>1191</sup> It is a framework that National Sporting Organizations, National Sporting Organizations for People with Disability, and other approved Sporting Administration Bodies can adopt on a voluntary basis.<sup>1192</sup> The Australian Sports Commission however requires national-level sporting organizations to adopt agreed policies to receive funding. Complaints related to the National Integrity Framework are handled either by Sport Integrity Australia or by the sport organization.<sup>1193</sup> For sporting organizations that do not adopt the National Integrity Framework, Sport Integrity Australia reviews their policies to ensure consistency within the sport system.

### Sport Integrity Australia

Created under the *Sport Integrity Australia Act (2020)*,<sup>1194</sup> Sport Integrity Australia was established to "prevent and address threats to sports integrity and to coordinate a national approach to matters relating to sports integrity in Australia."<sup>1195</sup> The legislation provides Sport Integrity Australia with oversight over the National Anti-Doping Scheme,<sup>1196</sup> match fixing,<sup>1197</sup> and other matters related to sports integrity.<sup>1198</sup> Under the Act, "threats to sports integrity" namely include "the abuse of children and other persons in a sporting environment" and "the failure to protect members of sporting organizations, and other persons in a sporting environment, from bullying, intimidation, discrimination or harassment."<sup>1199</sup>



While Sport Integrity Australia maintains operational independence, the Minister for Sport may provide direction to the organization's chief executive officer "in relation to the performance of his or her functions and the exercise of his or her powers."<sup>1200</sup> The Sport Integrity Australia Advisory Council oversees the chief executive officer and provides advice to them related to their functions and to the functions of Sport Integrity Australia.<sup>1201</sup> This advice is strictly strategic and cannot relate to any specific individual or case.<sup>1202</sup>

Sport Integrity Australia manages reports of doping in sport and certain types of National Integrity Framework breaches for participants of sports that have adopted the Framework.<sup>1203</sup> Specifically, Sport Integrity Australia manages matters relating to safeguarding children and young people and discrimination based on protected characteristics (such as race or nationality, disability, sex, sexual orientation, religion)<sup>1204</sup> from the national level to grassroots for sports that have adopted the framework. All other complaints under the National Integrity Framework are handled by the sport organization in accordance with the Complaints, Disputes and Discipline Policy that is part of the National Integrity Framework. Appendix 8 provides a table outlining examples of complaints handled by Sport Integrity Australia compared to those managed by sport organizations.

We understand that Sport Integrity Australia's authority in matters of child safeguarding and discrimination is derived from the Australian Government's adoption of international legal instruments, such as the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*.

Even in matters of child safeguarding and discrimination, Sport Integrity Australia's powers are limited to investigations and support. It has no ability to issue sanctions. Instead, this decision falls to the adopting sporting organization. Sport Integrity Australia however offers guidance to sporting organizations about sanctions.<sup>1205</sup>

### National Sports Tribunal

The National Sports Tribunal, established by the *National Sports Tribunal Act 2019*, offers independent and cost-effective resolution of sports disputes. It was created following a recommendation of the Wood Review to address integrity issues consistently across sports.<sup>1206</sup>

Specifically, the Tribunal "hears and resolves national-level sporting disputes in Australia."<sup>1207</sup> To facilitate efficient and cost-effective resolution for sporting bodies and their participants, the Tribunal offers a range of dispute resolution methods, including arbitration, mediation, conciliation, and case appraisal.<sup>1208</sup> The Tribunal addresses a broad spectrum of matters through three divisions: the Anti-Doping Division, the General Division, and the Appeals Division.<sup>1209</sup> The Anti-doping division deals with anti-doping rule violations while the General Division hears other disputes that arise under the rules of a sport. The Appeals Division handles appeals from decisions rendered by the first two divisions but also from decisions made by sport organizations.<sup>1210</sup> The Appeal Division of the National Sports Tribunal may hear appeals from a sport organization's decision on findings and sanction under the National Integrity Framework.

The leadership of the National Sports Tribunal comprises a Chief Executive Officer and a panel of Tribunal Members who are appointed by the Minister for Sport.<sup>1211</sup> Although it operates at arm's length from the government to maintain independence, the Tribunal is accountable to Parliament via the Minister for Sport. Furthermore, the Tribunal's operations are subject to oversight through auditing by the Auditor-General (as the Tribunal is a division within a Commonwealth Department), and its decisions remain subject to judicial review under public law principles.

## UNITED KINGDOM

As we discuss in Chapter 12, the United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy with an uncodified constitution. Power was historically centralized at Westminster, but since the late 1990s, a devolution process has transferred certain powers to the governments of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland through Acts of Parliament. Responsibility for sport in the United Kingdom is shared by several organizations. UK Sport oversees high-performance sport across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. In contrast, responsibility for physical activity and grassroots sport is divided up among the constituent countries of the United Kingdom and their respective sport organizations — England (Sport England), Northern Ireland (Sport Northern Ireland), Scotland (Sport Scotland), and Wales (Sport Wales).

Each of these constituent bodies has their own standards for safeguarding and protecting children and youth in sport.<sup>1212</sup> These standards are rooted in the legal principle of “duty of care.” This duty means that sports organizations and those in positions of authority have a responsibility to ensure reasonable measures are taken to ensure the safety of individuals participating in sport activities they provide or endorse.<sup>1213</sup>

## Sport Integrity

Following recommendations from the Whyte Review into allegations of mistreatment within gymnastics, UK Sport implemented a requirement that national sport organizations (referred to as national governing bodies) use Sport Integrity as a condition of funding.<sup>1214</sup> Launched in May 2022, Sport Integrity consists of an independent and confidential reporting hotline and an independent investigation process.<sup>1215</sup> It is operated by Sport Resolutions, an independent sport-specific dispute-resolution service, and supported by a charitable organization, Crimestoppers.<sup>1216</sup>

Sport Integrity processes and investigates allegations of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and abuse at the high-performance level. It does not deal with complaints related to anti-doping, gambling or match fixing, or issues related to team selection.<sup>1217</sup> Sport Integrity's services are available at no cost for athletes, athlete support personnel, and office holders participating in or operating Olympic and Paralympic programs funded by UK Sport.<sup>1218</sup>

### Grassroots level of sport

Whether a sport or activity is part of a national governing body has implications for grassroots and community sport. For local organizations affiliated with a national governing body, that body's safeguarding procedures will apply and there is usually a specific person identified to receive complaints.<sup>1219</sup> The Ann Craft Trust, another charitable organization, provides support to national sport organizations to implement best practices in safeguarding adults.<sup>1220</sup>

When local organizations are not affiliated with a national governing body, there are multiple potential paths for them to file a complaint. These include, but are not limited to, reporting directly to local staff, or speaking with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children — a child protection charity.

### IRELAND

Ireland frequently emerged as another model in our engagement process. We note, however, that Ireland is a parliamentary democracy and a unitary state. This means that, unlike Canada's federated model, the central government has full legislative powers and local governments play a very limited role.<sup>1221</sup>

#### Sport Ireland and the National Sports Policy

Sport Ireland serves as the national body tasked with overseeing the growth and promotion of sport across Ireland. It operates in alignment with the National Sports Policy 2018–2027, issued in 2018 by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.<sup>1222</sup> This policy outlines the country's strategic objectives for the next ten years and Sport Ireland had a lead role in addressing the operational and strategic challenges outlined in it.

In 2023, Sport Ireland released the Sport Ireland Strategy 2023–2027, which defines how Sport Ireland will implement and support the National Sports Policy. The strategy aims to achieve the following key objectives:

- Increase levels of participation in sport through innovative programs and initiatives, with a focus on diversity and inclusion.
- Actively support high-performance sport, athletes, and support staff to perform on the international stage.
- Encourage individuals to engage in long-term participation.
- Enhance the number and quality of coaches, officials, administrators, and volunteers involved in sport.
- Deliver crucial support services such as safeguarding and anti-doping to ensure ethical, safe, and fair play in sports.
- Continue to develop and improve the Sport Ireland Campus<sup>1223</sup> and sporting infrastructure across Ireland.<sup>1224</sup>

### **Sport organizations' obligations and the protection of children and youth**

In 2019, Sport Ireland introduced a guidance document called “The Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport.” This guidance aims to support National Governing Bodies of Sport and local clubs to ensure that they can meet their child safeguarding and child-protection responsibilities.<sup>1225</sup> To be recognized as a National Governing Body, and thus receive funding, these bodies must demonstrate to Sport Ireland that they comply with current legal obligations about safeguarding children and young people and implement best practices in this area in line with the Safeguarding Guidance.<sup>1226</sup>

At the local level, the Safeguarding Guidance asks that each organization or club ensure it has adequate disciplinary, complaints, and appeals procedures in place. Clubs are encouraged to adopt and disseminate a clear code of conduct reflecting child welfare values and addressing administrators, coaches, officials, players, and parents alike.<sup>1227</sup> Children’s officers should be appointed to review existing policies in relation to young people, check that all activities are safe and fun, and inform adults of how to deal with any concerns that may arise in relation to the protection of children and young people.<sup>1228</sup>

When a written complaint is received, either by the secretary or Club Children’s Officer, a disciplinary committee should be appointed to handle the matter. If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a crime, the committee must disband and refer the case to statutory authorities.<sup>1229</sup> Sanctions, if any, should be issued in writing with reasons provided, and if the member against whom the complaint was made is under 18 years of age, parents or carers must be informed. Following an appeals process, the matter may be escalated to the sport’s governing body, meaning its national organization.<sup>1230</sup>

Sport Ireland then requires National Governing Bodies of Sport to have an independent mechanism in place to resolve disputes arising in relation to a game or sport.<sup>1231</sup> For example, Athletics Ireland’s disciplinary process, provided in response to offences ranging from unsporting behaviour to bullying and discrimination, involves written notice of penalties, with the right to a hearing and appeal.<sup>1232</sup> Independent disciplinary and appeal committees assess breaches based on the balance of probabilities and can impose sanctions, including fines, suspension, or expulsion. Serious cases (e.g., criminal charges) can lead to immediate suspension and referral to the statutory authorities.<sup>1233</sup>

Sport Ireland requires sport organizations to include rules in their governing documents about using Sport Dispute Solutions Ireland (“SDSI”) for resolving disputes. This is a cost-effective not-for-profit dispute-resolution service for Irish Sport that offers mediation and arbitration in the case of sporting disputes, that is, issues arising around the governing body’s rule book.<sup>1234</sup>

Finally, each National Governing Body must appoint a National Children’s Officer to ensure children’s interests are prioritized. The officer supports safeguarding efforts, promotes child-friendly practices, coordinates training, monitors trends, and ensures that clubs follow appropriate child-protection policies and procedures.<sup>1235</sup>

While Sport Ireland released its Policy on Diversity and Inclusion in Sport in 2023, it neither recommended nor mandated a complaint mechanism, recognizing instead the capacity of National Governing Bodies and Local Sport Partnerships to deliver initiatives that impact diversity and inclusion in sport.<sup>1236</sup> Several National Governing Bodies have integrated discrimination complaints into their wider safeguarding complaints process.<sup>1237</sup>

### **TAKEAWAYS ON OTHER COUNTRIES' APPROACH**

Despite their best efforts, strong policies, and a willingness to create change, the countries we studied that were suggested to the Commission as models for their approach to safe sport still do not have a single point of entry for complaints or a truly unified approach to safe sport complaint management. We observed that countries have encountered jurisdictional issues that pose challenges to the creation of a universal code of conduct and a centralized complaint mechanism. Their efforts to create such a code or complaint mechanism have generally been limited to the national level or high-performance sport programs.

As an exception, Australia leveraged international legal instruments to reach grassroots sport. Their area of oversight was, however, limited to the subject of those legal instruments, notably child safeguarding and discrimination based on protected grounds.

In the absence of international instruments granting constitutional authority to the national government, centralized safe sport initiatives or systems are based on contractual agreements and often use funding as a tool of persuasion. Gaps and inconsistencies continue to exist in these systems.

As we saw, Canada is not alone in undertaking an extensive review of its sport system, especially when it comes to policies and procedures for handling complaints of maltreatment. The Commission heard about many reforms during its engagement process and met with international counterparts and experts to better understand the work that has been undertaken. The Commission is grateful for the candidness of these individuals and organizations. We recognize that it is by working together, and sharing information, best practices, and lessons learned, that the global sporting world can overcome these challenges. Just as it did with anti-doping following the Dubin Inquiry, Canada has an opportunity to be a leader for change and reform in the sporting world once again.

## **A coordinated pan-Canadian response to maltreatment in sport**

We cannot emphasize enough the urgent need for a stronger and more effective response to maltreatment in sport. Although some Canadian studies suggest that maltreatment is more prevalent at the national level,<sup>1238</sup> we heard loud and clear that it extends far beyond high-performance environments. Instances of maltreatment are widespread at all levels, from grassroots to high-performance sport. Efforts to strengthen our collective response must go beyond protecting high-performance athletes. They are essential for safeguarding the well-being of all individuals, especially children and youth who make up the largest group of sport participants in Canada. Everyone is responsible for ensuring safety in sport: governments, sport organizations, participants, and the community.



Federal, provincial, and territorial governments recognized the need to “take action to address significant concerns regarding the safety of participants at all levels.”<sup>1239</sup> They signed the Red Deer Declaration for the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport<sup>1240</sup> in 2019. In doing so, they committed to “prioritize collective action to address harassment, abuse and discrimination and unethical behaviour in sport, while respecting jurisdictional responsibilities.”<sup>1241</sup> The Ministers responsible for Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation agreed to work together to immediately “investigate a mechanism to report and monitor incidents of harassment, abuse and discrimination reported in sport environments in order to inform future decisions and initiatives.”<sup>1242</sup> This commitment led to the launch, in June 2022, of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program under the leadership of the Government of Canada.

At the 2022 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation, the Ministers agreed that they would “work towards establishing an independent third-party mechanism in their jurisdiction.” This included processes for reporting and resolving maltreatment allegations for sport organizations funded by a federal, provincial, or territorial government by 2023. Jurisdictions could use the former Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner as their independent third party, or another entity.<sup>1243</sup>

Four years after the 2022 Ministers Conference, we note that not all governments have implemented a third-party mechanism. More precisely:

- Quebec, which did not sign the Red Deer Declaration, appointed the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman.
- New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Nunavut have entered into a contract with an Independent Third-Party Mechanism.
- Prince Edward Island, Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and Manitoba are currently in the process of implementing Independent Third-Party Mechanisms.
- British Columbia is in the process of establishing Sport Safeguarding BC, an independent not-for-profit organization created to maintain a centralized complaint mechanism.
- Ontario and Yukon do not have a centralized provincial or territorial complaint mechanism.

In our Preliminary Report, we explained how our engagement process and independent review of current safe sport complaint mechanisms led to a clear conclusion: Canada needs greater uniformity and alignment across safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms. Canadians are calling for a more cohesive safe sport approach. It is essential that these mechanisms are accessible to sport participants at all levels of sport, including the local level where resources are often limited. It is crucial that governments work together to establish a centralized independent complaint mechanism in their respective jurisdictions. But they must also work together to achieve uniformity, alignment, and reach at all levels of sport. If anything, our initial conclusions have been further reinforced as a result of the engagement process that followed the release of our Preliminary Report.

## FEEDBACK ON THE FOUR FRAMEWORKS PROPOSED IN THE PRELIMINARY REPORT

We recognize the challenges involved in implementing consistent policies and complaint mechanisms that serve all levels of sport within Canada's federated model and the division of powers between two levels of government. Our efforts, in the first year of our mandate, therefore focused on independently researching, reflecting, and engaging on various intergovernmental collaboration models to achieve this goal.

In our Preliminary Report, we proposed four frameworks, three of which require collaboration between the two tiers of governments but ensure that all sport participants in Canada have a safe place to report maltreatment. In addition to presenting our vision for each model, we identified their potential advantages and disadvantages in light of the feedback and perspectives we gathered through the first phase of our engagement process.

After releasing our Preliminary Report, the Commission continued to gather feedback on the four proposed models. In what follows we briefly review the four models we introduced in our Preliminary Report. Then we outline the feedback that we received in the second phase of our engagement process. This includes the National Summit, the online submission portal, the online feedback form, and meetings with participants.

### Option 1: A national safe sport authority or tribunal

As a first option, the Commission proposed that the Government of Canada reach an agreement with the provincial and territorial governments for a collaborative framework. Both levels of government would enact safe sport legislation and empower a national safe sport authority or tribunal to administer federal, provincial, and territorial legislation. We suggested that such a cooperative framework would include:

- uniform provincial and territorial safe sport legislation applicable to sport participants and athletes involved in provincial and local level sport
- complementary federal safe sport legislation applicable to athletes involved in national and international level sport
- a single national safe sport authority or tribunal empowered by both orders of government to enforce the federal, provincial and territorial safe sport legislation
- a council of ministers comprising the ministers responsible for sport in each provincial and territorial participating jurisdiction and the federal minister responsible for sport to oversee the national authority or tribunal
- provincial and territorial registry offices in every participating jurisdiction providing a common range of services to sport participants and athletes.

This suggestion was informed by similar collaborative frameworks considered by federal, provincial, and territorial governments in the area of securities regulation<sup>1244</sup> and developed for environmental assessments.<sup>1245</sup>

### Option 1 — Participants' feedback

Most participants in our activities supported the idea of creating a national safe sport authority, empowered by both federal and provincial governments to enforce legislation. Many felt this model would streamline the response to maltreatment across the country and establish a consistent regulatory framework to enhance safety in Canadian sport. We also heard that a national authority could provide a safe space for reporting in smaller communities, where the close-knit nature of many such settings can serve to discourage individuals from coming forward. Participants also emphasized that a national authority would extend its protections to everyone involved in sport, not only high-performance athletes and participants. Sport organizations, who must currently maintain Independent Third-Party Mechanisms for reports falling outside of the scope of the Canadian Safe Sport Program, believed that a national authority could alleviate their burdens. They often feel unequipped and lack the necessary resources to address such matters.

Some participants spoke of the equal participation of provinces and territories with the Government of Canada that would be a hallmark of the creation of the national authority. They suggested that it should therefore be referred to as a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority, similar to the pan-Canadian securities regime.<sup>1246</sup> Participants also noted that a legislated model would grant the new authority power to compel evidence. It would guarantee the independence and expertise of adjudicators, increase procedural fairness, and allow for a judicial review process. It would also relieve sport organizations of the burden of collecting consent forms.

However, many participants who viewed the national authority positively were skeptical about its feasibility. They noted that such a model would require an unprecedented level of collaboration and agreement between the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories. We heard that implementing a national authority would take too long, and that the Commission ought not to let the pursuit of perfection get in the way of developing and introducing alternate, effective approaches. Participants were also worried that the high volume of reports that would flow to the authority would affect the timeliness and effectiveness of the process. They perceived the quasi-judicial process of a national authority, along with the possible judicial review process that might ensue, as too rigid for most types of reports. They also thought it would create the potential for a myriad of endless judicial proceedings.

Some saw the high cost of implementation as prohibitive. Others believed that the total cost would probably be the same or lower than implementing parallel safe sport complaint policies and mechanisms in all Canadian provinces and territories. A small number of participants expressed the concern that the national authority would not be sufficiently nimble to deal with reports from the community level. Many participants also noted that some provinces have already invested significant amounts of money in their Independent Third-Party Mechanism and that they are therefore unlikely to delegate their authority to a national authority.

Finally, some participants were of the view that Parliament lacks the constitutional authority to enact legislation regulating prohibited conduct in sport at the national and international levels or to establish a federal tribunal to enforce such legislation. However, they suggested that Parliament could, through federal legislation, create a safe

sport body (either as a not-for-profit organization or a crown corporation) to develop and administer a national safe sport complaint management system accessible to the sport community. Provinces and territories could then enact safe sport legislation applicable to participants at all levels of sport and delegate their authority to investigate and adjudicate complaints under that legislation to the federally established body.

### **Option 2: An Independent not-for-profit corporation as safe sport regulator**

As a second possibility, we proposed that the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments agree to delegate the administration and enforcement of a universal safe sport policy to a single independent not-for-profit corporation. More precisely, we suggested a collaborative framework in which:

- The Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments would make the necessary revisions to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport to ensure its applicability at all levels of sport.
- The Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments would assign the responsibility to administer and enforce the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport<sup>1247</sup> through the application of the Canadian Safe Sport Program.
- The Government of Canada would mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.
- The Government of Canada would mandate that all National Sport Organizations receiving federal funding modify their membership rules to require of their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that they adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.
- The provincial and territorial governments would mandate that all sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.
- The provincial and territorial governments would mandate that all Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding modify their membership rules to require of their member Community Sport Organizations that they adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

This model builds upon the vision behind the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. In theory, the program allowed provincial and territorial governments to opt in and use the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner as their Independent Third-Party Mechanism. However, by requiring government-funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to mandate that their members also adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program, this model expands its reach to include local-level sports. Given that provinces and territories did not participate in the former Abuse-Free Sport Program due to its prohibitive costs, we suggested that the Government of Canada should cover the expenses of the national program.

Under this framework, we recommended that Sport Canada should be responsible for the custody of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and for revising it. This would be until the Centralized Sport Entity is established, at which point the Universal Code of Conduct should be transferred to the new entity.

### **Option 2 — Participants' feedback**

This second approach did not generate as much enthusiasm as the creation of a national safe sport authority. Participants' main concern was that a model similar to Option 2, that is, the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, has proven unsuccessful. Other participants felt this approach was not different enough from the current contract-based model. In the current model, adjudicators of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport do not have investigative authority or immunities.

Some participants argued that the custody and responsibility to review the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport should not be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity or Sport Canada. Instead, it should stay with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, which is tasked with administering the Canadian Safe Sport Program. They feared that Sport Canada or the Centralized Sport Entity lack the expertise required to oversee the Universal Code of Conduct.

### **Option 3: Conditional financial contributions to provinces and territories**

As a third option, the Commission had suggested that the Government of Canada:

- maintain the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to independently administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport through the Canadian Safe Sport Program for participants in national and international level sport
- incentivize each province and territory with conditional financial contributions to establish a centralized complaint mechanism within their jurisdiction. This mechanism would meet the criteria defined by the Government of Canada and be responsible for administering and enforcing a universal safe sport policy applicable to participants of government-funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

This recommendation was informed by similar conditional financial contributions which were found to be constitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada in the area of health.<sup>1248</sup>

### **Option 3 — Participants' feedback**

While most participants viewed the national safe sport authority (Option 1) as the best approach in theory, they believed that the conditional financial contributions approach (Option 3) was the most realistic and feasible. Many participants thought highly of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's work with the Canadian Safe Sport Program. They especially praised the efficiency and timeliness of its report process. Participants suggested that this expertise at the national level could benefit provinces and territories in implementing their own complaint mechanisms.



Others felt that provincial and territorial mechanisms were essential to ensure responses to maltreatment in sport are tailored to the unique context of each region. They believed that this approach would maintain a connection to the community level. Participants also believed that this model would “distribute” reports across multiple complaint mechanisms (one national and several provincial and territorial) and therefore enhance the timeliness and efficiency of each in processing them.

Several provinces and territories have already engaged Independent Third Parties to process reports for their sport organizations.<sup>1249</sup> We were told that conditional financial contributions would enhance these existing models while ensuring commonalities in approach and processes. Finally, many participants at the National Summit organized by the Commission praised the Quebec recreation and sports integrity ombudsman model and considered it suitable for implementation in other provinces and territories. They highlighted that a key feature of the Quebec model is its applicability, through legislation, to all sport participants in the province. This includes the local and community level, and not just sport participants affiliated with government-funded sport organizations.

#### **Option 4: Federal safe sport legislation and tribunal**

Finally, the Commission suggested in its Preliminary Report that the Government of Canada consider:

- enacting legislation or regulations to address prohibited behaviours in national and international sports, similar to Quebec’s model
- creating a federal safe sport tribunal to enforce safe sport legislation or regulations.

The Commission recognized, however, that this fourth approach alone might not achieve the desired uniformity and reach.

#### **Option 4 — Participants’ feedback**

Participants almost unanimously rejected this fourth approach for the reasons we previously identified in the Preliminary Report. Namely they said it would not impact or improve provincial and territorial response to maltreatment in sport, nor would it reach the community level. Some participants suggested that a federal safe sport tribunal (Option 4), paired with conditional financial contributions to provinces and territories (Option 3) would likely achieve the desired objective. Others were of the view that Parliament did not have the constitutional authority to enact legislation regarding prohibited behaviours in national and international-level sport and establish a federal tribunal to enforce it.

#### **Provinces and territories’ feedback on the proposed models**

As part of the second phase of our engagement process, we met with provincial and territorial governments to gather their feedback on the four proposed approaches outlined here. Following the Red Deer Declaration, most provinces and territories have already implemented or are in the process of implementing their own Independent Third-Party Mechanism. For this reason and because of regional differences, the third approach was the preferred option (that is, the Government of Canada provides conditional financial contributions for provinces and territories to establish a centralized complaint mechanism meeting specific criteria).

Provinces and territories were largely in favour of supporting and strengthening the existing provincial and territorial systems with contributions conditional on a set of criteria. However, many told us that they were skeptical about the Government of Canada imposing criteria or standards because they had already invested significant time and money in developing and implementing an Independent Third-Party Mechanism in their jurisdiction. Many noted a strong preference that these criteria be developed collaboratively between both orders of government. They told us that they wanted to “have a voice” in developing the conditional financial contribution framework. They emphasized that this approach must be flexible to allow them to tailor their safe sport systems to the unique local challenges and needs of their communities. It should also be supportive of local autonomy and accountability. Others indicated that they would consider this approach only if it were limited to sport organizations that receive most of their funding from the federal government, and that federal contributions should not be subject to federal requirements or criteria.

Most provinces and territories were skeptical about a top-down pan-Canadian safe sport authority and did not want a model imposed on them. Some were concerned about a single authority being overwhelmed by large numbers of reports of maltreatment and other prohibited behaviours in sport. Others thought it would be difficult to enact provincial or territorial legislation granting a federal body authority to hear and adjudicate provincial, territorial, and local safe sport complaints. Most importantly, they feared undoing the progress that they had, in most cases, accomplished in their respective jurisdiction. Others indicated that they intend to retain their autonomy in areas under their jurisdiction and would not delegate their authority in this field to a pan-Canadian body.

Despite these concerns, many provinces and territories expressed interest in a possible hybrid model, which was not examined in our Preliminary Report. They suggested that this model would allow provincial and territorial complaint mechanisms to triage cases and delegate only the most significant maltreatment cases to a national adjudicating body whose costs would be assumed by the Government of Canada. The intent behind this proposed hybrid model was to ensure consistency in how the most egregious cases of abuse and maltreatment in sport were being handled.

## **CALLS TO ACTION: STRENGTHENING CANADA'S RESPONSE TO MALTREATMENT IN SPORT**

As the Commission noted in its Preliminary Report, a comprehensive response to maltreatment in sport requires implementing consistent policies and complaint mechanisms that are applicable and accessible to everyone at all levels of sport.

### **Improving the Universal Code of Conduct**

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport establishes a clear and consistent set of standards “to advance a respectful sport culture that delivers quality, inclusive, accessible, welcoming and safe sport experiences.”<sup>1250</sup> By defining harmful behaviours, it gives national-level sport organizations a unified foundation for promoting safety in sport. In our view, it is a powerful tool to not only respond to maltreatment

in sport but also to prevent it. It helps create a shared understanding of prohibited behaviours across the sport system and supports a culture that prioritizes athlete well-being and responsible conduct. Because it was initially drafted five years ago, we believe that the Universal Code of Conduct should be immediately updated and modernized to ensure it remains current, comprehensive, and responsive to the needs of Canadians. It should also reflect our country's values and best practices in addressing maltreatment. Additionally, we are of the view that a review exercise should be undertaken regularly — at least every two years — to ensure the Code reflects evidence-based best practices. The *Global Policy Standards for Inclusive, Equitable and Safe Sport and Physical Education*, discussed in Chapter 9 and scheduled to be presented for endorsement by UNESCO Member States at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport in 2027, should be taken into consideration when revising the Universal Code of Conduct.

In our Preliminary Report, we recommended that responsibilities for the Universal Code of Conduct, its modernization and periodic review be transferred from the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to Sport Canada until the Centralized Sport Entity is established, at which point they should be transferred to the new entity. We maintain that the roles of the author and administrator/adjudicator of the Universal Code of Conduct should remain separate. In our view, it is important for several reasons, including:

- ensuring that the application of the Universal Code of Conduct is unbiased and impartial
- providing a system of checks and balances preventing a single entity from having too much power over the creation and enforcement of the Universal Code of Conduct
- enhancing accountability; minimizing real or perceived conflicts of interest and ensuring that the Universal Code of Conduct is applied fairly and without undue influence from those who wrote it.

However, we recognize that no other entity currently has the necessary expertise and independence to assume custody of the Universal Code of Conduct. We therefore believe that, although not optimal, the custody and updating of the Code should remain with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport until the Centralized Sport Entity is established. However, it is crucial that the Centre implement safeguards to ensure a separation between the policy development and adjudicating roles. Failing to do so would risk recreating the issues that arose with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. That is, the commissioner's office was perceived to lack independence from the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, where it was housed. We also encourage the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to engage independent, external experts to facilitate updating the Universal Code of Conduct.

## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**13. The Government of Canada maintain the adoption of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as a condition of federal funding for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.**

**14. The Government of Canada designate, until the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 is established, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport as the custodian of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. The Centre will be responsible for reviewing the Code and ensuring that it remains current, comprehensive, and responsive to the needs of Canadians, and that it reflects best practices in addressing maltreatment. The Centre shall also consider the *Global Policy Standards for Inclusive, Equitable and Safe Sport and Physical Education* once they have been endorsed by UNESCO Member States.**

**15. The Government of Canada ensure that safeguards are in place to maintain a clear separation between the policy development and adjudication roles of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.**

**16. The Government of Canada transfer the custody and responsibility for revising the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

**17. The Government of Canada ensure that the custodian of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport undertakes a comprehensive review of the Code every second year.**

### Harmonizing safe sport standards across the sport system

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport is a policy, not legislation. It applies only to individuals who compete or are otherwise involved in national or international-level sport (including athletes, coaches, officials, staff, and team personnel) and who are affiliated with sport organizations that adopt it. While federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes are required to adopt the Universal Code of Conduct as a condition for receiving funding from Sport Canada, other sport organizations are under no obligation to do so.

In addition to the Universal Code of Conduct, most national-level sport organizations maintain their own safe sport policy or code of conduct, applicable to all individuals affiliated with their organization, including those who do not compete or are not otherwise involved in national or international-level sport.

At the provincial level, Quebec is currently the only jurisdiction with a statutory safe sport framework. The *Act respecting safety in sports*,<sup>1251</sup> recently amended by Bill 45 — *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*,<sup>1252</sup> appoints the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman. The ombudsman is responsible for “receiving complaints in matters of integrity and for making recommendations in that regard, in particular to a sports federation, sports body or recreation body.”<sup>1253</sup> The Act also empowers the Minister of Sports, Recreation and the Outdoors to establish by regulation “standards for ensuring the safety and integrity of persons during the practice of a recreational activity or a sport.”<sup>1254</sup> This includes standards pertaining to prohibited behaviours.<sup>1255</sup> In October 2025, the minister published the draft *Regulation to ensure the integrity of persons during the practice of a recreational activity or a sport*.<sup>1256</sup> To our knowledge, the Quebec model is the only one that is not limited to individuals affiliated with government-funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

British Columbia and Nunavut have implemented a mandatory universal safe sport policy (not legislation) applicable to government-funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations within their jurisdictions.<sup>1257</sup>

Most provinces and territories require that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations adopt a safe sport policy or code of conduct of their choice, as a condition of funding. This means that each organization has a different policy. Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations may also need to adopt the safe sport policy of the National Sport Organization overseeing their sport, with the potential for further confusion or inconsistency.

At the community level, except in Quebec, there is generally no obligation to adopt a safe sport policy or code of conduct. These policies are required only when mandated by their governing body, a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization, or as a condition of government funding.

The current framework places the burden of policy development on sport organizations, which often lack the expertise and capacity to draft effective safe sport policies. The current situation also leads to a misalignment between safe sport policies with similar objectives across different levels of sport, provinces, and territories.



The Commission's call for harmonized safe sport standards has been raised by others before us. In its report entitled "Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating A Safe Sport Environment for all Athletes in Canada"<sup>1258</sup>, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women indicates:

"Witnesses also indicated that harmonized rules around maltreatment in sports are needed in Canada. The whole sports system must be involved in ensuring safe sport. The UCCMS [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport] 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." 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. 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. The Committee was also told that all sports organizations in Canada should adopt and enforce the UCCMS. However, the Government of Canada only has the capacity to enforce the UCCMS at the federal level, which is currently done by requiring sports organizations to integrate the UCCMS in their organizational policies and procedures in order to receive funding from Sport Canada."<sup>1259</sup>

We believe that the Government of Canada should mandate, as an additional condition of federal funding, that national-level sport organizations develop and adopt a safe sport policy or code of conduct that mirrors the prohibited behaviours and the list of sanctions in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. This would alleviate the burden on sport organizations, ensure safe sport policies are grounded in expertise, and maintain consistency in safe sport standards (including prohibited behaviours and sanctions). It would also ensure that the same safe sport standards apply to all individuals affiliated with the national-level sport organization, regardless of their involvement with national or international teams or sporting events.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**18. The Government of Canada mandate, as a condition of federal funding for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and institutes, that they adopt a safe sport policy or code of conduct that includes safe sport standards consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.**

### **Aligning enforcement of safe sport standards across the sport system**

The Canadian Safe Sport Program is available only in specific contexts and to certain participants within federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, specifically those competing or otherwise involved in sport at the national and international levels.

While several provinces and territories have not yet implemented a centralized complaint mechanism, most are in the process of doing so. All provinces and territories, except Quebec and British Columbia, have chosen to delegate the review and investigation of safe sport reports to an independent third party, mostly external professionals or law firms. British Columbia has chosen an independent non-profit model (Sport Safeguarding BC) similar to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. In contrast, Quebec has taken a legislative approach by appointing a recreation and sports integrity ombudsman. The Quebec model is the only one that applies to all sport participants, regardless of whether they are affiliated with a sport organization that receives government funding. The Independent Third Parties contracted by other provinces and territories have a more limited reach at the local level. Their jurisdiction generally extends only to individuals registered with sport organizations that are members of a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization, which in turn holds membership in the provincial or territorial Multisport Service Organization.

National, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations also hire Independent Third Parties directly. National-level organizations do so for cases that fall outside the Canadian Safe Sport Program's scope, while Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations do so in provinces and territories without a centralized complaint mechanism.

The current framework leads to the following issues:

- The mechanisms for responding to maltreatment in sport are fragmented, and sport participants are often shuffled from one complaint mechanism to another.
- The Canadian Safe Sport Program and its provincial and territorial counterparts have limited applicability and reach at the local level.
- Most provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations rely on Independent Third Parties to handle their safe sport reports. This is despite a perceived conflict of interest, high costs, concerns regarding specific competencies, and a lack of regulatory oversight over these professionals and law firms.

The Commission believes that the most effective way to strengthen Canada's response to maltreatment in sport and address the identified issues is to implement the first approach proposed in our Preliminary Report (Option 1) and develop a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program that includes establishing a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority.

Within this collaborative framework, each government would enact safe sport legislation and empower the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority to enforce it. Like many participants in our activities, we believe this model would

streamline responses to maltreatment nationwide. It would also establish a consistent regulatory framework across all levels of sport and enhance safety in Canadian sport. We recognize that such an undertaking requires sustained commitment and resolute political will from our governments, and we believe this should be a long-term goal.

Therefore, in the short term, we believe that the Government of Canada must implement the third approach proposed in our Preliminary Report (Option 3). This means the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport would continue to administer the Canadian Safe Sport Program. The Government of Canada would also incentivize each province and territory with conditional financial contributions to establish a centralized complaint mechanism within their jurisdiction. This mechanism would meet the criteria defined jointly by the Government of Canada and provincial and territorial governments.

The Commission also considered the hybrid model that certain participants proposed, including provinces and territories. Under this model, cases considered grave enough would be referred to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. While we acknowledge that the intent of this approach is to promote consistency in handling the most serious cases, we see significant challenges in defining an appropriate threshold for what constitutes a “serious” case. This would raise a risk of inconsistency in how provincial and territorial complaint mechanisms triage their complaints and determine which cases are ultimately referred to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

After careful consideration, we believe that, in the short term, governments’ efforts must focus on implementing Safe Sport Programs in each province and territory. In the long term, the objective must be to establish a unified Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program. It should be made up of a single authority that would ultimately assume responsibility for all reports of maltreatment, regardless of the “seriousness” of the allegations.

### **Phase I: Roadmap to implementing harmonized safe sport programs**

#### *The National Safe Sport Program*

Although the Canadian Safe Sport Program has been in operation for less than a year, the Commission considers it a meaningful improvement over the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. This view is based on both our independent review of the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules and the largely positive feedback received from participants in our engagement activities. In addition to the program being fully funded by the Government of Canada, its rules:

- clearly identify the participants they apply to and provide greater uniformity across adopting sport organizations
- establish specific timelines for each step of the report process and allow the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to issue procedural orders to ensure efficiency, timeliness, and fairness
- enhance transparency and communication with both the parties involved and the adopting sport organization

- require that the program be administered in a trauma-informed manner and that investigators possess experience or expertise in trauma-informed practices
- increase procedural fairness by allowing parties to be heard before the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport issues a decision and by providing better oversight of the investigation process
- allow for a broader range of resolutions, ensuring that reports are addressed appropriately and effectively
- designate the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport as the sole administrator for all steps of the process, rather than dividing responsibilities between the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes.

As we previously mentioned, several participants urged the Commission to recommend that Parliament amend the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*<sup>260</sup> to:

- designate the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport as Canada's independent national safe sport agency, with a legislative mandate to administer the Canadian Safe Sport Program
- authorize information sharing between the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and relevant government agencies to support the administration of the Canadian Safe Sport Program
- grant the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport appropriate investigative authority and the power to sanction sport organizations and individuals.

Participants believed these changes would alleviate the financial and administrative burdens on National Sport Organizations related to collecting consent forms from their participants. Among other benefits, this would help prevent jurisdictional challenges when a respondent has not signed a consent form. Conversely, several participants argued that the Government of Canada lacks the constitutional authority to grant the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport such a legislative mandate because they view sport as a matter exclusively within provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

The Commission finds that the Canadian Safe Sport Program should remain a contract-based model given the limited number of participants falling within its scope of application.

However, we emphasize that the long-term goal must be for the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, to establish a truly pan-Canadian safe sport authority grounded in both federal and provincial/territorial legislation. Achieving this vision will require clear, sustained, and proactive leadership from the Government of Canada.

In the meantime, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is collecting consent from participants in the Canadian Safe Sport Program. Participants complete an e-learning module and consent to the program using an online platform. The role of adopting sport organizations is therefore limited to directing national team athletes, coaches, and staff to the platform as they are being selected or hired by the sport organization. These organizations also maintain an updated list of Canadian Safe Sport Program participants for the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. These improvements from the former Abuse-Free Sport Program should reduce the administrative burden previously placed on adopting sport organizations to distribute and collect consent forms from their participants.

The Commission acknowledges that the risk of jurisdictional challenges when a respondent has not signed a consent form cannot be eliminated without legislation on safe sport standards and prohibited behaviours. However, we find that the risk is now significantly reduced. The Canadian Safe Sport Program's consent form explicitly states that “events which occurred prior to the implementation of the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport] and/or [Canadian Safe Sport Program], or prior to agreement to this Consent Form, may also fall retroactively within the jurisdiction of the Agents if such events fall within the scope of the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport] and/or [Canadian Safe Sport Program].”

We find the Canadian Safe Sport Program is a significant improvement over the former Abuse-Free Sport Program. However, we were told that it is a drawback that the new program does not conduct Sport Environment Assessments. We agree. These assessments are essential tools for identifying and addressing the root causes of unsafe sport cultures within organizations. They help Sport Canada determine whether additional funding conditions are required. We understand that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport plans to conduct Sport Environment Assessments but requires additional federal funding to proceed. The Government of Canada must therefore provide adequate funding to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to immediately reinstate Sport Environment Assessments as part of the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

Finally, we commend the Government of Canada for covering all costs related to the Canadian Safe Sport Program for the adopting sport organizations. However, it is crucial that users are able to seek review of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's decisions before the Safeguarding Tribunal and appeal the Safeguarding Tribunal decisions arising from the Canadian Safe Sport Program without service fees. These rights ensure accountability, build trust in the system, and promote fairness and transparency.



## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**19. The Government of Canada maintain the adoption of the Canadian Safe Sport Program as a condition of federal funding for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.**

**20. The Government of Canada maintain the mandate it has given the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to independently administer and enforce, through the Canadian Safe Sport Program, the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport for federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, by receiving and responding to reports of prohibited behaviour and carrying out policy activities.**

**21. The Government of Canada increase federal funding to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to allow it to carry out Sport Environment Assessments, as contemplated in the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules.**

**22. The Government of Canada maintain consistent and sustained funding to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to enable the continued operation of the Canadian Safe Sport Program.**

**23. The Government of Canada maintain consistent and sustained funding to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada to ensure that (i) reviews of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's decisions to the Safeguarding Tribunal and (ii) appeals of the Safeguarding Tribunal's decisions arising from the Canadian Safe Sport Program to the Appeal Tribunal be offered free-of-charge for all parties involved in the report process.**

### *Provincial and Territorial Safe Sport Programs*

To harmonize the response to maltreatment in sport at the national, provincial and territorial levels and expand it to local levels, the Commission envisions a three-step approach inspired by what has been done in the sectors of health and child care.

In the health sector, the Government of Canada uses its spending power to impose national standards on the provinces' health care insurance plans as a condition of federal financial contributions to the provinces. The *Canada Health Act*<sup>261</sup> “establishes criteria and conditions related to insured health services and extended health care services that the provinces and territories must fulfill to receive the full federal cash contribution under

the Canada Health Transfer (CHT).<sup>1262</sup> Several bilateral and multilateral agreements were established under the *Canada Health Act*. Through a recent federal initiative known as “Working Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians” the federal government committed to investments of \$200 billion to support the health and well-being of Canadians.<sup>1263</sup> These investments include \$25 billion over the next 10 years in funding under bilateral agreements with provinces and territories. Their aim is “to improve access to family health and mental health and substance use services, support the health workforce and modernize health systems.”<sup>1264</sup> Since March 2024, all provinces and territories have signed bilateral agreements with the Government of Canada. Each of these agreements includes a mutual commitment to uphold the *Canada Health Act*.<sup>1265</sup>

In 2017, the Government of Canada developed, with consultation from provinces and territories and Indigenous peoples, the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework.<sup>1266</sup> The framework “sets the foundation for collaboration and additional federal investments in provincial and territorial early learning and child care systems.”<sup>1267</sup> Under the framework, governments agree to “work together over time to achieve broad long-terms goals for early learning and child care systems” that are “high quality, accessible, affordable, flexible, and inclusive.”<sup>1268</sup>

Following its signature on the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework, the federal government began negotiating bilateral agreements with provinces and territories under the framework. As part of the 2021 budget, the Government of Canada announced an investment of \$27 billion over five years to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system with provinces and territories.<sup>1269</sup> The *Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act*,<sup>1270</sup> which supports the Multilateral Framework and related funding agreements, was introduced in the House of Commons on December 8, 2022. It received royal assent on March 19, 2024.<sup>1271</sup>

Drawing on these two models, our strategy for harmonizing Canada’s response to maltreatment in sport involves the following three key steps:

1. The Government of Canada shall develop a Multilateral Sport Framework in consultation with provinces and territories.
2. Parliament shall amend the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*<sup>1272</sup> to support the Multilateral Sport Framework and bilateral funding agreements with provinces and territories.
3. The Government of Canada shall negotiate and enter into bilateral funding agreements with each participating province and territory.

### Step I: The Multilateral Sport Framework

As we mentioned earlier, many participants, including governments, emphasized the importance of early collaboration and buy-in from provinces and territories to achieve harmony and consistency in Safe Sport Programs between both levels of government. We agree. Any conditions attached to federal funding must reflect a shared vision between the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories for a clear path to strengthen their response to maltreatment in sport. Most provincial and territorial governments we met showed a political will for further collaboration with the Government of Canada in this area. There is a desire for making reporting and resolution systems for safe sport better aligned and integrated across jurisdictions.

As a first step, we propose that this shared vision be developed within a Multilateral Sport Framework, led by the Government of Canada in consultation with provinces and territories. It could be similar to the approach used for the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework. The Multilateral Sport Framework shall set the foundation for meaningful and long-term governmental collaboration and additional federal investments in provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs. It shall include, at a minimum:

- an agreed-upon set of criteria that provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs shall meet to qualify for federal investments
- an agreed-upon set of objectives
- a commitment, by the Government of Canada, to provide federal funding to provincial and territorial governments that builds upon existing provincial and territorial investments in Safe Sport Programs
- a commitment, by provincial and territorial governments, to use the federal funding to support the development and enhancement of their Safe Sport Program tailored to their local needs and contexts while aligning with the Multilateral Sport Framework's criteria and objectives.

Based on our research and review of existing safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms, and on feedback from participants, we strongly believe that provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs must meet these five minimum criteria to qualify for federal funding under the Multilateral Sport Framework:

1. **Universal safe sport standards.** Provinces and territories shall adopt a universal code of conduct, legislation, or regulations establishing safe sport standards consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.
2. **Independent safe sport authority.** Provinces and territories shall establish a provincial or territorial safe sport authority to administer reports of alleged violations of universal safe sport standards. The safe sport authority shall include the following features:
  - a. **Public or non-profit body:** The safe sport authority shall be a public authority or a not-for-profit third-party delivery organization appointed or designated by the government of the province or territory.

- b. **Independent:** The safe sport authority shall operate autonomously and be free from political or organizational influence.
  - c. **Comprehensive:** The safe sport authority shall have jurisdiction over all reports of alleged violations of universal safe sport standards arising in the practice of a sport organized by a sport federation or a public or private body, association, league, or club formed to organize or practice a sport, regardless of whether such entities receive government funding.
  - d. **Accessible:** The safe sport authority shall be funded by the provincial or territorial government and must be free of charge for its users.
3. **Information sharing.** Provinces and territories shall ensure collaboration and information sharing between their safe sport authority and the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. Together, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and provincial and territorial safe sport authorities shall develop a system for sharing knowledge and information relevant to their mandate, including best practices. Safe sport authorities must also agree to share all imposed sanctions that involve suspensions, permanent ineligibility, or other restrictions on sport participation, for inclusion in a pan-Canadian public registry (which we discuss in Chapter 11). This registry will be managed by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.
  4. **Universal screening policy.** Provinces and territories shall adopt a universal background screening policy applicable to sport organizations receiving government funding.
  5. **Universal governance standards.** Provinces and territories shall adopt a sport governance code or universal governance standards consistent with those contained in the Canadian Sport Governance Code applicable to sport organizations receiving government funding.

In our view, criteria 1 to 3 together address all three issues identified with the current safe sport approach:

- The first criterion, “universal safe sport standards,” aims at achieving alignment and consistency in safe sport policies across jurisdictions and levels of sport.
- The second criterion, “independent safe sport authority,” aims at achieving alignment and consistency among centralized complaint mechanisms and expands their reach to all levels of sport. It also requires governments to move away from the for-profit independent third-party model, which has proven problematic in many ways. Instead, governments will rely on an impartial and independent not-for-profit body established specifically to maintain a system for safe sport complaint intake and management. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, Sport Safeguarding BC, and Quebec’s recreation and sports integrity ombudsman are examples of such bodies.
- The third criterion, “information sharing,” is meant to facilitate information sharing between the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and provincial and territorial safe sport authorities and create a comprehensive Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals in Sport.

These criteria also provide provinces and territories with the flexibility they need to tailor their Safe Sport Programs to local challenges and the specific needs of their populations.

With respect to the fourth criterion, “universal screening policy,” we believe that prevention must be central to any effective safe sport program. In Chapter 11, we present our findings on the prevention of maltreatment in sport and outline the rationale for recommending the inclusion of this criterion within the Multilateral Sport Framework.

As for the fifth criteria, “universal governance standards,” we strongly believe that good governance in sport organizations is a prerequisite to creating safe sport environments. In Chapter 14, we outline our findings on the need for harmonized governance standards across the sport system as well as the reason for including this criterion as part of the Multilateral Sport Framework.

Finally, we believe that governments should eventually expand the Multilateral Sport Framework beyond safe sport programs to develop a shared vision for promoting broad sport and physical activity participation in the country. We acknowledge that the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* already provides that the minister may enter into agreements for the payment of contributions to provinces and territories for costs incurred to encourage, promote and develop sport and physical activity, and that bilateral agreements are currently in place. However, framing these contributions in the Multilateral Sport Framework would permit governments to better define their commitments towards supporting broad sport and physical activity participation. For example, they could agree to prioritize support for community-level initiatives that advance equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

#### Step II: Amending the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*

Once the Multilateral Sport Framework is finalized, we recommend, as a second step, that the Government of Canada’s vision for a harmonized safe sport response be included in the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. Parliament would amend the Act to:

- acknowledge and support the Multilateral Sport Framework developed with provinces and territories
- reinforce the Government of Canada’s long-term commitment to safe sport and define the federal vision and principles for a coordinated approach to strengthening the response to maltreatment in sport
- affirm the Government of Canada’s commitment to sustained and ongoing funding for provinces’ and territories’ Safe Sport Programs
- enhance accountability and transparency by requiring the minister to report annually to Parliament on federal investments and progress toward a coordinated response to maltreatment in sport.

We believe that a legislative commitment to sustainable funding for safe sport in Canada provides provinces and territories with greater predictability and assurance of federal support. These amendments to the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* would also emphasize the importance of ongoing collaboration between both orders of government in efforts to strengthen their response to maltreatment in sport.



### Step III: Bilateral funding agreements

As a third and final step, we recommend that the Government of Canada enter bilateral funding agreements with each province and territory to put the Multilateral Sport Framework and the amended Act into operation. Each bilateral funding agreement shall include:

- the specific conditions upon which federal funding shall be allocated to the province or territory's Safe Sport Program
- an action plan showing how the provincial or territorial government intends to use federal investments to meet the Multilateral Sport Framework's criteria and objectives in a way that responds to their unique circumstances (such as demographic factors, existing safe sport complaint mechanisms, specific populations)
- an obligation for the provincial or territorial government to report annually on progress made in relation to the Multilateral Sport Framework and the impact of federal funding, while reflecting the priorities of the province or territory.

The bilateral funding agreements are essential for ensuring effective implementation of and accountability under the Multilateral Sport Framework. They also allow each province and territory to address their unique needs while upholding the Multilateral Sport Framework's objectives when developing or improving their Safe Sport Program.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**24. In the short term, the Government of Canada actively collaborate with provincial and territorial governments and support them in developing and implementing comprehensive and harmonized Safe Sport Programs to respond to maltreatment at all levels of the Canadian sport system, by:**

- a. **Developing, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, a Multilateral Sport Framework. The Framework shall set the foundation for long-term government collaboration and additional federal investments in provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs and shall include:**
  - i. **an agreed-upon set of criteria that provincial and territorial governments shall meet to qualify for federal investments. The Commission strongly encourages governments to consider the criteria pertaining to universal safe sport standards, an independent safe sport authority, and information sharing, universal screening policy and universal governance standards, as outlined in Chapter 10**

### Call to Action (continued)

- ii. an agreed-upon set of objectives
  - iii. the Government of Canada's commitment to provide provincial and territorial governments with federal funding that builds upon existing provincial and territorial investments in Safe Sport Programs
  - iv. provincial and territorial governments' commitment to use the federal funding to support the development and enhancement of their Safe Sport Program tailored to their local needs and contexts while aligning with the Multilateral Sport Framework's criteria and objectives.
- b. Amending the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* to:
- i. acknowledge and support the Multilateral Sport Framework developed by the Government of Canada with provinces and territories
  - ii. reinforce the Government of Canada's long-term commitment to safe sport
  - iii. define the federal vision and principles for a coordinated approach to strengthening the response to maltreatment in sport
  - iv. affirm the Government of Canada's commitment to sustained and ongoing funding in support of provinces' and territories' Safe Sport Programs
  - v. enhance accountability and transparency by ensuring reports to Parliament.
- c. Negotiating, with each provincial and territorial government, a bilateral funding agreement reflecting the specific conditions upon which federal funding shall be allocated toward the province or territory's Safe Sport Program. Each bilateral funding agreement shall include:
- i. an action plan that will demonstrate how the provincial or territorial government intends to use federal investments to meet the Multilateral Sport Framework's criteria and objectives in a way that responds to their unique circumstances (such as demographic factors, existing safe sport complaint mechanisms, specific populations)
  - ii. an obligation for the provincial or territorial government to report annually on progress made in relation to the Multilateral Sport Framework and the impact of federal funding, while reflecting the priorities of each jurisdiction.

Once provinces and territories have implemented the agreed-upon criteria under the Multilateral Sport Framework, the Government of Canada will be able to require, as a condition of funding for National Sport Organizations, that they amend their membership rules to ensure that their members, the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, adopt and comply with the universal safe sport standards established by their respective provincial or territorial governments.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**25. The Government of Canada, once provinces and territories have implemented the agreed-upon criteria under the Multilateral Sport Framework, require, as a condition of federal funding for National Sport Organizations, that they amend their membership rules to ensure their members, namely Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, adopt and comply with the universal safe sport standards established by their respective provincial or territorial governments. We strongly believe that these standards must be consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.**

### Phase II: Roadmap to implementing a unified Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program

As mentioned earlier, the Commission believes that the most effective way to enhance Canada's response to maltreatment in sport and address the issues identified in the current framework is for the Government of Canada to develop, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, a unified Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program. In the Commission's view, the main components of this program would include:

- a model provincial and territorial statute applicable to sport participants and athletes involved in all levels of sport within the province or territory
- if necessary and feasible, a complementary federal statute applicable to athletes involved in national- and international-level sport
- a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority empowered by both orders of government to enforce the federal, provincial and territorial statutes
- a council of ministers made up of the ministers responsible for sport in each provincial and territorial participating jurisdiction and the federal minister responsible for sport which oversees the pan-Canadian Authority
- provincial and territorial registry offices of the Pan-Canadian Authority in every participating jurisdiction providing the same range of services to sport participants and athletes.

Like many participants in our activities, we believe this model will streamline governmental responses to maltreatment in sport nationwide. It will establish a consistent federal–provincial–territorial regulatory framework applicable to all individuals involved in sport, from grassroots to high-performance levels, and enhance safety in Canadian sport environments. This approach will also increase uniformity and clarity by creating a centralized point of access for complainants within each jurisdiction and eliminating duplication of safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms across levels of sport. Through a legislated pan-Canadian model, governments can also grant the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority appropriate investigative powers and the ability to sanction sport organizations and individuals.

The creation of the Council of Ministers to oversee the Pan-Canadian Authority addresses concerns from provinces and territories about the Government of Canada imposing its own model. It guarantees equal provincial, territorial and federal influence over the Pan-Canadian Authority and ensures that each legislature retains control over its own safe sport legislation.

The Commission acknowledges that this is an important undertaking that will require significant collaboration between governments and a commitment to transformational leadership. In the medium to long term, we encourage governments to build on the existing Canadian Safe Sport Program and the safe sport programs that will be developed under the Multilateral Sport Framework to create a single Pan-Canadian program. This would ultimately involve merging the national, provincial and territorial safe sport authorities into a unified pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority. In this model, provincial and territorial safe sport authorities would not be eliminated but rather transformed into provincial and territorial registry offices of the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority. This will ensure that the capacity, timeliness, and effectiveness of the Pan-Canadian Authority remain unaffected.

## Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**26. In the long term, the Government of Canada actively collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to develop a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program, by:**

- a. entering into an agreement with provincial and territorial governments to develop a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program
- b. collaborating with provincial and territorial governments to adopt complementary federal, provincial, and territorial safe sport legislation
- c. collaborating with provincial and territorial governments to consolidate national, provincial, and territorial safe sport authorities into a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority with provincial and territorial bodies serving as registry offices in each participating jurisdiction
- d. collaborating with provincial and territorial governments to empower the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority to administer federal, provincial, and territorial safe sport legislation
- e. collaborating with provincial and territorial governments to create a council of ministers composed of the ministers responsible for sport in each provincial and territorial participating jurisdiction and the federal minister responsible for sport which will oversee the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority
- f. funding, jointly with participating provincial and territorial governments, the operations of the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority.

In the short term, our Calls to Action seek to establish and align National and Provincial and Territorial Safe Sport Programs throughout the country. Their long-term objective is to create a unified Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program. In both cases, our Calls to Action ensure that any Safe Sport Program, whether national, provincial, territorial, or Pan-Canadian, includes as essential elements:

- universal safe sport standards
- an independent safe sport authority
- information sharing between authorities, including a pan-Canadian registry of sanctioned individuals.



Furthermore, they ensure that the reach of these Safe Sport Programs extends to the local level. And they ensure that the safe sport authority responsible for processing reports and conducting investigations operates with full independence from political or organizational interference while maintaining accountability to government.

## Enhancing complaint mechanisms and their resolution processes to better support those affected

Through its independent review and engagement process, the Commission has identified other opportunities for improvement both in terms of the essential components of Safe Sport Programs and of complaint-management processes implemented by the safe sport authority. While these best practices need not, in our view, constitute formal criteria within the Multilateral Sport Framework, sharing our findings may provide valuable guidance for governments as they develop their own Safe Sport Programs.

### **FEEDBACK ON THE COMMISSION'S PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS: BEST PRACTICES FOR COMPLAINT MECHANISMS AND THEIR RESOLUTION PROCESSES**

In the first phase of our engagement process, we undertook an independent review and gathered significant feedback regarding the former Abuse-Free Sport Program (which was still in operation in the first ten months of our mandate). We also examined Independent Third-Party Mechanisms hired by provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations.

In our Preliminary Report, we determined that there is a lack of consistency in how safe sport reports are received, evaluated, investigated, or resolved across different complaint mechanisms. The Commission also noted the following recurring shortcomings within the resolution processes and procedures of these mechanisms:

- They are often unclear and unnecessarily complex.
- They are not timely and take too long to reach a resolution.
- They are not transparent enough.
- They often lack adequate support for the individuals involved.
- They are not adequately trauma informed.
- They lack due process.
- They lack enforcement and oversight.

We also noted that multiple participants expressed concerns regarding the capacity of Independent Third Parties to maintain confidentiality throughout the process.

As a result, we made preliminary recommendations not only to the Government of Canada but also to provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations that all resolution processes and procedures for handling safe sport reports in Canada:

- be clear, straightforward, and easily accessible to all
- be timely and efficient
- be trauma informed and adapted to individuals who have experienced harm
- embed procedural fairness for all parties involved
- include monitoring and accountability measures to ensure that sport organizations properly enforce sanctions.

In the same vein, we also made preliminary recommendations that all complaint mechanisms handling safe sport reports across Canada:

- be transparent and provide consistent communication with all parties involved
- provide appropriate assistance to help individuals navigate the process and provide case managers who can act as intermediaries between the parties and the investigator or decision-maker and answer procedural questions or concerns
- provide access to legal aid resources for all parties involved.

### **Participants' feedback on best practices for resolving complaints**

Participants almost unanimously agreed with the Commission's preliminary recommendations on complaint processes and procedures. They emphasized the importance of clear and concise, timely, trauma-informed, procedurally- fair, confidential, and user-friendly report processes that feel safe to the users.

They also emphasized that processes and procedures must be efficient and appropriate to the nature of the allegations. Processes must also provide for a range of resolutions. They noted that not all reports required a formal resolution that involves an investigation and a decision on a violation and a sanction.

A significant number of participants believed that complaint processes and procedures should incorporate restorative principles, especially in cases involving minors. Others disagreed and noted that victims and survivors were being pressured into mediation. Still others believed that restorative justice should be reserved for "less serious" cases. Many emphasized that, in cases of egregious maltreatment or abuse, victims and survivors must retain their right to a formal, investigative process.

We were also told that Indigenous approaches ought to be integrated in complaint processes and procedures. As an example, some suggested that restorative circles be built into processes and procedures. The New Zealand sport system, which allows people to choose the mainstream approach or the Māori approach, was also cited as a good model.

In relation to the investigation process specifically, some participants suggested that it should be conducted by the safe sport authority rather than an external investigator. They noted that this approach would allow better oversight of the investigation process. Others praised the Quebec model, which allows the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman to initiate investigations independently.

Finally, to ensure that sanctions are properly enforced, participants suggested that the processes and procedures include penalties for sport organizations' boards of directors that fail to enforce sanctions, including a cut in government funding. Others suggested that there be additional sanctions for those found to be in breach of a sanction or that sanctions be escalated to the minister when the sport organization refuses to comply (as the Quebec recreation and sports integrity ombudsman can require).

### **Participants' feedback on best practices for complaint mechanisms**

The most common feedback we received is that complaint mechanisms must be accessible at the grassroots level and independent — they should reside “outside of sport.” Participants also highlighted the need for decisions to be public and for the complaint mechanism to report on the resolution of safe sport reports. Many emphasized the importance of implementing a triage system by which the complaint mechanism determines whether a report falls within its jurisdiction at the outset of the process. Others went further and suggested that complaint mechanisms ensure that reports falling outside their jurisdiction are referred to the appropriate authorities.

Another recurring theme was that complaint mechanisms should also have jurisdiction over organizations outside of the “traditional” sport system, including private sport organizations and unfunded or emerging sports.

In terms of support services, we were told that complaint mechanisms should have case managers and navigators to guide the parties throughout the various steps of the report process. Legal aid and mental health support should also be made available to the parties. Participants also suggested that there be post complaint services to assist with reintegrating complainants and respondents into the sport system.

### **CALL TO ACTION: KEY FEATURES OF RESOLUTION PROCESSES**

Given the broad support from participants in our engagement process, the Commission reaffirms its preliminary recommendations concerning best practices for complaint-resolution processes and procedures. Our review has also led us to conclude that processes and procedures must incorporate a triage mechanism, a variety of resolution methods, restorative principles, and an Indigenous approach.

### Triage

Resolution procedures should include an early triage or screening step to identify complaints or reports that do not involve maltreatment, including abuse, harassment and discrimination, and return them to the sport organization to address. This helps prevent the process from becoming encumbered by complaints related to other matters, such as team selection.

### Broad range of resolutions

To avoid backlogs and ensure that responses match the seriousness of allegations, processes and procedures should include alternatives to formal investigations and decisions on violation and sanction. These alternative resolutions include apologies, negotiation, mediation, education, and remedial resolution.

### Restorative principles

Restorative practices stem from restorative justice, which focuses on repairing harm to people, relationships, and communities rather than on punishment.<sup>1273</sup> They create space for those harmed and those responsible to come together, express their needs, and work toward accountability, healing, and reintegration.<sup>1274</sup> The goal is to address the impact of the harm, support meaningful resolution, and reduce the likelihood of future harm.

Restorative justice involves a search for solutions — rather than retribution and punishment — in order to promote reconciliation, repair, and reassurance for the victims of crime, the offender, and the community at large.<sup>1275</sup>

It has been used in the Canadian criminal justice system for over 40 years.<sup>1276</sup> There are hundreds of restorative justice programs across Canada operating at different stages of the system. Many of these programs have learned from long-standing Indigenous legal traditions used by Indigenous peoples to resolve disputes.<sup>1277</sup>

The Principles and Guidelines for RJ Practice in Criminal Matters<sup>1278</sup> were developed by the Canadian Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Ministers responsible for Justice and Public Safety as a resource to help restorative justice programs and facilitators. The document outlines several common basic principles that guide restorative justice programs, including:<sup>1279</sup>

- **Reparation:** Focus on acknowledging and repairing the physical, emotional, and financial harm caused by crime and meeting the needs of those affected.
- **Respect:** Treat all participants with dignity, compassion, and equal consideration.
- **Voluntariness:** Ensure the participation of victims, offenders, and community members is voluntary, and based on free, informed, and ongoing consent.
- **Inclusion:** Foster and support the meaningful participation of those affected, including victims, offenders, their friends, their families, and their communities.

- **Empowerment:** Enable participants to communicate openly and honestly and to have an active role in determining how to address their needs, as they see them.
- **Safety:** Attend to the physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual safety and well-being of all participants. Participation in restorative justice should not result in further harm to any participant.
- **Accountability:** Assist those who have caused harm to acknowledge and take responsibility for harm and reparation.
- **Transformation:** Provide opportunities for understanding, healing, and change, and contribute to the restoration and reintegration of victims and offenders.

The format of restorative justice approaches varies depending on the context and needs of the parties involved. In the Canadian criminal justice system, the three most used restorative justice practices are:<sup>1280</sup>

- **Victim–Offender Mediation.** This type of mediation “involves facilitated communication between victim(s) and offender(s) in a safe, structured and supportive environment.”<sup>1281</sup> A mediator helps participants identify their needs. Participants can share their perspectives, address unresolved questions, and attempt to address and repair harm. Sometimes, these processes lead to agreements that may involve safety measures, restitution, or reparation.
- **Restorative conferencing.** This model involves many participants, including “support persons, community members affected by the offence and relevant community/criminal justice representatives.”<sup>1282</sup> A facilitator guides discussions to ensure everyone is heard to address harms and agree on reparation. Restorative conferencing also addresses “community safety, school safety, family safety as well as offender and victim reintegration.”<sup>1283</sup>
- **Restorative circles.** Restorative circles are community dialogues rooted in traditional Indigenous peacemaking practices. They address harm to the community and emphasize collective accountability. Restorative circle meetings involve “offenders, victims, friends, family, interested community members, and justice system representatives.”<sup>1284</sup> They include “healing circles focused on healing the community [...]; community circles focused on addressing community issues; sentencing circles focused on sentence recommendations; and releasing circles focused on the conditional release of an offender.”<sup>1285</sup> The goal of restorative circles is to “restore peace within the community.”<sup>1286</sup>

Each practice is designed to address harm, foster accountability, and promote healing.

Restorative justice often involves not only the victim and offender but also a broad range of participants. It is crucial that whoever acts in the role of facilitator or mediator is well-versed in the restorative justice principles we outlined to prevent re-victimization. The process is about healing and the offender’s acceptance of responsibility for their actions that caused the harm. The facilitator or mediator must be able to direct the parties away from positions that are inconsistent with the principles of restorative justice.



### Restorative practices in Canadian sport

Our research suggests that restorative practices are currently relatively uncommon among Canadian sport organizations. While examples do exist, there are limited instances of Canadian sport organizations that voluntarily implement formal restorative processes. This apparent gap indicates that restorative justice approaches have yet to gain widespread adoption in Canadian sport contexts, despite their potential benefits for addressing conflicts and building stronger sport cultures.

#### *Sport Nova Scotia*

Although not specific to sport, Nova Scotia has a Restorative Justice Program.<sup>1287</sup> Originally launched for youth in 1999 and later expanded to adults, it can be used at various stages of the criminal justice process. The program emphasizes accountability, healing, and community involvement.<sup>1288</sup> Its overall aim is to reduce re-offending and create more meaningful, human-centred justice outcomes.

Nova Scotia builds upon its experiences and successes to develop a restorative approach to justice in sport. We understand that the Restorative Lab at Dalhousie University's Schulich School of Law is currently facilitating a collaborative process involving athletes, advocates and leaders committed to safe sport, to develop a system to respond to individual and systemic complaints and change the culture of sport in the province. Sport Nova Scotia has received funding to implement a restorative approach through investments in human resources and education in the coming years.

We also note that the independent complaint process recently implemented by Sport Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia's sport federation, will eventually incorporate restorative justice practices. Safe sport complaints for incidents involving participants who are 19 and older (the age of majority in Nova Scotia) are currently handled by Alias Solution, an Independent Third-Party Mechanism. For complaints made against individuals under 19 years old (unless they hold a position of authority within their Provincial Sport Organization), they are currently handled through policies of Provincial Sport Organizations but should be handled through a restorative justice process in the near future. This new process is "aimed at promoting a healthier, more respectful sporting culture for Nova Scotian athletes."<sup>1289</sup>

#### *NU Sport Federation*

The centralized complaint mechanism of the NU Sport Federation, Nunavut's sport federation, also incorporates restorative justice practices. The Sport Integrity and Complaints Policy of NU Sport Federation explains that although complaints can be brought by or against minors, they are not required to attend or participate in an oral hearing or an investigation if one is conducted.<sup>1290</sup> The policy also strongly encourages parties to resort to alternative dispute-resolution processes, including negotiation, facilitation, and mediation.<sup>1291</sup>

*Team Nova Scotia (Canada Summer Games)*

In 2025, the Restorative Lab at Dalhousie University piloted a restorative approach to team culture and discipline through the development of Team Nova Scotia's Code of Conduct and Shared Commitments for Wellbeing<sup>1292</sup> for the 2025 Canada Summer Games. The Code establishes a restorative framework to ensure the safety and well-being of Team Nova Scotia, including supportive, accountable responses to harm during the Canada Summer Games. The Code sets out processes for reporting harm, responsive interventions (e.g., temporary separation from team members, being sent home), and an appeals mechanism.

The Code is administered by the "Restorative Team" (a group of restorative facilitators) and the "Safety and Wellbeing Team," composed of:

- the Chef de Mission<sup>1293</sup> or designate
- one member of Mission Staff<sup>1294</sup> who is free of conflict
- at least one member of the Restorative Team.

The Restorative Team's role is to support: (a) Mission Staff to take a proactive approach and ensure the conditions for well-being and success; and (b) athletes, coaches, managers, and Mission Staff to respond when issues arise. The Code spells out that where a situation requires more support, the Restorative Team will work together with the Safety and Wellbeing Team to adequately respond.

*University of Guelph (cross-country and middle-distance teams)*

Between 2022 and 2025, the University of Guelph and a group of alumni athletes as well as current and former staff came together with the support of external facilitators to create and implement a restorative process.<sup>1295</sup> It was largely focused on the University of Guelph's cross-country and middle-distance programs between 1997 and 2020 because this period represented "a time of unhealthy culture within these programs."<sup>1296</sup> The purpose of the restorative process was "to reflect on past experiences, build on positive changes already made, and identify further opportunities for development" to foster a safer and healthier sport culture.<sup>1297</sup>

After analyzing various initiatives related to restorative practices, the Commission concludes that such practices offer meaningful avenues to address misconduct and culture-related issues in sport in ways that promote learning, accountability, and behavioural change. When integrated thoughtfully into safe sport complaint processes, restorative practices can provide athletes, coaches, and other sport participants with opportunities for dialogue and for rebuilding trust. In many cases, these practices can be good alternatives to formal investigative and disciplinary processes because they help address underlying causes of harm and support more durable resolutions.

In our view, including restorative practices in safe sport complaint resolution processes not only enhances the effectiveness of complaint mechanisms but also contributes to safer, healthier, and stronger team cultures.

However, we are also of the view that restorative practices should never prevent a victim or survivor from pursuing a formal investigative and disciplinary process in cases of egregious maltreatment or abuse. A formal process provides accountability but also outcomes that do not rely on a victim or survivor's willingness to engage with the person who harmed them. Victims and survivors must be informed about their rights and the implications of opting for a restorative process. They must never feel pressured into restorative practices for reasons of institutional efficiency or reputational concerns. To prevent the misuse of restorative practices, the right to pursue a formal process must, in certain cases, be actively protected and clearly communicated — even when restorative approaches are offered as alternative voluntary options.

### **Indigenous traditions and practices**

Participants, including governments, said that sport organizations and governments should review safe sport policies and resolution processes from an Indigenous perspective because current rules do not reflect the realities of Indigenous communities. In our view, integrating restorative justice principles in safe sport complaint resolution processes is an important step toward creating a culturally relevant and responsive safe sport system for Indigenous people. As we mentioned earlier, several restorative justice programs draw on Indigenous legal traditions that Indigenous peoples have used for a very long time to resolve disputes within their communities.

However, restorative principles on their own are not sufficient. Safe sport complaint processes must incorporate and respect the legal traditions and cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples. This includes, for example, the use of restorative circles and the involvement of Elders or Knowledge Keepers as facilitators. These practices must be developed in meaningful collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**27. The Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations to ensure that resolution processes of safe sport authorities and Independent Third-Party Mechanisms incorporate the following features:**

- a. **Clarity and simplicity.** They must be designed to minimize confusion, reduce procedural barriers, and ensure that individuals understand their rights, responsibilities, and the steps involved throughout the process.
- b. **Timeliness and efficiency.** They must include clear timelines for each step of the process and accountability measures to ensure prompt and efficient resolution of reports.
- c. **Procedural fairness.** They must incorporate principles of procedural fairness, including impartiality, the right to be heard, adequate disclosure, and procedural safeguards for both complainants and respondents throughout all steps of the process.
- d. **Proportionality.** They must provide a variety of resolution methods as alternatives to a formal investigation and decision process to ensure that resolutions are proportionate to the nature of the allegations.
- e. **Restorative practices.** They must incorporate restorative practices that promote reconciliation, repair, and reassurance for the complainant, the respondent, and the sport community. However, they must not override the importance of safety, voluntariness, and the right to pursue the formal process.
- f. **Indigenous practices.** They must incorporate and respect the legal traditions and cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples.
- g. **Sanction enforceability.** They must provide for monitoring and accountability measures to ensure that sport organizations properly enforce sanctions.

### **CALL TO ACTION: KEY FEATURES OF SAFE SPORT AUTHORITIES AND INDEPENDENT THIRD-PARTY MECHANISMS**

Given participants' broad support for our preliminary recommendations regarding complaint mechanisms' key features, the Commission reaffirms its preliminary recommendations. We also emphasize the importance of safe sport authorities and Independent Third Parties implementing the best practices we outline here.

We acknowledge that many participants to our engagement process called for mental-health support within safe sport authorities and Independent Third-Party Mechanisms. While mental-health services are critical for participants involved in report processes and procedures, we do not believe that these services ought to be provided by the safe sport authorities or complaint mechanisms.

In our view, the primary role of complaint mechanisms must be to offer a fair, timely, trauma-informed, and independent process for addressing maltreatment in sport. Embedding mental-health services within these structures risks blurring responsibilities. We believe that mental-health services should be delivered by qualified professionals through appropriate external services, and that the role of safe sport authorities or Independent Third Parties should be limited to providing appropriate referrals.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

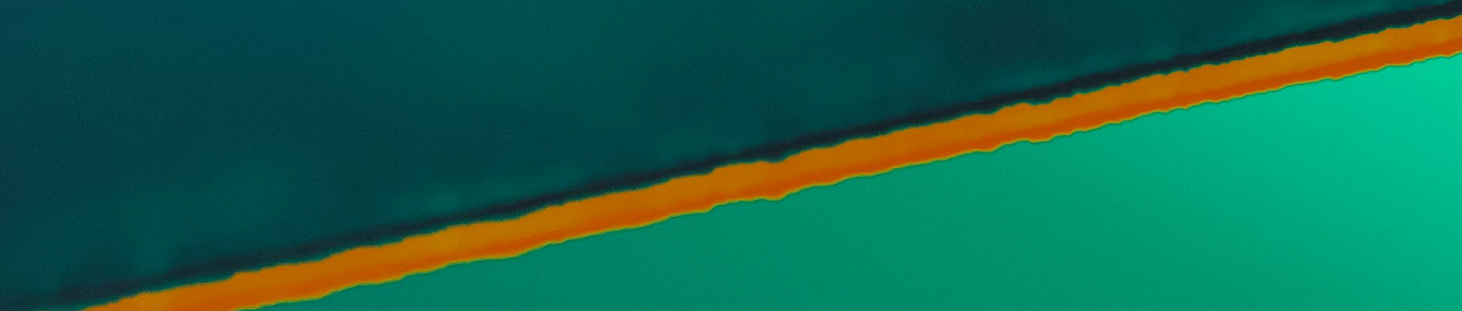
**28. The Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations to ensure that safe sport authorities and Independent Third-Party Mechanisms incorporate the following features:**

- a. **Trauma-informed practices.** They must be adapted to individuals who have experienced harm. All correspondence and interactions with individuals interacting with the program and all steps of the reporting process shall be undertaken with sensitivity, respect, and support to prevent re-traumatization.
- b. **Transparency.** They must be transparent and provide consistent communication with all parties involved in the report process.
- c. **Support.** They must provide appropriate support and assistance to help individuals navigate the various steps of the process. This includes case managers or navigators who act as intermediaries between the parties and the investigator or adjudicator, and who can answer procedural questions or concerns.
- d. **Expertise.** They must include adjudicators and investigators with expertise in trauma-informed practices and procedural fairness, as well as in the subject area relevant to the report (such as physical, psychological, sexual maltreatment, neglect, discrimination, or harassment).
- e. **Legal aid resources.** They must provide access to legal aid resources for all parties involved. Both complainants and respondents must have equitable access to legal advice or representation to help them understand their rights and effectively participate in the process.



# **CHAPTER 11:**

## **Prevention strategies to build and sustain safe sport environments**





# Chapter 11:

## Prevention strategies to build and sustain safe sport environments

Many participants emphasized that preventing maltreatment in sport settings is as important, if not more important, than reacting to it after it has happened. The Commission agrees. Prevention is the cornerstone of a sustainable and effective safe sport strategy. A system that focuses solely on remediation can never truly be safe because it waits for harm to occur before it acts. In contrast, prevention creates a culture and a framework designed to minimize the risk of maltreatment occurring in the first place.

Prevention is not only about ensuring safety in sport. It is about protecting the well-being of society more broadly. Sport touches the lives of many Canadians, including children, families, and communities, and plays a significant role in daily life. Because so many people are involved in sport in some way, creating safe sport environments has broad societal significance.

Strengthening prevention is urgent. Ensuring the safety of children and other vulnerable participants in sport is crucial and cannot be delayed. Without a stronger focus on preventing harm, we risk continuing cycles of maltreatment that affect individuals and communities alike.

This chapter focuses on safe sport education and training, background screening processes, data collection, registries of sanctioned individuals, and safeguarding officers in sport organizations. These preventative measures were most frequently highlighted by participants throughout our work, and the Commission found them to be foundational.

We recognize that National Sport Organizations and other sport bodies may develop and implement additional prevention measures and tools tailored to their specific contexts. These include whistleblower policies, which establish frameworks that promote the reporting of illegal, unethical or unsafe conduct and safeguard individuals who come forward from retaliatory actions.<sup>1298</sup>

These efforts, while not our focus here, are important components of a broader safe sport strategy. Comprehensive and harmonized safe sport policies are another powerful tool for prevention. We review the current state of safe sport policies and codes of conduct in Chapter 9 and address policy considerations alongside our Calls to Action related to safe sport complaint mechanisms in Chapter 10.



## Safe sport education and training

Education and training are essential to preventing maltreatment in sport and promoting safe and inclusive sport environments for all. Numerous education and training initiatives specific to safe sport are currently in place across the Canadian sport system. From grassroots to high-performance sport, they reflect efforts by various sport organizations to promote safer, more respectful, and inclusive sport environments.

Given the breadth and variety of these initiatives, the Commission could not examine all of them. We therefore outline a selection of notable safe sport education and training programs, projects, and movements that participants most frequently referred to in our engagement process, or that illustrate trends and practices in this field. For each of them, we provide participants' perspectives.

### **THE NATIONAL COACHING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM AND THE MAKE ETHICAL DECISIONS TRAINING**

The Government of Canada, through Sport Canada, supports the Coaching Association of Canada which develops harmonized coaching education across the nation.<sup>1299</sup> As Chapter 5 explains, the association partners with most National Sport Organizations to deliver coaching education through the National Coaching Certification Program.<sup>1300</sup> It also works with Provincial and Territorial Coaching Representatives who deliver the program in their respective jurisdictions. All the provinces and territories have a regional representative.<sup>1301</sup> Sixty-five National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations use the National Coaching Certification Program.<sup>1302</sup>

As part of the National Coaching Certification Program, the Coaching Association of Canada offers the “Make Ethical Decisions” training. The training empowers coaches to “handle challenging ethical situations” and “identify the legal, ethical, and moral implications of difficult situations that present themselves in team and individual sports.”<sup>1303</sup> Coaches must successfully complete the “NCCP Make Ethical Decisions online evaluation” for certification in any National Coaching Certification Program.<sup>1304</sup>

National Sport Organization coaches are required to obtain certain certifications from this program for their organization to receive funding for coaching salaries and professional development under the Sport Support Program.<sup>1305</sup> To be eligible for this funding, the Government of Canada requires that their coaches meet the following training requirements:

- complete the Safe Sport Training Module of the Canadian Safe Sport Program (discussed below)
- complete the Make Ethical Decisions training of the National Coaching Certification Program
- be certified within the National Coaching Certification Program Competition – Development context, or higher.<sup>1306</sup>

Training requirements for coaches also exist at the provincial and territorial level of sport. For example, to be eligible to receive government funding in Ontario, Provincial Sport Organizations must certify their coaches through a formal sport-specific certification program conducted through the National Coaching Certification Program or an approved equivalent.<sup>1307</sup>

Alberta requires Provincial Sport Organizations to follow “appropriate” leadership and training standards for coaches that are similar to “those exemplified in the National Coaching Certification Program or equivalent program.”<sup>1308</sup> Meeting these standards is a condition of consideration for provincial funding under the Association Development Grant Program (core funding).<sup>1309</sup>

At the community level, local-level sport organizations such as clubs and associations may also require their coaches to obtain specific certifications or complete safe sport training.

### **THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM AND THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM'S SAFE SPORT TRAINING**

As Chapter 15 outlines, the adoption of the Canadian Safe Sport Program is mandatory as of April 1, 2025. National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes must adopt it to receive funding from Sport Canada under the Sport Support Program.<sup>1310</sup> We examine the Canadian Safe Sport Program in detail in Chapter 10.

The Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules stipulate that adopting sport organizations must ensure that all program participants complete the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's<sup>1311</sup> Safe Sport e-learning module.<sup>1312</sup> These participants typically include the organization's national- and international-level athletes, employees and board members, national-level coaches, and athlete support personnel.<sup>1313</sup>

The e-learning module, entitled “Safe Sport 2025,” provides education on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (discussed in Chapter 9) and on the Canadian Safe Sport Program's complaint mechanism (discussed in Chapter 10).<sup>1314</sup>

Similar education requirements existed under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.<sup>1315</sup> However, instead of offering its own education program, as does the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner accredited existing training programs and courses that met Sport Canada's standards. Two of the available programs were the Safe Sport Training offered by the Coaching Association of Canada and the Respect in Sport Training offered by the Respect Group Inc.<sup>1316</sup>



The Safe Sport Training module of the Coaching Association of Canada teaches sport participants to “make decisions that promote athletes’ physical and mental well-being.”<sup>1317</sup> It takes the form of a 90-minute e-learning program addressing:

- definitions, descriptions, and examples of prohibited behaviours under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport
- signs and symptoms of various forms of maltreatment
- the duty to report
- the scope of application of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport
- roles and responsibilities.<sup>1318</sup>

### **OTHER SAFE SPORT EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND TRAININGS**

A range of organizations offer many other safe sport education and training programs. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples:

- Commit to Kids for Coaches by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection
- Commit to Kids for Coaches: Foundational Information for Safeguarding Children from Sexual Abuse by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection
- Safe Sport Education by Generation Safe
- Respect in Sport for Activity Leaders by Respect Group Inc.
- Respect in Sport for Officials by Respect Group Inc.
- Respect in Sport for Parents by Respect Group Inc.
- Bystander Intervention in Sport by Right to Be and viaSport BC
- Discrimination in Sport Training by the Centre for Safe Sport in Schools, Camps, and Communities
- Sport is Not an Equal Playing Field: An Introduction to Anti-Racism Literacy and Action by Anti-Racism in Sport.<sup>1319</sup>

These safe sport education or training programs were all accredited by the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.<sup>1320</sup>

We were informed that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is currently exploring several other education initiatives, including certification and accreditation programs, and intends to expand its offerings in the coming years.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON SAFE SPORT EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Many participants in our activities emphasized that education is fundamental to preventing maltreatment and building safe sport environments. They generally agreed that safe sport education should be available for all participants in sport, including athletes, coaches, officials, parents, and staff (including leadership teams, sports medicine staff, boards of directors, and volunteers). Participants also emphasized the need for prevention at the grassroots level of sport.

They suggested that safe sport training should be mandatory for all athletes and coaches (including full-time and part-time coaches, apprentices, independent contractors, and volunteers). They also said there should be consequences for those who do not complete mandatory training.

We heard that parents should also receive safe sport education as issues often arise when parents have unrealistic expectations for their children. Participants suggested that everyone, from athletes to parents, should receive the same information to help everyone recognize inappropriate behaviour.

### **Content of training**

While participants believe that safe sport training is beneficial, they told us that existing programs have flaws. A common concern, particularly among coaches, is that they tend to emphasize “what not to do” and do not sufficiently address “what to do” to create safe sport environments. We were told that safe sport training should provide coaches and others the practical tools they need to succeed and include examples of best practices and positive behaviours to follow. It must also clearly describe behaviours that are inappropriate.

We were advised that some training programs’ content had not been updated for years and that it should be modernized to reflect current society’s expectations. For example, we were repeatedly told that most training programs do not address racism, sexism, hazing, digital harms, social media, or how to coach kids.

Participants proposed that safe sport education should address:

- how to recognize maltreatment and effectively intervene
- experiences of victims and survivors of abuse
- gender-based violence
- informed consent
- racism, discrimination, First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples and decolonization
- equity, diversity, and inclusion and cultural sensitivity
- how to recognize grooming processes.

Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of educating parents about grooming processes because they may also be subject to grooming and unintentionally enable sexual maltreatment.

We were advised that anti-Indigenous racism education should be implemented across all levels of sport. Participants also emphasized the need for training aimed at building anti-oppressive and inclusive team environments.

We were told that more education is needed on the safe sport complaint management processes. Athletes, coaches, parents, and other participants suggested that safe sport education should clearly address the complaint process, including what constitutes a valid complaint, how to file one, and what it means to file a complaint.<sup>1321</sup>

Finally, we heard that at the university and college level, safe sport training is often a general program applicable to all postsecondary sports. It typically lacks information specific to each institution, which can leave students unaware of the particular complaint mechanism(s) available to them.

### **Effectiveness of training**

We were told that the issue is not only the content of the training programs, but also that the delivery format is not effective. Most programs are delivered through online courses or e-learning modules. Some participants described training programs as useless and often referred to them as mere “check-box exercises.”

Many participants believed that a 90-minute e-learning course was not enough for anyone to truly understand safe sport. Some felt that there should be in-person learning opportunities. Others indicated that the virtual option could be beneficial but needed to have interactive components. Multisport Service Organizations and safe sport educators who offer in-person training explained that in-person learning helped participants to better understand safe sport. We were informed that safe sport training must be accessible to athletes who are blind or partially sighted because they already represent a particularly vulnerable population.

We heard that it takes time and practice to build a better and safer sport culture. Individuals who work in safe sport education noted that the frequency of training also has an impact on whether it leads to a significant cultural change or is merely a “performative” exercise.

### **Volume and duplication of training**

Participants noted the absence of uniform national standards defining appropriate and adequate safe sport education. Many remarked that no single body is responsible for providing training and education on safe sport in Canada.

This lack of coordination means that participants were frequently asked to take several, very similar safe sport courses offered by different groups, on varying occasions.

The demands on coaches, especially the number of training sessions now required by sport organizations, are also increasing. Many commented that the volume of training can be overwhelming and often repeats the same information.

We were told that, in many cases, it can take more than 15 hours to complete the required training sessions to achieve a certain coaching status. Parent coaches suggested that training has to be practical for parents and not daunting or unreasonable.

At the grassroots level of sport, where most coaches are volunteers, sport participants regularly raised concerns about the volume and cost of the required training. In fact, many of these coaches are parents who are coaching “from the side of their desk.” They suggested that approved safe sport training should be centralized on one platform and offered free of charge.

## **PROJECT LIGHTHOUSE**

Project Lighthouse was a collaborative initiative led by the Canadian Olympic Committee with support from Sport Canada. Its initial funding was announced on May 1, 2023. Its goal was to promote and align safe sport through education, collaboration, and communication.<sup>1322</sup> Through Project Lighthouse, \$2 million was invested in creating or improving safe sport education modules, providing grants and financial support, and facilitating provincial collaboration.

The Canadian Olympic Committee worked with partners from multiple levels of sport to accelerate safe sport initiatives in a coordinated way through Project Lighthouse. These partners included:<sup>1323</sup>

- the Coaching Association of Canada
- the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport
- Sport Nova Scotia
- viaSport (British Columbia)
- Sport'Aide (Quebec).

As part of Project Lighthouse, the Coaching Association of Canada launched the Quality Coaching Campaign<sup>1324</sup> to raise awareness of the resources available for coaches, administrators, and parents, such as their e-learning modules and training programs. They included the Safe Sport Training e-learning module and the Coaching Athletes with a Disability e-learning module of the National Coaching Certification Program.

Project Lighthouse also supported the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport in developing three new modules to advance safe sport education:

- **Safe Sport 2025**, the Canadian Safe Sport Program's e-learning module on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and on the Centre's independent complaint mechanism.
- **Understanding Competition Manipulation**, an e-learning module on how to prevent competition manipulation that was made mandatory for Team Canada at the 2024 Paris Olympics.
- **Health Care Practitioners Module**, a module that was mandatory for Canadian health care practitioners at the 2024 Paris Olympics. It offered guidelines on how to provide safe health care that follows the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

A key part of Project Lighthouse was the provincial collaboration that brought together viaSport (British Columbia), Sport'Aide (Quebec), and Sport Nova Scotia. Leaders from these provincial organizations met to share safe sport practices and programs. They also worked together to expand the reach of their existing programs and resources beyond their own provinces.

This collaboration led to:

- over 20 safe sport awareness workshops and presentations from Sport'Aide delivered in other provinces in both French and English
- a national digital campaign to increase awareness of viaSport's Bystander Empowerment Tool, offered in both French and English
- a study commissioned by Sport Nova Scotia to better understand how people working in education engage with safe sport.

### Participants' perspectives on Project Lighthouse

Project Lighthouse was the first attempt to coordinate safe sport education. Participants in our engagement process, including provinces, believed that Project Lighthouse was a great initiative for centralizing safe sport education. However, they also noted that the sport system still needs to harmonize and coordinate safe sport education and awareness programs.

Participants also affirmed that leadership and support are essential because of the sport system's fragmented nature. They were concerned that Project Lighthouse was ending and highlighted the need for further investment to improve coordination.



## TRUE SPORT MOVEMENT

The True Sport Movement was created after the Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Ministers responsible for sport enacted the Declaration of Expectations for Fairness in Sport (the London Declaration) in August 2001.<sup>1325</sup> It aimed to promote ethical practices and values-based behaviours in sport. It also aspired to create a culture where athletes, coaches, organizations, and communities prioritize positive, respectful, and fair engagement in sport, rather than focusing solely on outcomes like winning.<sup>1326</sup>

Until February 2025, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport administered the True Sport program, based on education and community engagement.<sup>1327</sup> Guided by the values of fairness, excellence, inclusion, and fun, True Sport was a values-based approach to sport built on seven principles: Go For It, Fair Play, Respect Others, Keep It Fun, Stay Healthy, Include Everyone, and Give Back.<sup>1328</sup>

Through educational campaigns, resources, and partnerships with various organizations, True Sport helped to develop a shared understanding of ethical behaviour in sport and creating environments in which participants could thrive.<sup>1329</sup>

The movement engaged sport organizations, schools, community organizations, coaches, teams, athletes, officials, and event organizers committed to fostering and demonstrating a culture of “good sport” and values-driven sport.<sup>1330</sup> Individuals and organizations were required to sign the True Sport Declaration to formalize their agreement to uphold the True Sport Principles.<sup>1331</sup> By becoming a member of the True Sport Movement, individuals and organizations committed to training, competing, and offering sport experiences, including championships and tournaments, that aligned with these True Sport Principles.<sup>1332</sup> The program was widely adopted in many levels of sport across Canada, from grassroots organizations to professional sport leagues.<sup>1333</sup>

True Sport also offered a variety of online resources and tools to help True Sport members promote and activate values-based sport. These resources included:

- a True Sport Multimedia Toolkit
- a four-episode podcast series exploring True Sport resources and their successful implementation
- an interactive e-learning course providing coaches with True Sport information
- tools and approaches to support the delivery of values-based programming
- social media tiles that promote the True Sport Principles
- a three-volume resource for educators of children from age six to young adolescence that facilitates learning the True Sport Principles with a focus on ethical and physical literacy.<sup>1334</sup>

In February 2025, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport announced its decision to discontinue the work it was doing with the True Sport Program.<sup>1335</sup> It explained that its expanding role in administering the complaint

mechanism and its collaborative work with sport organizations through the True Sport Program created a conflict of interest.<sup>1336</sup> During the Commission's discussions with participants, many echoed this concern. They said that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport could not effectively maintain independence while also working in close partnership with the sport community.

### **Participants' perspectives on the True Sport Movement**

Many participants, including a provincial government, mentioned True Sport as a model for exemplary approaches to safe sport. Many described that it was more than providing education. It was rooted in social change.

True Sport promoted social change by encouraging and working with sport organizations to adopt the programs' values and principles. This program was about identifying "founding values" and incorporating and embracing behaviours that align with them. Participants noted that by identifying True Sport Principles and delivering its programs and services, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport provided necessary tools to create positive, values-based sport experiences and positive sport cultures.

Many participants praised the program's wide reach. For example, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport hosted "activation workshops" where National Sport Organizations learned how to integrate True Sport into their policies, programs, and practices. We learned that there were 5,640 True Sport members as of October 9, 2024. They included 2,089 sport organizations (such as National Sport Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and Multisport Service Organizations), 594 schools, 380 teams, 293 coaches, and 116 athletes.

However, we also heard of incidents of maltreatment and inappropriate behaviours occurring even in sport organizations that had adopted the True Sport Principles. Some participants also felt that the True Sport Program had limited reach throughout the sport system. They noted that while it was an effective program, it did not get a lot of uptake. They attributed this in part to the abstract nature of "values-based" sport as a concept.

Even so, we heard concern in the sport community that the progress made with True Sport will be lost now that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is no longer administering the program. We were told that it is important for the True Sport Program to continue, and that another Multisport Service Organization with existing ties to the sport community, or a new entity, could take over its administration.

### **RESPONSIBLE COACHING MOVEMENT'S RULE OF TWO**

The Coaching Association of Canada and the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport jointly established the Responsible Coaching Movement.<sup>1337</sup> This movement is a call to action for sport organizations, parents, and coaches to implement responsible coaching practices across Canada, both on and off the field of play.<sup>1338</sup>

The Responsible Coaching Movement invites all coaches and sport organizations to learn and apply consistent safety principles.<sup>1339</sup> It offers crucial elements, resources, and processes to follow for sport to be safe, smart, and secure for all. These resources focus on the three pillars of the Responsible Coaching Movement: the "Rule of Two," background screenings, and ethics training.<sup>1340</sup> We understand that many sport organizations across the country have adopted these principles to prevent maltreatment in sport.

In particular, the so-called Rule of Two was frequently brought to our attention as a common practice. This rule requires two responsible adults (such as a coach, staff, parent, or screened volunteer) to be present with a sport participant at all times.<sup>1341</sup> The rule's goal is to ensure all interactions and communications are open, observable, and justifiable.<sup>1342</sup>

### **Participants' perspectives on the Rule of Two**

We understand that the Rule of Two is considered a helpful and, by some, an essential rule to help prevent maltreatment in sport. However, there were mixed views on how widely it is used and how effective it is.

For instance, we heard from numerous victims and survivors who explained that maltreatment often occurs in front of bystanders who look the other way. We were also told that some sport organizations claim to adopt the Rule of Two but do not actually enforce it.

Although the Rule of Two is well known at the national level of sport, we were advised it is less common at the grassroots level. For example, local-level coaches explained that while coaches were familiar with the rule, the families they work with were not. Additionally, we heard how the Rule of Two could prevent participation by creating transportation challenges in rural or remote communities.

### **DUTIES TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT IN SPORT**

In certain circumstances, provincial and territorial child welfare laws impose a legal duty to report suspected or known child abuse or neglect to local child welfare services, provincial or territorial social service ministries or departments, or local police.<sup>1343</sup>

In the sport context, the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport also establishes an obligation to report concerns regarding inappropriate conduct in sport. As we further discuss in Chapter 9, the Universal Code of Conduct sets harmonized rules that federally funded national-level sport organizations must adopt to promote a respectful sport culture.

In addition to defining various forms of maltreatment, the Universal Code of Conduct explicitly prohibits certain behaviours that, while not constituting maltreatment themselves, are nonetheless prohibited. Specifically, section 5.11 of the Universal Code of Conduct states that failing to report possible maltreatment is a prohibited behaviour.<sup>1344</sup> The Universal Code of Conduct thus requires every adult participant, who adheres to the Code's principles, to report any instance of prohibited behaviour (as defined in the Code) that another participant commits. Consequently, an adult participant violates the Universal Code of Conduct if they knew, or reasonably ought to have known, about another participant's prohibited conduct and failed to report it. Such a failure to report can result in sanctions. Section 7 of the Universal Code of Conduct details the scope and severity of such sanctions.<sup>1345</sup>

## **PUBLIC ONLINE SURVEY CONDUCTED AS PART OF THE COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES**

The Commission's public online survey was designed to collect data across several key areas, including the prevention of maltreatment in sport. The following results reflect the views of survey respondents who answered questions about improving safe sport in Canada.

### **Mandatory safe sport training**

The survey results show that most of the respondents believe that various groups of sport participants should be required to complete safe sport training in Canada. The top three groups so identified were:

- coaches (97.0%)
- officials and referees (93.2%)
- sport administrators (89.9%).

Other groups identified by respondents included athletes (84.4%), support personnel (83.7%), and parents and guardians (77.3%). A smaller proportion of respondents—but still a majority—believe that children and youth (61.0%) and event support staff (52.6%) should also be required to complete safe sport training.

### **Frequency of safe sport training**

A total of 46.5% of the organized sport participants who answered the safe sport section of the survey believed that safe sport training should be provided every two to three years.

### **Safe sport training's effectiveness**

The survey revealed that a large majority of organized sport participants who completed the safe sport section have had safe sport training. When asked whether they had undertaken safe sport training within the past 10 years, 75.5% reported yes, 20.2% reported no, and 4.3% were unsure.

Those who reported they had completed safe sport training in the last decade were subsequently asked to rate its effectiveness in fostering safe sport environments across Canada. Most respondents expressed a positive sentiment toward the training: 10.4% rated it as very effective, 55.7% as moderately effective, 20.5% as not very effective, and 6.5% as not effective at all.

### **Standardization of safe sport training**

An overwhelming majority (89.7%) of respondents who completed the survey's safe sport section believe that completion of safe sport training should be transferable across different levels of sport in Canada. The survey also indicated strong support for a national standard for safe sport training, with 90.0% of respondents in favour, 4.3% opposed, and 5.7% unsure.

## REMINDER OF THE COMMISSION'S PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

In its Preliminary Report, the Commission found that it is critical for the Government of Canada to assume a leadership role in harmonizing and coordinating safe sport education and training. We also acknowledged its role in improving the reach, content, and efficiency of such education and training across the sport system. The Commission therefore recommended that the Government of Canada:

1. Launch a public awareness campaign to inform the public about safe sport.
2. Take a leadership role in developing, in collaboration with stakeholders, provincial and territorial governments, and Indigenous groups, a National Safe Sport Education Program:
  - a. The Program would have chapters tailored to all stakeholders, including athletes (adults and children), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators, and members of board of directors.
  - b. Responsibility for delivering and updating the National Safe Sport Education Program would be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established. In the interim, these responsibilities would reside with Multisport Service Organization(s) mandated by Sport Canada and operating under its supervision.
  - c. The delivery of the National Safe Sport Education Program within federally funded sport organizations would be mandatory. The Government of Canada would encourage provincial and territorial governments to implement the same requirement for provincially and territorially funded sport organizations.
  - d. National Sport Organizations receiving federal funding would be required to modify their membership rules to require of their members that they deliver the National Safe Sport Program within their organization. The Government of Canada would encourage provincial and territorial governments to implement the same requirement for funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.
  - e. The Government of Canada would provide resources necessary for the delivery of the National Safe Sport Education Program to government-funded National Sport Organizations and their members, as well as government-funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and their members.
3. Ensure the continued delivery of the True Sport Program by transferring it to an independent Multisport Service Organization and to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is created.

For each preliminary recommendation, we outline below the feedback we received from participants in our engagement process following the Preliminary Report's publication, including feedback received during the National Summit organized by the Commission. We then set out our Calls to Action.



## **FEEDBACK ON A NATIONAL PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

### **Participants' feedback**

Participants in our engagement process generally agreed that a public awareness campaign would increase understanding of safe sport. Many felt that the campaign should target diverse populations and engage all participants in sport. Participants also emphasized that a campaign should model what safe sport looks like and highlight sport's benefits and its positive aspects. At the same time, they noted that it should include education on identifying maltreatment and abuse. As such, the campaign would need to strike an appropriate balance between promoting positive experiences in sport and addressing potential harms. We were also advised that the campaign should include real examples and true stories of victims and survivors. Participants also suggested that there be education on what bystanders can do.

Others stressed that safe sport is concerned not only with eliminating maltreatment in sport but also with addressing all forms of human rights violations. They suggested that the campaign include issues of diversity and inclusion, including disability, and educate athletes about their rights. Other participants believed that the campaign should raise awareness of available safe sport resources, including helplines, the Canadian Safe Sport Program, and its provincial and territorial counterparts. The Quebec campaign was cited as an example of such a campaign. It featured short clips on topics such as grooming, the role of parents, and bystander intervention. These were aired during the Quebec Games and concluded with information about the helpline.

### **Governments' feedback**

Provincial and territorial governments generally supported a national campaign to increase the public's awareness of safe sport and maltreatment in sport. They emphasized that such a campaign is urgently needed and should be led by the federal government. Government representatives suggested that the federal government should collaborate with provinces and territories to ensure a consistent approach to implementation, while taking into account each province's and territory's unique realities.

## **CALL TO ACTION: LAUNCHING A PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

Sport organizations have made extensive efforts to educate sport participants about safe sport, prohibited behaviours, and the resources and mechanisms available in cases of maltreatment or misconduct. However, our work reveals a continuing need to raise awareness across the broader Canadian population. This is essential to address the long-standing culture of silence in sport, the historical normalization of harmful practices, and entrenched cultural norms that persist within the system.

Everyone involved in sport plays a role in creating and maintaining safe, respectful, and inclusive sport environments. Limiting education to only certain groups undermines the collective responsibility required to prevent maltreatment.

Given participants' broad support, including provincial and territorial governments, the Commission remains of the view that the Government of Canada should launch a national public awareness campaign. It would inform the Canadian public about safe sport practices and the various forms of maltreatment and other prohibited behaviours in sport. We are also aware that education campaigns are the first step in changing awareness and behaviours.

The Commission expects that the federal government will look beyond the sport system to identify and hire subject-matter experts to assist in developing the campaign. It is also essential that the Government of Canada collaborate with provinces and territories to ensure consistent implementation, while taking into account each jurisdiction's unique circumstances. The campaign's launch and delivery should be managed by a National Multisport Service Organization contracted by the federal government. At the same time, the platforms, programs, and networks of National Sport Organizations should be used to amplify the campaign's reach and messaging.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**29. The Government of Canada lead the launch of a national public awareness campaign by:**

- a. **developing, in collaboration with subject-matter experts, a national public awareness campaign to inform the Canadian public about (a) safe sport practices, including core values in sport, best practices and good behaviours to foster safe sport environments and (b) the various forms of maltreatment and other prohibited behaviours in sport**
- b. **collaborating with provinces and territories to ensure consistent delivery of the national public awareness campaign while also taking into account each province and territory's unique circumstances**
- c. **contracting a National Multisport Service Organization to launch and deliver the national public awareness campaign**
- d. **collaborating with National Sport Organizations to help amplify messaging and disseminate information through their national platforms, programs, and networks.**

### FEEDBACK ON THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL SAFE SPORT EDUCATION PROGRAM

#### Participants' feedback

Many participants told us that safe sport education should not be a one-off initiative but should be delivered each year. Most participants agreed that e-modules alone are insufficient to drive meaningful behavioural change and that in-person training is essential. Some identified workshops or conferences as effective formats. Others suggested that both in-person and self-paced online formats should be available. Many agreed with our

preliminary recommendation for participant-specific chapters for athletes, coaches, parents, volunteers, and administrators. We were told that safe sport education and training should be free of charge to reach a wider audience and that it should even be part of school curricula.

Many participants agreed that, once established, the Centralized Sport Entity should coordinate the curriculum for a National Safe Sport Education Program. They saw value in having a single organization responsible for developing, updating, and delivering safe sport education because this would ensure consistency and keep the content current across all sport programs. However, some participants felt that safe sport education should not be the Centralized Sport Entity's responsibility. They saw a real and perceived conflict of interest in the entity being responsible for strategic leadership and oversight of the Canadian sport system while also developing education on safe sport. In their view, safe sport functions must remain independent from sport organizations.

We also heard that responsibility for (i) overseeing and updating the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and (ii) developing and delivering education and awareness initiatives tied to the Universal Code of Conduct should reside with an independent sport integrity agency, like the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. Participants noted that the knowledge and expertise required to deliver content-specific education already resides within the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. Its active involvement in investigations and complaint resolution provide real-time, practical insights that inform the ongoing development of the educational content related to the Universal Code of Conduct.

### **Governments' feedback**

Governments emphasized that safe sport education is essential to driving a cultural shift in the sport system. They viewed complaint mechanisms as reactive responses to maltreatment and stressed that education must be given equal—if not greater—priority in preventing harm and fostering safe sport environments.

Many governments expressed openness to collaborating with the Government of Canada on the development of a National Safe Sport Education Program. However, some expressed concern that the development and delivery of such a program through the Centralized Sport Entity could undermine or duplicate existing education initiatives. As examples they included the National Coaching Certification Program and other safe sport modules and training that governments have put in place. We were told that some of the Provincial and Territorial Multisport Service Organizations are currently providing safe sport education and resources to assist Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations in meeting funding requirements or legislation. Other governments saw the National Safe Sport Education Program as encroaching on their areas of jurisdiction, particularly education and sport. We were also told that provinces and territories have already delegated responsibility for safe sport education to the Coaching Association of Canada. Both provincial and territorial governments and the federal government have also aligned with and adhered to the National Coaching Certification Program.

Some provincial and territorial governments believed that the National Safe Sport Education Program's delivery could only be imposed as a condition of funding for sport organizations primarily funded by the federal government. They also opposed a federal requirement that National Sport Organizations direct their member

Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to deliver the program within their organization. They viewed this as falling outside federal jurisdiction.

### **CALLS TO ACTION: DEVELOPING A PAN-CANADIAN SAFE SPORT EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Education is critical to preventing maltreatment in sport. It raises awareness of rights and responsibilities, empowers athletes and other sport participants to recognize and report unsafe practices, and promotes a culture of respect, inclusion, and accountability. Education enables consistent application of safe sport policies and codes of conduct across the sport system, supports early identification of harm, and helps challenge entrenched norms and culture that perpetuate abuse or unsafe behaviours in sport.

A wide range of safe sport education and training initiatives are currently in place across the Canadian sport system. Delivered by various sport and multisport service organizations, these initiatives span grassroots to high-performance sport and reflect collective efforts to promote safer, more respectful, and inclusive sport environments. That said, through its work, the Commission identified several areas for improvement. To make meaningful change in the system, safe sport education and training must:

- **be delivered to all participants.** This includes not only coaches and athletes but also parents, officials, administrators, volunteers, support staff, and even children in age-appropriate ways. Currently, safe sport education and training is not consistently delivered to all these groups. This leaves gaps in awareness and understanding of safe and unsafe sport practices across the sport system.
- **go beyond identifying maltreatment in sport.** It must include education on broader social issues that impact athlete well-being and safety, including informed consent, grooming, anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- **vary in formats.** Safe sport education and training should not be limited solely to online modules and e-learning formats. Relying exclusively on these formats has proven ineffective. Interactive and in-person training is crucial to create meaningful engagement and behaviour change.
- **be delivered in a coordinated manner.** Safe sport education and training must be delivered through a coordinated and centralized approach to ensure consistency in messaging, reduce redundancy, and improve its overall impact. The current delivery model is fragmented, with multiple organizations offering overlapping or duplicative courses that lead to confusion and inefficiencies.

In 2023, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women identified similar areas needing change. In *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for all Athletes in Canada*, the Standing Committee recommended 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.<sup>1346</sup>
- 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.<sup>1347</sup>
- The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories, and Indigenous groups, work with organizations that fall outside the mandate of the Canadian sports system to 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
  - bystander intervention and adequate and appropriate responses to witnessing all forms of maltreatment.<sup>1348</sup>
- The Government of Canada ensure athletes receive information about their rights and available services they can access should they experience maltreatment in sports.<sup>1349</sup>
- 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.<sup>1350</sup>

Shortcomings in Canada's safe sport education and training have been noted by many. Coming back to our preliminary recommendation, participants generally agreed with the need for the development and delivery of a national safe sport education program. Provinces and territories also said they are open to collaborating with the Government of Canada in jointly developing such a program. We believe that provinces and territories would be more likely to support the initiative if they are involved from the outset. This type of federal and provincial/territorial collaboration has occurred before, for example, in the National Coaching Certification Program. To reflect the equal involvement of provinces and territories in its development, we will refer to such an initiative as the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program.

We maintain that the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program should be developed by governments in collaboration with subject-matter experts and include chapters tailored to meet the needs of all participants involved in sport. This would ensure that safe sport education is evidence based, consistent, accessible, and



specific to each role across the entire sport system. The participants shall include, at a minimum, athletes (adults and children), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators, and members of boards of directors.

The Commission maintains that the custody and responsibility for updating and delivering the program to the sport community should be delegated to a National Multisport Service Organization under Sport Canada's supervision. This would be until the Centralized Sport Entity is established, at which point responsibility should be transferred to it.

Some participants felt strongly about safe sport education remaining with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, which possesses the knowledge and expertise, and currently administers the Canadian Safe Sport Program. However, the Commission sees both a real and perceived conflict of interest in having the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport simultaneously administer the Canadian Safe Sport Program (thereby enforcing the Universal Code of Conduct) and deliver education on its content. In our view, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport recognized this conflict when it chose to discontinue the True Sport Program, citing its new role as the national safe sport administrator.

A better approach is to delegate the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to an entity separate from the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. The Centre should periodically share information and data on the reports it receives with the entity responsible for educating the sport community on safe sport. That said, we acknowledge and agree that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is better positioned to deliver education on the Canadian Safe Sport Program and its rules and report process.

The Commission also maintains its recommendation that the Government of Canada require all sport organizations receiving federal funding to deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to everyone involved in, affiliated with, or registered with their organization. It must also encourage provinces and territories, which will have taken part in the program's development, to implement the same requirement for sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding.

Finally, to ensure the broadest possible reach, we reiterate our recommendation that the Government of Canada provide funding and resources to develop and deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program not only to sport organizations receiving federal and provincial/territorial funding, but also to unfunded sport organizations wishing to participate on a voluntary basis.

## **Calls to Action**

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**30. The Government of Canada lead the development and delivery of a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program by:**

- a. taking a leadership role and engaging with provincial and territorial governments to jointly develop, in collaboration with subject-matter experts, a single, comprehensive, interactive, and efficient Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program for all participants involved in Canadian sport**
- b. contracting a National Multisport Service Organization, supervised by Sport Canada, to implement, update, and deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program. These responsibilities shall be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

**31. The Government of Canada transfer to the same National Multisport Service Organization, and to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12, once it is established, the educational component of the mandate that Sport Canada currently assigned to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport as part of the Canadian Safe Sport Program. This component pertains to the development and maintenance of e-learning courses and other educational resources aimed at educating participants and stakeholders on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and promoting safe sport environments for all participants. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport may retain this component of its mandate until the National Multisport Service Organization delivers the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program.**

### **Calls to Action (continued)**

**32. The Government of Canada keep the mandate it has given to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to design, develop, and maintain e-learning courses and other educational resources on the Canadian Safe Sport Program, its rules, and its report process.**

**33. The Government of Canada work to deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to the broadest possible range of sport participants by:**

- a. mandating that all sport organizations receiving federal funding deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to all individuals involved in, affiliated with, or registered with their organization**
- b. encouraging provincial and territorial governments to mandate that all sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to all individuals involved in, affiliated with, or registered with their organization**
- c. making the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program accessible to any sport organization, including unfunded national, provincial, territorial, and local-level organizations, wishing to deliver the program to individuals involved in, affiliated with, or registered with their organization on a voluntary basis**
- d. funding and providing the resources for developing and delivering the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to sport organizations receiving federal, provincial and territorial funding, and any other sport organizations wishing to avail themselves of the program on a voluntary basis.**

### **FEEDBACK ON REINSTATING THE TRUE SPORT PROGRAM**

There was broad consensus among participants in our engagement process that the True Sport Program should be brought back. We were told that True Sport represents the ultimate prevention strategy to eliminate maltreatment but also other issues in sport, including doping, cheating, disrespect, and fraudulent behaviours. There were mixed views on whether the Centralized Sport Entity should assume responsibility for True Sport.

Some participants suggested that the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada could take over the True Sport Program until the Centralized Sport Entity is established or for a longer period. Others believed that the Sport Information Resource Centre would be ideally positioned to host the program because:

- The Sport Information Resource Centre's mission is to advance safe, inclusive, and value-based sport. Stewardship of True Sport is directly aligned with their role in strengthening culture and practice across the sport sector.

- The Sport Information Resource Centre already has an extensive network spanning community clubs, National Sport Organizations, researchers, and policymakers, which would help ensure that True Sport values are adopted at all levels.
- The Centre's proven ability to translate research and evidence into practical tools, campaigns, and resources would enable the principles of True Sport to be shared widely and effectively.
- The Centre already plays a leading role in workshops, conferences, and cross-sector collaborations, and could readily expand these activities to deliver the True Sport Program nationwide.

Other participants suggested that the Canadian Safe Sport Collective could take on the True Sport Program in partnership with the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. The collective is a pan-Canadian collaboration that stems from Project Lighthouse. It is led by national and regional Multisport Service Organizations and works toward proactive and restorative safe sport programming at all levels of sport in Canada. The Collective believes in sport's potential to create healthy and resilient individuals and communities and develop good humans, not just athletes. Its mandate is to create and share education and resources that enable a proactive and restorative approach to safe sport programs in Canada.

#### **CALL TO ACTION: REINSTATING THE TRUE SPORT PROGRAM**

As we outlined earlier, the Commission finds that safe sport education for sport participants must go beyond simply identifying maltreatment and unsafe behaviours.

To foster a meaningful culture shift, education must define what safe sport looks like and emphasize sport's benefits and its positive aspects, including the promotion of core values and positive experiences.

In this respect, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's True Sport initiative has emphasized fairness, respect, inclusion, and responsibility. It has played and could continue to play a significant role in fostering a culture of positive engagement across the Canadian sport system. The Commission therefore remains of the view that the True Sport Program should be reinstated and expanded following its discontinuation by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

We leave it to the Government of Canada to identify the National Multisport Service Organization best suited to assume this role until the Centralized Sport Entity is established. However, we see a conflict in the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada taking on this responsibility. This is similar to how the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport recognized a conflict of interest in delivering the True Sport Program while also acting as the national safe sport administrator. In our view, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada cannot host the Safeguarding Tribunal and the Appeal Tribunal while simultaneously delivering the True Sport Program and engaging with the sport community. We also reiterate that the True Sport Program shall be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

**Call to Action**

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**34. The Government of Canada contract a National Multisport Service Organization to advance the mission and expand the reach of the True Sport Program across the Canadian sport system. Custody of the True Sport Program should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12, once it is established.**

**CALL TO ACTION: BYSTANDER TRAINING AND DUTIES TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT IN SPORT**

Participants in our engagement process repeatedly emphasized the importance of delivering bystander training to the sport community. It would ensure that all individuals involved in sport are equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognize, prevent, and respond appropriately when witnessing any form of maltreatment.

As we noted earlier in this chapter, provincial and territorial child welfare legislation imposes a legal duty to report suspected or known child abuse or neglect in certain circumstances. The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport also obligates any Canadian Safe Sport Program participant to report any instance of prohibited behaviour (as defined in the Code) committed by another participant. Despite the existence of these legal and contractual duties, participants in our engagement process described multiple instances when individuals were aware of maltreatment or abuse yet chose not to report it.

Consequently, the Commission is convinced that both the public awareness campaign and the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program, which would be developed and delivered under the Government of Canada's leadership in response to our Calls to Action 29 and 30, should include bystander training. By bystander training, we mean education on recognizing, preventing, and responding to harmful behaviours in sport, and on the legal duty to report child abuse and the contractual obligation to report prohibited behaviour under the Universal Code of Conduct.



## Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**35. The Government of Canada include bystander training, including education on the legal and contractual duties to report child abuse and maltreatment in sport, as part of the public awareness campaign and the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to be developed under the leadership of the Government of Canada in response to Calls to Action 29 and 30.**

## Background screenings

Background screenings serve a vital role in creating and maintaining safe environments, including work and sport environments.<sup>1351</sup> A background screening ensures that individuals in positions of trust or authority within sport organizations, such as coaches, staff, and volunteers, meet certain integrity requirements to participate in sport.<sup>1352</sup> Screenings help identify individuals who may pose a risk to the organization or its participants.<sup>1353</sup>

Sport organizations across the country have developed policies and procedures to screen their coaches, staff, and volunteers.<sup>1354</sup> In certain jurisdictions, sport organizations are required to implement screening policies to receive government funding.

Although it may not always be mandatory, background screening has become a common practice in the sport community.<sup>1355</sup> However, as the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's report entitled "Safe Sport in Canada" pointed out, the use of background checks remains inconsistent.<sup>1356</sup>

The Coaching Association of Canada has developed resources to help sport organizations develop their background screening procedures.<sup>1357</sup> These include a reference document called the "Background Screening Policy and Process Considerations for Sport Organizations," the "Background Screening Matrix," and a template screening policy.<sup>1358</sup>

In essence, the association encourages sport organizations to assess the risk level presented by each applicant—whether a coach, staff, or volunteer—and to tailor their screening practices accordingly.<sup>1359</sup> Individuals in positions with the greatest access, authority, or responsibility—paid head coaches, travel team coaches, and team managers—are generally considered to pose the highest level of risk and therefore warrant the most rigorous screening measures.<sup>1360</sup>

## SCREENING TOOLS

The screening tools include:

- interviews
- letters of reference or reference checks
- criminal record checks
- vulnerable sector checks
- screening disclosure forms which can, for example, ask the participant to disclose if they have been previously sanctioned by a sport governing body.<sup>1361</sup>

There is an important distinction between a criminal record check and a vulnerable sector check. Criminal record checks determine whether a person has been convicted of a crime.<sup>1362</sup> In contrast, vulnerable sector checks are a more thorough verification that includes a criminal record check, a local police information check, and suspended (pardoned) information for sex-based offences.<sup>1363</sup> Vulnerable sector checks were created to protect children and vulnerable persons. These checks can be conducted only by the police agency where the applicant lives.<sup>1364</sup> The Coaching Association of Canada does not recommend criminal record checks because they do not contain local police information.<sup>1365</sup> It recommends vulnerable sector checks for coaches in high-risk positions (head coaches and travel team coaches) when the coach first joins the organization, in addition to other forms of screening.<sup>1366</sup> Some sport organizations rely on private companies that offer a variety of background checks.<sup>1367</sup>

## SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

Even though there is no legislative requirement for National Sport Organizations to implement screening policies, most of these organizations have adopted one.<sup>1368</sup>

Coaches working for National Sport Organizations must provide a police record check for the organization to receive federal funding for their salaries. Specifically, coaches must submit one of the following, or an equivalent, to their National Sport Organization:

- Enhanced Police Information Center check (E-PIC)
- Vulnerable Sector Search (VSS)
- Vulnerable Sector Verification (VSV)
- Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC).<sup>1369</sup>

In certain jurisdictions screening policies are mandatory. For instance, in Ontario, Provincial Sport Organizations must have a screening policy to be recognized by the province and receive government funding.<sup>1370</sup> However, the type of required screening is not specified.

Similarly, Designated Provincial Sport Organizations in British Columbia must have a policy outlining “procedures that uphold the *Criminal Record Review Act*, including requirements for employees and volunteers to obtain Criminal Record Checks.”<sup>1371</sup> Even when background screening policies are not required as a condition of funding, sport organizations may voluntarily choose to implement such policies for their personnel.

At the grassroots level, sport clubs and community associations can choose to develop and implement background screening policies for persons in positions of trust or authority, such as coaches and volunteers.<sup>1372</sup>

### **PARTICIPANTS’ PERSPECTIVES ON SCREENINGS**

There is a broad consensus that background screenings, which participants often referred to as “background checks,” are an essential tool to prevent abuse and maltreatment. Many participants, including victims, survivors, and parents of children who were abused, strongly believe that screenings must be mandatory. This is essential when hiring coaches who will be interacting with children or other vulnerable persons.

Participants emphasized the importance of background checks for coaches because of the significant power imbalance between coaches and athletes. There was also a consensus that the requirement for background checks should extend to all individuals in positions of trust. This includes officials, referees, and volunteers who work with children and other vulnerable persons, such as those with disabilities.

Sport organizations often require background checks as part of their onboarding process for coaches and others in positions of authority, like officials and referees. Most National Sport Organizations have screening policies that require criminal record checks for individuals interacting with the public and vulnerable persons.

Although screening practices are common in sport, participants expressed concern that there are no standardized screening requirements across the country. In particular, screening procedures at the grassroots level of sport may not be as detailed or strict. We were also reminded that screening procedures can place an administrative burden on organizations that are already facing financial and resource limitations.

As a remedy for inconsistent screening policies, participants suggested creating standard national screening practices and guidelines that would apply consistently across all jurisdictions. Others recommended making screenings transferable between jurisdictions and sport organizations to reduce the burden of separate screenings.

Throughout our discussions, many participants indicated that current screening practices were not enough to protect the public. There was a widespread view that more needs to be done to enhance background checks and better protect the public.

On multiple occasions, we were informed of situations that raise serious questions about the effectiveness and enforcement of background screening policies and practices. For example:

- Individuals with lifetime coaching bans were still coaching at clubs and associations that claimed to have screening policies in place.
- Individuals were hired after completing screening processes. Only later the sport organization discovered that they had prior charges or convictions for sexual offences.
- Sport organizations and individuals who were contacted for reference checks were aware of past charges, convictions, or suspensions, but did not reveal this information.

Many participants were also concerned that screenings are not periodic. In most cases, background checks are conducted only when an individual first joins an organization. This could be insufficient because some individuals remain with organizations for many years.

We also heard that an increasing number of sport organizations, including numerous National Sport Organizations, do not require their coaches, officials, or other individuals occupying positions of trust or authority to obtain a vulnerable sector check. Many participants identified this as a concerning development because vulnerable sector checks are more comprehensive than ordinary criminal background checks. Participants suggested on numerous occasions that vulnerable sectors checks should be compulsory for all individuals working or volunteering with children or other vulnerable persons.

We were advised that vulnerable sector checks are becoming less common partly because an increasing number of sport organizations are relying on private companies, rather than local police services, to conduct criminal background checks. While private companies can process these checks online with a fast turnaround time, in some cases, they are also telling sport organizations that vulnerable sector checks are not necessary.

We also heard that some private companies' background checks are broader than criminal record checks. Participants noted that vulnerable sector checks require more paperwork and processing, especially when compared to the background checks that private companies offer. We were also told that vulnerable sector checks, which only local police services can conduct, are significantly more expensive than criminal background checks.

## REMINDER OF THE COMMISSION'S PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Screening processes for anyone who has authority, access, or influence over athletes (especially minors), including coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees, are essential to maintaining safe sport environments. Yet, the implementation and scope of such processes remain inconsistent nationwide.

In its Preliminary Report, the Commission recommended two alternative approaches to standardizing background screenings in sport across the country.

### Option 1: Mandatory vulnerable sector checks

As a first option, we recommended that the Government of Canada mandate that sport organizations receiving federal funding conduct vulnerable sector checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes. We also recommended that it should be mandatory for these checks to be conducted periodically. We then recommended that the Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments to implement the same requirement for provincially and territorially funded sport organizations. As an incentive, we recommended that the federal government subsidize the cost of mandatory vulnerable sector checks for all sport organizations receiving federal funding and provide financial contributions to provinces and territories to allow them to subsidize the cost of mandatory vulnerable sector checks for sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding.

To further expand the use of vulnerable sector checks, we also recommended that the federal government make federal funding conditional on National Sport Organizations revising their membership rules. Specifically, National Sport Organizations would be required to mandate that their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations conduct appropriate vulnerable sector checks for their sport participants. We further recommended that the Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments to follow suit by requiring their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to impose the same requirement on their member Community Sport Organizations, provided these costs are assumed by the federal government.

We suggested that, once established, the Centralized Sport Entity should be responsible for subsidizing the cost of mandatory vulnerable sector checks. In the meantime, we recommended that these responsibilities be assumed by Sport Canada.

### Option 2: Standardized background screening policy

As a second option, we recommended that the Government of Canada take a leadership role in developing—in collaboration with Multisport Service Organizations, provincial and territorial governments, and Indigenous groups—a standardized background screening policy. Adoption and implementation of the policy would be required by the Government of Canada as a condition of federal funding. We also recommended that the



Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments to implement the same requirement for provincially and territorially funded sport organizations. As an incentive, we recommended that it subsidize the costs of background screenings for sport organizations receiving federal funding and provide financial contributions to provinces and territories to allow them to subsidize these costs.

To further expand the screening policy's implementation, we also recommended that the federal government make federal funding conditional on National Sport Organizations modifying their membership rules. These changes would require that their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations also adopt and implement the policy. We further recommended that the Government of Canada encourage provinces and territories to do the same. That is, their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations would have to impose the same requirement on their member Community Sport Organizations, as long as the implementation costs are assumed by the federal government.

We suggested that, until the Centralized Sport Entity is established, responsibility for developing and overseeing the standardized background screening policy, and for providing the funding and financial contributions needed to offset implementation costs for sport organizations, should rest with Sport Canada.

## **FEEDBACK ON THE BEST APPROACH TO STANDARDIZING BACKGROUND SCREENINGS**

### **Participants' feedback**

There was broad consensus among participants that background screenings should be mandatory in sport. Many noted that their organizations had already implemented such requirements. Participants also expressed strong support for a nationwide, standardized, risk-based background screening policy.

By "risk-based" policy, we mean a policy that tailors screening tools to a role or position's risk level and places heavier scrutiny in higher-risk positions while using lighter checks for lower-risk roles. The objective is to balance security needs with efficiency and proportionality. For example, the role of a community-based support staff member might pose less risk than that of a national team coach travelling internationally with athletes.

Many highlighted shortcomings in relying solely on vulnerable sector checks. They indicated that a broader background screening policy, including tools such as criminal record checks, screening disclosure forms, letters of reference, and interviews, would better address these gaps. Others suggested that additional screening tools, such as a review of social media and registries of sanctioned individuals, should be incorporated into a comprehensive screening policy.

Participants also raised concerns regarding the value of vulnerable sector checks. Some viewed them as outdated and others emphasized that they are costly, administratively burdensome, and time consuming. They believed that mandating vulnerable sector checks for all participants would cause unnecessary delays. Participants also noted that sex-related offences have been ineligible for pardon since 2012, and that, for individuals born after 1994, vulnerable sector checks do not reveal anything beyond what is already included in an Enhanced Police Record Check.

Finally, some participants noted that sport organizations that are not affiliated with National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, including many Para sport clubs, should also be required to conduct background screenings. They noted that the only way to achieve this outcome is by mandating background screening through provincial and territorial legislation. As an example, participants highlighted that Quebec's Bill 45, which amended the *Act respecting safety in recreation and sports*, introduced new provisions that require sport federations, sports bodies, and recreation bodies in Quebec to conduct background verifications.

### **Governments' feedback**

Provincial and territorial governments noted that, in certain communities, background screening requirements might create additional barriers to participation in sport because not everyone can regularly obtain criminal record checks. We also noted that criminal record checks are valid only as of the date they are issued, meaning individuals may commit offences after a check has been completed. Participants further observed that deciding what offences should disqualify someone can be challenging because thresholds vary. They questioned, for example, whether an impaired driving offence should result in a coach's removal from the sport organization. Perceptions of what is acceptable or disqualifying may vary across jurisdictions.

Other governments believed that background screening—whether through vulnerable sector checks or a standardized screening policy—could be imposed only for sport organizations primarily funded by the Government of Canada. They also argued that the Government of Canada could not require National Sport Organizations to change their membership rules to impose screening obligations on Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations since this would not fall within federal jurisdiction.

### **CALLS TO ACTION: A UNIVERSAL STANDARD FOR BACKGROUND SCREENING**

Sport organizations across the country have developed policies and processes to screen applicant coaches, staff, and volunteers to ensure they meet important integrity requirements to participate or otherwise be involved in sport. The screening tools most commonly used include vulnerable sector checks, criminal record checks, disclosure forms, reference checks, interviews, and, most recently, social media screening.

Despite these efforts, the implementation of background screenings remains inconsistent across jurisdictions and among sport organizations, largely because requirements vary. In some cases, provincial legislation mandates screenings. In others, they are required as a condition of government funding. In many instances, they are implemented on a voluntary basis.

Sport Canada requires National Sport Organizations to obtain background checks from coaches as a condition for receiving federal funding for their salaries. These checks include “an Enhanced Police Information Center (E-PIC) check, Vulnerable Sector Search (VSS), Vulnerable Sector Verification (VSV), Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC), or equivalent.”<sup>1373</sup>

At the provincial and territorial level, Ontario requires Provincial Sport Organizations to have “risk-based screening policies and procedures in place to ensure the protection of children participating in sport.”<sup>1374</sup> These are a prerequisite to be recognized by the province and receive government funding. British Columbia requires that its designated Provincial Sport Organizations have a “Criminal Record Check and Screening” policy. These policies must “outline procedures that uphold the *Criminal Record Review Act*, including requirements for employees and volunteers to obtain Criminal Record Checks procedures.”<sup>1375</sup> In Quebec, Bill 45—*An act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*,<sup>1376</sup> introduced new provisions requiring sport federations, sports bodies and recreation bodies to conduct background verifications for persons required to work with, or to be regularly in contact with minors or persons with disabilities.

The Commission also observes that most National Sport Organizations have screening policies requiring criminal record checks for individuals who interact with the public and vulnerable persons, including children. However, these checks are often less comprehensive than vulnerable sector checks, which include both a police information check and an assessment to determine whether an individual has a record of a suspension (pardon) for sexual offences. The primary reason for this gap appears to be the prohibitive cost of and time required for vulnerable sector checks, which can be conducted only by local police services.

The consistent implementation of harmonized background screening procedures for anyone who has authority, access, or influence over athletes (especially minors) is a fundamental component of a sound prevention strategy. The Government of Canada has a vital leadership role to play in establishing and supporting this national standard.

We recognize that many participants raised concerns that vulnerable sector checks are outdated, costly, administratively burdensome, and sometimes not comprehensive. We also recognize that a standardized background screening policy allows for greater flexibility in screening tools. We therefore recommend that the Government of Canada develop a risk-based, standardized background screening policy (Option 2). This is preferable to mandating that federally funded National Sport Organizations conduct vulnerable sector checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes (Option 1).

The standardized background screening policy should be risk based. This means that it should tailor screening tools to the level of risk associated with each role (including but not limited to coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes). This approach ensures a balance between security needs and efficiency. It also maintains proportionality and avoids undue burdens on sport organizations.

Regarding the policy's content, we believe it should include, at a minimum, the following screening tools:

- vulnerable sector checks
- criminal record checks
- screening disclosure forms
- reference checks
- interviews
- social media screening.

It is also essential that the policy incorporates, as a screening tool, a requirement for sport organizations to verify individuals against the Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals, which we discuss later in this chapter. This would allow sport organizations to determine whether sport participants are subject to restrictions, probation, suspension, or permanent ineligibility, according to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport or any of its provincial and territorial counterparts. The policy shall also stipulate that background screenings be conducted at regular intervals to ensure that all individuals with authority, access, or influence over athletes, including children, meet the integrity requirements to participate in sport.

In the Preliminary Report, our recommendation was that all governments jointly develop a standardized background screening policy, which would then be mandated as a condition of federal or provincial and territorial funding. After careful consideration, we think that a more effective approach would be for each government—federal and provincial/territorial—to develop its own universal background screening policy. This would allow provinces and territories to tailor their policies to local needs and the specific characteristics of their communities and populations. It would also let them decide whether to tie the policy to provincial or territorial funding or, as Quebec did with Bill 45, to mandate background screening through legislation to extend their reach beyond funded sport organizations. This second choice is preferable.

Consequently, we call on the Government of Canada develop a National Background Screening Policy for adoption and implementation by federally funded sport organizations. Additionally, we recommend that a provincial or territorial background screening policy be established as a criterion for provincial or territorial Safe Sport Programs to qualify for federal funding under the Multilateral Sport Framework outlined in Chapter 10.

## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**36. The Government of Canada develop a National Background Screening Policy in collaboration with subject-matter experts. The policy shall include, as a mandatory screening tool, a verification against the Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals, which will be implemented in response to our Calls to Action 41 to 45. Custody and responsibility to review and oversee the National Background Screening Policy shall be assigned to a National Multisport Service Organization under the supervision of Sport Canada. These responsibilities shall be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12, once it is established.**

**37. The Government of Canada mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding adopt and implement the National Background Screening Policy and increase core funding to subsidize the costs of implementing the National Background Screening Policy.**

**38. The Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments to develop a “Universal Screening Policy” as an additional eligibility criterion for provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs to qualify for federal funding under the Multilateral Sport Framework (as outlined in Chapter 10).**

## Data collection

### REMINDER OF THE COMMISSION'S PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATION

The Commission recommended, in its Preliminary Report, that the Government of Canada create a national tool to regularly collect and analyze data on key indicators. This would help measure and assess the health and safety of sport environments across the country. Such data would include information on sport participation, safe sport complaints, and the outcomes of those complaints.

Experts note that the continued emergence of high-profile maltreatment cases in the media underscores the urgent need for effective, evidence-based approaches to prevent and address maltreatment in sport programming, now and in the future.<sup>1377</sup>



In their view, this is essential to advancing the creation of safe sport environments and ensuring that all participants can fully realize sport's benefits.<sup>1378</sup> Equally important is ensuring that this evidence is accessible to everyone involved in sport, including coaches, parents, officials, volunteers, support staff, and other interested parties.<sup>1379</sup>

### **GOVERNMENTS' FEEDBACK ON MEASURING SPORT ENVIRONMENTS' HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Provincial and territorial governments noted that the federal government cannot collect data in areas that fall within their jurisdiction. They indicated that the sharing of information must take into account applicable privacy and access-to-information legislation.

### **CALLS TO ACTION: COLLECTING EVIDENCE TO GROUND PREVENTION EFFORTS**

While we acknowledge that there may be some constraints, governments should collaborate to share non-personal data to support evidence-based decision making and strengthen safe sport outcomes across Canada.

An easy first step would be for governments to consolidate data collected through the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, along with data from existing provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms. This consolidation should include, for example:

- information on the types of prohibited behaviours reported
- methods of submission
- ages of impacted individuals
- the sport and level of sport involved
- the roles of the reporting individual, the reported individual, and the impacted individual.

As experts have explained, prevention measures such as safe sport education and background screenings are unlikely to be effective in the long term if they are not grounded in theory and empirical evidence.<sup>1380</sup> The same is true of mechanisms for responding to maltreatment in sport.

### Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**39. The Government of Canada establish a comprehensive national tool to regularly collect and analyze data on key indicators that measure and assess the health and safety of sport environments in Canada. Safe sport reports and their outcomes must be included in the data collected.**

**40. The Government of Canada collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to consolidate data collected by provinces, territories, or their centralized complaint mechanisms or safe sport authorities.**

In Chapter 12, we also call upon the Government of Canada to systematically measure and assess data on sport participation across the country.

## Public registries of sanctioned individuals

In Chapter 10, we reviewed the complaint mechanisms operating at the national, provincial, territorial, and local levels of sport across the country. Our findings reveal inconsistencies, misalignment, and limited reach. These findings highlight the need for a coordinated approach to responding to maltreatment in sport.

Here we review the public databases and registries maintained by centralized complaint mechanisms and sport organizations that list individuals whose eligibility to participate in sport has been restricted.

We first review the registries created under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program and the new Canadian Safe Sport Program, as well as those that National Sport Organizations maintain. We then discuss the registries at the provincial and territorial level, including centralized registries and those implemented by Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. Then we share participants' perspectives on registries of sanctioned individuals.

We then briefly explore grassroots registries and a registry maintained in the United States by the Centre for SafeSport.

### THE FORMER ABUSE-FREE SPORT REGISTRY

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport requires the maintenance of a searchable, publicly available database or registry of individuals whose eligibility to participate in sport has been restricted.<sup>1381</sup>

Until August 1, 2025, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, which was tasked with administering the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, was responsible for maintaining and updating the Abuse-Free Sport Registry. This responsibility was part of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program and in accordance with the Universal Code of Conduct.<sup>1382</sup> The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport now maintains the registry under the Universal Code of Conduct (see below).<sup>1383</sup>

The Abuse-Free Sport Registry was a searchable database of participants who were subject to the Universal Code of Conduct and the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, and whose eligibility to participate in sport had been restricted—because of either provisional measures or sanctions.<sup>1384</sup>

This registry was created during the former Abuse-Free Sport Program's first year of operations, sometime between June 2022 and June 2023.<sup>1385</sup> It represented a response to the public disclosure requirements under the Universal Code of Conduct.<sup>1386</sup> The registry was made available to the public on the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner's website on March 28, 2024.<sup>1387</sup>

The Abuse-Free Sport Registry's primary purpose was to “reduce risks to the safety of all members of the sport community.”<sup>1388</sup> More specifically, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada hoped that the registry would help reduce safety risks by providing another tool to safeguard the general public against maltreatment.<sup>1389</sup> They also hoped it would contribute to deterring and denouncing maltreatment and help prevent it from reoccurring.<sup>1390</sup>

Sanctions were added to the Abuse-Free Sport Registry when the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes restricted a respondent's eligibility to participate in sport.<sup>1391</sup> However, there was an exception to this general rule: sanctions imposed on minors or other vulnerable persons were not automatically disclosed in the registry.<sup>1392</sup> Instead, such disclosure occurred on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with applicable policies and procedures.<sup>1393</sup>

When sanctions were added to the registry, the following information about the individual facing sanctions or provisional measures was made public:

- full name
- city/province/territory
- program signatory affiliation
- prohibited behaviour under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport
- restriction(s) in effect (such as probation, eligibility restrictions, or suspension)
- date of issue
- period in effect.<sup>1394</sup>

The Abuse-Free Sport Registry only included information about participants who had signed the consent form discussed in Chapter 10, after their sport organization joined the former Abuse-Free Sport Program.

### **CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM PUBLIC REGISTRY**

Since April 1, 2025, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport maintains the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry, which is published on its website.<sup>1395</sup> The purpose of the registry is to achieve the objective of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, which is to foster a safe sport environment.<sup>1396</sup>

The Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules set out the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's duty to maintain the public registry.<sup>1397</sup> They also describe the circumstances in which a sanction or provisional measure must be published in it.<sup>1398</sup>

The rules specify that the registry must be a searchable public database.<sup>1399</sup> It contains information on participants whose eligibility to participate in sport has been restricted in some way, along with summary information noting the specific violation and the restrictions imposed.<sup>1400</sup>

Where sanctions include a suspension, permanent ineligibility or, at the Centre's discretion, other sanctions that restrict eligibility to participate in sport, they are listed in the registry for the period they are in effect.<sup>1401</sup> However, as a general rule, sanctions and provisional measures involving minors are not published in the registry, although they may be published exceptionally on a case-by-case basis.<sup>1402</sup> The registry includes both provisional measures<sup>1403</sup> and sanctions, including sanctions under review or appeal.<sup>1404</sup>

The Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry contains the following information about restricted individuals:

- full name
- city, province/territory
- adopting sport organization
- prohibited behaviour(s) under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (such as boundary transgressions and physical maltreatment)
- restriction(s) in effect (such as eligibility restriction(s), probation, suspension, ineligibility)
- date of issue of the restriction(s)
- period in effect of the restriction(s)
- summary report (if available).<sup>1405</sup>

The registry contains information on individuals who are subject to the Canadian Safe Sport Program.<sup>1406</sup> According to the Program's rules, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport may also recognize, enforce, and publish on the registry "sanctions imposed on a participant by a professional regulatory body, or by a domestic or international sport organization(s) outside of the [Canadian Safe Sport Program]."<sup>1407</sup> This includes sanctions from "the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, where the sanctions have been imposed on a participant for conduct consistent with behaviour prohibited under the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport]."<sup>1408</sup>

We also note that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport maintains the "CCES Database" according to Rule 19.5 of the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules.<sup>1409</sup> This is a "database with information on all resolutions and sanctions."<sup>1410</sup> It includes information related to sanctions and resolutions that were not posted to the registry (for example, where the sanction did not restrict the respondent's ability to participate in sport). It also includes sanctions that are no longer posted on the registry because they are no longer in effect.<sup>1411</sup>

Adopting sport organizations can obtain information from the CCES Database with the subject participant's consent.<sup>1412</sup>

## **REGISTRIES MAINTAINED BY NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

There is currently no statutory requirement for National Sport Organizations to maintain registries of individuals who have been sanctioned for maltreatment in sport. It is also not a condition to receive federal funding.<sup>1413</sup> Nevertheless, a growing number of National Sport Organizations are maintaining public registries detailing sanctions for maltreatment in sport, including Athletics Canada, Skate Canada, Gymnastics Canada, and Swimming Canada.<sup>1414</sup>

We observed that the registries that National Sport Organizations created typically include individuals whose ability to participate in sport has been restricted. They list the sanctioned individual's name, the sanction type, and the period it is in effect. The level of detail varies by registry.

A registry's scope is typically limited to the sport organization's individual members, although some extend to members of their affiliated Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.<sup>1415</sup>

For example, Athletics Canada maintains a public registry of suspended individuals on its website.<sup>1416</sup> A previous version of Athletics Canada's Code of Conduct (2021) specifically indicated that Athletics Canada would maintain a public registry of respondents who have been sanctioned or whose eligibility to participate in sport has been limited in accordance with the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.<sup>1417</sup> However, the current version, the "Code of Ethics and Conduct Policy (AC Code) (2023)," does not mention the registry.<sup>1418</sup>



Athletics Canada's registry of suspended individuals continues to be accessible to the public. It includes the names of the individuals, their status (for instance, "suspended"), the effective period of the sanction, and the jurisdiction. In some cases, there is a link to the decision that imposed the sanction.<sup>1419</sup> We note that the registry includes individuals who are sanctioned at the national level and those who were sanctioned by provincial and territorial branch mechanisms.<sup>1420</sup>

Gymnastics Canada also provides a publicly available list of suspended or expelled members in accordance with its Discipline and Complaints Policy.<sup>1421</sup> The list is publicly available and includes the name of individuals, province, role, start date, status, and scope of the suspension.<sup>1422</sup> The reason for the sanction is not indicated. Once their suspension is served the member is removed from the list.

Skate Canada is another National Sport Organization that maintains and regularly updates a public registry of individuals who are currently suspended or expelled from the organization.<sup>1423</sup> According to Skate Canada's Code of Ethics,<sup>1424</sup> the registry identifies individuals who are prohibited from participating in any activities, events, or competitions that Skate Canada licenses, endorses, or sponsors. The listed information includes the individual's name, membership category, provincial or territorial affiliation, the nature of the sanction (suspension or expulsion), and its effective period.<sup>1425</sup>

The list explicitly states that it is not a historical record of all past suspensions but instead a current list of active sanctions.<sup>1426</sup> Additionally, the registry does not include the names of minors serving suspensions and it may not be exhaustive.<sup>1427</sup>

Finally, Swimming Canada's Discipline and Complaints Policy sets out that Swimming Canada may publish a complaint's outcome on their website.<sup>1428</sup> This includes the policies that have been violated, the name of the individual(s), and the type of sanction imposed, if any. It further states that Swimming Canada shall not publish the personal information of minors or other vulnerable participants.<sup>1429</sup> The list of members or registrants who have been found to violate Swimming Canada's policies and procedures can be found on its website.<sup>1430</sup> The site indicates that it is not a comprehensive list of all sanctions.<sup>1431</sup>

## **REGISTRIES AT THE PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL LEVEL**

There are currently no statutory requirements for Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations to maintain a public registry of sanctions for maltreatment in sport. Nor is it a condition to receive government funding.

Even so, there are some examples of such registries at the provincial and territorial level of sport. In Saskatchewan, for example, Sask Sport maintains a centralized registry of sanctions related to its member sport organizations. There are also some examples of Provincial Sport Organizations who voluntarily maintain public registries.

### Centralized registry of sanctioned individuals

To our knowledge, Sask Sport's Registry of Sanctions is the only example of a public centralized registry at the provincial and territorial level of sport. It lists sanctioned individual members of Sask Sport who have been suspended for a period of one year or more due to a breach of the Code of Conduct, the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent Address Maltreatment in Sport, or in some cases, other Provincial Sport Organization policies.<sup>1432</sup> The Registry of Sanctions is maintained in accordance with section 52 to 54 of the Discipline and Complaints Policy.<sup>1433</sup> Provincial Sport Organizations are obliged to adopt this policy to be a member of Sask Sport. This membership is required for them to be eligible to receive funding.<sup>1434</sup>

The information listed in this registry includes:

- full name
- affiliated Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization
- role (such as coach, member, parent)
- type of violation (such as Code of Conduct)
- details on the suspension's duration.<sup>1435</sup>

Members of a Provincial Sport Organization who have received a long-term suspension are ineligible to register with any Provincial Sport Organization in Saskatchewan affiliated with Sask Sport.<sup>1436</sup> In turn, Provincial Sport Organizations are responsible for verifying the list to ensure that they do not permit a suspended coach or activity leader to join their organization.<sup>1437</sup>

### Registries maintained by Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations

Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations can choose to maintain a public registry of sanctioned or suspended members. Their registries are generally set out in the organizations' policies, like a discipline and complaints policy. For instance, Ontario Volleyball<sup>1438</sup> and Gymnastics Ontario<sup>1439</sup> are examples of Provincial Sport Organizations with public registries of suspended members.

Ontario Volleyball maintains a publicly available list of infractions, suspensions, and conditional memberships,<sup>1440</sup> in accordance with its Discipline and Complaints Policy.<sup>1441</sup> The list includes the names of the individuals who have been permanently expelled, suspended, or temporarily suspended. The listed suspensions identify which provisions were violated in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport or in Ontario Volleyball's Code of Conduct.<sup>1442</sup> This list serves to uphold transparency and accountability in enforcing disciplinary measures imposed under the Universal Code of Conduct. The Discipline and Complaints Policy stipulates that disciplinary decisions will be publicly available unless the decision maker expressly determined otherwise.<sup>1443</sup>

Gymnastics Ontario is another example of a Provincial Sport Organization that maintains a public registry of sanctioned members on its website.<sup>1444</sup> This is a list of members who have either been suspended or expelled, or who are on probation.<sup>1445</sup> The list includes the member's name, jurisdiction, role, details about the sanction(s) and, if applicable, the disciplinary decision.<sup>1446</sup> According to Gymnastics Ontario's Discipline and Complaints Policy and Appeal Policy, decisions imposed by the discipline panel or the appeal panel are considered a matter of public record, unless the respective panel decides otherwise.<sup>1447</sup>

BC Soccer maintains a "list of organizations and adults that have recently received a sanction from BC Soccer Association."<sup>1448</sup> In November 2025, media outlets published a story about a national team coach convicted of sexual assault who was not included on any public sanctions list published by either Canada Soccer or BC Soccer.<sup>1449</sup> When asked why the coach had not been included in BC Soccer's public list of sanctioned individuals, BC Soccer responded that their database reflects only individuals banned by the provincial governing body.<sup>1450</sup> This prompted the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to call for a national registry of sanctioned individuals, describing the situation as "a perfect example of a serious gap that needs to be fixed."<sup>1451</sup> To our knowledge, Canada Soccer does not maintain a public list or registry of sanctioned individuals within their organization.

## LOCAL AND GRASSROOTS REGISTRIES

The Commission is not aware of any public registries of sanctioned or suspended members maintained at a local level or grassroots level by a sport club, community association, or other grassroots sport organization.

## PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON REGISTRIES OF SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS

Individuals who are banned from participating in sport can migrate across sport organizations, move to different jurisdictions or sport settings, and continue their sport involvement despite being actively suspended. Participants told us that people and organizations often do not know when coaches and other individuals have been sanctioned because this information is generally not well or consistently communicated throughout the sport community.

Many identified the need for a national registry that would include information about sanctioned individuals from all levels of sport. While registries of sanctions currently exist at various levels of sport, participants noted that this fragmented network is insufficient to effectively identify which individuals have been sanctioned or suspended from participating in sport.

In many cases, sanctions are not recorded in any registry because the complaints originate within sport organizations that were neither signatories to the former Abuse Free Sport Program nor to the Canadian Safe Sport Program. These organizations also do not maintain their own sanctions registry. Another issue is that the few registries maintained by sport organizations are generally difficult to find on the organizations' websites, and the public remains largely unaware of their existence.

Most of the participants we met with supported the creation of a national registry of sanctions. They noted that there should be a single registry that contains information about all sanctioned participants, including coaches, athletes, and individuals in leadership, governance, and administrative roles. That said, participants affirmed that a person's name should be added to such a registry only after due process has been completed, and only for certain types of sanctions like suspensions.

Sport organizations and governments suggested that a centralized registry of sanctions would help sport organizations, especially smaller organizations or those led by volunteers, to more efficiently verify an individual's history in sport. Additionally, incorporating information from multiple jurisdictions would help prevent sanctioned individuals from moving to another jurisdiction to continue coaching or participating in sport while under active suspension.

### **REGISTRY OF SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS MAINTAINED BY THE US CENTER FOR SAFESPORT**

In the United States, the US Center for SafeSport maintains a registry of sanctions.<sup>1452</sup> Called the Centralized Disciplinary Database, it lists individuals from across the country who have been banned from sport by the US Center for SafeSport.

For context, the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017* established the US Center for SafeSport.<sup>1453</sup> It is empowered to “serve as the independent national safe sport organization for the United States.”<sup>1454</sup>

The US Center of SafeSport then adopted the SafeSport Code. This code applies to the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee, National Governing Bodies, and Local Affiliated Organizations and their Participants, as defined in the SafeSport Code.<sup>1455</sup> The code includes provisions on its jurisdictions, applicable procedures, prohibited conduct, reporting, resolution procedures, temporary measures, and sanctions.<sup>1456</sup>

Engaging in or tolerating conduct prohibited by the SafeSport Code—such as child abuse, sexual misconduct, or emotional and physical misconduct—constitutes a violation of the Code.<sup>1457</sup> If there is sufficient evidence that a participant violated the Code, the organization decides whether this individual can participate in sport and to what extent. The Center may impose sanctions, which could include a suspension or ineligibility.<sup>1458</sup>

Under section 220541(a)(1)(G) of chapter 36 of the *United States Code*, the US Center for SafeSport is required to “publish and maintain a publicly accessible internet website that contains a comprehensive list of adults who are barred by the Center.”<sup>1459</sup>

This disciplinary database includes the name of the individual, their city, state, sport affiliation(s), misconduct, sanction, date of issue, and adjudicating body.<sup>1460</sup> The database is searchable with key words and can be filtered using criteria such as city, state, sport affiliation, and adjudicating body.<sup>1461</sup>

## **PUBLIC ONLINE SURVEY CONDUCTED AS PART OF THE COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES**

The Commission's public online survey asked survey respondents about their views on registries of sanctioned individuals in sport. The following results reflect the views of survey respondents who answered questions related to improving safe sport in Canada.

### **Creating a Canadian registry of sanctioned individuals in sport**

Nearly 58.9% of organized sport participants who completed the safe sport section support the creation of a publicly available registry of individuals found to have committed maltreatment in organized sport. An additional 34.4% indicated that their support would depend on the situation, while only 4.5% were not in favour.

### **Registry model**

When asked about the most appropriate model for a publicly available registry of sanctioned individuals, 61.2% of organized sport participants who completed the safe sport section indicated a preference for a single national registry covering all levels of organized sport across Canada. A total of 25.1% favoured a hybrid model with a national registry for high-performance sport and separate provincial and territorial registries for local clubs and teams. A small number of respondents (8.0%) felt that separate registries for each sport would be most appropriate.

### **Information to include as part of the registry**

The same survey participants were also asked which types of information should be published on the registry. The most frequently selected responses were:

- the name of the person who committed maltreatment (89.1%)
- the type of maltreatment that occurred (83.7%)
- the sanction(s) imposed (81.3%)
- the sport(s) the person was involved in (78.7%)
- the name of the sport organization the person was affiliated with (60.5%)
- the full text of the decision related to the incident (55.0%).

## **REMINDER OF THE COMMISSION'S PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

In its Preliminary Report, the Commission built on the four models proposed to respond to maltreatment and other prohibited behaviours in sport (which we summarize in Chapter 10 of this report). We also examined several approaches for effectively implementing a nationwide public registry of sanctioned individuals.

As a first option, we recommended, in the context of the collaborative framework in which both orders of government would enact safe sport legislation and empower a pan-Canadian safe sport authority to administer federal, provincial and territorial legislation (referred to as Option 1 in Chapter 10), that the legislation also provides for the creation of a pan-Canadian registry of sanctioned individuals.



As a second option, we recommended, in the context of a collaborative framework in which both orders of government would contractually delegate the administration of a pan-Canadian universal safe sport policy to an independent not-for-profit corporation (Option 2 in Chapter 10), that the organization be contractually required to implement a pan-Canadian registry of sanctioned individuals.

As a third option, we recommended, in the context of a collaborative framework in which the Government of Canada would provide conditional financial contributions to provinces and territories to support the implementation of provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs (Option 3 in Chapter 10), that it only provide financial contributions to provinces and territories whose safe sport authorities shared information about their sanctions. This would enable the Centralized Sport Entity to maintain a single pan-Canadian registry of sanctioned individuals. We recommended that until the Centralized Sport Entity is established, Sport Canada would be responsible for maintaining the registry.

Finally, as a last and fourth option, we recommended that the Government of Canada enter into agreements with provinces and territories that have implemented a centralized complaint mechanism in their jurisdictions. Under these agreements, they would report sanctions for inclusion in a pan-Canadian registry (Option 4 in Chapter 10). Sport Canada would maintain this registry until the Centralized Sport Entity is established.

The Commission also recommended that any registry of sanctioned individuals publish provisional measures and sanctions for as long as they remain in effect.

## **FEEDBACK ON IMPLEMENTING A NATIONAL REGISTRY OF SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS**

### **Participants' feedback**

The engagement process that followed our Preliminary Report's release led us to conclude that there was an almost unanimous consensus on the urgent need to implement a centralized pan-Canadian registry of sanctioned individuals in sport. Our discussions focused on what information should be included in the registry and for what length of time.

Many participants argued that sanctions should remain publicly available in the registry on a permanent basis, rather than only for the sanction's duration. They cited professional regulatory bodies as an example. They noted that these bodies maintain registries which include, among other details, the result of disciplinary proceedings. They also said that the public can search these registries to verify whether a member has any current or past proceedings. Other participants suggested that only the most egregious cases of maltreatment justify the permanent publication of sanctions in the registry. Many suggested that there could be a registry of historical sanctions available to a limited group of persons within sport organizations—for the purpose of hiring coaches, for example. A limited number of participants believed that provisional measures should not be published on the registry until a person has been found to have committed maltreatment or other prohibited conduct. Others felt that the registry should not include sanctions issued against minors.

Several participants suggested that the registry could be linked to the National Coaching Certification Program database. This would allow sport organizations to easily identify coaches whose ability to participate in sport has been restricted. Finally, several participants noted that a public registry of sanctioned individuals could raise privacy concerns. They said these concerns would be mitigated if legislation mandated the maintenance of such a registry. With this in mind, it was noted that Quebec could not maintain a registry due to privacy legislation constraints.

### **Governments' feedback**

Provincial and territorial governments were generally very enthusiastic about the idea of creating a national registry of sanctioned individuals and viewed it as beneficial. Although they acknowledged that it would require significant effort, they believed there should be a mechanism to track offenders who move from one province or territory to another. Some governments suggested that this could potentially be achieved by signing memorandums of understanding with sport organizations. However, others warned that differences in provincial and territorial privacy legislation might limit the feasibility of creating a national registry it could raise privacy concerns.

### **CALLS TO ACTION: IMPLEMENTING A PAN-CANADIAN REGISTRY OF SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS**

As we described earlier in this chapter, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport maintains the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry. This is a searchable public database of participants whose eligibility to participate in sport has in some way been restricted following a violation of the Canadian Safe Sport Program. The Program Rules set out the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's duty to maintain the registry. They also describe the circumstances in which a sanction or provisional measure is to be published.

Importantly, the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry captures only violations and restrictions that arise under the Program. Consequently, the Registry applies in only certain contexts and to certain participants of federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.

The Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules explicitly authorize the implementation of a public registry. Aside from these, there are no federal statutory or policy requirements for National Sport Organizations to maintain a public registry of individuals sanctioned under their respective safe sport policies. However, several National Sport Organizations have voluntarily started implementing public registries of sanctions within their organizations.

As we described earlier, at the provincial and territorial level, Sask Sport maintains a centralized registry of sanctions for its member sport organizations in Saskatchewan. A handful of other Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations across the country also voluntarily maintain public registries, despite the absence of statutory or policy requirements.

However, the implementation of sanction registries remains the exception rather than the rule in the sport system overall. This makes it difficult to determine whether an individual has been banned or restricted from participating in sport.

A common concern raised during many of our meetings was that these individuals can move across organizations, jurisdictions or sport settings. This allows them to continue participating in sport despite being under active restriction. To address this issue, some participants, including sport organizations and governments, suggested a nationwide registry of sanctions. They believe this would enable sport organizations to more efficiently verify an individual's history in sport.

The Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women likewise recommended 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.”<sup>1462</sup> The Commission agrees that a unified and accessible platform for tracking sanctions across the country would help prevent individuals who have been banned or sanctioned in one jurisdiction from moving to another and re-engaging in sport without consequence.

However, a national registry of sanctioned individuals is only as reliable as the national and provincial/territorial centralized complaint mechanisms that feed into it. In other words, the broader the reach of the centralized complaint mechanisms, the wider the range of sanctions captured by the registry. This objective underpins our Calls to Action articulated in Chapter 10.

In Chapter 10, the Commission calls upon the Government of Canada, in the short term, to take steps to improve alignment among national and provincial/territorial centralized complaint mechanisms and expand their reach, including to:

- maintain the mandate it has given to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to administer and enforce the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport through the Canadian Safe Sport Program
- provide federal funding to provinces and territories to support the development or improvement of their Safe Sport Programs, which shall meet a set of criteria to be jointly agreed-upon under a Multilateral Sport Framework. Each provincial and territorial Safe Sport Program would include an independent safe sport authority, similar to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, to administer reports of alleged violations of universal safe sport standards.

In the long term, we call upon the Government of Canada to collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to consolidate national and provincial/territorial safe sport authorities into a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority. It will have provincial and territorial bodies serving as registry offices in each participating jurisdiction.

How to establish a Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals is an issue that flows naturally from these Calls to Action, given that the registry would centralize information provided by these various safe sport authorities.

Consequently, in the short term, we call on the Government of Canada to enter into an agreement with provincial and territorial governments. The agreement would set out collaboration and information-sharing between the National Safe Sport Authority (that is, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport) and the provincial and territorial safe sport authorities established according to the Multilateral Sport Framework. This collaboration should include sharing information relevant to their respective mandates, including imposed sanctions, for inclusion in a Pan-Canadian Public Registry of Sanctioned Individuals in Sport.

After careful consideration, we believe that the responsibility for maintaining and updating the registry should rest with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, rather than with Sport Canada or the Centralized Sport Entity. The Centre already oversees the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry. Furthermore, we see no role for the Centralized Sport Entity in the complaint mechanisms. Its responsibilities should be limited to the custody of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and the delivery of safe sport education and training.

As Chapter 10 suggested, information sharing between the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the various provincial and territorial safe sport authorities could be agreed to as a criterion under the Multilateral Sport Framework. It could be further formalized through bilateral funding agreements between the federal government and each province and territory.

That said, governments need not wait for the Multilateral Sport Framework's execution, the conclusion of bilateral funding agreements, or provincial and territorial safe sport authorities' establishment before creating a Pan-Canadian Registry. The Government of Canada could immediately conclude agreements with provinces and territories that already have a centralized complaint mechanism in place or are in the process of implementing one. This would enable them to share necessary information with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to create a Pan-Canadian Registry. As a reminder, Quebec, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Nunavut already have a centralized complaint mechanism. Prince Edward Island, Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, and British Columbia are in the process of establishing one.

As for the content of the Registry itself, the Commission agrees that, in principle, past sanctions would ideally remain publicly available on a permanent basis, rather than only for the sanction's duration. However, we acknowledge that privacy laws may impose restrictions on the disclosure of personal information, including:

- limiting the disclosure of personal information to what is strictly necessary to carry out the objectives of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and provincial and territorial codes of conduct (or legislation and regulations)
- limiting the disclosure period to the duration of the sanction
- subjecting the disclosure of minors' personal information to the most stringent disclosure limitations, if it is disclosed at all.

The scope of personal information published, and how long it would be disclosed, could expand if, as recommended in Chapter 10 (Call to Action 26), provinces and territories enact legislation that delegates their authority to investigate and adjudicate reports of maltreatment to a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority, and empower it to maintain a sanction registry.

In any event, we believe that the Pan-Canadian Registry should capture only sanctions that involve a suspension, a permanent ineligibility, or other measures that restrict an individual's eligibility to participate in sport. In other words, sanctions consisting solely of an apology, educational measures, or similar remedial actions should not be included.

A middle-ground solution would be for the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to maintain a separate database of resolutions and sanctions from all provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms and safe sport authorities, including those not published on the public registry and those that are no longer posted because they are no longer in effect. Sport organizations could be granted access to this information, for background screening and hiring purposes, upon obtaining the consent of the individual concerned. This is consistent with the Centre's current practice for its own resolutions and sanctions.



## **Calls to Action**

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**41. In the short term, the Government of Canada assume a leadership role by working collaboratively with provincial and territorial governments to establish, implement, and sustain a Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals in Sport. This initiative could be developed and governed through the Multilateral Sport Framework (as outlined in Chapter 10).**

**42. The Government of Canada assign to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport the mandate to collaborate with existing provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms—and, as they are established, provincial and territorial safe sport authorities under the Multilateral Sport Framework—to collect and consolidate relevant information on sanctions that restrict an individual's eligibility to participate in sport.**

**43. The Government of Canada direct the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to make the necessary modifications to the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry to transform it into a comprehensive Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Registry.**

**44. The Government of Canada direct the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to publish on the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Registry all sanctions restricting an individual's eligibility to participate in sport that are issued by the Centre, provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms, and, as they are established, provincial and territorial safe sport authorities as required by the Multilateral Sport Framework (outlined in Chapter 10).**

In the long term, when developing a single unified pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program, federal and provincial/territorial governments shall work together to mandate the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority to oversee and maintain the Pan-Canadian Registry.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**45. In the long term, the Government of Canada work closely with provincial and territorial governments to mandate the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority to oversee and maintain the Pan-Canadian Public Registry of Sanctioned Individuals in Sport.**

## Safeguarding officers

In Chapter 3, we explained how power imbalances, a culture of silence and a “winning at all costs” mentality within sport enhances the likelihood of, and can exacerbate, maltreatment. We heard that, on many occasions, individuals were aware of maltreatment but chose to do nothing. Professionals, including doctors, therapists, and nutritionists, witnessed harmful behaviours and listened to athletes describe their experiences, but allowed coaches and others to continue their conduct out of fear of losing their own positions if they spoke up. This pervasive culture of silence often compels bystanders, as well as victims and survivors, to leave their sport or change teams rather than report abuse.

We also heard accounts of high-performance athletes being paraded unwillingly as trophies by sport organizations to attract private sponsorship, with little regard for their autonomy, well-being, or personal choices. Athletes described raising concerns about maltreatment by their coaches to their sport organizations, only to have their claims dismissed because the coaches in question consistently produced medal-winning results. Often, in these cases, athletes were labelled as being overly sensitive. In other instances, sport leaders dismissed, undermined, or ignored allegations of maltreatment out of fear of negative publicity or funding cuts. Sport organizations often acted only when faced with the imminent threat of a public scandal.

We were told that even when formal complaint mechanisms exist, many athletes initially raise concerns informally with team personnel or others within the sport organization. If these individuals are unqualified or conflicted, allegations of maltreatment or harmful behaviours can be mishandled, ignored, or even actively suppressed. This undermines individual safety and systemic accountability.

To counter these deeply ingrained issues in sport, several participants emphasized the need for every sport organization to appoint a designated individual whose primary responsibility is to ensure athletes' safety and well-being. They stressed the importance of dedicated individuals who can advocate effectively for athletes without being influenced by organizational pressures.

Participants suggested that these individuals should be licensed health professionals whose focus is on athletes' psychological and physical well-being rather than on high-performance or selection-related decisions. They emphasized that, even if paid by sport organizations, these professionals must be operationally independent from both the organization and the team. They must not serve as team personnel. Participants also suggested that their responsibilities could include monitoring sport organization activities and attending training sessions, competitions, and other sporting events to observe practices firsthand and identify potential maltreatment. This approach would allow them to witness potential maltreatment, thereby removing the burden from athletes to disclose or report harm themselves.

### **CALLS TO ACTION: DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS FOR ALL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

Athletes need protection from power imbalances and organizational cultures that prioritize performance outcomes and reputational risk over their welfare. Such environments can make it difficult for athletes to speak up about maltreatment or unsafe practices.

In the Commission's view, appointing individuals within sport organizations whose sole mandate is to safeguard athletes' safety and well-being is a critical prevention measure. Embedding this role into the structure of sport organizations creates accountability, ensures that athlete welfare is consistently prioritized, and shifts the system toward a more athlete-centred approach, in which the health, safety, and dignity of participants are valued as highly as performance outcomes.

We will refer to these individuals as "safeguarding officers." This avoids any confusion with the role of "safe sport officers," who are often understood to be the Independent Third Parties hired by sport organizations to handle reports of maltreatment (discussed in Chapter 10).

To be effective, safeguarding officers must operate independently of both the team environment and the sport organization's performance structures, with appropriate safeguards in place to ensure their autonomy and protect them from undue influence. For example, they could report directly to a safe sport or ethics committee rather than executives, be appointed under a contract that includes protections against retaliation and unjust termination, and be structurally isolated from performance, selection, and funding decisions.

Safeguarding officers must also be licensed health professionals with the expertise to address psychological and physical health and well-being of athletes. Independence and professional qualifications are critical to ensuring that concerns are handled competently, confidentially, and without undue influence.

The role of safeguarding officer is critical to strengthening public confidence, dismantling cultures of silence and removing significant barriers to reporting maltreatment. It can also encourage the use of established complaint mechanisms and other available support services.

### Calls to Action

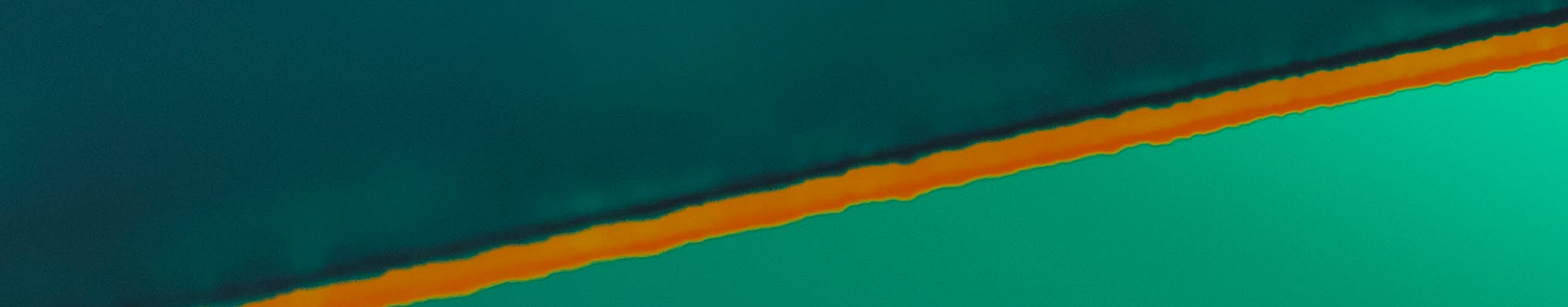
The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**46. The Government of Canada mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding designate a safeguarding officer. The officer's responsibility shall be to safeguard athletes' safety and well-being within the sport organization's activities. Safeguarding officers shall be independent from the team environment and the sport organization's performance structures.**

**47. The Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments to implement the requirement for safeguarding officers (Call to Action 46) with respect to provincially and territorially funded sport organizations.**

# **CHAPTER 12:**

## **The need for new leadership of Canadian sport**







# Chapter 12:

## The need for new leadership of Canadian sport

This chapter addresses the need for a new leadership approach to Canadian sport that we identified in Chapter 5 where we describe the sport system. We begin by outlining the Commission's findings on the fragmented sport system and the need for leadership of Canadian sport. Then, we provide an overview of the sport models in Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Norway. We follow with a reminder of the Commission's preliminary recommendations related to leadership in sport and the creation of the Centralized Sport Entity.

Subsequently, we consider the feedback we received before and after the release of the Preliminary Report in four areas: governmental leadership in sport and physical activity in Canada; the state of intergovernmental collaboration; federal sport and physical activity policies; and the need for a centralized, coordinated, and united approach to sport and physical activity in Canada through the creation of a Centralized Sport Entity to redress the shortcomings of the current approach. This includes feedback received at the National Summit organized by the Commission.

We conclude this chapter with our final findings and Calls to Action.

### Commission's findings on the fragmented sport system and the need for leadership in Canadian sport

As we outlined in previous chapters, the Canadian sport system is complex and fragmented. The complicated jurisdictional issues combined with inconsistent accountability mechanisms, governance requirements, oversight, and a lack of information-sharing mechanisms among sport and physical activity organizations at all levels has led to confusion and gaps. This complexity is compounded by the array of individuals and organizations who play a role within the Canadian sport system and those trying to address the void in overarching leadership. Although these individuals and organizations are well intentioned and want to make meaningful contributions to sport in Canada, there remains no definitive or identifiable point of national leadership.

The federal government has failed to implement a united vision for sport at all levels in Canada. Many shared their concerns about the long-standing lack of direction and vision for sport.

Overall, the Canadian sport "system" has evolved over decades by responding to various crises, issues, and pressures in an ad hoc manner, rather than with long-term strategic vision and direction.

Decisions have been made reactively, in response to “crises of the moment.” This has led to a lack of clarity, cohesion, and strategic depth in Canada’s current sport policy framework. Despite the government’s significant investments, these shortcomings have resulted in inconsistent outcomes and unrealized benefits for Canadians.

We were advised that ministers are often motivated by short-term political or circumstantial objectives, rather than addressing more strategic longer-term goals. Recurring concerns were the changing approaches or visions that often emerged after a change in government or a cabinet shuffle. Over the past 15 years, there have been 10 changes in ministers and portfolios, and sport has not always had a dedicated minister.<sup>1463</sup> The lack of prioritization or attention to the sport portfolio was also consistently noted. This instability has resulted in a lack of clear direction and vision and caused delays and confusion when priorities are re-examined or re-established.

For example, the federal government released an initial announcement in May 2023 stating that National Sport Organizations would be required to fully comply with the Canadian Governance Code by April 1, 2025.<sup>1464</sup> A year and a half later in November 2024, a different minister made a subsequent announcement stating that only certain governance requirements, rather than the entire Code, would become mandatory conditions for funding. However, by then several National Sport Organizations had already dedicated resources and expended significant effort to ensure complete compliance with that Code in response to the first announcement.

The sport portfolio has typically remained an entry-level ministerial position because Sport Canada is a branch within the Department of Canadian Heritage that is responsible for sport — it does not have its own ministry. In some instances, a secretary of state or minister of state holds this portfolio, which diminishes its importance at the federal cabinet table since these positions do not always carry full authority or a strong presence within cabinet. For over 20 years, sport has been housed within the Department of Canadian Heritage, a department responsible for promoting Canadian identity and values and celebrating Canada’s history and heritage. Sport is therefore seen as a vehicle to foster and promote national pride. As a result, high-performance success often becomes the primary focus, rather than the growth and stewardship of a vibrant national sport system and an increase in sport participation in Canada.

*We learned that the federal government’s sport and physical activity policies are not adequately implemented, and in some cases, they have not been implemented at all.*

Federal, provincial and territorial governments endorse policies and initiatives, however, the implementation of these policies and initiatives is slow and, in some cases, they are never implemented. A frequently cited example demonstrating these challenges was the delayed implementation — or the lack of implementation in some jurisdictions — of the Red Deer Declaration — For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport.

There were also evident shortcomings in the implementation of previous editions of the Canadian Sport Policy, particularly when it came to increasing participation in sport. While both the 2002 and 2012 versions aimed to increase participation in sport, neither succeeded, and levels of participation remain a challenge. There were also delays in the introduction of the most recent Canadian Sport Policy, which serves as a further example of

complicated and prolonged processes in the Canadian sport system. The federal, provincial, and territorial ministers agreed to review the Canadian Sport Policy in February 2021. Although its release was initially anticipated for February 2023, the renewed policy was ultimately released in August 2025 — approximately three years after the previous Canadian Sport Policy 2012–2022 had expired. The Commission recognizes that time and effort are required with any collaborative policy involving both levels of government. However, it is also the Commission's understanding that changes of federal ministers and governments have contributed to this delay.

The efficiency of the existing intergovernmental collaboration mechanisms was also questioned throughout the Commission's engagement activities. Mechanisms and apparent willingness exist to promote coordination between federal, provincial, and territorial governments — including the Conferences of Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, and the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council. However, challenges affecting their effectiveness were noted. For example, meetings between ministers are infrequent and have limited accomplishments. Others noted that meetings involve high-level officials who may be disconnected from the realities of sport “on the ground.”

Overall, the lack of leadership and the absence of a national strategy, combined with a reactive approach to sport in Canada, has resulted in the proliferation of National Multisport Service Organizations in an uncoordinated manner. Each of these organizations operates with its own board of directors, chief executive officer, or executive director.

As Chapter 15 outlines, the core funding to National Sport Organizations has not increased since 2005. At the same time the number of National Sport Organizations has also grown. This has created an environment in which organizations, often with increased and mandated responsibilities, find themselves competing for support from an unchanging pool of funds. We also understand that changes in government result in delays for funding approval because ministers require briefings prior to making any such approvals.

Many organizations and individuals who engaged with the Commission also heavily criticized the current funding's focus on performance and medals. They told us how the shift to a performance-focused system placed unhealthy pressure on athletes, coaches, and organizations. They also observed that this focus on performance shifted funding and organizational priorities toward achieving medals, rather than encouraging a broad, inclusive, and accessible culture of sport and physical activity across Canada.

Many individuals and organizations declared to the Commission that the time is right for a review of the sport system. They believe that while promoting high-performance sport is important, it needs to be balanced with increasing grassroots sport participation and physical activity as part of the development of a comprehensive new vision for sport in Canada.



## Sport models in other countries

Participants often recommended that we draw inspiration from the structures responsible for sport in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Norway, recognizing the effectiveness of their models and strategic approaches to advancing sport. They told us that these countries understand the value and benefits of sport for society. As a result, before turning to what improved leadership and intergovernmental collaboration in the Canadian context might look like, we examine the models that these countries have adopted. We selected these countries as comparators because they were most frequently identified in our discussions as national models to consider. Some of them have similar government structures as Canada.

Each of these countries has designed their sport system using different models, with varying structures. Australia and Norway bring together the responsibility for high-performance sport and broader participation under one entity. However, unlike Australia, Norway's sport governing body is the umbrella organization for all organized sport in the country. By contrast, the United Kingdom separates these responsibilities, with a nationwide approach to high-performance sport and a regional approach to broad participation. New Zealand's approach reflects a mix of both models.

### AUSTRALIA

Australia is a federation with six states and two major territories. Powers are divided between the central federal government and regional governments in the states and territories, all of which have their own constitutions, parliaments, governments, and laws.<sup>1465</sup> Federal powers are defined in the Constitution. All undefined powers, or remedial powers, are an area of state and territory responsibility.

The federal government has exclusive power over defence, foreign policy, currency, copyright, and citizenship. It shares power with the states and territories over education, environment, health, taxation, and overseas trade. Finally, residual powers of primarily state and territory interests include public transport, utilities such as electricity and water supply, consumer affairs, and police, prison, and ambulance services. There are also over 500 local councils that can make local laws related to, for example, local roads, parking, and sewerage for their region or district.<sup>1466</sup>

Australia's sport funding mechanisms are based on a collaborative framework involving national, state, and local governments, along with private sector contributions. This framework is designed to support both elite and community-level sports. The Australian Government's Ministry of Sport is housed within the Department of Health's Office for Sport which oversees sport development.<sup>1467</sup> The Ministry of Sport supervises the Australian Sports Commission which is responsible for mass sport participation. Its mandate is to "lead, support and provide opportunities for all communities to be involved in sport, while growing elite success and representation, inspiring future generations."<sup>1468</sup>



Australia has two national strategies to achieve its sport mandate. One strategy, “Australia’s Sport Participation Strategy — Play Well,” is focused on mass sport participation.<sup>1469</sup> The other, “High Performance 2032+ Sport Strategy,” is focused on high-performance sport.<sup>1470</sup> Both fall under the umbrella of the Australian Sports Commission. In other words, in Australia, high performance and participation in sport are one authority’s responsibility. This central entity, funded by the Australian Government, is overseen by an arms-length board of directors. The reach, relevance, and vibrancy of the Australian approach can be seen by examining the two recent strategic documents we just described.

In line with its mandate, the Australian Sports Commission works with various stakeholders to create opportunities from the grassroots community level to high performance. These stakeholders include sport clubs, schools, recreation centres, sport institutes and academies, national sport organizations, and the Australian Olympic Committee. The commission works across the local, state, territorial, and national levels of sport.<sup>1471</sup>

The Australian Institute of Sport, which is an arm of the Australian Sports Commission, performs a variety of functions: developing a sport excellence program, establishing and maintaining training facilities, conducting research, providing sport medicine and sport science services, and addressing issues relating to facilities.<sup>1472</sup> This institute functions as a hub for sport science and research, with a specific focus on high performance, and serves the needs of national and international-level athletes and teams. State Institutes of Sport fulfill similar roles but address the needs of athletes within their respective state or territorial structures.<sup>1473</sup>

The Australian Sports Commission invests in high-performance and national sport participation programs, performance pathways, people development and well-being, and research and innovation. It also manages high-performance operations at various locations and offers support to thousands of athletes and dozens of Australian sports through guidance and collaboration.<sup>1474</sup>

As a Government Commonwealth Corporate Entity, it is a corporate body with a separate legal personality from the Commonwealth of Australia. It was created by legislation, the *Australian Sports Commission Act, 1989*.<sup>1475</sup> This Act prescribes the commission’s objectives, functions, and powers, and outlines the circumstances in which the minister may give directions to the commission.<sup>1476</sup>

The Australian Sports Commission is governed by a board of commissioners whose members are appointed by the Minister of Sport. The board determines the Australian Sports Commission’s overall direction and decides on resource allocation and on policy for delegated decisions. The board is accountable to the Minister for Sport.<sup>1477</sup> As a Government Commonwealth Corporate Entity, the Australian Sports Commission is funded by the Australian Government to support and invest in sport at all levels.<sup>1478</sup> It is also subject to the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, which identifies a number of requirements to ensure the proper use and management of public funds,<sup>1479</sup> including preparing a corporate plan, producing a performance statement, and maintaining risk oversight and management systems.

Several features of the Australian sport system were described to the Commission. First was the division of specific roles within distinct statutory agencies (the Australian Sports Commission, Sport Integrity Australia, and the National Sports Tribunal<sup>1480</sup>), which provides clarity of responsibilities and institutional independence. Second, were the checks and balances in place, including board oversight, auditing by the Auditor General, and reports to the minister and Parliament, which provide more than one accountability pathway. These accountability mechanisms prevent the possibility of a single oversight body judging its own action.

In terms of challenges encountered by the Australian sport system, given their federated model, Australia like Canada encounters challenges in the consistent application of policies at all levels of a sport.

## UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy. The constitution is mainly uncoded.<sup>1481</sup> Historically, legislative, administrative, and executive power in the United Kingdom resided with the central government in Westminster. However, since the end of the twentieth century, a process of devolution has been transferring certain powers to the regional governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. This transfer of power is spelled out in devolution legislation.<sup>1482</sup>

Devolution in the United Kingdom has occurred asymmetrically, meaning that certain regional parliaments have greater legislative and executive power than others.<sup>1483</sup> In general, certain powers are “reserved” for the United Kingdom Parliament, such as defence, foreign affairs, and matters that concern the United Kingdom as a whole.<sup>1484</sup>

Matters devolved to regional governments include health and social services, education, economic development, and agriculture.<sup>1485</sup> Local and city administrations have certain powers that allow them to manage local affairs more effectively. These powers differ by region, with responsibilities divided in various ways between local and regional governments throughout England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. These powers generally include community services, environmental matters, local transport, housing, and social services.<sup>1486</sup>

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (United Kingdom Government) is responsible for designing sport policy across the United Kingdom, which includes England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.<sup>1487</sup> The department’s sport policy promotes sport from an early age and encourages sport throughout life.<sup>1488</sup>

UK Sport is described as a government arm’s-length executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department that serves all of the United Kingdom.<sup>1489</sup> UK Sport is responsible for high-performance sport. It has no direct involvement in community or school sport.<sup>1490</sup> It is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the National Lottery.<sup>1491</sup> Its primary mission is to lead and support Olympic and Paralympic sport in the UK, and ensure British athletes achieve sustained world-class success.<sup>1492</sup> UK Sport therefore works closely with the British Olympic Association.<sup>1493</sup> In this context, UK Sport developed the strategy entitled “Powering Success Inspiring Impact.” This strategy for the period of 2021 to 2031 has three core ambitions: keep winning and

win well, grow a thriving sport system, and inspire positive change.<sup>1494</sup> The organization also developed a Para performance framework.<sup>1495</sup> UK Sport is accountable to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.<sup>1496</sup>

In contrast, promoting sport participation and implementing the federal sport policy across the United Kingdom falls to a sport entity within each country. Those entities are Sport England, Sport Northern Ireland, Sport Scotland, and Sport Wales.<sup>1497</sup> England, Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland each compete as separate countries in the Commonwealth Games and are supported by their respective national sport entity.<sup>1498</sup>

Given that UK Sport oversees high-performance sport, but grassroots sport is overseen by sport entities within each country of the United Kingdom, some felt that this approach created a disconnect.

## NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy established through various statutes and conventions<sup>1499</sup>. It does not have states or provincial governments. Its government is divided between the central government, which makes decisions affecting the country, and local governments, which look after the interests and needs of specific communities through regional, city, or district councils.<sup>1500</sup>

The central government is responsible for issues of national interest, including housing, welfare, education, health, defence, and foreign policy.<sup>1501</sup> Local governments' powers are defined by various legislation. They include providing local services, levying property taxes, and other regulatory tasks. Local governments are independent of, but subordinate to, the central government.<sup>1502</sup>

Sport New Zealand is the Crown entity responsible for promoting, encouraging, and supporting physical recreation and sport in the country.<sup>1503</sup> It was established by the *Sport and Recreation New Zealand Act*.<sup>1504</sup>

Sport New Zealand also includes High Performance Sport New Zealand, which leads the high-performance sport system and supports athletes and coaches. It aims to deliver performances on the world stage that inspire the nation and its communities, helping to build national identity and promote New Zealand internationally.<sup>1505</sup>

Sport New Zealand reports to the Minister for Sport and Recreation through its board of directors. The minister appoints the board chair and members of the board. The board sets and guides the Sport New Zealand strategic direction.<sup>1506</sup> It is also responsible for implementing sport strategies that aim to improve physical activity and well-being.

Sport New Zealand has two principal strategic directions: “Every Body Active: Strategic Direction 2020–2032,”<sup>1507</sup> focuses on physical activity, and “High-Performance Sport New Zealand 2025–2028 Strategic Plan,” focuses on high performance.<sup>1508</sup> It also developed a Disability Action Plan designed to support the development of an inclusive and enabling “Play, Active Recreation and Sport System” so that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to achieve their goals.<sup>1509</sup>

The national government funds Sport New Zealand to promote play, active recreation, and sport, with a focus on system leadership and national well-being.<sup>1510</sup> At the same time, the country's 11 regional councils and 67 territorial

authorities also have their own responsibilities. The territorial authorities are collectively referred to as “local authorities.” They support their communities by providing sport facilities, funding, and promoting participation as the biggest service provider of recreational programs and infrastructure. Local authorities also partner with national, regional, and local sports organizations to deliver community sport and maintain recreational facilities. They are recognized as providing locally led decision making and community development.<sup>1511</sup>

The Aspen Institute has recognized the country’s model for sport delivery to youth as one of the world’s best-organized systems, with both national and regional governing bodies supporting local clubs.<sup>1512</sup>

## NORWAY

Norway is a constitutional monarchy with a written constitution.<sup>1513</sup> It is a unitary state — that is, it has a single central government. Sport and the promotion of physical activity are separate portfolios in Norway. The Department of Civil Society and Sport, under the Ministry of Culture and Equality, is generally responsible for sport policy, supporting voluntary sport organizations and allocating public funding for sport.<sup>1514</sup> The Government of Norway allocates 64% of the gaming proceeds from Norsk Tipping (the national lottery and sports betting mechanism) to sport.<sup>1515</sup>

Separate ministries are responsible for physical activity in schools and public health initiatives. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for physical education in schools.<sup>1516</sup> The Department of Public Health, under the Ministry of Health Care and Services, is responsible for promoting health at the population level, including measures to support increased physical activity.<sup>1517</sup> National strategies and guidelines for physical activity are developed by the Department of Public Health.

The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (*Norges idrettsforbund og olympiske og paralympiske komité*) is the government’s principal partner in organized sport.<sup>1518</sup> It is a nongovernmental organization responsible for governing organized sport in the country. The organization is the result of a merger between the Norwegian Confederation of Sports, the Norwegian Olympic Committee, and the Norwegian Paralympic Committee.<sup>1519</sup> Its members are the 55 national federations, 11 regional confederations, approximately 328 sports councils, and 9,454 clubs.<sup>1520</sup>

The central administration of the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports coordinates a number of activities for the federations and confederations, such as the distribution of lottery funds.<sup>1521</sup> It also develops policies and guidelines for sport in Norway, including a long-term strategy for Norwegian sports, Children’s Rights in Sports, and the Norwegian Para sport strategy.<sup>1522</sup>

The guiding vision for sport in Norway is “Joy of Sport — for All.”<sup>1523</sup> Community sport and lifelong participation are key priorities.<sup>1524</sup> Children’s rights are central to the delivery of sport programs for children in Norway. The General Assembly of the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports adopted the Children’s Rights in Sports and Provisions on Children’s Sports. The first guidelines for children’s sport were adopted in 1976, and were later revised in 2007, 2015, and 2019.<sup>1525</sup>

The Children's Rights in Sports are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are designed to help children have a positive experience every time they participate in training, competition, or other activities.<sup>1526</sup> They promote and safeguard children's best interests, and include:

- the right to participate in training that is safe and secure, without pressure or exploitation
- the right to participate in training and competitive activities that are designed to help develop friendships and feelings of solidarity
- the right to express their own opinions and have them considered the right to choose which sport or how many sports they wish to participate in
- the right to determine how much they wish to practise their chosen sport
- the right to choose whether they would like to participate in competitions
- the right to participate in training and competitive activities that are suitable for their age, physical development, and level of maturity
- the right to participate in sports, regardless of their family's financial situation or involvement.<sup>1527</sup>

The Children's Rights in Sports and the Provisions on Children's Sports state that all sport activities should be developed and adapted for children so that they are encouraged to try new things and are motivated to participate in sport for as long as possible.<sup>1528</sup> The Provisions on Children's Sports regulate competitions for children until the age of 12. Children are not allowed to compete until they turn six. They are also not allowed to participate in Norwegian Championships, European Championships, World Championships, or similar competitions until they turn 12.<sup>1529</sup> Additionally, all clubs that organize children's sport must also appoint an individual with specific responsibility for children in that club, which includes the responsibility to ensure that the club's board actively supports these rights and provisions.<sup>1530</sup>

The organization has also developed a Para sport strategy called "One Sport — Equal Opportunities: Norwegian Parasport strategy 2022–2027."<sup>1531</sup> The strategy aims to foster inclusive sport environments by ensuring that people with disabilities have equal opportunities for sport and are met with respect, knowledge, and inclusion. It focuses on supporting both grassroots and elite athletes with disabilities by ensuring disability-inclusive facilities, training and education on Para sport, and awareness initiatives.<sup>1532</sup>

Over the course of our engagement, the Norwegian approach to sport was most often referenced as an ideal model. Many admired how Norway's sport system and culture results in developing children and communities and elite adult athletes who perform well in both winter and summer sports.<sup>1533</sup> Norway has a highly successful elite-sport system and is among the most successful nations in Olympic competition.<sup>1534</sup> However, participants noted that much of Norway's success comes from how it highly values sport and physical activity and the benefits these bring to public health and communities. The country's commitment to these values is reflected in government policies. Norway's approach to sport for youth and Children's Rights in Sports was noted by the Aspen Institute.<sup>1535</sup>



As we have just seen, international models offer different approaches to sport and have their own distinct and unique features, which are invaluable as we redefine Canada's approach to sport.

## Reminder of the Commission's preliminary recommendations

In its Preliminary Report, the Commission recommended that a single federal department should be responsible for both sport and physical activity. These responsibilities are currently divided between two departments, with Canadian Heritage responsible for sport (via Sport Canada) and the Ministry of Health responsible for physical activity (via the Public Health Agency of Canada).

The Commission also recommended the creation of a Centralized Sport Entity to address the current lack of leadership and the absence of a comprehensive, cohesive, national strategy for sport and physical activity in Canada.

Furthermore, the Commission identified the scope, roles, and responsibilities of this new entity. Its potential roles and responsibilities included:

- developing a national sport and physical activity strategy with clearly defined priorities
- developing a national Para sport strategy in collaboration with the Para sport community at the national, provincial, and territorial levels
- developing and implementing the national coaching certification program supporting research efforts relevant to health, well-being, and sport and physical activity programs
- funding for sport and physical activity, including the receipt, allocation, distribution, and oversight of all federal sport funding governance of sport organizations
- serving as custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and related audits
- safe sport education and support of prevention measures including the National Safe Sport Education Program, True Sport Program, and a standardized background screening policy.

These roles and responsibilities are currently performed by several entities, including national Multisport Service Organizations.

Regarding the possible legal structure of the recommended Centralized Sport Entity, the Commission presented five options for consideration in its Preliminary Report: a ministerial department, a ministerial departmental agency, a crown corporation, a not-for-profit created by federal legislation, and a not-for-profit third-party delivery organization. Without making a recommendation on the legal structure of the new entity, at that time the Commission noted that a crown corporation or a not-for-profit created by federal legislation appeared to be preferred options.

## Strategic changes for strengthened vision and leadership for sport and physical activity in Canada

As we described in the Preliminary Report, the Commission remains of the view that, to ensure that sport in Canada is inclusive, accessible, well-governed, and safer, strategic changes must be made to improve governmental leadership, unify efforts, and ensure accountability.

Four strategic changes are required. The first three concern government leadership, while the fourth deals with the creation of the Centralized Sport Entity:

- The need for strong and effective governmental leadership in sport and physical activity in Canada.
- The need for enhanced and improved intergovernmental collaboration that is grounded in accountability to pursue a coordinated, consistent, and harmonized approach at all levels of the sport system.
- The need for up-to-date federal sport and physical activity policies that reflect current realities, emerging challenges, and best practices. This includes support, accountability, and transparency in the implementation of such policies.
- The need for a centralized, coordinated, and united approach to sport and physical activity in Canada through the creation of a Centralized Sport Entity.

As we outline these changes to improve leadership within the sport system, we provide participants' perspectives, including what participants shared with the Commission prior to the publication of the Preliminary Report as well as feedback on our preliminary findings and recommendations, including feedback received at the National Summit organized by the Commission.

### THE NEED FOR STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

In addition to the participants' perspectives on the federal responsibility for sport and physical activity as outlined in Chapter 5, the Commission received feedback regarding the consolidation of sport and physical activity under the same department, and the importance of federal leadership in the areas of sport and physical activity, which we outline here.

#### Feedback on the need for strong and effective government leadership

In response to our preliminary findings and recommendations, participants reiterated that there was no true leader in the sport system. Throughout the Commission's activities, they urged the federal government to provide strong leadership and clear direction for sport and physical activity in Canada. They also called on the government to work closely and collaboratively with the provinces and territories to improve safe sport and the sport system. Participants affirmed that the minister responsible for sport and physical activity should be a full member of the federal cabinet and that sport should be prioritized.

At the same time, participants identified opportunities for Canada to demonstrate leadership on the international stage. In particular, as a part of the launch of the UNESCO's *Global Policy Standards for Inclusive, Equitable and Safe Sport and Physical Education*, countries will be selected to participate in a pilot. Participants encouraged Canada to participate in this piloting phase, noting that its involvement would represent a valuable and timely opportunity to contribute to and help shape emerging global standards to promote inclusive, equitable, and safe sport and physical education.

Our preliminary recommendation to integrate the responsibilities for sport and physical activity under the same department received broad support. Participants noted that sport and physical activity were previously integrated under a single department named "Fitness and Amateur Sport" until it was dissolved in 1993. Additionally, because physical activity was given more attention when a single minister was responsible for both sport and physical activity, participants saw reintegrating sport and physical activity as a positive development.

We heard broad, enthusiastic support among participants for a comprehensive approach that considers the entirety of the sport continuum — from participation and physical activity to high-performance sport. Participants told us that sport and physical activity are intrinsically interconnected, and that promoting physical activity and broad sport participation ultimately supports high-performance sport in Canada.

We did, however, hear some reservations from the sport community about the reintegration of sport and physical activity, which was understood to mean all forms of movement. Some voiced concerns that "physical activity" (in its broadest sense) would be too vast, so they preferred a sport-focused approach. They also noted the need to define the boundaries of physical activity to circumscribe its scope.

Participants cautioned against integrating responsibility for sport and physical activity within Health Canada. They noted that the health system is facing great challenges, the portfolio is already quite extensive, and that sport would not fare well in this setting. They also noted that physical activity received insufficient attention within the health portfolio. Instead, participants proposed various structures to support sport and physical activity at the federal level. Some suggested that physical activity should be transferred to Sport Canada (under Canadian Heritage). Others proposed that a new distinct department encompassing sport and physical activity should be created. A minority of participants believed that the federal government, through Sport Canada, should support only high-performance sport. They felt that support for grassroots sport and physical activity ought to come primarily from provincial and territorial governments.

### **Calls to Action: the need for strong and effective government leadership**

As referenced in Chapter 4 on the constitutional framework of our country, sport is not a head of power identified in the Constitution. As a result, there has been hesitancy by all levels of government to assume a full leadership role and ensure true collaboration between the federal, provincial and territorial levels of government, creating a leadership void. On numerous occasions, questions of jurisdiction and the federated model in Canada were identified as the reasons for our current fragmented sport system. In addition, the absence of consistent ministerial leadership, productive and

ongoing intergovernmental collaboration, and the lack of a single entity responsible for providing strategic vision and leadership of sport and physical activity in Canada were listed as significant shortcomings. As a result, the sport system has been left with unclear and inconsistent policy direction and is rife with inefficiencies and redundancies.

Everyone involved in the sport sector, including every person the Commission met, recognizes the immense and numerous benefits of sport and physical activity. However, governments have consistently failed to optimize the value of sport. Considering the undeniable benefits of sport and physical activity, as we outline in Chapter 2, and the safe sport crisis which permeates every level of sport, the Commission is of the view that all levels of governments and the sport sector must elevate sport to the status it deserves.

The Commission's view of the need for a single federal department to be responsible for both sport and physical activity remains unchanged. In fact, the additional feedback we received following our Preliminary Report emphasized how closely sport and physical activity are linked. This reinforces our view that bringing together sport and physical activity at the federal level is essential for effective leadership and improved coordination within the sport system.

The promotion of sport and physical activity are intrinsically linked. The interdependence of sport and physical activity is illustrated by the fact that both are addressed in one statute: the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. Similarly, in our view, sport and physical activity must be integrated at the federal government level to operate effectively and to ensure a consistent approach from the grassroots to the national level, as was the case in the past. A single minister should, therefore, be responsible for sport and physical activity.

In turn, strong and decisive leadership is needed from the federal minister to foster a new and integrated vision for sport and physical activity in Canada. Government and ministerial leadership are essential to guide departmental activities, lead enhanced collaboration with provinces and territories, and shape new structures to ensure a more integrated sport and physical activity system in Canada. Most importantly, stronger leadership will ultimately lead to a stronger and safer sport system. Strong leadership from the minister will continue to remain crucial once the Centralized Sport Entity, which we outline in what follows, is established.

We are of the view that the federal government must take a holistic and balanced strategic approach to developing sport. This means creating safe, welcoming, and inclusive sport environments, while also promoting physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being. Without strong leadership, sport and physical activity risk being overshadowed. Accordingly, the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity's mandate should be to encourage, promote, and develop physical activity and sport for all Canadians.

Given the interdependence between sport and physical activity, we maintain our preliminary recommendation that both must reside within the same government department. Uniting these areas under a single department ensures that the minister benefits from coordinated policy and programmatic support to implement the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. This coordination will enable the development and implementation of a unified strategy for sport and physical activity.

As we described earlier in Chapter 5, two distinct federal departments — Canadian Heritage and Health Canada — currently play a role in the Canadian sport and physical activity sector, but in different capacities. The Department of Canadian Heritage, through Sport Canada, is responsible for encouraging, promoting, and developing sport.<sup>1536</sup> Meanwhile, Health Canada, through the Public Health Agency of Canada, aims to examine and improve the physical activity levels of those living in Canada.<sup>1537</sup>

Only the responsibilities of the Public Health Agency of Canada specifically related to the promotion of physical activity ought to be transferred to the department responsible for sport and physical activity. As a part of its current mandate to promote physical activity, the Agency:

- provides information related to physical activity and injury prevention, including sport-related concussions
- collaborates with partners, including the provinces and territories, on physical activity through the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council
- monitors the physical activity levels of Canadians
- provides funding to promote physical activity.<sup>1538</sup>

All other core responsibilities of the Public Health Agency of Canada — including promoting overall health, preventing and controlling chronic health diseases and injuries, preventing and controlling infectious diseases, and preparing for and responding to public health emergencies — should remain with the Agency.<sup>1539</sup>

To be clear, the Commission believes that “sport” is a broad concept that ought to mirror the sport policy and the objectives set out in the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, as well as the elements of sport as defined under the Canadian Sport Policy 2025-2035. That is, sport refers to organized rule-based activities, with a focus on skills development, including community, competitive, and high-performance level activities which can be performed either alone or in a team setting.

Sport ought to be fun, inclusive, accessible, fair, and safe and allow for broad participation by everyone at all levels of sport.

Implicit in this definition is the need to build capacity to increase participation in sport and support the pursuit of excellence.

Physical activity, on the other hand, while part and parcel of sport, refers to less organized or informal activities and movement which are fundamental elements of health and well-being. In other words, while sport is physical activity, physical activity is not always sport. Like sport, physical activity should also be accessible to all. We note that the delineation between the Public Health Agency of Canada’s support of physical activity initiatives and other health-promotion programs is currently unclear. This will need to be clarified during the transition process.



In our view, legislative amendments are advisable to make lasting structural changes to consolidate government leadership for sport and physical activity. Legislating these changes protects them from being easily changed or undone by future governments. Until the required legislative amendments can be made, the federal government should immediately ensure that a single federal minister is responsible for both sport and physical activity. The Public Health Agency of Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage should both support the minister during this period. Formal cooperation mechanisms between the Agency and Canadian Heritage should be established.

**Calls to Action**

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**48. The Government of Canada ensure that a single federal minister is responsible for sport and physical activity (as was the case for the period from August 16, 2023, to March 14, 2025), and subsequently ensure that this minister is supported by a single federal department responsible for both sport and physical activity.**

**49. The Government of Canada make the necessary legislative amendments to ensure that a single federal minister responsible for sport and physical activity is supported by a single federal department, to promote long-lasting structural changes.**

**THE NEED FOR ENHANCED INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION GROUNDED IN ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Commission received feedback related to the collaboration between federal, provincial, and territorial governments in the areas of sport, physical activity, and recreation, which we outline in Chapter 5 and below.

**Feedback on the need for improved intergovernmental collaboration grounded in accountability**

In responding to the Preliminary Report, participants noted that recommendations related to intergovernmental collaboration needed to be strengthened. Participants, including representatives from provincial and territorial governments, consistently stressed that effective collaboration among all levels of government is crucial to the wellbeing of Canadian sport.

There was a strong sense that the federated model often served as an excuse for governments to deflect responsibility onto others, without assuming leadership or being accountable for the development of sport and physical activity. Participants noted long-standing jurisdictional challenges. Some felt that provinces and territories have sometimes abdicated their responsibilities for sport and physical activity, creating a leadership void. They suggested that, in response, Canadians turned to the federal government and other sport organizations to fill this void, which resulted in fragmented and disjointed approaches to sport and physical activity across the country.

We were told that federal, provincial, and territorial governments need to work together to build a more unified system. In this respect, we heard a strong willingness and commitments from a majority of provincial and territorial governments to collaborate with the federal government to improve safe sport and the sport system in Canada.

Participants recognized that there are multiple forums for intergovernmental collaboration in sport and physical activity. These include the Ministers Conferences, which bring together the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation approximately once a year, as well as the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council, and its committees.<sup>1540</sup> Moreover, we were told that the working groups of the Federal/Provincial-Territorial Sport Committee are in the process of being reviewed, considering the recent renewal of the Canadian Sport Policy. Participants advised that these groups have previously focussed on issues such as maltreatment in sport and good governance.

However, we heard that these mechanisms face important challenges. Participants in our engagement activities described these forums as inefficient. They cited infrequent meetings between ministers who are responsible for setting policy directions and approving collaborative actions. We were advised that the news releases to be published following the Ministers' Conferences were typically drafted prior to the meetings, suggesting that key outcomes may have been predetermined and that the meetings themselves are not being used as forums for meaningful discussion. Some participants identified the need for active working groups to drive progress, noting that they have worked well in the past.

Representatives from provincial and territorial governments suggested creating clear action plans. These plans should show which level of government is responsible for each task and clarify roles to facilitate and improve collaboration. We were reminded that flexibility is required to enable provinces and territories and the federal government to work in a complementary manner. A flexible approach to collaboration should allow all levels of government to tailor programs, policies, and approaches to their regional realities, while still achieving consistency with desired outcomes.

We were told that communication and transparency are essential for cooperation between governments. Some representatives from provincial and territorial governments informed us that such communication was lacking during the most recent renewal of the Canadian Sport Policy and the negotiation of bilateral agreements with provinces and territories.

Participants contrasted successful examples of intergovernmental collaboration in other sectors, such as health care and child care, where shared commitment has produced tangible benefits for Canadians. The federal, provincial, and territorial governments successfully collaborated to create a multilateral framework to support increased quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity in early learning and child care.<sup>1541</sup> In 2021, the Government of Canada made an investment of over \$27 billion over five years to build a Canada-wide early learning and child-care system with provinces and territories.<sup>1542</sup> This example demonstrates that the federal

government has been willing to lead in other areas. Participants felt that the same resolve should be applied to sport and physical activity.

On one hand, we heard that stronger governmental collaboration is essential for advancing sport and physical activity in Canada. Participants identified improved transparency, better communication, and stronger leadership as priorities to ensure that collaborative efforts translate into meaningful and lasting impact. On the other hand, some participants believed intergovernmental collaboration in the sport, physical activity and recreation sector was already very effective compared to other sectors, but that maybe the public was not aware of the work undertaken by governments.

Moreover, cross-sectoral collaboration emerged as an important theme in efforts to modernize and strengthen the sport system's governance. Participants highlighted that effective collaboration was essential given that the sport system is broad and involves multiple domains, such as education and infrastructure. They noted that effective collaboration between governments should therefore not be limited to the sport, physical activity, and recreation sectors. We heard calls to improve collaboration between the sport, physical activity, and recreation sector and other areas such as health, education, finance, economic development and infrastructure. The goal would be to support facility development and renewal and enhance sport and physical activity programs in schools, among other priorities.

Importantly, to continue and further efforts toward reconciliation, Indigenous people highlighted the need for Indigenous people to exercise control over sport within their communities. Such decisions, they emphasized, must be made by and for Indigenous people. We were advised that sustained collaboration is essential and that proactive steps should be taken by decision-makers to engage with Indigenous people. This would ensure their meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making processes related to all aspects of sport. In doing so, the Canadian sport system would include Indigenous perspectives.

**Call to Action: the need for enhanced intergovernmental collaboration grounded in accountability**

Even though there are legal and jurisdictional considerations, responsibility for sport and physical activity, given their critical roles in Canadian life, ought to be shared across all levels of government. Strong collaboration and clear communication between federal, provincial, and territorial governments are crucial to address the safe sport crisis and advance sport and physical activity in Canada. Enhanced collaboration is also needed to promote consistent and harmonized approaches to promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, and well-governed sport opportunities for all Canadians at all levels.

Only by working together can all governments improve safe sport in Canada, improve the sport system, and establish Canada as a world leader in sport and physical activity.

As we previously noted, federal, provincial, and territorial ministers for sport, physical activity, and recreation set the direction for shared priorities and collaborative policies in sport and physical activity during their Ministers Conferences. These priorities are then implemented through the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council and its related committees, such as the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Sport Committee. The committees can create, manage, and dissolve subcommittees or working groups composed of government officials and, where appropriate, experts from the sector, as needed.

Despite the existence of forums to promote intergovernmental collaboration to advance sport and physical activity, these mechanisms have not consistently delivered the desired results. Ministers Conferences, for example, occur too infrequently, with only three meetings every four years. This lack of regular engagement between ministers limits opportunities for meaningful dialogue to address emerging challenges in a timely manner or follow up effectively on collaborative action priorities. Infrequent meetings impede ministers' ability to address emerging complex issues that require attention, coordination, and sustained commitment from all parties. Examples of issues include the implementation of the Canadian Sport Policy and collaborative actions to address abuse, harassment, and discrimination in sport.

By contrast, we understand that intergovernmental collaboration between ministers is more frequent in other sectors, such as Justice and Public Safety, Finance, the Status of Women, and Labour Markets.<sup>1543</sup> For example, meetings between the ministers of Finance, Justice, and Public Safety are held once or twice a year, compared to three times every four years for ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation.<sup>1544</sup>

To improve the effectiveness of intergovernmental collaboration, the Commission recommends that Ministers Conferences be convened more frequently and as needed to address critical issues, such as the current safe sport crisis. Sufficient time must be allocated during these meetings to ensure thorough exploration and meaningful discussion of each topic.

The Commission emphasizes that it is crucial that agreed-upon policies and collaborative priorities are implemented. While all levels of government must continue to work together to do so, each provincial and territorial government has a specific responsibility for enacting relevant measures within its own jurisdiction. We specifically address federal sport and physical activity policies in what follows.

The Commission encourages the federal government to collaborate with its provincial and territorial counterparts to implement concrete measures to ensure greater transparency and accountability as it relates to intergovernmental collaboration. Very little information is made available to the public when it comes to intergovernmental collaboration in the areas of sport, physical activity, and recreation.

While there are differences in the information reported to the public following intergovernmental collaboration, some forums and sectors are substantially more transparent. Some have websites providing information to the public on their structure and initiatives. For example, the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration's website displays their organizational chart, including the names of all their working groups.<sup>1545</sup> The Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety publishes reports and studies documenting its ongoing work.<sup>1546</sup>

With these examples in mind, one measure to improve the transparency of intergovernmental collaboration in sport, physical activity and recreation could include publishing annual reports on the activities carried out by the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council, its committees, and working groups. Other similar measures could be considered.

We note that once the Centralized Sport Entity is established, as the Commission recommends and explains later in this chapter, the federal minister responsible for sport and physical activity, together with the department officials supporting them, will continue to be responsible for collaborating with their provincial and territorial counterparts, including the negotiation of bilateral agreements. Moreover, collaboration between the ministers, department officials, and the Centralized Sport Entity will be vital in this context, and the Entity should be included during these meetings.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**50. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, enhance the rigour of intergovernmental collaboration to improve safe sport in Canada and the sport system, and advance sport and physical activity for all Canadians. Concrete actions could include the following:**

- a. increasing the frequency of the Ministers Conferences**
- b. promoting cross-sectoral collaboration**
- c. taking concrete measures to increase the transparency and public accountability of intergovernmental collaboration.**



## **THE NEED FOR FEDERAL SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY UPKEEP AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Commission received feedback related to the oversight and implementation of federal sport and physical activity policy, which we outline in Chapter 5 and in what follows.

### **Feedback on the need for federal sport and physical activity policy upkeep and implementation**

Generally, participants reiterated clear concern that federal sport policies, like the Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability (2006) and the Federal Policy for Hosting International Sport Events (2008), are outdated and no longer adequately support the Canadian sport system's evolving needs and realities. They emphasized that the federal government must renew existing frameworks so that they can address present-day challenges and priorities. Others proposed new targeted government interventions focused on sport infrastructure, sport and climate change, and equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Different opinions were shared with the Commission regarding our preliminary recommendation to create a national Para sport strategy. Indeed, within the Disability sport community, there is inconsistency about whether Disability sport should be captured within a broader sport policy or should, instead, be the subject of a dedicated strategy. Some participants were of the view that Disability sport is a part of the sport system and, therefore, should be captured in a single Canadian sport policy. Others were of the view that a unique, specific policy for Disability sport was needed. Irrespective, all agreed that such a policy should be developed by and with members of the Disability sport community.

There was strong agreement among participants that sport and physical activity policy renewal and development must be based on evidence. They stressed that ongoing investment in research in sport and physical activity is fundamental to designing innovative policies and advancing national priorities in these areas.

Although updating policies is essential, participants told us that implementing these policies is what defines true progress. Policies and plans are worthless unless actions follow. We heard that many strategies have been created but remained largely unimplemented. To address these concerns, we were told that strategies needed to be linked with specific, measurable results, along with support for their implementation.

### **Calls to Action: the need for federal sport and physical activity policy upkeep and implementation**

Canada has demonstrated strength in fostering collaborative approaches to sport and physical activity policy. The Commission recognizes that the Canadian Sport Policy, for example, was the product of extensive cooperation and engagement, reflecting shared priorities and a vision for sport in Canada.

The Commission was encouraged to see a strong focus on participation, inclusion, and access, as well as a thoughtful approach to balancing high performance and participation in the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035. Participants in our engagement activities welcomed this change in direction for sport in Canada. However, the policy fails to provide guidance or concrete measures to ensure these priorities become reality.

We have also noted challenges with implementing collaborative actions with respect to safe sport. Federal, provincial, and territorial governments committed to implementing a coordinated intergovernmental approach to address harassment, abuse, and discrimination in sport, as contemplated by the 2019 Red Deer Agreement. At this point, there is still no evidence of progress on the adoption of such collaborative actions, and maltreatment continues to be prevalent across the country at every level of sport. Improved policy implementation and genuine collaboration are essential to achieve a truly safe sport system for all Canadians.

Our calls to improve the development and renewal of policies and their implementation are addressed in turn below.

### **Developing and renewing policies**

Aside from the Canadian Sport Policy, the federal government's sport policy framework is widely viewed as outdated. Most policies are more than a decade old. As we previously noted, federal sport-related policies include:

- Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport (2005)
- Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability (2006)
- Federal Policy for Hosting International Sport Events (2008)
- Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls (2009)
- Canadian High Performance Sport Strategy (2019).

These policies have not kept pace with the evolving needs or the expectations of Canadians. The Commission is of the view that the federal government should review and revitalize its sport-related policies in association with the implementation of the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 to better serve the sport community. It is imperative that the federal government commit to regularly reviewing and updating sport and physical activity policies to ensure that they align with current priorities, emerging challenges, and best practices.

The federal government's sport and physical activity policies must also reflect the values that are important to our society such as respect, diversity, inclusion, and fairness. Current federal sport policies and programs do not always reflect these values.

Sport is a core pillar of Canadian identity, and there is a clear desire for a sport system that embodies our shared values, inspires national pride, and promotes health and well-being, while being held to the highest standards.

### **Disability sport strategy**

As a part of the broader efforts to renew and modernize federal sport policies, the Commission is of the view that the federal government should develop a separate national strategy for Disability sport. This strategy, which would be developed in collaboration with the Disability sport community, would encompass Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport.

The Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 broadly promotes inclusion and accessibility and briefly acknowledges that persons with disabilities face barriers to accessing infrastructure and equipment. However, it does not offer specific, actionable measures to address these barriers. Without a dedicated Disability sport strategy, the Disability sport community risks being marginalized and overshadowed within Canada's sport system. A targeted strategy is needed to address these concerns.

In the spirit of the “nothing about us, without us” principle, the Disability sport community must be involved with conceiving, developing, and implementing this strategy. Accordingly, specific concerns that the strategy should address will need to be established with this community's collaboration. We have also noted that the federal government should also update and modernize the Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability (2006). Canada needs to learn from other countries that have successfully developed and introduced policies and strategies focused on advancing Disability, Para and Paralympic sport.

### **Equity, diversity, inclusion, and access strategies**

There is no denying that an equitable, inclusive, diverse and accessible sport system is critical for society. The national suite of sport-related policies has significant gaps in this area. Challenges remain in sport infrastructure and the promotion of equity, diversity, inclusion, and access in sport and physical activity. The Canadian Sport Policy itself has identified enhanced participation as an area requiring more emphasis.

To address these shortcomings, the Commission strongly believes that the federal government should work collaboratively with provincial and territorial governments to develop and implement a national sport infrastructure strategy and a national strategy on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport and physical activity (both of which are detailed in Chapter 7).

### **High-performance and broad sport and physical activity participation strategy**

The federal government should develop and implement a new strategy to promote broad participation in sport and physical activity, in collaboration with members of the sport system, including sport organizations, consistent with a new approach that balances support for high performance and broad sport participation. It should encompass broad sport participation and high-performance sport, consistent with the objectives outlined in the Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035.

Despite recognizing the benefits of sport participation for all Canadians, there is currently no coordinated, long-term federal approach focused on increasing participation. The federal government has only a high-performance strategy: the Canadian High Performance Sport Strategy (2019). In contrast, other sport-leading nations such as Australia, New Zealand, and Norway have also established policies designed to promote broad participation in sport. It is essential to recognize the importance of addressing participation across the entire continuum of sport, from the grassroots to high-performance. A new policy should replace the Canadian High Performance Sport Strategy (2019).

### **Evidenced-based and inclusive policy development**

The development of sport and physical activity policies must be evidence-based. As in other sectors, policymakers need to rely on robust data derived from comprehensive research and ongoing analysis to inform their decision-making processes. Such an approach will assist in ensuring that policies are “cutting edge” and reflect contemporary understanding. For this reason, it is essential that the federal government has access to comprehensive data describing sport and physical activity at every level in Canada, including participation rates.

Some organizations endeavour to provide this data, including Statistics Canada, the Sport Information Resource Centre, ParticipACTION, and the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. Nevertheless, there is a lack of regular, systematic collection of data relating to sport and physical activity, including participation, funding, infrastructure, and participant well-being. There is also insufficient coordination among these organizations leading to the duplication of efforts.

Accordingly, the federal government must ensure that there is a national tool to systematically and regularly gather and analyze this information to support policy development. As Chapter 11 explains, the tool must also include regular collection and analysis of safe sport indicators. In addition, the Commission recognizes the lack of research, information, and data specific to Indigenous people and sport in Canada (see Chapter 6). The federal government must provide continued funding to support research in this area.

We further note that applying an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens to sport and physical activity policy development and decision making is essential. A concern for inclusion must inform every stage of policy development, implementation, and evaluation. Systematically recognizing and responding to the diverse needs, perspectives, and experiences of all individuals, including Indigenous people, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, will foster a sport system that truly reflects the values of diversity and inclusion, and helps to eliminate barriers to participation for all Canadians.

### Implementing and monitoring policies

The development of comprehensive sport and physical activity policies is an important first step toward fostering safe, inclusive, equitable, and accessible sport environments, as well as promoting physical activity. But the creation of such policies alone is insufficient to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Throughout the Commission's engagement activities, the federal government's failure to translate policy commitments into tangible programs and meaningful outcomes emerged as a recurring theme. All too often, decision-makers create policies and priorities but take little action to implement them. Consequently, no evidence of meaningful progress follows. Repeated inaction erodes trust in the sport system and undermines future efforts to drive change.

To address this shortcoming, the Commission is of the view that policies must be accompanied by concrete plans and programs to support their implementation. Policies must be grounded in clear and measurable outcomes, including explicit benchmarks or targets. Establishing benchmarks is essential to assess progress and permits transparency in reporting outcomes. Most importantly, the implementation of these policies requires investment and strong political leadership.

The Government of Canada should annually report on the activities undertaken to meet its sport and physical activity policy objectives in a clear manner and with reference to specific benchmarks.<sup>1547</sup> Regular, transparent reporting on government policies is crucial to foster accountability and public trust. These practices would allow the government and the public to track progress, highlight areas needing improvement, and ensure that policies achieve their intended impact. This would be distinct from the obligation to review programs every five years which the *Financial Administration Act* requires. The focus of these annual reports should be on transparent communication with the public about policy progress.



## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

- 51. The Government of Canada review its sport-related policies and commit to regularly reviewing sport and physical activity policies and strategies to reflect current realities, emerging challenges, and best practices. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.**
- 52. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Disability sport community at the national, provincial, and territorial levels, develop a national Disability sport strategy to promote access to sport for persons with disabilities, which includes Para sport and Paralympic sport. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.**
- 53. The Government of Canada develop a national strategy to promote participation in sport and physical activity at all levels, encompassing broad sport participation and high-performance sport. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.**
- 54. The Government of Canada develop and implement action plans and institute programs to support all its sport and physical activity policies and strategies. Each action plan should clearly define the policy's objectives, set measurable targets, and outline specific actions to be taken by the Government of Canada. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.**
- 55. The Government of Canada, to promote transparency and accountability, regularly and publicly report on the implementation and results of federal sport and physical activity policies and programs. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.**
- 56. The Government of Canada establish a comprehensive national tool to regularly collect and analyze data on key indicators of sport and physical activity, including participation.**
- 57. The Government of Canada allocate continued funding for Indigenous-led research specific to Indigenous people and sport in Canada.**

## **THE NEED FOR A CENTRALIZED, COORDINATED, AND UNITED APPROACH TO SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CANADA AND A CENTRALIZED SPORT ENTITY**

Here we consider participants' perspectives we received prior to the release of the Preliminary Report and the feedback we received with respect to our preliminary recommendation for the creation of a Centralized Sport Entity. Before outlining this feedback, we wish to emphasize that while we use the phrase "Centralized Sport Entity" to refer to the recommended entity, its mandate and responsibilities are paramount, not its name.

### **Feedback on the need for a centralized, coordinated, and united approach to sport and physical activity in Canada and on the Centralized Sport Entity**

While some skepticism was expressed about the creation of a Centralized Sport Entity, a wide majority of participants expressed support for the Commission's preliminary recommendation related to the creation of a new Centralized Sport Entity. In what follows we outline the feedback we received supporting the Centralized Sport Entity followed by the concerns participants raised regarding it. We conclude with suggestions to address these concerns.

#### **Factors and considerations for a Centralized Sport Entity**

Among those in support of the Centralized Sport Entity, it was noted that if given a clear vision and mandate, the Centralized Sport Entity would become the unified voice of the Canadian sport and physical activity community that is so desperately needed. They recognized that the sport "system" is broken and that taking steps toward establishing a Centralized Sport Entity with a view of all levels of the system, from national to local, was critical. We also heard of the importance of ensuring the Centralized Sport Entity advances and celebrates sport at all levels.

Participants emphasized the need for a Centralized Sport Entity that goes beyond the role currently played by Sport Canada, which many defined as primarily a funding function. Some described how other commonwealth countries had taken a similar approach to centralizing sport within one entity in support of this recommendation.

Participants highlighted that the Centralized Sport Entity is needed to address the transformational changes that the system so urgently requires. They further asserted that one national authority would be in a better position to bring together all the fragmented amateur sport organizations in Canada to create a unified voice. A majority of participants supported the leadership role that the Centralized Sport Entity would play in setting policy and strategy directions. They also recognized the importance of a single independent entity implementing the combined strategy of sport and physical activity, from the grassroots to the podium, while enhancing collaboration and reducing bureaucracy.

Several provincial and territorial governments also recognized the benefits of taking a centralized and coordinated approach to sport, as we recommended with the creation of the Centralized Sport Entity, because they have undertaken a similar approach to organizing sport and physical activity within their own jurisdiction. In those settings, the assigned entities have, for example, assumed responsibilities for planning, programming, and funding amateur sport.

Some participants shared that government oversight had faltered, if not completely failed them, because ministers and bureaucrats were routinely biased and sided with sport organizations rather than with athletes. On that note, the idea of a Centralized Sport Entity was seen as a positive step toward less political interference than has been noted in recent years.

The Commission, as we set out earlier in the section summarizing the recommendations made in our Preliminary Report, recommended several roles and responsibilities for the Centralized Sport Entity. These included, for example, funding for sport and physical activity, the development of a cohesive national sport and physical activity strategy, and responsibility for the governance of sport organizations by serving as custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and related audits. Participants also suggested additional roles and responsibilities for the Centralized Sport Entity, namely:

- development of a collaborative infrastructure review and sport infrastructure strategy
- development of sustainable sport in the context of climate change
- development of a targeted excellence strategy
- good governance and human rights education
- sport participation and access advocacy for physical activity and active lifestyles cross-sectoral and intergovernmental collaboration
- official and referee training/certification
- revenue generation, including an advancement arm to pool donations or a licensing and consulting arm that sells curricula, for example.

Participants emphasized that in fulfilling its mandate, the Centralized Sport Entity ought to meaningfully engage with the sport and physical activity communities to ensure that their perspectives and needs are heard and considered.

Although a majority expressed support for a Centralized Sport Entity in Canada, some shared skepticism considering its breadth of responsibilities, fearing that it would be a change only in form, not substance, and that the same known individuals and entities would be at the helm.

We also heard that perhaps the Commission was asking too much of the entity and that this could risk lowering the likelihood of its creation, let alone its success. Some expressed that there was a lack of clarity in the Commission's Preliminary Report around its proposed responsibilities. Those participants were left confused given that some of the entity's roles and responsibilities are currently performed by Sport Canada and national Multisport Service Organizations. It was unclear to them whether these organizations would cease to exist once the Centralized Sport Entity was created or whether the entity would result in an added layer of duplicative services. Others were also left wondering whether National Sport Organizations, the Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism, and the Sport and Dispute Resolution Centre would fold into the Centralized Sport Entity.

We also heard that to maintain the entity's integrity, its role should be limited to the regulation and oversight of sport, not delivery and implementation. The latter roles were seen as the National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations' responsibility. Some also proposed that the funding and oversight functions should be separated into two distinct entities.

In addition to concerns regarding the scope of roles and responsibilities, some worried that the change would be more of a form-over-substance exercise leading to a simple transfer of current responsibilities and related challenges in the system to a new entity.

We were repeatedly told that genuine change would not be possible if the new entity is established and led by the same familiar groups and people. Participants who were failed by the current system's structures reiterated that rebuilding trust in the sport system was essential. They emphasized that a Centralized Sport Entity replicating the current system with the same individuals as decision-makers, but under a new name, would not address this need. We were told that the new entity needs to be constructed and seen as a new organization steered by dynamic new leadership.

Others told us that a small contingent of decision-makers and senior leadership within the Canadian sport system had gained massive influence over the direction of priorities and funds and directly or indirectly benefitted from the status quo. Some recognized that while these decision-makers may agree that the system needs to be improved, they would not support changes that could impact to the status quo and their interests. Such changes could alter their influence and power.

We also heard concern that those in favour of and actively advocating for a Centralized Sport Entity would be the same people leading that entity. This would perpetuate the issues that the Commission has identified rather than break the cycle. Participants therefore advocated for a fresh start that goes beyond the advancement and pursuit of high-performance sport and includes the direct input of the entire sport sector.

### **Suggestions on the scope of the Centralized Sport Entity**

Considering the scope of roles and responsibilities that would fall within the Centralized Sport Entity, it was suggested that a transitional task group be established to oversee the process. More specifically, participants proposed a phased approach initially focusing on national-level funded sport organizations to achieve early success while designing the entity for broader, long-term impact.

To address their concerns and skepticism about the Centralized Sport Entity, participants agreed that the entity could not be a reiteration of the current sport structures or transpose Sport Canada into a new structure.

Participants also agreed that independence from government, high governance standards, and accountability were important features that should be reflected in this new entity. They were also in favour of an entity established by legislation, recognizing it would be more likely to withstand a change of government and its priorities.

A crown corporation or a not-for-profit created by legislation were the most frequently discussed structures. Participants highlighted that a crown corporation would provide several advantages, including predictable and permanent federal funding, and a line of direct accountability to the government but with the required independence and autonomy. They also noted that Australia balances both high-performance and grassroots sport through the Australian Sport Commission, which is the equivalent of a Canadian crown corporation.

Others preferred the not-for-profit structure, created by federal legislation. They indicated that this structure would provide permanency through its enabling legislation and independence because it would be governed independently.

### **Calls to Action: the need for a centralized, coordinated, and united approach to sport and physical activity in Canada and on the Centralized Sport Entity**

As we outlined earlier in this chapter, the safe sport crisis has prompted Canadians to call for a redefinition of how sport and physical activity are governed and overseen in Canada. This redefined approach must be comprehensive and cohesive across all levels of sport participation in the country. The responsibility for promoting sport and for improving physical activity levels in Canada must be brought back together under the same minister and supported by one department. Our approach to sport must encompass both the pursuit of excellence in high-performance sport and broad sport participation. Decisions made with respect to sport and physical activity must be evidence-based and timely, not shaped by undue political influence and pressure. More importantly, a single point of leadership for sport and physical activity in Canada will provide clearer and greater accountability.

A Centralized Sport Entity will allow for a harmonized, strategic, and coordinated approach to sport across the country. Uniting Canada's sport and physical activity organizations will lead to better efficiencies, reduce redundancies, and clarify responsibilities. This will create synergies and efficiencies between sport and physical activity programs. In addition, the centralization of functions as opposed to the fragmentation of functions across different organizations will enhance public confidence by providing a clear, distinct entity they can refer to. In fact, we are of the view that a streamlined structure would create a more direct line of accountability because responsibilities would be clearly defined and could not be shifted among multiple actors. If this is done thoughtfully and comprehensively, trust in the system will increase.

For these reasons, the Commission remains of the view that a centralized approach to sport and physical activity in Canada must be implemented. Considering the feedback received prior to and in response to its preliminary recommendation, the Commission is now even more convinced that an independent Centralized Sport Entity is the necessary instrument to implement these changes.

In what follows, we provide our final findings and Calls to Action as they relate to the new Centralized Sport Entity's mandate, key functions and responsibilities, legal structure, and funding. We also provide a phased



approach to be considered for the implementation and operationalization of this new sport entity.

### **Centralized Sport Entity: mandate, key functions and responsibilities**

The Commission is of the view that the Centralized Sport Entity's mandate should be to encourage, promote, and develop sport and physical activity in Canada consistent with the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. Without limiting this mandate, the Commission is of the view that the functions we identify below ought to be undertaken by the Centralized Sport Entity. It will obviously be up to the Entity to determine how best to implement these functions, including the necessary programs and procedures.

Before outlining these functions, we highlight some of the relevant findings made in other chapters of this report that relate to functions 4 to 7 listed here.

As Chapter 14 with respect to governance outlines, there is currently no body, entity, or authority responsible for the Canadian Sport Governance Code. There is also no consistent approach to governance in the sport world and little to no effective monitoring of compliance with existing governance requirements. Similarly, as Chapter 11 explains, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport<sup>1548</sup> announced its decision in February 2025 to discontinue the work it was doing with the True Sport program. As of the date of writing this Commission's Report, no organization has taken over administration of this important program. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, although some organizations endeavour to compile and publish data related to sport and physical activity in Canada, there is no organization responsible for the systematic collection of data relating to sport and physical activity, including participation, funding, infrastructure, participant well-being, and the coordination of such efforts.

The following are key functions that should be undertaken by the Centralized Sport Entity to carry out its mandate.

#### **1. Strategic direction and leadership for sport and physical activity:**

The Centralized Sport Entity would take on a strategic direction and leadership role in enhancing collaboration within the sport and physical activity sector to identify system-wide priorities and ensure coherence among federal, provincial, and territorial sport and physical activity strategies, policies, and investments.

This leadership role should also include identifying opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration with the sport and physical activity sector, including but not limited to collaboration with sport organizations and multisport service organizations. As outlined earlier, in carrying out this function, the Centralized Sport Entity ought to work and collaborate with the federal and provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport and physical activity, and their department officials supporting them. The Entity should also be included during meetings held by the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for sport and physical activity.

## **2. Funding for sport and physical activity**

Funding for sport and physical activity, including the receipt, allocation, distribution, and oversight of all federal sport and physical activity funding, should reside with the Centralized Sport Entity. Its functions would include but would not be limited to developing a comprehensive long-term funding strategy, developing funding-support criteria, identifying funding conditions, making funding decisions, and distributing funds to sport and physical activity organizations.

Through funding conditions, the Centralized Sport Entity could use funding levers to reinforce the adoption of policies, including but not limited to, safe sport and sport governance, in alignment with identified national, provincial, and territorial priorities.

We recognize that some of these funding functions currently reside with Sport Canada and Own the Podium as they relate to sport, and the Public Health Agency of Canada as they relate to physical activity.

## **3. Policy for sport and physical activity**

The Centralized Sport Entity would be responsible for developing, reviewing, updating, maintaining, and implementing national sport and physical activity policies. Such responsibilities would include but not be limited to:

- regularly reviewing sport and sport and physical activity policies and strategies to reflect current realities, emerging challenges, and best practices. This would include the National Background Screening Policy recommended in Chapter 11.
- developing a national strategy — supported by programs and concrete measures — to promote participation in sport and physical activity, encompassing high-performance sport and broad sport participation
- developing, in collaboration with the Disability sport community at the national, provincial, and territorial levels, a national Disability sport strategy — supported by programs and concrete measures — to promote access to sport for persons with disabilities which includes Para sport, and Paralympic sport
- developing a national strategy on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport and physical activity in collaboration with equity-deserving groups.

In addition, the Centralized Sport Entity would be responsible for implementing action plans and instituting programs to support these sport and physical activity policies and strategies. Each action plan should clearly define the policy's objectives, set measurable targets, and outline specific actions to be taken.

Finally, the Centralized Sport Entity would regularly evaluate and publicly report on the implementation of federal sport and physical activity policies and programs. We recognize that this function currently resides with Sport Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada as it relates to policies that fall within the scope of physical activity as described in the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.

**4. Custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport**

The Centralized Sport Entity should be responsible for the review, update, and maintenance of these codes to ensure they remain current and relevant. As it currently stands, no entity is responsible for the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Responsibility for the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport currently resides with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

**5. Education and Training**

The development and delivery of pan-Canadian education and training efforts related to sport and physical activity should reside with the Centralized Sport Entity. This would include the responsibility to operationalize, update, and deliver the pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program, to advance the mission and expand the reach of the True Sport Program across the Canadian sport system, and to develop and implement the national coaching certification program. We recognize that these functions currently reside with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the Coaching Association of Canada.

**6. Compliance and oversight**

The Centralized Sport Entity should be responsible for the development and implementation of a monitoring, compliance, and auditing regime of the organizations it funds. This regime's implementation would ensure effective use of funds and compliance with funding conditions, including but not limited to requirements related to governance and safe sport.

The Centralized Sport Entity would need to develop the required governance expertise to conduct regular audits to ensure implementation and compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. The Entity would also conduct regular and proactive monitoring and auditing of federally funded sport and physical activity organizations.

**7. Sport and physical activity research and knowledge**

The Centralized Sport Entity should be responsible for supporting and advancing Canadian sport and physical activity through best practice research and knowledge-building efforts for the sport sector, including systematic monitoring of levels of physical activity and sport participation in Canada. These initiatives would inform the policies and strategies developed by the Entity and ensure they are evidence-based.

This function, which, at the moment, mainly resides with the Sport Information and Resource Centre and the Public Health Agency of Canada, would be supported by the national tool to collect and analyze data on key

indicators to measure sport and physical activity, including sport participation. It would also be supported by Indigenous-led research, as referenced earlier in a Call to Action made to the Government of Canada.

For many of these functions, the Centralized Sport Entity will need to collaborate with federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity, and recreation, including participation at the Ministers Conference. In Chapter 10 as it relates to safe sport and Chapter 14 on governance, we explore in further detail the importance and need for this collaboration to ensure harmonized approaches across all levels of sport.

Over time, each responsibility or function outlined here could evolve into its own arm of the Centralized Sport Entity with dedicated subject-matter expertise. The Centralized Sport Entity should leverage the expertise and knowledge within the sport and physical activity communities.

Considering the above key functions and responsibilities, the Commission wishes to clarify that the Centralized Sport Entity would not integrate the following entities: the Canadian Centre on Ethics in Sport; the national and provincial safe sport authorities, or the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority as recommended in Chapter 10; the Sport Dispute and Resolution Centre of Canada; or National Sport Organizations.

In addition, consistent with our Call to Action 3 made in Chapter 6, the Centralized Sport Entity would engage with Indigenous sport organizations, governments, and communities in its decision-making processes to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are reflected throughout its work.

For further clarification, as Chapter 6 outlines, the Commission recognizes the importance for Indigenous sport organizations to be led by and for Indigenous people. As such, Indigenous-led sport organizations, including but not limited to the Aboriginal Sport Circle, the Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies, and Indigenous-led games, would not be integrated into the Centralized Sport Entity unless they themselves choose to pursue that path.

### **Centralized Sport Entity: the appropriate structure**

To address the sport system's current shortcomings as outlined throughout the Commission's report and this chapter, the Commission is of the view that the structure of the Centralized Sport Entity must reflect the following principles:

- **Stability.** The Entity must be created in a way that guarantees its ongoing and stable existence. This would be achieved by legislating the Entity's creation and ensuring that it receive stable, ongoing and predictable government funding.
- **Independence.** The Entity must operate at arm's length from the government and operate independently from governmental influence, pressures, and political cycles.
- **Accountability.** The Entity's structure must provide a line of accountability to the Government of Canada.

- **Operational efficiency.** The selected structure must provide the Entity with the ability to deliver quality programs and services in a timely manner. It must also afford the Entity with some flexibility to innovate in order to respond and adapt to evolving needs.

As we shared in our Preliminary Report, the Commission identified five different potential models and structures for the Centralized Sport Entity. These models are described in greater detail below, followed by an explanation of why the Commission chose the Crown corporation model. Appendix 10 also includes a table which compares the features of the various models including the type of entity, its governance and accountability framework, sources of funding and the degree of autonomy from government.

#### *Ministerial Department*

Ministerial departments are run by a minister who gets their authority to manage the department from a statute.<sup>1549</sup> In the current model, Sport Canada is a branch led by a director general within the Department of Canadian Heritage. This branch falls underneath the Sport, Major Events and Commemoration sector, which is led by an assistant deputy minister. Although the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages is currently responsible for the Department of Canadian Heritage's portfolio, some of their authority related to sport has been delegated to the Secretary of State (Sport).<sup>1550</sup> Regarding, physical activity, these responsibilities were allotted to the Minister of Health.<sup>1551</sup> As we have outlined in this chapter, it is evident that the current model is ineffective.

#### *Ministerial departmental agency*

Departmental agencies operate largely within the same fiscal and human resource framework as departments. However, agencies have more autonomy in their decision making and operations, either because of the specialized skills involved in their work, or because they perform regulatory functions that must remain free of political influence.

In general, such organizations are created by legislation that set out their mandate, authorities, and organizational structure.<sup>1552</sup> Some agencies are structured on a corporate model in which decision-making powers are vested in a board or commission.<sup>1553</sup> Examples of departmental agencies include the Canada Border Services Agency and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

#### *Crown corporation*

Crown corporations are not-for-profit government organizations created by federal legislation. Although they operate at arm's length from the government,<sup>1554</sup> they remain accountable to the government. Crown corporations focus on the delivery of services and operational matters.<sup>1555</sup>

While most crown corporations operate in an industrial, commercial, or financial environment, some have a public policy mandate.<sup>1556</sup> Some crown corporations are almost completely funded by the government while others, generally those with a commercial orientation, tend to be self-sufficient or profit making.<sup>1557</sup> Crown corporations therefore tend to have more flexibility in financial and management matters compared to other government bodies, although they are generally still subject to the government's human resource and administrative policies.<sup>1558</sup>

The legislation that creates a crown corporation provides the policy, operational framework, and the



responsibilities of the minister, the board of directors, and the chief executive officer.<sup>1559</sup> (Each crown corporation is assigned a responsible minister who represents the corporation in Parliament and ensures accountability.)<sup>1560</sup> Furthermore, the mandate, and therefore the policy direction of the corporation, can be modified as required via legislative amendment. Examples of crown corporations include the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Telefilm Canada, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

While this model provides maximum decision-making autonomy from government, crown corporations remain accountable to Parliament for the conduct of their affairs by reporting to the minister assigned to oversee them. This minister has the authority to recommend the approval of the corporation's corporate plan and budgets and is responsible for recommending potential board members to the Governor in Council.<sup>1561</sup>

#### *Not-for-profit created by federal legislation*

Created by federal legislation, these entities are governed by a board of directors whose members are appointed by Order in Council. They are accountable to Parliament through a minister, by tabling a Corporate Plan and Annual Report. They receive funds from the federal government, making them subject to the terms of their contribution agreement. They also receive funds from any contributing signatories. An example of this model is the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada established by the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.<sup>1562</sup>

#### *Not-for-profit third-party delivery organization*

Another model that is sometimes used is a third-party delivery arrangement model. This approach is usually chosen when specialized knowledge specific to the program is required.

In this context, a third-party organization enters into a contribution agreement with the department and receives and disburses funds to one or multiple ultimate recipients in compliance with the contribution agreement. Under this model, the third party is created to respond to a need identified by the federal government and is accountable to the federal government department it entered into a contribution agreement with.

This model, in contrast to the others, provides more flexibility to the entity in terms of determining its mandate. It also allows for collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, who could be parties to the contribution agreement. In such cases, the corporation would be accountable to all interested parties to the contribution agreement. Examples of this model include the National Sport Organizations funded through Sport Canada's Sport Support Program, as well as other entities like the Canada Media Fund.

#### **The Commission's chosen model: the Crown corporation**

Of all of these models, we are of the view that the crown corporation is the optimal option for the Centralized Sport Entity. This model will provide a stable existence and funding, operational autonomy and independence from government, as well as the ability to execute the required functions to carry out its mandate. A crown corporation would strike an appropriate balance between having governmental support but also maintaining sufficient distance from political pressures, which, as noted earlier in this chapter, may impact operational efficiencies. It would also maintain a line of accountability to the Government of Canada. An added benefit of the

crown corporation model is the possibility to explore new sources of revenue as the scope and mandate of the Centralized Sport Entity evolves.

First, it should be noted that the four other models have certain shortcomings. Thus, as we outlined earlier in this chapter, the current model where sport sits within the ministerial department and physical activity reside within the Public Health Agency of Canada has proven ineffective. Although a departmental agency has a higher degree of independence than a ministerial department, it still operates within the public administration. As a result, the level of political influence remains present. A not-for-profit third-party delivery organization, which would receive government funding to achieve outcomes outlined in a contribution agreement, could raise concerns about consistent and stable funding. The situation that many National Sport Organizations find themselves in serves as an example of this instability. A not-for-profit created by legislation would provide the greatest independence from government, as it would be legally independent and would operate outside the government structure. As a result, although it would be publicly funded, the accountability framework would be limited.

Second, in considering these options, the Commission is of the view that it is important to find the right balance between ensuring autonomy and independence for decision making on sport-specific issues, while also accounting for ministerial direction and accountability of the Entity.

The Commission is of the view that a crown corporation provides both autonomy and independence from government and reduces the impact of political interference and pressures in the decision-making process but retains a line of accountability to the Government of Canada. Such a model would also provide predictability in terms of funding. Another advantage is that it would be more difficult for changes to the funding to occur given that the Entity would be created through federal legislation. To provide even further balance between autonomy and independence from government in decision-making powers, the enabling legislation should clearly define the circumstances in which the minister responsible for the Entity can intervene.

Third, it is worth noting that the crown corporation as the legal structure for a Centralized Sport Entity is not a novel idea — this was the approach that both Australia and New Zealand adopted, for example. For instance, the Australian Sports Commission is a Government Commonwealth Corporate Entity and Sport New Zealand is a Crown Entity.

The Commission also draws attention to the Canada Council for the Arts, a Crown Corporation known as Canada's national arts funder, which offers a broad range of grants to Canadian artists and arts organizations.<sup>1563</sup> The Canada Council for the Arts was created following a recommendation made by the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences led by the Right Honourable Vincent Massey.<sup>1564</sup> A parallel to sport can be drawn from the recommendation resulting from the Massey Commission because, like sport, culture is not a matter of exclusive responsibility noted in the Constitution. In creating the Canada Council for the Arts, the federal government ascertained its role in the context of culture and arts. This entity was established to function in parallel to provincial and territorial structures relating to culture and arts.

Finally, to further support meaningful change, the Centralized Sport Entity's board of directors should be grounded

in expertise and impartiality. The Commission is of the view that the governance standards required of sport organizations (as outlined in Chapter 14) should also apply to the Centralized Sport Entity. Further, to ensure the independence, credibility, and capacity for objective oversight, the Commission is of the view that the new Entity's board of directors should be composed of individuals with the required expertise to implement and oversee the Entity's mandate.

The individuals forming the board of directors overseeing the Centralized Sport Entity should bring fresh, unbiased perspectives, in order to restore trust, drive reform, and safeguard the integrity of the Entity's mandate.

It is important that the board include individuals with demonstrated expertise in governance, administration, and leadership. Board members should also possess a sensitivity to the needs and circumstances of the sport and physical activity community. This should include but not be limited to safeguarding and protecting vulnerable populations. In addition, to foster trust and credibility, appointments to the board of directors should be guided by the principles of independence, integrity, and the absence of any conflicts of interest.

#### **A phased approach to creating the Centralized Sport Entity**

As functions and responsibilities are transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity, the financial resources associated with those functions and responsibilities would also be re-allocated to it. To be clear, this transfer would involve the re-allocation of some of the existing funds already managed by Sport Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada as it relates to their functions within the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, using Vote 5 (Grants and Contributions envelope) and Vote 1 (the associated administrative cost allocation).<sup>1565</sup>

While the overall transfer would not require significant additions of new funds, since the base funding would come from the budget transfer described above, a transitional fund would need to be established to offset the initial costs related to the entity's establishment, as is the case for any large transformational initiative. The Commission is of the view that the consolidation and re-allocation of existing resources would maximize impact and reduce duplication and redundancy.

The Commission recognizes that a crown corporation (the "Centralized Sport Entity") will have to be created legislatively, either through new legislation or amended legislation. Its mandate, as set out here, will have to be incorporated into this enabling statute. As is the case with other crown corporations,<sup>1566</sup> the Commission recommends that the language describing the mandate, functions, and powers given to the crown corporation be broadly defined.

We recognize that the scope of the Centralized Sport Entity is broad as it aligns with both the sport and physical activity objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. As such, we are of the view that steps toward the creation of the Centralized Sport Entity must be undertaken immediately. However, the implementation of its functions could be approached in two phases, starting with the functions related to sport, followed by those related to physical activity.

The first phase would focus on encouraging, promoting, and developing sport at all levels. This would involve implementing functions 1 to 7 outlined earlier that relate to the sport objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. Within this first phase an incremental approach to the transfer of functions to the Centralized Sport Entity could be undertaken. Some of the functions related to sport identified in functions 1 to 7 currently reside with Sport Canada, Own the Podium, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the Coaching Association of Canada, and the Sport Information and Research Centre respectively. As these functions would be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity, the financial resources associated with them would be redirected to the Centralized Sport Entity.

The second phase should expand the functions assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity to include functions related to improving physical activity. This would involve implementing functions 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 outlined earlier that relate to the physical activity objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. These functions currently reside with the Public Health Agency of Canada. As these functions would be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity, the financial resources associated with them would be redirected to the Centralized Sport Entity.

This phased approach would allow for the Centralized Sport Entity to build success before organically expanding the scope of its functions and responsibilities.

### Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

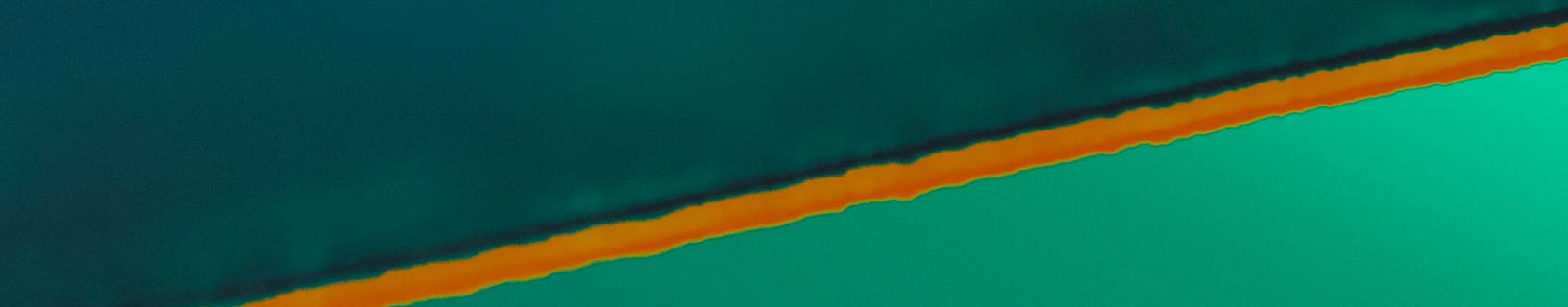
**58. The Government of Canada create a Crown Corporation (the “Centralized Sport Entity”), established by enabling legislation in which it provides the entity a broad mandate to encourage, promote, and develop sport and physical activity in Canada consistent with the objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.**

**59. The Government of Canada adopt a phased approach to operationalize the Centralized Sport Entity starting with the implementation of functions related to the sport objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* followed by those related to the physical activity objectives set out in that same Act.**



# **CHAPTER 13:**

## **Alignment across sport system structures**







# Chapter 13:

## Alignment across sport system structures

The Canadian sport system structures lack alignment, integration, strategic collaboration, and cohesion.

In this chapter, we outline our findings with respect to those structures. We remind the reader of the Commission's preliminary recommendations with respect to alignment in sport system structures. We then provide our final findings on system alignment, including calls to establish shared services among sport organizations, amalgamate sport organizations, and standardize policies and ensure their consistent application across the sport system.

In our findings, we consider opportunities to enhance the services and support provided to athletes with disabilities and to organizations dedicated to Disability, Para and Paralympic sport. We also take into consideration participants' perspectives, both before and after the release of the Preliminary Report, including at the National Summit organized by the Commission, which we highlight within each section.

Because this chapter explores approaches to strengthen alignment, we refer to notions of horizontal and vertical alignment.

- Horizontal alignment generally refers to the coordination and harmonization of efforts and policies within a specific hierarchical level of a system<sup>1567</sup> to improve efficiency and consistency across a single level of that system. For example, coordination across several national sport organizations or coordination across several provincial sport organizations.
- Vertical alignment, on the other hand, refers to the coordination and harmonization of efforts and policies across different hierarchical levels of a system.<sup>1568</sup> For example, coordination across all levels of one sport, from the National Sport Organization to the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and then to the community level.

### Commission's findings on the sport system structures: sport system misalignment

As outlined in Chapter 5, and found by the Commission in its Preliminary Report, there are too many organizations vying for too few resources, either at the national level, at the provincial and territorial level, or at the community level of sport. This has created competition among stakeholders within the sport system rather than collaboration.

The sheer number of National, Provincial, and Territorial Sport Organizations creates redundancies and duplication of efforts. As of the date of writing this report, there are 64 funded National Sport Organizations and over 560 funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations across the country.<sup>1569</sup> Each of these sport organizations has its own board of directors, staff, and coaches. They also each have their own internal legal, human resources, communications, information technology (IT), and accounting departments or are required to purchase these services elsewhere. Each sport organization spends part of their budget on administrative services.

Furthermore, National Sport Organizations generally have limited policy or program influence across other levels of their sport. The rules addressing the organization and conduct of competition (i.e. ‘The Rules of the Game’) are the only exceptions, as these rules are typically applied from the national level all the way to the grassroots. The relationship between National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations can vary significantly depending on the sport and the Province and Territory. For example, a Provincial Sport Organization may be hesitant to have a National Sport Organization involved in their provincial programming as the provincial organization considers this to be a matter within their purview. While these organizations work seamlessly together in some sports, they work in complete isolation in others.

The lack of collaboration and coordination can be attributed to many factors including whether these levels of sport pay attention to broader sport participation or high-performance sport. While Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations (and their community member organizations) may develop athletes who ultimately earn medals on an international stage, this is not their primary objective. National sport organizations, in many cases, focus on the development of elite athletes and lack resources to address other issues at other levels of their sport.

There is also a common misconception that National Sport Organizations have control over their sport from the national level to the grassroots. In fact, a majority of National Sport Organizations have very little oversight or control over their provincial and territorial member organizations and are disconnected from the grassroots. This is typically not well understood by the public. Most tend to assume that a sport is affiliated with its National Sport Organization and guided by that organization’s policies, programs and processes. There is a need for greater clarity around sport organizations’ roles and responsibilities at each level of the sport structure.

Issues of alignment and efficiencies also exist within Canada’s Disability and Para sport system. There is inconsistency with respect to sport for people with disabilities, which is offered either in segregated, adapted, or integrated environments, as described in Chapter 5.

For example, at the national level, four Para sport organizations are recognized and funded by the federal government. There are also other national-level Para sport organizations that operate independently within the broader sport system, meaning they do not operate within the structure of the National Sport Organization responsible for the non-Para sport equivalent. There has also been a trend to integrate Para sport and non-Para sport within the same national governing body. Some National Sport Organizations’ responsibilities therefore extend to Para sport. A similar combination of organizations operates at the provincial, territorial and community level of sport, providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in sport.

Ultimately, a wide variety of organizations deliver sport for athletes with disabilities. Although they have differing mandates, capacities, and geographical reach, these organizations generally have similar objectives. Some offer opportunities in a specific sport across disabilities, while others offer opportunities across a variety of sports for a specific group of participants with disabilities. Some organizations offer opportunities for individuals with and without disabilities, while others focus on participants with disabilities. There are also organizations that offer adapted opportunities within a broader offering for everyone. While recognizing these inconsistencies occur across all levels of the sport system, the Commission also acknowledges that the integration of Disability sport with non-Disability sport is not always optimal. This is due to the unique realities of athletes with disabilities, which include the need for disability-specific expertise and equipment.

A further challenge to alignment in the sport system is the emergence and growth of private entities. They operate in an ecosystem in which National, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations have limited or no ability to oversee or influence them, frequently resulting in poor governance, and the absence of any consistent oversight or accountability.

It is clear to the Commission that funding of the Canadian sport system is a fundamental concern, made more complex by the current fiscal and geopolitical context. Funding of the sport system is discussed in Chapter 15, in which the Commission calls on the federal government to increase and stabilize the financial support it provides to National Sport Organizations.

Specific, positive incentives should be provided to sport organizations to allow them to explore and implement new structural and organizational approaches to achieve efficiencies and creative measures to do more with less.

However, recognizing that increased funding is required does not remove the need to find efficiencies and cost-saving measures and create synergies within the sport system.

## Reminder of the Commission's preliminary recommendations

In its Preliminary Report, the Commission presented nine recommendations as options to strengthen alignment and create efficiencies within the sport system at the national level ("horizontal alignment") and between the national, provincial and territorial, and community levels of sport ("vertical alignment"). We presented these options as solutions that could be implemented individually or combined to achieve a greater overall impact.

At the national level, the Commission recommended the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations and sharing and standardizing common services across these organizations. Recognizing that amalgamation would require time and effort, the Commission also recommended that a horizontal shared services model should be initiated as a first step toward amalgamation.



With respect to vertical alignment, the Commission made recommendations to strengthen alignment and integration across the different levels of a sport by encouraging National Sport Organizations to:

- Seek broad application of policies across all levels of their sport.
- Consider their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations in any amalgamation process.
- Consider a vertical shared services model with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

Recognizing the unique circumstances of Para sport organizations and Para athletes, the Commission found that alignment and consistency in Para sport settings may not always be optimal. However, a national Para-sport-specific policy and program framework should be developed in collaboration with the Para sport community.

To incentivize National Sport Organizations to implement a shared services model and amalgamate, the Commission also recommended that the Government of Canada create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations as they undertake these processes.

## Steps to transformation

As suggested above and outlined in the sections that follow, the Commission is of the view that the Government of Canada and the sport sector must take immediate steps to initiate sustainable change that will lead to a more cohesive, aligned, and united Canadian sport system. Such change will in turn reinforce accountability, reduce duplication and redundancies, and clarify roles and responsibilities. It will also achieve financial and operational efficiencies, resulting in gains that can be reinvested in core programming. This change will lead, in our view, to a healthier, more vibrantly effective sport community.

The sport sector and all levels of government must find ways to create efficiencies and enhance collaboration to deliver sport programming more effectively for Canadians.

While positive incentives such as additional one-time funding or other benefits from the Government would encourage such efforts and reward cost-saving measures, the reality is that such steps are essential regardless of external motivation. In the current fiscal context, sport organizations must pursue these steps to transformation not only for financial gain but to ensure their long-term stability and survival. Where the Commission calls on the Government of Canada to use positive incentives to encourage sport organizations to act, it is not suggesting funding conditions that could result in a loss of funding for organizations that fail to act. Rather, the Commission is calling on the Government of Canada to take a leadership role by encouraging sport organisations to take action by supporting these processes.



The current conditions and context provide an opportune time to redefine the federal, provincial and territorial collaborative relationship and break down the different jurisdictional silos. The objective would be to strengthen unity across the country and sport organizations and create a real Canadian sport system, something which the Commission was told by many did not really exist.

For such change to occur, the government and sport sector must:

1. Establish shared services models among sport organizations.
2. Amalgamate sport organizations.
3. Ensure consistent application of policies across the sport system (e.g., safe sport policies, governance requirements).

The Commission recognizes that amalgamating sport organizations may require time and effort. Therefore, it may be easier and quicker for some organizations to establish shared services models. However, although one process may present fewer challenges, both processes are integral and must be pursued in tandem, with the same emphasis and effort. Pursuing one process does not remove the need to undertake the second.

Furthermore, the processes to establish a shared services model and to amalgamate must carefully consider the unique circumstances and needs of athletes with disabilities as well as Disability, Para, and Paralympic sport organizations to determine if, and in what circumstances, it might be optimal for these organizations to consider partnering or amalgamating with non-Disability sport organizations.

In response to its Preliminary Report, the Commission received feedback on the importance of distinguishing between Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport within the broader Disability sport community, recognizing that athletes with disabilities participate within these different settings. Chapter 1 addresses this.

Considering that Disability sports and athletes with disabilities incur additional costs because of their unique needs, the Commission recommended that additional funding be allocated to National Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations. This call to action is addressed in Chapter 15.

As provided in its Preliminary Report, the Commission remains of the view that a national strategy should be developed to improve collaboration and cohesion within the disability sport context. This strategy, which would encompass Disability sport, Para sport and Paralympic sport, would be developed in collaboration with these communities.

This call to action can now be found in Chapter 12. Further, as provided in that chapter, the Commission calls on the Government of Canada to review, update and modernize its 2006 Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability.

## Establishing shared services models among sport organizations

Before providing the Commission's final findings and Calls to Action, we outline the participants' perspectives on shared services that we received prior to the release of the Preliminary Report. We then share the feedback we received on the preliminary recommendations, including the feedback received at the National Summit organized by the Commission.

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON SHARED SERVICES MODELS**

Throughout the Commission's activities, participants told us that at the national level, a shared services model for National Sport Organizations would improve not only sport organizations' operations but also enhance collaboration.

The Commission understands that collaboration already occurs among certain National Sport Organizations. For example, national Summer and Winter Olympic, Paralympic, Pan American, Parapan American, and Commonwealth Games sport organizations regularly meet, collaborate, and advocate using vehicles such as the Summer Sports Caucus and Winter Sports Caucus, respectively.

We were also informed that in the 1980s and 1990s, Sport Canada required many National Sport Organizations to have their national offices in Ottawa as a condition of funding. At that time, these offices were co-located at the Canadian Sport and Fitness Administration Centre, and a broad array of shared, administrative and operational services and resources were provided.<sup>1570</sup> While no longer required to the same degree, similar opportunities exist today. In some cases, there are still co-working spaces, meeting rooms, and collaborative spaces available for sport organizations, in settings such as the House of Sport located at the RA Centre in Ottawa.<sup>1571</sup> Member organizations — which can include National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, as well as Provincial and Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations — have access to these spaces.<sup>1572</sup> These office and co-working spaces aim to facilitate knowledge and information sharing and to leverage operational efficiencies. Some provide services like information technology (IT) support and access to meeting rooms.<sup>1573</sup>

The concept of shared services is common in other sectors and other industries. It encourages collaboration and creates opportunities to minimize costs and generate savings and efficiencies. For example, the Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace was established by the Ontario government for this exact reason.<sup>1574</sup>

Participants observed that since many federally funded sport organizations work independently and in silos, redundancies could be reduced if they adopted a shared services model. It was also noted that a shared services among National Sport Organizations could take different forms. They could be established among all, or several, National Sport Organizations. No matter how services are shared, participants agreed that it would create efficiencies for sport organizations and allow them to focus on program delivery. National Sport Organizations and National Para sport Organizations both supported this.

The Commission heard that where a shared services model is established, its funding should be assured. Participants said that incentives in the form of financial support for the initial creation of shared services were essential.

Some suggested that a similar approach to shared services at the national level could be explored at the provincial and territorial level. Such a model could take different forms and would require the collaboration and leadership of provinces and territories. For example, one suggested possibility would be to have a single entity provide Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations with the common services required by all. The services shared in this model, similar to that of the national model, could include information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, travel services, translation services, and insurance provision. We recognize that this would demand considerable collaboration and effort.

Another suggested possibility was to implement a shared services model within each province and territory to provide services to all sport organizations within its jurisdiction.

Some participants noted that shared services models already exist in certain provinces and territories and therefore such a recommendation is not needed. For example, the Regroupement Loisir et Sport du Québec and its Centre québécois de services aux associations is a not-for-profit non-governmental organization that offers several products and services to its member organizations<sup>1575</sup>. The Regroupement's mission is to offer a range of services to its members to facilitate the carrying out of their activities.<sup>1576</sup> The Quebec Ministry of Education recognizes the Regroupement as the organization responsible for the management of professional, technical and administrative services offered to member national sport and recreational organizations.<sup>1577</sup> It also supports the Regroupement in its role managing insurance and to house the headquarters. According to the Declaration of Member Services, the Regroupement offers several services including, risk and financial management services, payroll services, a group insurance program, legal services, material and procurement resources, information technology (IT) services, and travel and leisure services.<sup>1578</sup>

Other participants indicated that some provincial or territorial sport federations offer shared services, to varying degrees, to their respective sport organizations. For example, Sask Sport offers a number of services to assist the operations of its member organizations, including, office space, printing, accounting, payroll, and access to group insurance.<sup>1579</sup> Sport New Brunswick offers the following services to its members: access to a sport insurance program, an employee health benefit program, translation services, simultaneous translation services, access to French as second language training, travel benefits and access to a boardroom.<sup>1580</sup>

Participants said that a shared services model does not require all sport organizations to be in the same physical location as services could be shared virtually.

To further standardize common practices and requirements within a sport, shared services between the national and provincial and territorial levels of a sport were also raised with the Commission as an option. For example, if a group of National Sport Organizations established shared services among themselves, they could explore sharing services with the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of their sports. In addition to conventional administrative services, these services could include other sport-specific processes such as event planning, training and education, membership registration, program development, and policy development. Some smaller

provinces and territories expressed support for a shared services model recognizing they have limited resources and capacity to deliver sport in their communities and such an approach to shared services would increase their capacity. Other participants disagreed indicating that such an approach would not be feasible considering National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations have different programming. Finally, we also heard that this approach would not be necessary in jurisdictions where the provincial or territorial sport federation currently offers shared services.

### **FEEDBACK ON PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our preliminary findings and recommendations regarding the establishment of shared services models received broad general support. However, it was noted that positive financial incentives, in addition to the current funding allocated to sport organizations, would be necessary to assist in the initiation and implementation of such processes.

With respect to the services that could be shared among sport organizations, participants suggested the following additional services:

- insurance
- services to assist with revenue generation
- travel and transportation services
- policy templates
- foreign exchange hedging
- legal services
- governance support.

### **CALLS TO ACTION: ESTABLISHING SHARED SERVICES MODELS AMONG SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

The Commission's findings and recommendations on the need for sport organizations to establish shared services mechanisms remain unchanged. As highlighted in the feedback we received following the release of our Preliminary Report, most participants, including several National Sport Organizations support this recommendation.

A shared services model among sport organizations to centralize common services would result in a better-integrated sport system. It would allow sport organizations to:

- pool their resources
- have greater purchasing power
- lower their respective administrative overheads
- create efficiencies and synergies
- generate savings.<sup>1581</sup>

Services that could be shared include, among others, information technology (IT) support, human resources, and legal, translation, and other professional services.

Given the support that participants expressed for the establishment of shared services models, the Commission is of the view that National Sport Organizations could develop and establish shared services models among sport organizations within a reasonably short time frame.

A shared services model among sport organizations could take different forms depending on the different levels of sport and the circumstances of each organization. At the national level, horizontal shared services model among a group of National Sport Organizations could be established.

In addition to partnering with each other to share services, National Sport Organizations could consider a vertical shared services model with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. This could also extend to club-level organizations. It could also combine both horizontal and vertical shared services models.

Considering the unique and specific needs of athletes with disabilities and Disability sport organizations, the Commission recognizes that any process to achieve a shared services model requires meaningful engagement and collaboration with Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations. It also has to include athletes with disabilities to obtain their insights and evaluate whether a shared services model is optimal. Different models are possible, as services could be shared among organizations that all serve persons with disabilities or with organizations that serve other types of sport participants.

To further incentivize sport organizations at all levels to share common services that are not sport specific, the Commission is of the view that provincial and territorial governments could encourage their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to consider a shared services model. In the provinces and territories that have entities that provide, to varying degrees, shared services to their respective sport organizations, further measures could be implemented to broaden the scope of existing services.



## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**60. The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to establish and implement a horizontal shared services model, by means of positive incentives such as additional one-time funding or other additional benefits. This model would allow for the centralization of common services among sport organizations, such as information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, translation services, travel services, insurance provision, and a shared foreign exchange strategy.**

**61. The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to establish and implement a vertical shared services model with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and, where possible, Community Sport Organizations. To achieve this, the Government would use positive incentives such as additional one-time funding or other additional benefits. This model would allow for the centralization of common services among these organizations, such as information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, translation services, travel services, insurance provision, and a shared foreign exchange strategy.**

**62. The Government of Canada collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to encourage their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to consider a shared services model.**

**63. The Government of Canada create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations as they establish and implement a horizontal and/or vertical shared services model.**

## Amalgamating sport organizations

Before providing the Commission's final findings and Calls to Action, we outline participants' perspectives on amalgamating sport organizations that we received prior to the release of the Preliminary Report. We also share the feedback we received following the publication of the preliminary recommendations, including the feedback received at the National Summit organized by the Commission.

### PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON HORIZONTAL AMALGAMATION

The suggestion to amalgamate National Sport Organizations is not new. In July 2020, Biathlon Canada, Nordic Combined Ski Canada, Nordiq Canada, and Ski Jumping Canada agreed to explore a "more unified approach to developing and operating Nordic sports in Canada."<sup>1582</sup> A steering committee considered potential areas of formal and informal collaboration. It explored everything from athlete- and coach-development pathways to operating models and revenue generation. Their work led to the creation of the Nordic Strategy.

Four working groups with members from each National Sport Organization made recommendations on the topics of revenue generation, membership/participation, sport performance, and administration. These groups presented their recommendation to the steering committee, which then developed an initial business case, engaged with each National Sport Organization's board of directors, and met with sport partners including Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee, and Own the Podium.<sup>1583</sup>

The steering committee concluded that:

“[...] the best way forward [to achieve the objectives] is through the creation of a new, single [National Sport Organization] responsible for all Nordic disciplines. The proposed [National Sport Organization] would centralize governance and administration while allowing for high-performance and national team programs specific to each discipline.”<sup>1584</sup>

Additional resources were invested in this project, and an external consultant was hired to build a more detailed business case for a single organization model. This work involved conducting a comprehensive review of all four National Sport Organizations and facilitating a stakeholder engagement process.<sup>1585</sup>

Despite significant effort, the four Nordic sports could not ultimately agree on amalgamation terms. They continue to operate as separate entities. Several participants identified both the lack of a financial incentive and the boards of directors' resistance as factors contributing to this unsuccessful attempt to amalgamate.

While some National Sport Organizations have been open to the idea of amalgamation, others are averse to it. They expressed concerns about:

- loss of sport-specific funding, whether through contributions from governments or membership fees
- loss in voting power, whether at the board level of an amalgamated sport entity or with Multisport Service Organizations like the Canadian Olympic Committee
- loss of sport-specific technical expertise.

Some government officials and National Sports Organizations also noted that there is little motivation for amalgamation. They suggested that incentives in the form of additional funding could encourage organizations to consider such an option.

Those who supported the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations, including some sport organizations, felt that specific opportunities lie in aligning Canadian sport organizations with their International Sport Federation counterpart thereby reducing expenses and permitting the development of sport programs in similar disciplines. For example, the four Canadian National Sport Organizations governed by World Aquatics such as swimming, artistic swimming, water polo, and diving could be housed within a single National Sport Organization.

However, we also heard that simply because sports fall under the same International Sport Federation, does not automatically mean that they should be amalgamated at the national level. Some said that their particular discipline at the international level did not receive the same attention as others governed by the same International Sport Federation.

Some suggested that amalgamation could be based on similarities between sports or on their size. Some even suggested creative ideas such as combining some summer and winter sports to explore efficiencies during the respective sport seasons.

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON VERTICAL AMALGAMATION**

The possibility of vertical amalgamation was also raised with the Commission, namely amalgamation and integration of a National Sport Organization with all of its Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

The Commission learned of an inspiring Australian example of vertical amalgamation. Cycling Australia, a national administrative body, successfully merged 18 of 19 local and state organizations into a new entity called AusCycling. The result was a single member-controlled national governing body.<sup>1586</sup> This merger led to several efficiencies. A single board of directors with 12 members replaced 18 boards with 130 directors, and a single chief executive officer assumed responsibility for administering the new organization.<sup>1587</sup> The resulting annual administrative cost savings are estimated to be \$186,000.<sup>1588</sup> Such an approach demonstrates how reducing the number of sport organizations can create efficiencies and cut costs. It is reported that Sport Australia demonstrated its leadership in the amalgamation process by providing administrative support and access to change management, legal, feasibility and human resources consultants.<sup>1589</sup>

Others raised an example of vertical amalgamation in the charitable health sector, a model that could be considered in the sport sector. That is, the amalgamation of provincial and territorial entities (operations, assets and liabilities) into one national organization where each former provincial and territorial entity and their respective board of directors became provincial or territorial advisory boards. The former provincial and territorial entities continued to operate but under the leadership of the national organization.

With respect to athletes with disabilities as well as Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations and the possibility of integration, the commission heard many considerations and perspectives.

Some participants suggested that when athletes with a disability are in a high-performance stream at the national level, it would make sense for them to be integrated into the National Sport Organization. This would ensure that they would receive high-performance, sport-specific coaching and support. However, at the grassroots level, athletes' disability needs, not performance expectations, are more typically the focus. This is because individuals with similar disabilities will, generally, have similar specialized equipment and support needs.

In other words, a high-performance athlete with a disability who competes at the international level in sprinting may need to work with a coach with sport-specific expertise who can offer tailored coaching. However, a

community-level athlete with a disability would benefit from the broad guidance and opportunities provided by those who recognize the more general needs of those entering sport.

In programs focused on participation and sport for development (community-level), disability needs may take priority over specialized sport considerations. For example, an athlete in a wheelchair may be able to learn wheelchair basketball or wheelchair football in a multisport organization that specializes in working with athletes who use wheelchairs. This format would also allow athletes to try multiple sports and to interact with other athletes with similar disabilities and adaptive needs.

The Commission also heard of the unique circumstances of Disability, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations. For some sports, the participant base is small because of the prevalence of a specific disability within the Canadian population. In addition, the Commission was reminded that the needs of athletes with disabilities differ not only from those of athletes without disabilities but also among athletes with disabilities. In particular, the Commission heard of the need for very specific ‘classification’ expertise in Para and Paralympic sport, which determines eligibility for, and level of, competition. The Commission also heard of specific needs in terms of travel, accommodation and care requirement as well as other components such as event planning and communications for sport involving athletes with disabilities.

Participants suggested ways to improve the efficiency and cohesion of Disability sport in Canada. These included integrating organizations dedicated to Disability sport within non-Disability sport organizations while establishing clear policy and program frameworks to appropriately serve the Disability sport community.

While the integration of Para sport organizations into non-Para sport organizations has already occurred in some settings at the national level, other Para sport athletes and sport administrators were strongly opposed to further integration.

We were also informed that although financial incentives to integrate may be offered, there is no guarantee that they will be forthcoming. This creates a risk that integration could lead to reduced funding. Many Disability sport organizations and athletes are not in favour of any further integration efforts.

### **FEEDBACK ON PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

In response to our preliminary recommendations related to sport organizations’ amalgamation, participants recognized the need for amalgamation — sometimes reluctantly. They admitted that if amalgamation does not occur, many sport organizations will encounter serious future difficulties that will jeopardize their survival. Others emphasized that without amalgamation or new efficiencies, many organizations would face almost insurmountable financial challenges. Still others noted that amalgamation was not only a question of survival but necessary for a more cohesive sport system. Some questioned why National Sport Organizations in Canada, governed by the same International Federation, were not already found within a common National Sport Organization.

Notwithstanding, it was recognized that sport organizations would face challenges in achieving amalgamation. Some were so daunted by the prospect that they said it would be too difficult to do.

### Challenges to amalgamation

Given the structure of sport organizations, participants identified some anticipated challenges to the amalgamation process of national sport organizations (horizontal amalgamation):

- Some indicated that boards of directors and/or the members of sport organization may not approve or support an amalgamation. According to some, decisions made by these individuals may be guided by the interests of the member organization they represent (e.g., Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization) rather than those of the organization.
- It was suggested that some directors or members might be reluctant to surrender their roles and the recognition and opportunities that resulted.
- Others noted resistance among some National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to amalgamate and create efficiencies, in addition to a lack of political will and financial support to incentivize these processes.
- Some expressed the fear that a smaller sport could lose its relevance if it was amalgamated with a larger sport.

Participants were skeptical when considering proposed vertical amalgamation between National and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. Some indicated it would be difficult as the relationships between these organizations are not always positive and supportive. Others feared that vertical alignment would be a step backwards for some provinces and territories given their connection to, and significant interest in grassroots activities, which permits a better understanding of local “on-the-ground” realities. There were concerns that a national-level organization would not share this perspective and that local concerns might disappear in a larger organization.

Reference to the Canadian federated model was noted as a possible obstacle to vertical amalgamation. Some participants, including some provinces and territories, shared concerns with the amalgamation of National Sport Organization with its provincial or territorial counterparts for fear that funding allocated to the provincial or territorial organizations would leave their jurisdiction. Some saw vertical amalgamation as a direct threat to their autonomy within their respective jurisdictions. Instead of such vertical amalgamation, it was suggested that the Commission’s recommendations should focus on sharing resources and horizontal alignment at the national level, which would naturally lead to further alignment at the provincial and territorial level.



Several criteria that could be used to consider amalgamation were shared with the Commission. These include:

- mirroring international federations
- using commonalities such as similar sports, similar infrastructure, or winter or summer sports.
- clustering very small organizations so as to ensure operational efficiencies.

Regardless of the criteria used for amalgamation, most participants said that the amalgamation process should be athlete-centered, meaning that the interests of the athletes must be at the forefront when deciding how to amalgamate.

Participants also acknowledged that any amalgamation process would require financial incentives and support to allow organizations to obtain expert advice, assistance, and guidance.

### **Amalgamation and Para sport organizations**

Different views came to light with respect to the amalgamation of Para sport organizations. On the one hand, some expressed concerns that amalgamating (integrating) Para sport organizations with non-Para sport organizations at either the national or provincial and territorial level would result in losing focus on Para sport development. Others noted that amalgamating Para sport organizations could lead to improved oversight and cohesion in terms of best practices. However, they also recognized that each Para sport is unique.

With respect to integrating Para sport organizations with non-Para sport organizations, some shared that for this recommendation to be feasible and successful, it would require the non-Para sport organization to be sufficiently funded and resourced. These participants further suggested that specific conditions be attached to the funding allocated to the integrated sport organizations. These conditions would require the organizations to actively support and develop Para sport programming.

Many shared their concerns about the integration of Para sport with non-Para sport organizations. For example, some expressed concern that Para sport programs would get lost and not be viewed through a Para sport lens. There were fears that this would result in the loss of the fundamental perspectives that ensure Para sport athletes' unique needs for special equipment, travel, accommodation, support and care are appropriately met.

Referring to previous examples when a Para sport was integrated with a National Sport Organization, some noted that despite best efforts to ensure a parallel experience for athletes with and without a disability, the parallel experience was never realized.

### **CALLS TO ACTION: AMALGAMATING SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

The Commission's findings and recommendations on the need for sport organizations to amalgamate remain unchanged.

In fact, considering the current financial challenges encountered by the sport system and the limited funding available, sport organizations have reached a critical point. Significant, strategic and transformational changes in the sport ecosystem are essential for continued viability of these organizations. The Commission is therefore of the view that many sport organizations must amalgamate to ensure their long-term stability and survival. Amalgamation will not only induce economies but, we believe, will contribute to a more united, cohesive, and accountable sport system.

Amalgamation would result in fewer sport organizations within the sport system. From a government perspective, fewer sport organizations would be competing for funding, entering into contribution agreements, reporting on deliverables and subject to oversight. From the sport organizations' perspective, amalgamation would reduce the number of boards of directors required, the number of chief executive officers or executive directors required, and the number of administrative staff or support.

By reducing duplication and redundancies, amalgamation would result in financial and human resource gains that could be redirected to program delivery benefitting athletes and participants while reinvigorating the sport system overall.

In addition to these operational efficiencies, amalgamation would enhance relationships between and among sport organizations, centralize services, and create greater consistency.

However, the Commission recognizes that amalgamation of sport organizations, or any form of consolidation, will present challenges. We recognize that many of the National Sport Organizations are member-based, and their members are often their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. We also recognize that changes to organizational structures and relationships will require membership and board of director support. These impacts and challenges do not mean that sectoral and organizational change should not be undertaken, but rather that it should be undertaken thoughtfully and with proper financial support.

We understand that International Sport Federations typically recognize only one national organization in each country. As a result, some sports in Canada have created umbrella organizations. The Canadian Snowsports Association is the Canadian member of the International Ski and Snowboard Federation. It is the umbrella organization that represents the eight national snow sport organizations which are its members: Alpine Canada (also referred to as Alpine Canada Alpin), Nordiq Canada (also referred to as Cross-Country Ski de Fond Canada), Canadian Freestyle Ski Association, Ski Jumping Canada, the Canadian Snowboard Federation, Nordic Combined Ski Canada, Speed Skiing Canada (also referred to as the Canadian Speed Skiing Association), and Telemark Canada (also referred to as Telemark Ski Canada Télémarch).<sup>1590</sup> Aquatics Canada, member of World Aquatics represents: Water Polo Canada, Canadian Artistic Swimming, Diving Canada, and Swimming Canada.<sup>1591</sup> We were encouraged to learn that these structures exist as they could form the basis for possible amalgamation. It also demonstrates how external pressures and requirements may be key drivers of creativity, adaptation and change.

Recognizing that there are costs associated with amalgamation, and that previous efforts to amalgamate would have benefited from financial support, the Commission is of the view that governmental financial incentives would stimulate sport organizations to embark on such organizational transformations and reward successful amalgamation.

As Chapter 12 outlines, the Commission recommends that several National Multisport Service Organizations fold into the centralized sport entity once it is established. This chapter therefore did not address the possibility of amalgamation among National Multisport Service Organizations. Recognizing that amalgamation in that context would result in similar benefits as those we discuss here, the Commission is of the view that exploring such amalgamation merits further examination.

**Options for amalgamating sport organizations**

Amalgamation of sport organizations could take different forms. We explore these possibilities in what follows. At the national level, a group of National Sport Organizations could initiate an amalgamation process (horizontal amalgamation).

Figure 13.1. Example of horizontal amalgamation



National Sport Organizations could also consider a vertical amalgamation with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

Figure 13.2. Example of vertical amalgamation



National Sport Organizations could also consider a combination of the options reflected in Figure 13.1 and Figure 13.2 listed above. Such an amalgamation, both horizontal and vertical, would combine within one organization a select number of National Sport Organizations and their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

Figure 13.3. Example of a combined horizontal and vertical amalgamation



Should a vertical amalgamation with Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations not be feasible or optimal, National Sport Organizations and provincial and territorial governments could incentivize the Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations within their respective jurisdiction to initiate an amalgamation process to mirror the amalgamation of their respective National Sport Organizations. This would require two horizontal amalgamation processes, one at the national level and the other at the provincial and territorial level of sport.

Figure 13.4. Example of two mirrored horizontal amalgamation processes, one at the national level and one at provincial or territorial level



As we explored earlier for the establishment of shared services model, any process to amalgamate requires meaningful engagement and collaboration with Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations and athletes with disabilities. Their input and insights are crucial in deciding whether amalgamation with non-Disability or with other Disability sport organizations would be optimal, given their unique and specific needs.



## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**64. The Government of Canada encourage horizontal amalgamation of National Sport Organizations through positive incentives, such as additional one-time funding and/or other additional benefits such as access to administrative support and/or consulting services.**

**65. The Government of Canada encourage vertical amalgamation of National Sport Organizations with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, to form a single national organization for each sport, with provincial and territorial branches. To achieve this, the Government would use positive incentives such as additional one-time funding and/or other additional benefits such as access to administrative support and/or consulting services.**

**66. The Government of Canada collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to encourage their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to consider amalgamation.**

**67. The Government of Canada create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations as they undertake the amalgamation process (horizontal and/or vertical amalgamation).**

## Ensuring consistent policies across the sport system

As Chapter 5 outlines, in many cases, there is a lack of collaboration between the National Sport Organizations and their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and private clubs. In rare cases uniform membership policies and procedures apply at all levels of sport. But even in cases where there is a high degree of collaboration and alignment, there can be a disconnect between a National Sport Organization's vision and those of their provincial and territorial counterparts.

There is also a common misconception among the public that any given sport is subject to its National Sport Organization's oversight. With the proliferation of private clubs, leagues, and institutes, parents and athletes can be under the false impression that such private entities operate under the umbrella of a National Sport Organization and is subject to their policies and procedures.

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE APPLICATION OF POLICIES**

Throughout its engagement activities, the Commission learned of several creative ways to address the gap identified in policy alignment that National Sport Organizations could explore in collaboration with their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

What follows are some suggestions that participants made to the Commission to ensure that private entities that fall outside the scope of National or Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are required to abide by certain policies and procedures:

- Requiring that an entity abides by certain policies and requirements to be eligible to compete in a national or provincial or territorial competition or championship. This could also be done by mandating that only clubs, coaches, athletes, and officials registered with the National Sport Organization or Provincial and Territorial Sport Organization are eligible to participate. A similar approach could be taken for national team selection processes and talent camps, making only athletes from member clubs eligible.
- Ensure that municipalities and any other organizations that rent facilities to a sport organization, club, or entity of any nature, require proof of official affiliation with a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization or National Sport Organization. They would also have to ensure that the latter complies with safe sport policies, complaint mechanisms, and governance requirements.
- Establishing an accreditation or certification process that any entity can apply to if they wish to be recognized. The accreditation or the certification would include compliance and application of specific policies and requirements. Public education regarding the accreditation process would allow the public to recognize organizations that are accredited and understand the risks associated with participation in an unaccredited organization's activities.
- Mandating that any organization delivering sport has to register with a centralized entity to receive accreditation. In return those who register could be afforded certain benefits such as free background checks, free safe sport training, education material, and other resources. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Canada Basketball and Canada Soccer have adopted a similar approach to encourage private clubs and entities to align with their respective policies. Canada Basketball implemented the club Verification Program and Canada Soccer implemented the club licensing program.<sup>1592</sup> It is reported that the Canada Basketball initiative led to the verification of 38 clubs within the first 12 months of the Verification program.<sup>1593</sup>

#### **CALLS TO ACTION: ENSURING CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF POLICIES ACROSS THE SPORT SYSTEM**

Policies and their application must be consistent within and across all levels of a sport to provide greater accountability and uniformity across the sport system. This ensures that all Canadians have access to the same experiences and resources.

The Commission is of the view that National Sport Organizations must take the lead in ensuring consistent policies and their application throughout their respective sport. The Government of Canada can incentivize this through funding conditions requiring National Sport Organizations to ensure broad consistency in the application of their policies across all levels of their sport. Similarly, provincial and territorial governments could encourage their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to seek this same consistency at the grassroots level.

Examples of such policies include safe sport policies, complaint mechanisms, and governance requirements among others that could emerge with time. Standardized, consistent policies with respect to safe sport and governance applied at all levels of sport are fundamental to the provision of a safer, more accountable sport system. The Commission has examined these issues in detail and made specific Calls to Action addressing them in Chapter 10 regarding safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms and Chapter 14 regarding sport governance.

The Commission also recognizes, however, that funding conditions imposed by different levels of government to ensure consistency of policies and their application are not enough. We understand that several sport organizations do not receive government funding (federal, provincial, or territorial) and are not subject to funding conditions. We also are cognizant that the proliferation of private sport organizations, clubs, and leagues has resulted in many of these entities operating outside the scope of governmentally funded sport bodies.

As a result, the Commission is of the view that the sport system, National Sport Organizations, and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations must lead and take the required steps to ensure that policies are consistently applied through all levels of sport. They must also develop processes to ensure that they extend to private entities as well.

### Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**68. The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to ensure broad consistency in the application of their policies across all levels of their sport until the Multilateral Sport Framework criteria are established and imposed (as described in Chapter 10).**

**69. The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to collaborate with their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to explore ways to ensure the application of their policies by organizations and entities that are currently not connected to a National or Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations.**

# **CHAPTER 14:**

## **Sport governance: from inconsistent to transparent and harmonized**







# Chapter 14:

## Sport governance: from inconsistent to transparent and harmonized

In this chapter, we begin by outlining the Commission's findings which illustrate the urgent need for the prioritization of sport governance in Canada. We then provide an overview of the sport governance frameworks that exist in Canada at both the national and provincial and territorial levels of sport and explore the approaches to sport governance undertaken by international groups and other countries. Subsequently, we provide a reminder of the Commission's preliminary recommendations before identifying the Commission's recommended steps to strengthening and prioritizing sport governance in Canada. Throughout the chapter, we also outline the feedback received on the Commission's preliminary recommendations, including comments provided during the National Summit and other engagement activities organized by the Commission. We then present our final conclusions and Calls to Action.

### Commission's findings on the urgent need for sport governance prioritization in Canada

Many of the issues that led to the Commission's creation reflect a fundamental failure of the governance structures in the sport system. These shortcomings have often been attributed to the root cause of the safe sport crisis in Canada.

Governance deficiencies affect all sport organizations, whether not-for-profit or private. This includes National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and community sport groups, clubs, and leagues. While some organizations, mainly at the national level, have attempted to address governance issues, the problems persist.

Many National and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are complex entities. Some manage significant budgets that include public funding. Sport organizations also tend to rely heavily on volunteers in various roles, including as board members. These volunteers are often former athletes, parents of athletes, or sport officials without any governance experience or expertise.

They typically have insufficient understanding of the complex needs of children and youth in vulnerable situations and have limited awareness of the approaches necessary to address allegations of maltreatment and abuse

within their organizations. Volunteers play a critical role in the sport system and make an incalculable “in-kind” financial contribution. However, they often do not have the expertise, skills, and training to make effective decisions, especially when dealing with increasingly complex issues within sport organizations. Furthermore, participants reported that the same individuals are frequently re-appointed to boards of directors resulting in the perpetuation of the ongoing issues.

In the current system, governance requirements for sport organizations are limited and inconsistent. As not-for-profit corporations, they must adhere to the requirements of either federal, provincial, or territorial not-for-profit corporation legislation. However, this legislation provides only basic statutory requirements with respect to governance, such as key duties for directors, and the duties and rights of members. As funders, governments can set governance guidelines. These guidelines can stand alone or be included as conditions in funding agreements with sport organizations.

We learned that there is a lack of consistency surrounding approaches to governance and little to no effective monitoring of compliance with the governance rules that do exist. Some participants described current oversight as a compliance exercise requiring sport organizations to self-report their compliance rather than being subject to regular independent audits and examinations conducted by governance experts.

A further challenge to appropriate governance and oversight in the sport system is the growth of private clubs, leagues, and organizations. Unfortunately, these entities fall outside the traditional sport system and are beyond the reach of National and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. As private entities incorporated under either federal, provincial, or territorial not-for-profit or for-profit incorporation legislation, they also lack guidance on sport governance standards.

As a result, we are left with a sport system where poor governance practices, limited governance requirements, and very little oversight have led to the mishandling of abuse, maltreatment, and safe sport complaints.

## Sport governance and existing frameworks

As the 2022 Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review by the Honourable Thomas Cromwell reminds us, the term governance has many definitions. It “generally describes the best practices and procedures used by the leaders of an organization to allocate authority and oversight responsibility for decision-making and operational activities.”<sup>1594</sup> Governance is influenced by various factors, including the organization’s mission and purpose, applicable legislative and regulatory requirements, and policies and standards.

Good governance practices are common in most Canadian settings. These practices are reinforced through highly regarded institutions like the Institute of Corporate Directors. However, these recognized practices are not consistently reflected in the sport sector which appears to operate under obsolete standards.

## **CURRENT GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

### **Legislation on governance standards**

While the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* is the governing legislation for all federally funded National Sport Organizations, it provides only a broad foundation for sport organizations' governance. The *Physical Activity and Sport Act* offers no governance guidance.

Because the legislated governance requirements are rudimentary, sport organizations must look beyond these laws to find guidance on governance.

### **Generally accepted best practices for good governance**

The Guide to Good Governance outlines the generally accepted best practices for not-for-profit organizations.<sup>1595</sup> The Honourable Thomas Cromwell referred to this guide in his Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review. Other governance experts have also referenced it. It provides specific and practical guidelines tailored to help not-for-profit organizations implement governance practices. It also emphasizes the fundamental principles of transparency, accountability, integrity and impartiality, fairness, and responsibility.

Another source of governance best practices can be found in federal policies and frameworks.

### **Sport governance policies and frameworks**

#### **The Canadian Sport Governance Code and the Sport Integrity Framework**

In February 2020, following the work of the 2019 Canadian High Performance Strategy action plan, a working group led by the Canadian Olympic Committee was formed to review other countries' governance codes. It also researched best practices in sport governance and discussed the approach to drafting a Canadian sport governance code and for identifying best practices for inclusion in it.

Broad engagement efforts were made by the working group to elaborate and develop a governance Code.<sup>1596</sup> For example, it held a series of meetings with National Sport Organizations to seek their feedback and input.<sup>1597</sup> At the conclusion of this process the Canadian Sport Governance Code was released online in April 2021.<sup>1598</sup>

To support its implementation, the Canadian Olympic Committee also prepared the Good Governance Framework,<sup>1599</sup> which connected the principles of the Code to the Sport Canada Governance Report Card. This report card has since been discontinued but will be discussed in the next section.

The Canadian Sport Governance Code aims to enhance governance practices within National Sport Organizations and improve accountability, transparency, and ethical conduct in Canadian sport. It is the Commission's understanding that the Code was structured to apply to all National Sport Organizations representing sports on the Olympic program as a first step to harmonizing governance practices. A statement in the Code encourages all other National Sport Organizations to adopt its governance requirements.<sup>1600</sup>

The Canadian Sport Governance Code provides alternative standards for National Sport Organizations with fewer than four full-time employees. These alternative standards are set out in italics in certain provisions of the Code. The Code further provides that although such National Sport Organizations have the option to adhere to the alternative standard, they are encouraged to comply fully with all of the provisions of the Code.<sup>1601</sup> All National Sport Organizations covered by the Code are governed by the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.<sup>1602</sup>

In May 2023, the then Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec announced that all federally funded National Sport Organizations would be required to adopt the Canadian Sport Governance Code and make the corresponding changes to their governance structures by April 2025 to receive federal funding.<sup>1603</sup> All other funded organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes were encouraged to adopt the Code's principles.

Consequently, many National Sport Organizations began making necessary changes to comply with the Code by April 1, 2025.

In July 2023, a new Minister of Sport and Physical Activity was appointed. On December 11, 2023, the new minister announced the creation of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission and a series of immediate actions to improve sport integrity and safe sport approaches.<sup>1604</sup> One of the actions was the modernization of the funding and accountability framework.<sup>1605</sup>

In November 2024, Sport Canada released the Sport Integrity Framework along with a revised set of guidelines. This Framework indicates that “good governance principles” would be integrated into existing accountability mechanisms for federally funded organizations.<sup>1606</sup> The Framework further specifies that instead of requiring organizations to sign on to a stand-alone governance code, the new funding model would require the adoption of five mandatory governance elements.<sup>1607</sup> This meant that the Canadian Sport Governance Code would not be mandatory for federally funded National Sport Organizations. The framework however noted that the Canadian Sport Governance Code remains a source of established best practices in sport organization governance.<sup>1608</sup>

This shift caused frustration among some National Sport Organizations. Several had invested resources and used their influence to convince their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to amend their bylaws to comply with the Code. These organizations were then left to explain the rationale for the shift in requirements to their members.

Since April 2025, federally funded National Sport Organizations must comply with the five fundamental governance requirements.<sup>1609</sup> These requirements are part of the evaluation criteria for their eligibility for the Sport Support Program.<sup>1610</sup> Federally funded National Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres have an additional year, until April 2026, to meet the same requirements.<sup>1611</sup>

The five fundamental governance requirements are:

1. A business plan/strategy that provides mission/mandate, vision, values, objectives, roles and responsibilities of the board and management, performance indicators, etc.
2. A board of directors that includes:
  - Diversity: processes in place to support representation among board members of a broad spectrum of identities and experiences within the community that it serves or seeks to engage
  - Athletes' voice: a transparent and inclusive process for selecting an athlete representative on its board of directors
  - Board orientation and training: processes in place to provide orientation and training for new and/or re-elected members on the fundamentals of good governance and board responsibilities
  - Oversight committees: establishment and maintenance, complete with board-approved terms of reference, of oversight committees.
3. Internal controls established for financial controls and ongoing risk management
4. Organizational transparency measures in place to share governance-related documents on its website, so that they are readily available and accessible to the public
5. Discipline and appeal policies and procedures are in place that include access to independent dispute resolution through the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.<sup>1612</sup>

Requirements 1 to 4 noted above are reflected in the Canadian Sport Governance Code.

The Sport Support Program further specifies that when a sport organization receives support under this program, it must adopt governance practices that advance transparency, accountability, and responsibility in the activities it undertakes. However, there is no additional guidance on what these governance practices should be.<sup>1613</sup>

Details on Sport Canada funding programs, processes, eligibility criteria, and evaluation criteria are discussed in Chapter 15.

#### **The Sport Canada Governance Report Card (discontinued)**

In 2019, Sport Canada developed the Sport Canada Governance Report Card as an oversight mechanism under the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework. It was meant to assess how the activities of federally funded sport organizations aligned with government priorities.

The first phase of the Report Card, issued in 2019, evaluated progress on measures to promote sport integrity, diversity and inclusion, and communication and engagement.<sup>1614</sup> The second phase, issued in 2021, focused



on good governance principles.<sup>1615</sup> Organizations were required to demonstrate compliance, and then received numeric scores and feedback on areas for improvement.<sup>1616</sup>

The Report Card was intended to guide best practices and influence resource allocation by encouraging sport organizations to use their results to prepare future funding applications to Sport Canada.<sup>1617</sup> However, the Report Card was suspended after concerns emerged that it had given high ratings to organizations that were later found to have significant governance and integrity issues.<sup>1618</sup>

Some participants told us that the Governance Report Card demonstrated the lack of capacity within Sport Canada to competently administer a governance-compliance oversight mechanism. Some even remarked that given its lack of governance expertise, Sport Canada is not equipped to assess whether an organization complies with a governance criterion. As a result, reliance is given to the sport organization's own assessment of whether it is complying with the standards based on documents provided by the organization.

### **Project Risk Assessment and Management Tool**

Sport Canada uses the Project Risk Assessment and Management Tool, a standardized departmental tool to assess applicants' risk level before granting funding. Using this risk-assessment tool, Sport Canada considers a number of factors, such as successful completion of previously funded projects, communication with the Department, daily operations, and the presence of good governance procedures.

The Project Risk Assessment and Management Tool examines the following criteria:

- the external environment which includes characteristics that may have an influence on the applicant's activity. This includes whether they have consistent governance practices
- the applicant's risk which considers whether they have previously received funding
- the complexity and magnitude of the applicant's activities and projects.

The risk assessment determines what, if any, conditions will be added to the contribution agreement intended to mitigate the identified risks. For example, if an application is assessed as higher risk, their contribution agreement might involve distributing funding through additional payments. It could also include additional reporting requirements, risk-mitigation strategies, and outline specific monitoring activities that must be undertaken.

While this risk-assessment tool is standardized and used at the Department of Canadian Heritage for all its funding recipients, it is our understanding that it is not tailored specifically to assess Sport Canada's funding recipients. For example, while good governance practices are one of the assessed factors, the purpose of this tool is not to provide a thorough objective and subjective assessment of a sport organization's implementation of good governance practices. It is our understanding that this tool relies on the information that sport organizations share or self-report to Sport Canada, rather than an audit-style verification, to assess the risk level before funding is granted.

### Reports and studies on governance in the sport system

In 2022, a number of important reports and studies focused on governance issues within three federally funded National Sport Organizations: Canada Soccer, Hockey Canada, and Gymnastics Canada. The 2022 reports by McLaren Global Sport Solutions on Canada Soccer,<sup>1619</sup> Justice Thomas Cromwell's Governance Review of Hockey Canada,<sup>1620</sup> and McLaren Global Sport Solutions' report to Gymnastics Canada<sup>1621</sup> each offer thoughtful and detailed recommendations about sport governance.

Some of these studies' recommendations were echoed in reports of the two House of Commons Standing Committees that undertook studies related to safe sport. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women tabled a report entitled "Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada"<sup>1622</sup> in 2023, and the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage tabled a report entitled "Safe Sport in Canada" in 2024.<sup>1623</sup> Several recommendations across these reports reiterated the importance of good governance principles. They encourage compliance with these principles by urging the adoption of clear statements and the development and adoption of processes and procedures addressing several governance-related responsibilities.

For example, the Cromwell Report recommended that boards of directors adopt statements to clarify their roles and responsibilities, adopt a specific governance model, and adopt a statement clarifying management's role.<sup>1624</sup> The Cromwell Report also recommends that boards establish processes and procedures addressing a number of factors, such as staggering board members' terms, an annual board review, the recruitment of board chairs, and the management of board meetings.<sup>1625</sup> Similar practices are recommended in the Guide to Good Governance.<sup>1626</sup>

Further, the Cromwell Report and both standing committee reports raised the importance of meaningful representation of athletes within sport organizations' governance structures and decision-making processes.

Finally, these reports and studies highlighted the need for openness and transparency about the use of any public funds.

## CURRENT GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS AT THE PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL LEVEL

### Legislation on governance standards

The governing legislation for Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations is either the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* or its provincial or territorial equivalent. Some provincial and territorial governments specify under which legislation the entity must be incorporated to be eligible to receive funding, while others are silent on this point or leave it to the sport organization's discretion.

Similar to federal legislation for not-for-profit incorporation, provincial and territorial legislative frameworks typically provide a broad governance foundation framework for sport organizations.

However, some provinces and territories go beyond this. For instance, Yukon has legislatively imposed governance requirements on its Territorial Sport Organizations as a condition for funding through the *Recreation Regulations*<sup>1627</sup> made under the *Recreation Act*.<sup>1628</sup> Section 5 sets out the mandatory criteria the Territorial Sport Organizations must comply with to be eligible for territorial funding. They must:

- have a volunteer leadership structure that is democratically elected by the membership at an annual general meeting
- have and make available to the public a written constitution, bylaws and objects
- be incorporated under the Yukon's *Societies Act* and be in good standing
- produce annual financial statements (to be audited if the Sport and Recreation Branch of the Department of Community and Transportation Services requests it)
- have a multi-year plan ratified by its board of directors.<sup>1629</sup>

We also note that in New Brunswick, the *Youth Assistance Act* empowers the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to make regulations respecting the conditions under which financial assistance is given to amateur sport bodies.<sup>1630</sup> However, as of the date of writing this report we have not identified any regulations enacted under this Act.

### Policies on governance standards

Some provinces and territories impose governance requirements on their Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations that go beyond those in the applicable not-for-profit legislation. They use policy, rather than legislative intervention, where compliance is required for funding eligibility. Below we provide three examples.

#### Governance requirements in Ontario

Provincial and multisport organizations in Ontario must meet governance requirements to be recognized under the Sport Recognition Policy for Provincial and Multisport organizations. This recognition then allows them to apply for provincial core funding under the Ontario Amateur Sport Fund.<sup>1631</sup> Several requirements must be met to receive this recognition. Under this policy, relevant to sport governance, the sport organization must:

- be a registered not-for-profit organization under the *Ontario's Corporations Act* or the *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010*
- have a board of directors elected by its members and residents of Ontario
- have effective governance structures in place and demonstrate it has the organizational capacity to provide programs and services to its members provincially. The organization must:
  - have bylaws and operational and financial policies
  - have a multi-year strategic plan that includes a vision statement/mandate, strategic directions, overview of current and future programs and activities, and risks and mitigation strategies

- submit budget and financial review engagement reports or audits
- carry insurance
- hold an annual general meeting. Notice about the meeting must be posted on the organization's website along with an agenda and any other relevant documents
- post the following material on their website: the elected board of directors, bylaws, operational and financial procedures, policies, and minutes or summaries of their annual general meeting.<sup>1632</sup>

### Governance requirements in British Columbia

Similarly, in British Columbia, viaSport's Designation Program aims to ensure that provincial and multisport organizations uphold standards in a number of areas, including governance.<sup>1633</sup> There are three designation categories under this program. Each one aligns to specific minimum standards that consider the sport's size and reach as well as the maturity of the organization.<sup>1634</sup> Only organizations with the accredited designation are eligible for annual funding.<sup>1635</sup>

The minimum standards required for obtaining and maintaining a designation are outlined in the viaSport Designation Program Policy.<sup>1636</sup> According to the policy's governance requirements, the sport organization must:

- be a registered not-for-profit in good standing with the *BC Societies Act*
- have a constitution and bylaws that define the organization's governance structure and at a minimum address the following:
  - organizational purpose
  - size and composition of the board
  - procedures for election of directors and corresponding terms
  - roles and duties of directors and officers
  - procedures for meetings of directors and meetings of the members
  - membership categories and voting rights
  - financial management
- have an approved multi-year strategic plan
- have annual approved operating budgets and prepare financial statements each fiscal year. The need for audited statements is determined based on the organization's annual revenue.
- carry a minimum of \$2,000,000 in general liability insurance

- maintain a suite of board-approved policies, including Code of Conduct, Discipline and Complaints, Dispute Resolution and Appeals, Criminal Record Check and Screening, Conflict of Interest, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access, Employee or Human Resources, Privacy, Fair Play and Anti-Doping, and Provincial Team Selection
- post on a publicly available website the following information that is easily accessible: organization name and purpose, current board of directors, bylaws, policies, rules and regulations, minutes or annual report from the recent annual general meeting, annual financial statements, and a safe sport page.<sup>1637</sup>

Compliance with the standards is evaluated through a formal self-assessment process.<sup>1638</sup> The organization also has to complete an annual report to confirm that they continue to meet the designation criteria and obligations.<sup>1639</sup> If an organization fails to demonstrate that they are meeting the prescribed standards, it may be placed on probation and given a timeline to remedy the situation.<sup>1640</sup> Where an organization is not able to comply with the standards, their designation may be reclassified or removed. Where the designation is removed, it results in the automatic termination of the funding.<sup>1641</sup>

### Quebec Governance Code

Quebec is the only province that has developed a governance code specifically tailored for not-for-profit sport and leisure organizations: the Code de gouvernance des organismes à but non lucratif (OBNL) québécois de sport et de loisir (the governance code for Quebec non-profit sport and recreation organizations), implemented in May 2020. We understand that a revised version of this Code was published in August 2025.<sup>1642</sup>

Recognizing that one size does not fit all, Quebec's Code outlines three levels of governance requirements: minimum, medium, and high.<sup>1643</sup> An organization's recurring funding and recurring annual operating budget are some of the indicators used to determine its level of governance requirements.<sup>1644</sup>

This Code is detailed and includes 14 governance requirement categories.<sup>1645</sup> Each one lists specific actions for an organization to comply with the requirement. These actions vary on the level of requirement of the sport organization.

We provide below an overview of the categories and what corresponding actions are required:

1. **Letters patent and annual declaration to the Registre des entreprises du Québec:** The board must ensure that incorporation documents are valid and that an annual declaration is filed to maintain legal status.
2. **Annual general meeting:** The board must hold an annual general meeting and present the organization's activities and financial reports.
3. **Voting members:** The general bylaws must clearly define the voting membership and that directors should be elected by the membership.



4. **General bylaws:** The general bylaws must be regularly revised and kept up to date. Letters patent, bylaws, and policies must be circulated to all new directors.
5. **Ethics and professional conduct of directors:** The board must adopt, implement, and comply with a code of ethics and professional conduct that addresses board solidarity, confidentiality of information, management of conflicts of interest, duty of prudence and diligence, directors' commitment, and annual declaration of interest.
6. **Directors' election and term of office:** The general bylaws must describe director eligibility, nomination requirements, the election process, and the establishment of an election committee. The general bylaws must stipulate that the board of directors must annually draw up a profile of the complementary skills it needs to achieve its objectives.

Regarding the composition of the board, the bylaws must define that a minimum number of directors are deemed to be independent and identify a maximum number of the entity's staff or executive who can serve as directors. The bylaws must also set specific criteria permitting an owner or staff of a private company linked to the organization by goods or services agreement to serve as director. Finally, the bylaws stipulate that not more than one active athlete on the national or international scene shall be a director.

7. **Policies for directors:** The general bylaws shall prescribe the length of a director's term, and the number of allowable successive terms. They must also specify the number of directors between 6 and 13 and stipulate that the board have at least one man and one woman. Directors must periodically evaluate the board operation and the directors' contributions. An onboarding process must be put in place, and all directors must have access to governance training.
8. **Operations of the board of directors:** The general bylaws must specify a quorum, describe the responsibilities of directors, officers' term of office, and officers' powers and duties. This section further stipulates that directors hold a minimum of four meetings in a year, that they adopt an annual meeting schedule, and have a standard agenda that includes an in-camera session. Description of what should be included in meeting minutes is also provided.
9. **Executive director:** The general bylaws must specify the executive director's relationship with the board and that a director may not be executive director. It further spells out that the board hires the executive director, determines their compensation and working conditions, and sets objectives to evaluate them once per year.
10. **Board committees:** The bylaws must specify that there shall be no executive committee and that they provide for the creation of three types of committees (standing, ad hoc, and statutory). The Bylaws must further provide for the creation of the following statutory committees for which the board must adopt a charter: audit committee; governance, ethics, and professional conduct committee; and the human resources committee.

- 11. Financial management:** The board must adopt a number of policies, including policies on the delegation of spending and contracting authority, revenues, awarding of contracts, the investment and disposition of surpluses, and addressing travel expenses. In addition, the board must prepare an annual budget and monitor expenditures. It is further mandated that an annual independent audit be conducted.
- 12. Other administrative policies:** As part of its responsibilities, the board must periodically review and monitor its policies, and report annually on their application.
- 13. Strategic plan:** The board must adopt a strategic plan that provides quantifiable targets. They must monitor the progress and implementation of the plan twice per year. The board is also responsible for approving management's annual action plan developed in accordance with the board's strategic plan.
- 14. Commitments, accountability, and public communications:** The code provides for public disclosure of a number of documents, many of which must be made easily available on the organization's websites. These documents include, for example, general bylaws, policies, an organizational chart, the composition of the board of directors, the board's code of ethics and professional conduct, a strategic plan, minutes of the last annual general meeting, an annual activity report, and the most recent financial report.

Compliance with the Quebec Code is a requirement for receiving funding from the Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity branch of the ministère de l'Éducation (Ministry of Education).<sup>1646</sup>

## GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES AND FRAMEWORKS DEVELOPED BY INTERNATIONAL GROUPS AND OTHER COUNTRIES

Some international groups have adopted governance principles related to sport to provide guidance to their respective members. Below we provide examples.

### International Olympic Committee

The International Olympic Committee developed the Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance within the Olympic Movement. These universal principles reflect internationally recognized standards of corporate governance and key considerations for sport organizations within the Olympic Movement.<sup>1647</sup> The document outlines several principles. We summarize below some of the key sport governance principles:

- **Principle 1 – Vision, mission and strategy of sports organisations:** This principle requires sport organizations to define and publicly communicate a clear vision and mission. It also highlights the importance of strategic planning that aligns with the mission.
- **Principle 2 – Institutional governance:** This principle calls for clearly defined roles and responsibilities of members and elected officials, public access to statutes and regulations, and the appropriate size of governing bodies. It also emphasizes diversity and inclusion, including a 30% gender balance representation, and athlete representation within governing bodies. Transparent publication of key information, democratic processes, term limits, and appeal mechanisms are also required.

- **Principle 3 – Ethical and Integrity Standards:** Organizations must foster a culture of ethical conduct and integrity by adopting conflict of interest and anti-corruption policies. Implementing transparent procurement and contract management processes are also required. This principle prescribes compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code, and the Olympic Movement Code on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions. With respect to safeguarding, it requires the establishment of a safe sport strategy and measures to appropriately respond to safeguarding concerns. Organizations must also provide continuous education in ethics, governance, safeguarding, and integrity, ensuring everyone – from board members to volunteers – understands their responsibilities.
- **Principle 4 – Financial governance:** This principle requires that organizations maintain accounts using recognized standards, publish annual audited statements, and adopt multi-year financial plans. Clear rules must govern compensation and contracts. The principle further requires a number of controls such as internal audits, external audits and risk management mechanisms.
- **Principle 5 – Support to athletes:** This principal requires the implementation of the Athletes' Rights and Responsibilities Declaration. It also provides that “athletes’ voices should be heard, and athletes should be represented with voting rights in the relevant decision-making bodies of sport organisations.” It also outlines expectations for athlete well-being protection, insurance access and mandatory prevention and education programs.

### Council of Europe

The Council of Europe comprises 46 member States, all of which are represented on the Committee of Ministers, its decision-making body.<sup>1648</sup> The Committee of Ministers also adopted good governance principles related to sport. In 2018, they adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)12.<sup>1649</sup> The Recommendation emphasizes that good governance in sport does not rest solely with sport organizations but also with governments. It recognizes that corruption, manipulation of sports competitions, and failures in governance threaten the integrity and safety of sport. As such, it sets out a set of actions that member States should take to strengthen governance in sport. It calls on member States to support, facilitate, and monitor the implementation of good governance principles.<sup>1650</sup> For example, governments are called upon to:

1. monitor progress, directly or indirectly, on how well their national sport sector implements good governance.
2. link public funding to governance standards by considering compliance with good governance principles as a criterion for public funding.
3. encourage national sport leaders to follow and advocate for good governance.

4. encourage sports organizations within their territory to:

- apply principles of democracy in their decision making and operations, and strengthen transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability
- integrate good governance measures into their internal rules and procedures.
- promote a culture of good governance through education
- ensure diverse and gender-balanced representation in decision-making
- cooperate with independent experts assessing their governance
- publish results of any governance self-assessments
- establish external evaluation and audit policies
- share information on corrupt practices with law enforcement authorities.<sup>1651</sup>

Similarly, several countries have adopted governance codes and frameworks related to sport and/or physical activity. New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Wales, Australia, and the Netherlands were the most often referenced in the course of our engagement activities. While each has taken a different approach to sport governance, they emphasize that consistency within their systems is fundamental to fostering a strong sport culture and mitigating a governance system's vulnerabilities.

### New Zealand

Sport New Zealand established a governance framework designed specifically for sport and recreation organizations.<sup>1652</sup> While the framework is not mandatory, sport organizations are encouraged and incentivized to align with its principles. Through the Governance Quality Mark program, a sport organization that meets specific governance standards will be accredited and can display a symbol that verifies this.<sup>1653</sup> Accreditation requires a third-party assessment of 37 evaluation standards every three years by a Sport New Zealand approved assessor.<sup>1654</sup>

The governance framework describes strong governance practices under four themes. We describe some of the practices below:

#### Clarity and cohesion

- having a clear statement of strategic direction to guide the organization
- defining the role of the board, rights of members, and the role of the chief executive
- ensuring cooperation and collaboration between the national body and its members

### **People**

- developing policies to elect and/or appoint board members from diverse settings and with a range of skills and backgrounds

### **Inside the boardroom**

- ensuring the board understands their role and responsibilities

### **Integrity and accountability**

- conducting board performance reviews and a planned regime of accountability to stakeholders
- developing policies for conflicts of interest, as well as elements such as doping, match fixing, children's sport, disputes, discipline, and sideline behaviour.<sup>1655</sup>

In addition to the accreditation program, Sport New Zealand offers a foundational development program for organizations that have not been through the accreditation process. It also has a governance self-evaluation tool and a program for individual board members to identify their development needs.<sup>1656</sup>

The governance framework and evaluation standards are based upon the elements in Sport New Zealand's Nine Steps to Effective Governance,<sup>1657</sup> a component of their capability-building program. This resource outlines key elements to consider when addressing governance of play, active recreation, and sport organizations. It addresses governance models, relevant legislation, common challenges, and trends.<sup>1658</sup> The Nine Steps Model explains components of effective governance, including defining the board's role and work plan, meeting procedures, monitoring and assessment, and board recruitment.<sup>1659</sup>

### **United Kingdom**

UK Sport and Sport England launched the Code for Sports Governance. This code sets out mandatory governance requirements for sport organizations that seek Government and National Lottery Funding from UK Sport and/or Sport England.<sup>1660</sup>

The Code for Sports Governance outlines requirements for transparency, diversity and inclusion, accountability, and integrity. Although mandatory, the code achieves flexibility by using a tiered approach to its adoption.<sup>1661</sup>

Organizations are assigned to one of three tiers, each with a different level of mandatory governance requirements.<sup>1662</sup> UK Sport and Sport England place an organization into the tier they consider most appropriate based on the size and circumstances of funding, and the organization's type and size according to an established broad definition of the tiers.<sup>1663</sup>



In 2021, UK Sport published its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.<sup>1664</sup> This strategy identifies four priorities:

- create more diverse athlete and workforce talent pathways
- increase diversity of representation on national governing bodies and boards
- promote and embed inclusion
- drive equality, diversity, and inclusion within UK Sport.<sup>1665</sup>

These priorities are reflected in the Code for Sports Governance. In fact, Principle 2 in the Code specifies that sport organizations should recruit and engage with people from diverse backgrounds.<sup>1666</sup> The requirements vary depending on the sport organization's tier category. For example, Tier 1 organizations may confirm compliance with this requirement by submitting any of the following to UK Sport, among other possibilities:

- a board skills matrix outlining the skills, experience, and diversity of its board members
- a recruitment policy that references consideration of skills and diversity of individuals
- minutes of discussion where the organization considered how to improve diversity and inclusion.

An assessor from UK Sport or Sport England may reach out to the organization to confirm their compliance and determine whether they are genuinely committed to diversity and inclusion.<sup>1667</sup>

The requirements are more stringent for Tier 3 organizations. They must publish clear ambitions to ensure their leadership represents and reflects the diversity of the communities they serve.<sup>1668</sup> Each year, they must also create a Diversity and Inclusion Action plan and submit it for approval to UK Sport or Sport England.<sup>1669</sup> The plan has to outline the organization's proposed actions to achieve leadership diversity and must be posted on their website. In addition, the organizations are obliged to publish an annual update on their Action Plan.<sup>1670</sup> These requirements have been recognized by the Aspen Institute as a strength of the UK Sport Code of Sports Governance.<sup>1671</sup>

Tier 2 organizations are expected to meet the requirements of Tier 1 plus some additional mandatory requirements from Tier 3. The exact Tier 3 requirements to be met, and the timeline for compliance, will depend on the nature of the investment and the circumstances of the organization.<sup>1672</sup>

It is the Commission's understanding that UK Sport works closely with sport organizations to help them comply with these requirements. When a sport organization fails to meet the UK Sport requirement, funds are withheld, and conditions are put in place until they achieve compliance.

Within its own structure, UK Sport's Diversity and Inclusion Plan specifies that:

“[...] by 2031 the people in UK Sport will be reflective of UK society. Specifically, this means that our Board, Senior Leadership Team and Workforce will separately and collectively be comprised of min: 50% female, 20% disabled, 18% diverse ethnic background, and 3% LGBTQ+, as well as people with different lived, regional and socio-economic experiences.”<sup>1673</sup>

These national demographic benchmarks are based on the 2021 census.

## Wales

Sport Wales is the national organization responsible for the stewardship of public sport funding in Wales. As a component of that stewardship, Sport Wales has developed sport governance frameworks. Welsh sport governance balances principles of both hard and soft governance to create a sport system that is both high performing and grounded in values.

Until recently, Welsh sport governance was supported by two frameworks that set minimum standards for publicly funded sport organizations in Wales: the Capability Framework introduced in 2015 <sup>1674</sup> and the Governance and Leadership Framework introduced in 2019.<sup>1675</sup> The Capability Framework identified 7 key governance areas, each with specific requirements. All organizations were expected to meet the essential requirements, while the minimum requirements varied depending on the level of funding the organization received.<sup>1676</sup> The Governance and Leadership Framework aligned with the Capability Framework and provided actions that a board could take to implement each key principle of good governance practice.<sup>1677</sup>

Following consultations and an independent analysis, comparing the frameworks to international and cross sectorial comparators, it was determined the frameworks remained fit for purpose.<sup>1678</sup> Notwithstanding this determination, there was an interest in streamlining and improving the frameworks. As a result, Sport Wales recently released the Arwain Cymru: A Governance and People Development Framework, bringing both former frameworks together under one.<sup>1679</sup>

Sport Wales recognizes that good governance must go beyond compliance exercises and is not a one-size-fits-all approach. As such, the Arwain Cymru Framework is offered as a developmental tool intended to encourage organisations to self-evaluate, prioritize continuous improvement and cultivate leadership.

Applicable to all the organisations that receive annual funding from Sport Wales, the Framework establishes the following 5 principles:

1. Organisational and legal compliance
2. People and cultures
3. Insight, engagement and strategy
4. An effectively run organization
5. Finance<sup>1680</sup>

Each principle is supported by a clear outcome, practical explanations and examples of required minimum standards (referred to as core elements) and good practices (which are not required but demonstrate governance maturity and leadership).<sup>1681</sup> For additional clarity, the Framework provides examples of positive indicators, unacceptable behaviours, and evidence of success for each element.<sup>1682</sup>

Organizations funded by Sport Wales are required to complete a self-declaration assessing their maturity in relation to each Framework element and to create a “governance and people improvement plan” which is regularly reviewed and approved by the organization’s board.<sup>1683</sup> Organizations may be required to provide evidence that supports the self-declaration.<sup>1684</sup>

If significant concerns are identified by Sport Wales, an escalation process may be triggered. This process emphasizes collaboration to help the organization improve and reduce risk.<sup>1685</sup> Sport Wales is available to support organizations and to help them strengthen their governance on an ongoing basis.<sup>1686</sup>

## Australia

In Australia, the Sport Governance Principles were co-designed through a sector-wide engagement process.<sup>1687</sup> Although these governance principles tend to be most applicable at the national, state, and territory levels, they can be used throughout the Australian sport sector.<sup>1688</sup>

According to the Australian Sports Commission, the Sport Governance Principles are intended to support a high standard of performance by those who govern a sport.<sup>1689</sup> To help sport organizations with implementing these governance principles, the Australian Sports Commission established the Sport Governance and Organizational Enhancement team. It advises and assists national sport organizations’ boards to develop sport governance practices in line with the Sport Governance Principles and Standards.<sup>1690</sup>

The Sport Governance Standards, also established following sector-wide engagement, provide measures for sport organizations to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of their governance systems and processes.<sup>1691</sup> There are 35 standards with a 4-point scale for each (1 representing low maturity and 4 representing the highest level of maturity).<sup>1692</sup> Each standard aligns with a Sport Governance Principle.<sup>1693</sup>

National and State sport organizations are invited to self-evaluate their governance against each standard using the 4-point scoring scale we described.<sup>1694</sup> Following this process, the Australian Sports Commission releases a Sport Governance Standards Benchmarking Report. This report provides insight into the current governance maturity of sport organizations and highlights where they need support.<sup>1695</sup> As a result, the Australian Sports Commission can redirect its support, education, and resources to better meet the sector's needs.<sup>1696</sup>

The expected governance maturity of a sport organization is based on the funders' financial investment (either the Australian Sports Commission or the State and Territory Agencies for Sport and Recreation) and the sport organization's generated revenue.<sup>1697</sup> In essence, the expected governance maturity of a sport organization depends on their overall internal capacity.<sup>1698</sup> The Australian Sports Commission makes it clear that expectations refer to the anticipated maturity level rather than a strict compliance level.<sup>1699</sup>

Principle 4 of the Sport Governance Standards specifies that a board should be composed of diverse individuals with different perspectives and experiences to ensure improved decision making.<sup>1700</sup> The standards for this principle state that the board selection matrix should provide for a mix of skills, expertise, and experiences.<sup>1701</sup> Goals should also be set regarding board composition and consider diversity, equity, and inclusion. Finally, the board should be composed of no more than 50% of one gender, the role of chair or deputy chair should be filled by a female or gender diverse person, and the directors should be independent.<sup>1702</sup>

Australia recently launched the National Gender Equity in Sport Governance Policy.<sup>1703</sup> Subject to some exceptions, this policy requires all national and state sport organizations, as well as organizations receiving specified funding, to meet gender equity targets for their boards of directors by July 2027.<sup>1704</sup> Equity, diversity, and inclusion are also a key focus of Australia's Sport Participation Strategy — Play Well<sup>1705</sup> and Australia's 2032+ High Performance Sport Strategy.<sup>1706</sup>

## Netherlands

Following the publication of a Code of Conduct in the corporate sector in the early 2000s, which provided recommendations on several governance-related matters to restore investor and citizen confidence in the corporate world, the Netherlands Olympic Committee introduced a Code of Good Sports Governance intended for its members.<sup>1707</sup> It was updated in 2021 and is based on four principles: responsibility, democracy, society, and transparency.<sup>1708</sup> All sport organizations in the Netherlands are now expected to comply with the Code.<sup>1709</sup>

Compliance is based on the “implement or explain” principle, which stems from the Dutch Corporate Code of Governance. In the sport context, this approach requires sport organizations to comply with the code of sport governance or explain in their annual reports why they failed to comply with portions of it.<sup>1710</sup> The code therefore offers room for flexibility according to each organization's own circumstances, while also providing a compass for integrity and socially responsible governance of every sports organization in the country.<sup>1711</sup> Directors and supervisors of sports organizations in the Netherlands must account for compliance with the code during the general meeting and in the annual report.<sup>1712</sup>

There are lessons to be learned from each of these models to strengthen and improve Canada's approach to sport governance.

## Reminder of the Commission's preliminary recommendations

In its Preliminary Report, the Commission made six recommendations to address the current governance shortcomings found within the Canadian sport system. These recommendations called for:

- the Government of Canada to make the Canadian Sport Governance Code mandatory for all federally funded sport organizations
- compliance with the Code would be subject to a transition period
- the Government of Canada to provide support to assist federally funded sport organizations to comply with the Code
- the Government of Canada be the custodian of the Code and responsible for its regular review (considering that no organization is currently responsible for the Canadian Sport Governance Code). This responsibility would be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once established.
- the Code would be enhanced with these five additional governance practices:
  - racial diversity as a consideration in the selection of board members
  - regular anti-racism training for all board members
  - athlete representation on boards
  - regular training on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport
  - specific transparency measures for organizations.
- regular audits of federally funded sport organizations be conducted as oversight would be key to ensuring effective implementation of the Canadian Sport Governance Code.

In addition to these six recommendations, the Commission proposed two options to promote uniformity and strengthen sport governance across all levels of the Canadian sport system. The first option proposed that the Government of Canada use its spending power to achieve greater uniformity of governance standards between the federal and the provincial and territorial levels of sport. The second option proposed that the Government of Canada collaborate with the provincial and territorial governments to establish and legislate similar federal and provincial/territorial sport governance standards.



## A mandatory and harmonized approach to sport governance grounded in accountability

As we have seen, there is no standardized approach to sport governance in Canada and little to no oversight. The Commission's Calls to Action aim to address the current governance shortcomings in the sport system.

Our Calls to Action address four important needs:

- the need for mandatory sport governance standards
- the need to review and enhance sport governance standards
- the need for sport governance standards oversight
- the need for a harmonized approach to sport governance standards at all levels of sport.

In the following sections, and through to the end of this chapter, we outline the feedback we received before and after the release of our Preliminary Report for each of these needs, including comments provided during the National Summit. We also present our final findings and Calls to Action for each of them.

### THE NEED FOR MANDATORY SPORT GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

#### Participants' perspectives on mandatory sport governance standards

Throughout our engagement activities, participants reiterated that there is a governance crisis in sport.

Participants highlighted that the current sport governance framework in Canada is limited and subject to very little compliance oversight. Some described the existing governance requirements as little more than a procedural exercise to access public funding.

When discussing whether to make compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code mandatory, some participants were concerned it would add to boards' already demanding work. They noted that most board members already have full-time jobs and limited time for these roles.

We were also informed that some National Sport Organizations might find it difficult, or even impossible, to comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code because of their current governance structures. For example, if a current bylaw does not align with the governance requirement, the sport organization would need to seek a change to the bylaw. Such a change is subject to the vote of the organization's membership, which is often made up of Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. National Sport Organizations indicated that forcing these changes would be challenging. Some also shared that the greatest challenge to implementing governance changes in their organization remains the attitudes and actions of their board of directors. Some noted that considering the lack of understanding about good governance practices, efforts to implement new standards

are viewed with suspicion and sometimes serious opposition. In other cases, participants suggested that a sport organization may be restricted from complying due to the specific requirements of its International Federation although they provided no specific example.

By contrast, we heard from different participants, including National Sport Organizations, who welcomed the Canadian Sport Governance Code. When the 2023 announcement was made, they worked toward reaching compliance with the Code. Some stated they found it odd that the Code was “tossed aside.” They said that was a result of pressure from a few sport organizations. Others said that, given the work done by their previous boards to implement good governance practices, complying with the Canadian Sport Governance Code was not difficult. With respect to the Code’s content, we heard that its substance reflects best-in-class governance practices and it should be regularly reviewed and updated.

The academics and experts the Commission met with were unanimous in their view that sport organizations ought to meet basic governance standards. They noted how the sport sector was one of the only sectors lagging on governance. Indeed, most of them believed that the Canadian Sport Governance Code ought to apply to all sport organizations and that these organizations should be subject to compliance verification. In fact, participants recognized that sport organizations could easily implement and comply with the Code, because unlike other Codes it is succinct.

In terms of good governance practices, we heard from academics and experts that the Code reflects a number of recognized practices, but that enhancements could be made in certain areas to strengthen it. The following were highlighted as examples of good governance principles currently captured in the Code:

- boards’ and committees’ roles and responsibilities
- skills and experiences of board members and committees
- transparency
- integrity
- respect and consideration for all interested parties
- accountability.

Experts emphasized that if we want good governance standards in sport, it has to start with governments taking a stance. They must use their spending levers to make governance standards mandatory, whether through legislation or the implementation of funding conditions.

Some have also observed that:

“Despite substantial public funding, and significant economic and social influence, sport has no equivalent legislative or regulatory structure [as opposed to structures in place for agriculture, forestry, and automotive manufacturing]. This absence leaves it [sport] uniquely exposed to misconduct, corruption, criminal infiltration, and risks to the people, communities, and industries that depend on it. Unlike other sectors where law, regulation, and enforcement act together, Canadian sport has relied almost entirely on voluntary governance codes that are narrow in scope, rarely enforced, and lacking independent assessment.”<sup>1713</sup>

While our recommendation to make the Canadian Sport Governance Code mandatory for all federally funded sport organizations received a high degree of support, some participants suggested that it required revisions. They therefore preferred the adoption of a set of sport governance standards over the Code’s imposition.

Some participants suggested that an in-depth audit of all National Sport Organizations’ governance practices should be undertaken before making any recommendations on the nature of the governance standards. They told us this would provide a baseline for the eventual governance code and that proceeding without such an audit was akin to working backwards.

Those who did not express support for mandating the entire Canadian Sport Governance Code agreed that minimal governance standards should be required of sport organizations.

Although participants recognized that voluntary adherence to a set of sport governance principles or to the Code can legitimize the values upon which the Code is built, a mandatory code would allow for true change to occur. As some explained, making sport governance principles mandatory by tying it to funding would make sport organizations take the required steps to ensure these changes. Without such requirements, these changes might have been opposed by existing board members or by the wider membership of the sport organization.

However, we also heard that making sport governance principles mandatory by tying it to funding would have to be done thoughtfully to minimize any negative impact on athletes in the event of a sport organization’s governance failure. On that note, we heard a number of suggestions about how non-compliance with sport governance principles could be addressed in a way that would not directly affect athletes. Some suggested that there should be personal sanctions on the directors, for example, removing them from the board or preventing them from taking on leadership roles within sport. It was not clear how these could be implemented given the independent nature of these corporations. The Commission was also warned that oversight of compliance with sport governance principles would have to go beyond a simple “check-box” exercise. Overall, most individuals and organizations the Commission engaged with agreed that sport governance principles should be tied to funding.

Considering the importance of standardized, mandatory sport governance principles across all levels of sport and jurisdictions, participants felt that their implementation should have some flexibility. This was a key point considering the varying levels of sport organizations' capacity across the sport system, especially at the community level.

Two suggestions were made to provide this flexibility for sport organizations in complying with standardized governance standards. The first was to add language to the Canadian Sport Governance Code to provide the possibility to request an exemption from complying with a specific requirement by providing an explanation as to why they were unable to comply. The exemption would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Some thought this would be an important feature considering sport organizations may have specific governance requirements to abide by as required by their governing international body, for example.

The second suggestion was to consider a tiered approach to compliance with sport governance principles. Reference was made to UK Sport's approach which considers, among other things, an organization's size and capacity. Participants suggested that this tiered approach could be adapted in the Canadian context in order to not penalize small, less-funded sport organizations who may otherwise struggle to implement the sport governance principles. As some participants framed it, good governance practices are necessary but the governance standards required of an organization may differ based on its scope and capacity. For example, the standards expected of an organization that receives multi-year funding may not be the same for an organization that receives only one-time project funding.

### **Calls to Action: mandatory sport governance standards**

As we outlined earlier, the sport system in Canada relies heavily on volunteers. Participants repeatedly stated that these volunteers often come from within the sport they represent (e.g., former athletes, coaches, parents of athletes, administrators). Although well-intentioned, they often do not have the governance experience or skills needed to address today's complex challenges as they relate to safeguarding in sport and other complex, emerging issues.

Given this reality, it is not surprising to learn about the significant governance challenges that exist within the sport system. Boards of directors often lack essential skills, training, and understanding of directors' responsibilities, and often face real and perceived conflicts of interest. Their lack of diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, and disability-specific expertise highlights the need for a wider range of perspectives and experiences within decision-making processes. And in the absence of regular oversight and examination of governance practices within sport organizations, there is no guidance or support for boards seeking to make needed changes in their governance practices.

The Commission is of the view that if basic good governance standards were adopted, made mandatory, implemented and complied with, many of the issues participants raised throughout our engagement activities, such as conflicts of interest and lack of transparency and public trust, would be addressed.

For example, conflicts of interest could be avoided by recruiting and selecting a diverse board of directors. Transparency and accountability could be achieved through the proactive and consistent publication of annual reports and itemized financial statements on an easily accessible and identifiable web page.

We also believe that mandatory governance standards would increase consistency across all sport organization governance structures and provide the needed guidance to boards of directors with varying degrees of sophistication in governance. Further, by making the Canadian Sport Governance Code mandatory as a condition of funding, sport organizations could rely on the mandatory requirement to respond to any resistance from their boards of directors.

With time, proper support, and compliance oversight, which we will discuss later in this chapter, stronger and more effective governance structures and practices will emerge within the sport system.

The Commission believes that compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code must be required of all federally funded sport organizations. In fact, sport organizations should already be complying with the Code's governance requirements.

The Cromwell Report and the above-mentioned standing committee reports made recommendations referencing basic good governance practices to mitigate or remediate the issues that sport organizations were facing. Many of these practices are in fact reflected in the Canadian Sport Governance Code. For example, the Cromwell Report referred to:

- adopting a formal statement describing both the board's and management's mandate, functions, roles, and responsibilities.<sup>1714</sup> This requirement is reflected in provision B.4. of the Code.<sup>1715</sup>
- ensuring a portion of the directors on the board are independent.<sup>1716</sup> This requirement is reflected in provision B.2. of the Code.<sup>1717</sup>
- establishing a nominating committee.<sup>1718</sup> This requirement is reflected in provisions C.1. and C.3. of the Code.<sup>1719</sup>

A further example is the recommendation for comprehensive financial and organizational transparency and accountability made by both the Cromwell Report and the Report from the Canadian Heritage Standing Committee on Safe Sport in Canada.<sup>1720</sup> Some transparency requirements are captured in provision F of the Code.



Appendix 11 provides a table that lists some of the good governance practices contemplated in the Canadian Sport Governance Code

We also understand that following the then-minister's announcement in 2023 that the Code would become mandatory, some National Sport Organizations started working toward compliance with it. The Commission was informed that at least 33 National Sport Organizations have reported they have adopted and complied with the Canadian Sport Governance Code, even though Sport Canada does not currently require it as a condition of funding, recognizing the importance of good governance practices. In addition, Sport Canada requires all federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes to meet governance requirements. Their compliance is mandatory to be eligible for funding under the Sport Support Program. These governance requirements are also reflected in the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Many federally funded sport organizations are already complying with many of the governance requirements outlined in the Code.

The Commission recognizes that compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code may present challenges for some sport organizations.

However, we strongly believe that the time has come for the Government of Canada to take a stance in making good governance practices a priority.

With respect to challenges, we wish to note that not-for-profit corporation legislation is intentionally broad because it provides a basic framework that can apply to various sectors. As a result, many good governance practices are unspecified in this legislation. By contrast, governance codes or standards tend to be more prescriptive than the legislation.

We commend Quebec's leadership in prioritizing good governance of their provincial sport and recreation nonprofit organizations. We echo the sentiments they shared in the introduction to their Code of Governance for Québec Sport and Recreation Non-Profit Organizations:

[Translation] "In short, organizations need and deserve boards that are more effective in governance. The sport and recreation community can no longer afford to maintain boards that do not see developing and strengthening their own performance as a priority. The long-term success of these organizations depends, at least in part, on their ability to instill in their directors the conviction that while good intentions are a start, they are not enough to do all the work required to successfully lead their organizations through the challenges of the future. The level of excellence targeted by this Code of Governance [The Code of Governance for Québec Sport and Recreation Non-Profit Organizations] is far more demanding."<sup>1721</sup>

Academics and experts who participated in our engagement process were adamant that sport governance standards need to be mandatory. Any challenges or difficulties that sport organizations described as barriers to compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code should signal to the Government of Canada areas where these organizations require guidance, support, and direction. These challenges and difficulties should not prevent mandating compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Measures should be implemented to assist sport organizations in reaching full compliance with the Code and alleviate any challenges or difficulties they may encounter.

A transition period should be considered to provide sufficient time for sport organizations to comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code without impeding their eligibility for funding during the transition. The length of this period could take into consideration an organization's capacity to comply. For example, a smaller sport organization might require a longer transition period than would a larger one. Such an approach would provide flexibility while still requiring compliance with minimum good governance standards.

As Chapter 13 outlined, as a cost saving measure, sport organizations could come together and hire one consultant to assist them with the compliance process instead of each organization having to do so independently. In addition, proper support and guidance should be made readily available to sport organizations to assist them in reaching compliance with the Code.

It is worth noting that governance resources and courses tailored to not-for-profit organizations, developed by reputable institutions in Canada, are available. It is also the Commission's understanding that the Canadian Olympic Committee offers a free governance training program to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. This training is delivered through a university-affiliated school of business. All sport organizations across Canada should make full use of these resources.

The Canadian Sport Governance Code appears to currently reside on the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Sport Information Resource Centre websites. However, most participants the Commission met with could not pinpoint the entity responsible for the Code and suggested that it belongs to the sport community at large. Others believed that Sport Canada was the Code's custodian. While collaboration, cooperation, and engagement are important when developing a governance code, this code must reside with a single entity to remain relevant and have credibility within the sport community.

Therefore, the Commission is of the view that the Government of Canada should be the custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code until the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 is established. The government should also be responsible for its regular review in collaboration with governance experts. The next section will explore in greater detail the need for regular reviews of sport governance standards.

## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**70. The Government of Canada shall mandate that all federally funded sport organizations adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code and its future iterations. This will require revisions to the Canadian Sport Governance Code, which is currently tailored to National Sport Organizations.**

**71. The Government of Canada shall provide a reasonable transition period to allow federally funded sport organizations to comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code without affecting their funding. This transition period shall not apply to the governance requirements that are currently mandatory under the Sport Support Program for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.**

**72. The Government of Canada shall provide support, including funding, to federally funded sport organizations to comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

**73. The Government of Canada shall be the custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and shall be responsible, in collaboration with governance experts, for its regular review to ensure it remains current and reflects evolving governance best practices. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

## THE NEED TO REGULARLY REVIEW GOVERNANCE STANDARDS AND ENHANCE GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

Given the continued evolution of good governance practices, the custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code will need to assume its regular review. This review should be conducted in collaboration with governance experts to ensure it remains current and reflects evolving governance best practices.

### The need to regularly review governance standards

#### Participants' perspectives on the regular review of governance standards

We heard from some participants that if adoption of and compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code was going to be required as a condition of funding, it would first need to be reviewed. While they acknowledged that mandatory governance standards in sport are needed, they said that the Canadian Sport Governance Code in its current iteration is not suitable as the standard. Some expressed that the Code is inflexible and poorly designed. For example, we heard that the Code was problematic where it prescribed the sport organization's most senior staff person's title based on the number of employees. Participants saw this as outside the scope of

good governance practices. They were not convinced the Code reflected minimal good governance standards and that there may be better examples available elsewhere. A revision would ensure that the Code could be applied to all federally funded sport organizations, provide flexibility, and reflect enhanced and modernized governance principles.

#### **Final findings on the regular review of governance standards**

We recognize that the working group who drafted the Canadian Sport Governance Code anticipated that it would be reviewed no later than December 2026.<sup>1722</sup> Considering that the Code in its current iteration was first released in 2021, a review process should be initiated immediately and completed within 12 months.

We emphasize that the review of the Canadian Sport Governance Code should not delay making it mandatory for all federally funded sport organizations. Regular reviews are important to keep the Code relevant and aligned with good governance practices. This review exercise should happen at the same time as mandatory adoption.

#### **The need to enhance governance standards**

In the Preliminary Report, the Commission proposed five governance requirements that should be added to the Canadian Sport Governance Code. These requirements addressed the need for:

- diverse representation on boards of directors
- athlete representation with voting rights
- mandatory training of all board members on anti-racism and inclusion
- education on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport
- increased transparency.

#### **Participant's perspectives on enhanced governance standards**

In addition to the five additional governance requirements the Commission recommended in its Preliminary Report, participants reiterated that board-member term limits must be reflected in the Canadian Sport Governance Code. We heard that without term limits, individuals sometimes remain in their board positions for many years and for many reasons, including to benefit from some of the advantages and opportunities associated with their role. The importance of term limits was also presented as a structural safeguard, ensuring renewal, creating space for new skills, and helping address persistent performance issues.

Similarly, most organized sport participants who responded to the Commission's online public survey and answered questions about improving the sport system in Canada agreed that the same people remain on board of directors for a long time. Specifically, a combined 54.0% of respondents either "Strongly agree" (22.8%) or "Somewhat agree" (31.2%) with that statement.

Participants to the commission's engagement activities also addressed the issue of conflicts of interest on boards. They shared that head coaches should not be eligible to sit on boards, nor should parents if their child is on the national team (speaking of national sport organizations). By contrast, some participants wondered whether it was necessary to prevent those connected to sport from serving as board members.

The Commission's online public survey also found evidence that among organized sport participants who answered questions about improving the sport system, 48.0% indicated that they were concerned about potential conflicts of interest in the sport organization they interact with the most. The results from the Commission's survey also suggests that concern about conflicts of interest was higher among respondents with direct or indirect experience of maltreatment, including:

- those who experienced maltreatment (68.6%)
- those who witnessed maltreatment (57.9%)
- those who made a maltreatment complaint (60.5%)
- those who did not make a complaint (56.9%)
- those who were the subject of a maltreatment complaint (64.4%).

Participants involved in the Commission's engagement activities also raised other areas to be considered in the Canadian Sport Governance Code. These include:

- employee well-being
- data protection and cybersecurity
- anti-bribery and anti-corruption
- whistleblower protection
- awareness of emerging issues such as match fixing, gambling, and betting
- board skills and succession planning.

### **Participants' perspectives on representative boards of directors**

Throughout our engagement activities, participants expressed concerns about the lack of diverse voices at the decision-making tables. They noted that several boards remain very insular and that the same individuals are repeatedly making the same decisions. Others told us that boards of directors are not always a welcoming and inclusive environment for individuals from equity-deserving groups, including racialized individuals. For example, we heard of situations where racialized board members had to justify their experience, and skill sets when seeking positions as a director or officer in contrast to what was required of other candidates. They were also overtly subjected to racism.



Many participants suggested that to bring change, organizations need clear expectations and standards for board diversity. This would involve making diverse representation mandatory on boards of directors and encouraging sport organizations to create meaningful opportunities for racialized individuals to reach leadership positions.

However, participants also acknowledged that the first racialized individuals appointed after the mandated requirement might be seen as a token rather than a merit-based appointment infusing new skills. Despite this concern, members of racialized communities still believed that such an approach was necessary to achieve real change.

They also insisted that any consideration for mandated representation of racialized people on boards should be accompanied by support measures to ensure that these individuals remain in these positions. For instance, a supportive measure could involve ensuring anti-racism and inclusion training for members of the board and that a minimum of two members representing racialized diversity are appointed.

Many suggested that mandating the representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour on boards of directors would result in boards that better reflect Canadian society. Others suggested requiring boards to adopt a statement outlining their strategy to achieve diversity at the board level. They would need a target of at least 30% of directors from the Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities. We were told that a similar approach should also be considered for other equity-deserving groups such as those who identify as 2SLGBTQI+ and individuals with a disability.

To ensure that boards of directors fulfill their responsibilities to address diversity, participants suggested that sport organizations should be required to report annually on their boards' composition. This report would be submitted to the organization's governmental funder and to its membership at the annual general meeting.

The Commission's public survey asked organized sport participants who answered questions about improving the sport system in Canada whether the board of directors of the sport organization they deal with the most was sufficiently diverse to reflect the community served by the sport organization. Respondents were almost split on this question with 35.7% strongly or somewhat agreeing and 32.5% strongly or somewhat disagreeing. Marginalized groups — specifically racialized, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQI+ respondents — tended to register higher rates of disagreement (36.4%, 41.0%, and 42.2% respectively when combining "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree") with the statement.

In response to the Commission's preliminary recommendation to include racial diversity when selecting board members, there was no disagreement. However, participants involved in the engagement process sought a broader approach to ensure diverse representation on boards of directors. They told us that individuals from different equity-deserving communities should be represented, including members of the 2SLGBTQI+ and members of the disability communities. The need for Indigenous people's representation on all boards of directors was also raised.

While some participants reiterated their concerns that diversity as a selection requirement could lead to tokenism, others agreed that without diversity quotas, there would be no incentive for change. They said that without quotas, it would be too easy to let a concern for diversity fall to the side.

There was clear consensus that sport organization boards of directors need to be diverse and reflective of Canadian society. Furthermore, participants suggested that beyond a board's makeup reflecting diversity, board members themselves should all be individuals who are committed to equity, diversity, and decolonization.

### **Final findings on representative boards of directors**

According to our analysis of Canada's 2021 census data, approximately 30% of the Canadian population identifies as either Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour.<sup>1723</sup> Between 2019 and 2021, approximately 4.4% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older reported being 2SLGBTQI+.<sup>1724</sup> The 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability noted that 27% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older have one or more disabilities.<sup>1725</sup>

Despite this demographic data, we noted during our engagement activities that diversity is still not consistently reflected in the membership of sport organizations' boards of directors. The Commission is of the view that diversity must be reflected at all levels of the sport system, including on boards of directors.

For individuals from equity-deserving groups to see themselves within a sport, they must see themselves in all structures of the sport, and more importantly, in leadership positions such as boards of directors. Change occurs at the decision-making table, and meaningful change is less likely to occur without diversity reflected at that table.

The Canadian Sport Governance Code highlights the importance of diversity at the board level. It encourages National Sport Organizations to develop a policy for diversity at the board level and to report annually on its initiatives to recruit directors from diverse communities. The Code specifies that:

"[...] each [National Sport Organization] should develop a policy for diversity at the board level. Diversity refers to the broad range of demographic characteristics that exists across Canadian society including, but not limited to, sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, economic means, ability, age, official language of Canada spoken, religion and education. The board should report annually as to its approach and initiatives taken to attract directors with the required skills and diversity (including with respect to gender representation), whether it considers its initiatives successful and any additional steps the board will be making towards this objective."<sup>1726</sup>

However, other than stipulating that "no more than 60% of the directors are the same gender", the Code does not make any specific requirements in terms of board composition and diversity representation.

The value and importance of diverse boards of directors are not new. Both the Cromwell Report<sup>1727</sup> and the report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women<sup>1728</sup> noted how important it is to ensure that boards of directors reflect diversity.<sup>1729</sup> The Commission recognizes that most sport organizations already have diversity, equity, and inclusion policies and strategies. However, these policies and strategies, on their own, have not resulted in a diversity of representation on boards of directors.

Considering participants' feedback and considering the Canadian population's makeup, the Commission is of the view that sport organization boards of directors should reflect Canada's diversity. They should include representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour as well as other equity-deserving groups such as individuals who identify as 2SLGBTQI+ and those who have disabilities. Therefore, the Commission has broadened the scope of its preliminary recommendation.

With a clear mandate, organizations can achieve diverse representation. Because sport is a direct expression of who we are as Canadians, sport at all levels must lead to shared values such as diversity and inclusion. Sport organizations must uphold these values and comply with mandatory requirements of having diverse representation on their boards of directors. Voluntary efforts alone have failed to achieve diverse representation.

The Commission therefore reiterates the importance of ensuring that proactive and concrete steps be taken to creating boards of directors that truly reflect the diversity of Canadian society.

The existence of policies addressing diverse representation on boards of directors is not enough. Merely reporting on attempts to achieve diverse representation is no longer an acceptable response to these policies. Such policies must be implemented. Actions speak louder than words.

Considering the above, the Commission maintains that to accelerate meaningful and measurable progress in board diversity, and to increase diverse representation of sport organization boards of directors, diversity must be considered when board members are selected.

We also remain of the view that the proposal to mandate the representation of equity-deserving groups on boards of directors' merits further and immediate attention. The international models explored earlier in this chapter describe different approaches applied to achieve diverse representation in leadership, including boards of directors, and should be explored further.

Finally, the Commission maintains its preliminary recommendation that to cultivate a welcoming, inclusive, and safe board environments, inclusion and anti-racism training must be mandatory for all board members and this training must be delivered regularly.

### Participants' perspectives on athlete representation

Athletes shared with the Commission that they hold a unique position in National Sport Organizations. Although these organizations exist to serve them, athletes are often not considered members of these sport organizations and they have historically been excluded from formal governance structures, especially from boards of directors.<sup>1730</sup> The lack of representation of athletes' voices on sport organizations boards of directors was further supported by the Commission's online public survey. In fact, the survey reports that a majority of organized sport participant respondents who answered questions about improving the sport system in Canada feel that athletes do not have a voice on the board of directors. A combined 42.0% of respondents either "Somewhat disagree" (19.2%) or "Strongly disagree" (22.8%) with the statement that athletes have a voice, while 31.5% either "Strongly agree" (11.9%) or "Somewhat agree" (19.6%).

Throughout our engagement activities, athletes advocated for their representation in governance structures, including voting rights. Other participants noted the need to recognize various identities in the sport system, including coaches, officials, and administrators.

Several participants raised concerns regarding athlete representation in National Sport Organizations' governance structures. Some were concerned that athletes' interests may not always align with the broader interests of increasing participation and improving programming across the sport system. We also heard that athletes' personal interest in their sport might lead to conflicts of interest in decision making. Some suggested that conflicts of interest could be mitigated by having retired athlete representatives instead of active athletes. Others suggested the possibility of having athlete representatives from both the Parasport and non-Parasport sectors of the sport, with their voting rights limited to decisions relating to the other sport. It was noted that this is possible only where the sport is integrated.

National Sport Organizations identified a challenge raised by their current governance structures. The Commission learned that in some governance structures, bylaws prescribe that directors are elected by the National Sport Organization's membership, which is composed of Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. These bylaws do not currently include a requirement for an athlete representative to serve as a director.

Changing the bylaws to require that one director be an athlete representative would require a membership vote. Some National Sport Organizations told us that it would be difficult for them to insist that their members, the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, elect an athlete as director. This is because reserving a seat for an athlete could reduce those members' ability to advance their own priorities at the national level.

These organizations expressed concern that mandating an athlete representative position could also undermine perceived legitimacy because candidates would compete only within a limited pool and not through a broader election process. That is, candidates seeking to hold that position would only be competing with others vying for the same position. Some described this scenario as the athlete representative effectively being elected without the "popular vote." As an alternative to athlete representation on boards of directors, some suggested mechanisms to seek input from athletes and have athletes involved in committee work.

That said, a number of National Sport Organizations and National Multisport Service Organizations the Commission engaged with recognized the importance of athlete representation and confirmed that they have athlete representation on their board of directors.

In its Preliminary Report, the Commission recommended that boards of directors must include an athlete representative to serve as a director with full voting rights. The feedback we received in response to this recommendation outlined several benefits and some concerns.

Supporters of mandatory athlete representation suggested that these representatives be elected by the athletes of the sport. They noted however that for meaningful representation of athletes to be achieved, it would require more than one athlete representative. Some participants cautioned the Commission on making it a requirement. Some participants said that an athlete's presence might increase the risk of retaliation against them when they voiced their opinion, resulting in further silencing athletes. To address this concern, participants suggested that athletes should be represented by retired athletes.

Considering the Commission's recommendation to make the Canadian Sport Governance Code mandatory for all federally funded sport organizations, some wondered whether athlete representation should be a requirement for all of these funded sport organizations. Some thought that athlete representation may not be relevant for an organization like ParticipACTION, for example, and the requirement would therefore result in more of a check-box exercise.

Participants also raised some concerns about athlete representation in the event the Canadian Sport Governance Code gets applied at the provincial, territorial, and community levels of sport. In that context, participants shared that mandating athlete representation on boards of directors would simply not be possible, given the age of participating athletes. In cases where athletes' age would not permit their participation on boards of directors, participants suggested requiring an athlete committee headed by a board member obliged to consult with the athlete participants.

### **Final findings on athlete representation**

Confusion and uncertainty surrounding the requirement of athlete representation on boards of directors remains. The Canadian Sport Governance Code, released in 2021, recognizes that meaningful athlete representation in the governance structure is fundamental.<sup>1731</sup> While the Code strongly encourages National Sport Organizations to have an athlete representative on their boards of directors, each board decides how to best achieve meaningful representation.<sup>1732</sup> The Code further states that a National Sport Organization that decides not to have an athlete representative on its board must appoint at least one athlete representative as a board observer. Regardless of the approach the board selects, a process for selecting an athlete representative with significant input from that sport's athletes must be developed.<sup>1733</sup>



Sport Canada's Sport Support Program eligibility criteria released in 2024 requires National Sport Organizations to have a "transparent and inclusive process" for selecting an athlete representative on their board of directors.<sup>1734</sup>

The importance of meaningful and true athlete representation within a sport's governance structure and decision-making processes was recognized in the Cromwell Report<sup>1735</sup> and the reports of both standing committees. In fact, the report entitled "Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada" recommends the inclusion of athletes in all bodies and all decision-making processes regarding sport in Canada.<sup>1736</sup> Similarly, the Safe Sport in Canada report by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage recommends the inclusion of athletes in all bodies and all decision-making processes regarding safe sport in Canada.<sup>1737</sup>

The Commission notes that the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, which forms the legislative framework for federally funded sport organizations, does not prevent athletes from serving on boards of directors. Athlete representation is allowed as long as the athlete representative meets the qualifications to be a director as per the Act<sup>1738</sup> and is either elected<sup>1739</sup> or appointed by the directors.<sup>1740</sup> Under the Act, it is possible for directors to appoint a director if the articles of corporation allow them to do so. The term of such an appointed director expires at the close of the next annual meeting of members.<sup>1741</sup>

We also recognize the unique nature and realities of each federally funded sport organization. We understand that mandating an athlete representative as a member of the board of directors, with full voting rights, may require changes to their structure. Implementing such a change will take time and effort. We also understand that mandating athlete representation could unfairly cast doubt about their legitimacy as board members compared to other board members who are elected based on specific governance skills and expertise. However, the Commission is of the view that these initial challenges are outweighed by the importance of meaningful athlete representation on sport organizations' boards of directors.

To address some of the feedback we received from participants questioning whether athlete representation would be relevant for National Multisport Service Organizations, the Commission echoes the findings made in both standing committees' reports. They acknowledged the importance of athlete representation in all sport bodies and decision-making processes<sup>1742</sup>, which would include these organizations. We however recognize that the constituency of athletes represented in different organizations may differ and include a variety of athletes from different levels of sport.

In addition, as raised in other chapters of this Report, athletes with disabilities have unique needs. It is especially important for athletes with disabilities to be represented on boards of sport organizations where Disability sport is integrated or where the organization delivers services to athletes with disabilities.

Given the importance for athlete representation, we understand that some National Sport Organizations and National Multisport Service Organizations have taken steps to amend their by-laws to include an athlete representative as part of its board composition.<sup>1743</sup>

For all these reasons, the Commission remains of the view that it should be mandatory for every board to include an athlete representative — either active or former — with full voting rights. This requirement applies to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.

### **Participants' perspectives on mandatory training on preventing and addressing maltreatment for boards of directors**

The Commission heard numerous accounts from victims and survivors who felt that their experiences were inadequately addressed by their sport organization's management or board of directors. As a result, many often felt they were left without clear guidance and struggled to access help or remedies for what they had experienced.

We also heard harrowing descriptions of athletes and parents being silenced or shunned by organizations after raising allegations of abuse or maltreatment. We were troubled to learn these athletes were often considered to be troublemakers or accused of seeking retribution for their own shortcomings in training or performance.

We were therefore not surprised that a large majority of participants at the National Summit organized by the Commission supported our recommendation that all board members receive mandatory and regular training on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport. The training should be based on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

We heard that boards of directors need training on how to report maltreatment. They must be held accountable when complaints come forward. Some participants anticipated that requiring such training on a recurring basis, for example, annually, might be burdensome for volunteer board members. They suggested that the training be required for any new members, and then annually for current members if substantive changes to the Universal Code of Conduct content have been made. Some suggested safeguarding training through a human rights lens to understand the need for a code, rather than training on the Code itself. Others added that training on a trauma-informed approach should also be considered.

### **Final findings on mandatory training on preventing and addressing maltreatment for boards of directors**

The experiences shared with the Commission — and the findings and recommendations from the two above mentioned standing committees, the Cromwell Report, and the two McLaren Reports — underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of maltreatment in sport. Every individual within a sport organization, including board members, must also be familiar with the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

Support for such mandatory training is also found in Recommendation 17 of the “Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada” report.<sup>1744</sup> Both the Canadian Sport Governance Code<sup>1745</sup> and the Sport Support Program funding eligibility criteria<sup>1746</sup> require mandatory orientation and training for board members on the fundamentals of good governance and board responsibilities.

To be eligible for funding under the Sport Support Program a sport organization must also adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.<sup>1747</sup> We understand that under the Canadian Safe Sport Program, participants, including a sport organization’s board members, must complete a course about the Canadian Safe Sport Program’s rules and processes relating to maltreatment.<sup>1748</sup>

The Commission remains of the view that training focused on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport, based on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, must be part of the mandatory training for all sport organizations’ boards of directors. Given its importance, this training should be incorporated into the onboarding process for all new board members. In addition, all members should receive annual refresher training.

#### **Participants’ perspectives on financial transparency**

On numerous occasions, the Commission heard from participants who were unable to find key financial documents, such as annual statements, on sport organization websites.

We were told that sport organizations should show that public funds are being used as intended by proactively disclosing financial information such as senior leadership salaries. As some put it, financial reports would demonstrate that funds are going toward sport development rather than excessive salaries. Participants strongly insisted that the public should know where the money is going.

Participants also noted that a lack of financial transparency and accountability raises concerns about a sport organization’s legitimacy and efficiency and affects people’s trust in the organization. Some also stated that financial transparency mitigates risks of corruption within the organization.

Many from whom we heard, including athletes, advocated for full financial transparency regarding funds received from Sport Canada and the provision of detailed information as to how those funds are spent.

Most participants supported our preliminary recommendation requiring sport organizations to publicly post documents on their website. This includes board meeting minutes, an annual report, and the annual disclosure of public funds received with an accounting of their use. Some suggested that the annual disclosure of funds should include all financials and not be limited to public funds.

### Final findings on financial transparency

As recipients of public funding, sport organizations must be accountable not only to their funders but, more importantly, to Canadians. A lack of transparency and readily available information diminishes public trust.

By proactively and consistently disclosing financial information and sharing key governance-related information and documents, sport organizations can demonstrate the proper, effective, and efficient use of funds. This transparency will, in turn, bolster public trust, demonstrate accountability, and enhance confidence in the organization.

The call for transparent and accessible financial disclosure was raised by other participants, including governance experts. The Cromwell Report<sup>1749</sup> also called for transparent and accessible financial disclosure, as did Recommendation 4 of the Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage entitled “Safe Sport in Canada”.<sup>1750</sup>

A participant appearing before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women made a strong claim during its study on women and girls in sport. The participant said: “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>1751</sup> The Commission shares this view of financial transparency.

Sport organizations as publicly funded entities should not operate in secrecy. They should embrace transparency and proactively and openly share documents related to their use of public funds, including how they spend funds and make financial decisions.

Such transparency would demonstrate responsible management and show that funds, including public funds, are spent appropriately. However, as we have outlined here, such transparency is not yet the reality for most sport organizations.

The Commission maintains its finding that maximizing transparency aligns with the principles of openness and accountability — fundamental principles of good governance and leadership.<sup>1752</sup> Therefore, the Commission remains of the view that sport organizations must be required to post on their website, in addition to the other documents listed in the Canadian Sport Governance Code, the following three documents:

- board meeting minutes
- a document outlining all public funds received with a description of their specific use
- an annual report describing the organization’s activity and progress.

### **Calls to Action: regular review of governance standards and enhanced standards**

The following Calls to Action outline the elements and additional requirements we urge the Government of Canada to consider during its first review of the Canadian Sport Governance Code.

The revisions we call for include expanding the scope of the Code's application beyond National Sport Organizations to cover National Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes. Revisions should include the five enhancements outlined earlier, diverse representation on boards of directors, athlete representation with voting rights, mandatory training for all board members on inclusion and anti-racism, education on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport, and increased transparency.

#### **Calls to Action**

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**74. The Government of Canada shall, in collaboration with governance experts, conduct a review the Canadian Sport Governance Code to ensure it reflects evolving good governance practices.**

**75. The Government of Canada, as part of its Canadian Sport Governance Code review process, shall amend the Code to expand its application to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes and add the following mandatory practices:**

##### **Board composition**

- a. Diversity must be included as a board member selection criterion. Diversity includes individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, individuals who identify as 2SLGBTQI+, and individuals with a disability.**
- b. The board of directors must include an athlete representative, qualified to do so under the law, to serve as a director with full voting rights. In the context of a sport organization where a Disability sport is integrated or an organization that delivers services to athletes with disabilities, athletes with disabilities should be represented.**



**Calls to Action (continued)**

**Training**

- c. All board members must receive regular training on inclusion and anti-racism.
- d. All board members must receive regular training on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport based on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. As outlined in Chapter 11, the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program, which would fall within the function of the Centralized Sport Entity once established, would address this requirement.

**Transparency**

- e. Sport organizations must publicly post the following on their website:
  - a. minutes of all board meetings
  - b. an annual disclosure of all public funds received, along with an accounting of their use
  - c. an annual report describing the organization's activity and progress.

These documents would be added to other documents that the Canadian Sport Governance Code requires sport organizations to publicly post on their website. This includes articles of incorporation or continuance, bylaws, annual financial statements, minutes of members' meetings, board mandate, all committees' terms of reference, and an annual report on diversity.<sup>1753</sup>

**THE NEED FOR SPORT GOVERNANCE STANDARDS OVERSIGHT**

**Participants' perspectives on sport governance standards oversight**

Participants in our engagement process described a clear lack of oversight over federally funded sport organizations' governance practices. Some raised concerns that Sport Canada allocates public funds to these organizations without a comprehensive and regular oversight function.

Many also pointed out that while policies, practices, and procedures exist on paper, they are not always put into practice. They said that oversight beyond a check-box exercise is necessary to ensure compliance with good governance requirements.

Participants were in favour of the Commission's preliminary recommendation calling for regular audits of federally funded sport organizations to ensure the implementation of, and the compliance with, the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Participants told us that if we want governance to be more than just a voluntary reporting exercise, the system needs an oversight mechanism. This would ensure sport organizations are not only adopting and complying with the governance principles but are also effectively applying these principles in practice.

They suggested that such an oversight mechanism will require governance expertise. It will need to be independent and provide opportunities for athletes and other interested parties to submit anonymous feedback. Participants also noted that support should be provided to sport organizations to assist them in working toward and achieving compliance with governance standards.

### **Calls to Action: sport governance standards oversight**

We recognize that a compliance function was created at Sport Canada in an effort to provide some oversight. We understand that Sport Canada does not have dedicated governance expertise or an oversight mechanism to regularly verify sport organizations' compliance with prescribed governance requirements. They also do not conduct regular audits of all sport organizations. Given these limitations, compliance assessments are largely based on self-reported confirmation of compliance supported by objective, externally verifiable criteria.

To ensure the implementation of good governance practices, it is critical for the verification process to go beyond self-reporting on compliance and submitting supporting documentation. It is equally important to ensure that when a sport organization is struggling to fulfill its compliance responsibilities it receives guidance and support.

The Commission believes it is crucial to conduct random and periodic governance audits examining all sport organizations' level of adherence to the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Given that these organizations receive taxpayer money, it is imperative to establish formal oversight mechanisms that consistently enforce the Code.

This would ensure that federally funded sport organizations are appropriately and efficiently governed. Ideally, this governance oversight function would fall outside of Sport Canada and reside within the Centralized Sport Entity discussed in Chapter 12 once it is established.

**Calls to Action**

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**76. The Government of Canada in collaboration with governance experts shall develop and implement an oversight mechanism dedicated to sport governance. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

**77. The Government of Canada, using the developed oversight mechanism dedicated to sport governance, shall conduct regular audits of federally funded sport organizations to ensure their implementation of and compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

**THE NEED FOR A HARMONIZED APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE STANDARDS AT ALL LEVELS OF SPORT**

The Commission’s preliminary recommendations proposed two options to achieve greater uniformity of sport governance standards between the federal and the provincial and territorial levels of sport.

Throughout its engagement activities, the Commission observed a misconception among some participants that National Sport Organizations have authority and control over Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. When asked, National Sport Organizations reiterated time and time again that their scope and mandate are limited to national activities and that they have limited control and authority over their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. Some also explained that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are often members of their organizations and as members they elect the National Sport Organization’s board of directors. Therefore, it can be said that the control is exercised by the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations over the National Sport Organizations and not the reverse.

National Sports Organizations pointed out that this structure gives them little power or control beyond their own governance structure, which makes harmonizing governance standards across the whole system difficult. Participants also told us that there is a “bottleneck” at the provincial and territorial level. Governance changes made at the national level rarely reach the provincial and territorial level, and almost never reach the community level.

The reality remains that Canada's sport system extends beyond National Sport Organizations to the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and then to the community or local level. All three levels need to work together to achieve consistency and harmonization.

The Commission suggested in its Preliminary Report that requirements applying to National Sport Organizations should also apply to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and the Community Sport Organizations. This would ensure a consistent governance approach across the sport system. Many participants the Commission met advocated for this approach.

However, the Commission recognized that provinces and territories have their own legislation governing not-for-profit organizations and some have governance requirements attached to their provincial and territorial funding. These requirements may prevent a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization from fully adopting the Canadian Sport and Governance Code. Therefore, an amended version of the Code (an "amended version") tailored to the particularities of each province or territory could be adopted.

Before outlining the Commission's final findings and Calls to Action on the need for a harmonized approach to governance standards at all levels of sport, we review both options presented in the Preliminary Report and the feedback we received in response to these options.

#### **Option 1: Using spending power to implement uniform governance standards**

In our Preliminary Report, option 1 proposed that the Government of Canada require all federally funded sport organizations to adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. It also recommended that National Sport Organizations modify their membership rules so that their members — Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations — must comply with the Code or an amended version as a condition of their membership.

To further expand adoption and compliance, the Commission proposed that the Government of Canada could use its spending power to impose these governance requirements on Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations and Community Sport Organizations. This could be achieved through funding agreements between the Government of Canada and provincial and territorial governments. These agreements could condition funding intended for Provincial, Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations on compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or an amended version.<sup>1754</sup> The Commission acknowledged that this approach would apply to only Provincial, Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations receiving federal funding, which would limit its overall impact.

To broaden the impact, the Commission proposed that the Government of Canada could encourage provinces and territories to mandate their sport organizations to adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or an amended version. This would be a condition for receiving provincial or territorial funding. Provinces and territories could in turn mandate their funded sport organizations to modify their membership rules to require that all their members (such as Community Sport Organizations) adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or an amended version.

Each of these changes undertaken together would broaden the application of sport governance standards beyond Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that are members of federally funded National Sport Organizations.

### **Option 2: Collaborating to establish uniform governance standards**

In our Preliminary Report, option 2 proposed a collaborative framework within which federal, provincial, and territorial governments could reach an agreement to enact legislation prescribing similar sport governance standards based on the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Considering the collaborative nature of this approach, the Commission recognized that some provinces or territories might refuse to opt in and choose to legislate in their respective jurisdiction.

### **Participants' feedback on harmonizing governance standards**

Regarding the first option, we were informed that some multisport service organizations are already finding ways to incentivize their member organizations to adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Similarly, we heard that some National Sport Organizations are also ensuring that governance standards are imposed at lower levels of their sport through memorandums of understandings with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. While compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code is not necessarily required in these cases, compliance with established good governance standards is. We were also told that such an approach would benefit from National Sport Organizations providing assistance to their member organizations, such as templates, precedents, and training, for example.

Many participants agreed that provincial and territorial governments could support National Sport Organizations in encouraging Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or an amended version. However, provincial and territorial governments had diverging opinions on whether National Sport Organizations should require their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organization members to comply with the Code.



Recognizing the particularities of their province or territory, some governments were receptive to the idea of good governance principles for sport organizations at all levels of sport. However, they highlighted the need for flexibility considering the varying capacities of some of their Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, which can in some cases be quite limited. As we suggested earlier, a flexible and perhaps tiered approach could address these concerns.

In addition, some provinces and territories felt that such an approach may be construed as an indirect attempt to regulate sport organizations, which they said was not within the federal government's jurisdiction. Some provinces indicated that such a "top down" approach simply would not work for them. However, some participants indicated that it would be no different than the funding conditions imposed related to safe sport.

Most provinces and territories recognized the benefits of having harmonized sport governance standards at all levels of sport. They noted among other things that inconsistent federal and provincial and territorial funding conditions often result in sport organizations getting caught in the middle and having difficulty benefiting from the resources available. Provincial and territorial governments were more amenable to a collaborative approach to harmonized sport governance principles. For example, through collaboration provinces and territories could agree on a code or a set of principles.

The Commission also heard other ideas on how the scope of sport governance requirements could be expanded. One suggestion was for all levels of government to require grassroots sport organizations seeking not-for-profit status to be a member of their National, Provincial, or Territorial Sport Organization before incorporation is approved. Another suggestion was to leverage competition sanctioning to enforce compliance. For example, unless it complied with the National Sport Organization's governance requirements, the organization and its participants would be ineligible to participate and compete in competitions organized and endorsed by the National Sport Organization.

### **Calls to Action: a harmonized approach to governance standards**

The Commission's finding on the need for a harmonized approach to ensuring governance standards at all levels of sport remains unchanged.

We considered the feedback we received on the options the Preliminary Report proposed to harmonize sport governance. In light of the jurisdictional challenges inherent to the Canadian federated system, we believe that this goal can be achieved only through meaningful collaboration between all levels of government.

The approach we recommend includes components of both options outlined in the Preliminary Report but implemented through an intergovernmental collaborative framework and a phased approach. The long-term objective would be to reach consensus on a pan-Canadian sport governance code. We describe the two phases of our approach and provide our Calls to Action as they relate to each.

Recognizing that a collaborative approach will require time and effort, we call upon National Sport Organizations to encourage their respective members, the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, to adopt and implement the Canadian Sport Governance Code to the extent possible.

#### **Roadmap to implementing a harmonized approach to sport governance standards at all levels of sport**

To harmonize sport governance at national, provincial, and territorial levels and expand it to the local level, the Commission envisions a two-phase approach inspired by what has been accomplished in areas of health and childcare. This approach would be a component of the Multilateral Sport Framework described in Chapter 10.

##### *Phase I: the Multilateral Sport Framework — Good governance standards*

As we mentioned earlier, many participants, including governments, emphasized the importance of early collaboration from provinces and territories to achieve harmony and consistency of sport governance standards at both levels of government. Most provincial and territorial governments we engaged with were very receptive to working toward harmonized sport governance. However, they also stressed that the imposition of sport governance standards in a “top down” manner would not succeed. The Commission agrees and recognizes that any conditions attached to federal funding must reflect a shared vision between the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories for a coordinated and harmonized approach to sport governance.

Therefore, we propose that, as a first step, a shared vision for a harmonized approach to sport governance be developed within the Multilateral Sport Framework described in detail in Chapter 10.

We strongly encourage governments to include “universal governance standards” as part of the agreed-upon criteria that provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs must meet to qualify for federal funding under the Multilateral Sport Framework.

The universal governance standards criterion should at a minimum specify that provinces and territories each adopt a sport governance code or good governance standards that are mandatory and subject to compliance verification. The code or the standards should be consistent with the Canadian Sport Governance Code and the governance standards it prescribes.

Provinces and territories will then develop a sport governance code or good governance standards applicable within their respective jurisdictions that corresponds to the agreed upon criteria.

As outlined in Chapter 10, once the Multilateral Sport Framework is finalized, we recommend that the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* be amended to further reinforce the commitments made by all levels of government.

The Government of Canada will then be able to enter into bilateral funding agreements with each province and territory to put the Multilateral Sport Framework into operation. These agreements would include specific conditions on sport governance upon which federal funding shall be allocated towards the province or territory. This would effectively result in provincial and territorial governments requiring their respective sport organizations to adopt and comply with the sport governance standards or sport governance code they developed as a condition of their funding.

The Government of Canada could then require National Sport Organizations to make compliance with provincial or territorial governance standards — or the Canadian Sport Governance Code — a membership condition for their affiliated organizations.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**78. The Government of Canada, as part of the first phase to implementing a harmonized approach to sport governance standard at all levels of sport, shall:**

- a. **Encourage provincial and territorial governments to include universal governance standards as part of the agreed-upon set of criteria that provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs shall meet to qualify for federal investments under the Multilateral Sport Framework (as described in Chapter 10). We strongly believe that these standards must be consistent with those contained in the Canadian Sport Governance Code.**
- b. **Require National Sport Organizations receiving federal funding to change their membership rules to require that their members adopt and comply with the good governance standards or sport governance code required by their provincial or territorial government, once provinces and territories have implemented the agreed-upon criteria under the Multilateral Sport Framework.**

*Phase II: a Pan-Canadian Sport Governance Code*

The Commission believes that the most effective way to strengthen and harmonize sport governance at all levels of sport is for the Government of Canada to develop, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, a pan-Canadian Sport Governance Code.

We understand that this is a considerable undertaking but with time, coordinated effort, meaningful collaboration, and political will from all levels of government, it is attainable. Phase I will generate the necessary momentum and establish a solid foundation that governments can build on to reach a pan-Canadian Sport Governance Code.

Once developed, this Pan-Canadian Sport Governance Code would replace the Canadian Sport Governance Code at the national level and the governance standards or sport governance code developed by each province and territory as prescribed under the Multilateral Sport Framework.

**Call to Action**

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**79. The Government of Canada, as part of the second phase to implementing a harmonized approach to sport governance standards at all levels of sport, shall collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to develop and implement a Pan-Canadian Sport Governance Code at all levels of sport.**

Good governance lies at the heart of any healthy, safe, and effective system. It should be welcomed and encouraged by everyone as a shared commitment to uphold the basic principles of transparency, accountability, and fairness.

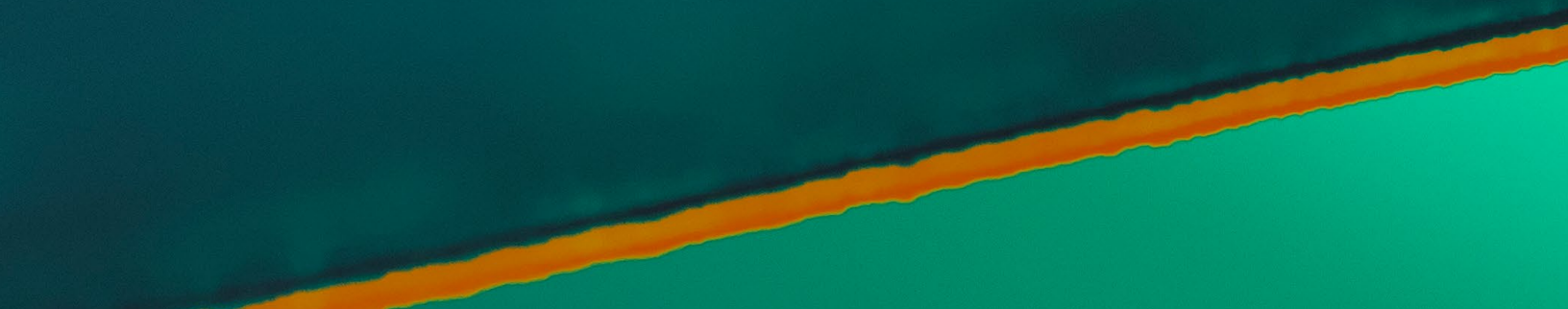
All governments must make sport governance a priority. Sport organizations receiving public funds to carry out their activities must be held to the highest standards of governance, accountability, and transparency, including robust oversight mechanisms. Complying with good governance must no longer be seen as a burden or a challenge, but rather as a basic standard that serves to protect society and benefit everyone involved in the sport system. By implementing good governance principles, governments and sport organizations will mitigate risks and improve the way they prevent, respond to, and address maltreatment and safe sport complaints.

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments must work together and not in silos. They have demonstrated collaboration is possible in several contexts, including health care, child care, and more recently to break down interprovincial trade barriers. This must be replicated in the context of sport. It is time to recognize the importance of a unified and harmonized approach to sport governance across Canada.



# **CHAPTER 15:**

## **Building the future: investing in sport and physical activity**





# Chapter 15:

## Building the future: investing in sport and physical activity

This chapter examines funding in the sport system. We begin with an overview of the sources of funding for sport in Canada. As previously noted in Chapter 5, amateur sport in Canada receives funding from all levels of government. Here, we examine Sport Canada's funding programs created to support sport organizations, their athletes and the hosting of sporting events. Next, we describe programs delivered by the Public Health Agency of Canada and Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada. We also provide a brief overview of how provincial, territorial, and municipal governments fund sport, and consider how sport is supported in other nations.

Finally, we provide a reminder of the Commission's preliminary recommendations before outlining our Calls to Action to enhance and improve the funding of the sport system. Throughout this chapter, we share participants' perspectives gathered before and after the publication of the Preliminary Report, including the feedback received during the National Summit organized by the Commission.

### Sources of funding for sport and physical activity in Canada

The Canadian sport system is a complex ecosystem that relies on various sources of funding to support athletes, organizations, events, and infrastructure. Funding for sport and physical activity organizations and programs comes from a variety of government and non-governmental sources.

As we noted in Chapter 5, all levels of government provide funding to support Canada's sport system. The federal government, through Sport Canada, invests primarily in national-level sport organizations. It also invests in projects and initiatives that promote physical activity through the Public Health Agency of Canada.

The funding that provincial and territorial governments allocate for sport and physical activity varies considerably across the country, as do the mechanisms that are used to distribute these funds. Municipal governments play an equally important role in providing funding and maintaining community infrastructure like arenas, pools, and recreation centres, while often also subsidizing local programming.

Beyond public funding, the Canadian sport system also relies on a variety of non-governmental funding sources. Some National, Provincial, Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations, and some athletes have been effective in securing private funding from sponsorships, merchandising agreements, and corporate and individual donations. Some sport organizations issue tax receipts, which can be helpful in securing donations. Others levy registration fees.



Despite these additional sources of funding, many National Sport Organizations depend on government funding from Sport Canada.<sup>1755</sup> According to a Deloitte study commissioned by the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee, 90% of National Sport Organizations depend on federal government funding as their primary source of revenue.<sup>1756</sup> On average, government funding represents between 47% and 50% of the revenue of National Sport Organizations receiving government funds.

According to the same study, only a few larger National Sport Organizations operate with minimal reliance on government funding. This is possible because they have other substantial sources of revenue, including membership fees, donations and sponsorships, event revenue, and merchandising agreements. On average, government funding accounts for approximately only 9% of these larger National Sport Organizations' total annual revenue.

In what follows, we explore in more detail the various sources of funding for sport, starting with the federal government's funding.

## Federal government funding

The Government of Canada supports sport and physical activity through various grants and contribution programs. These grants and contributions are the two principal instruments through which it transfers money to funding recipients, whether individuals or organizations. A **grant** is generally used for recurring funding, provided the recipient remains in good standing. It is not normally subject to an audit by the department.<sup>1757</sup> A **contribution**, on the other hand, is a conditional payment for a specific purpose. It is often larger and comes with a funding agreement, a payment schedule, reporting requirements, and is subject to an audit.<sup>1758</sup> Whether a funding program issues a grant or a contribution is determined by the terms and conditions of the program as approved by the Treasury Board.<sup>1759</sup>

Federal government funding for sport flows primarily through the Department of Canadian Heritage, via Sport Canada. The Minister responsible for the Department of Canadian Heritage is traditionally accountable for making funding decisions. They can delegate the authority for sport to the Minister responsible for Sport if there is one.

In addition to the funding available through Sport Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada provides funding for some physical activity and sport participation programs. Through other federal departments and agencies, sport organizations may also obtain project-specific or supplementary funding for initiatives that, while not directly related to sport, assist their organization. This could include, for example, the Canada Summer Jobs wage subsidy that supports the creation of employment opportunities for youth.<sup>1760</sup>

The following sections review Sport Canada's three funding programs as well as key funding programs from the Public Health Agency of Canada and Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada. Charts illustrating these primary sources of federal funding for sport and physical activity can be found in Appendix 12.

## SPORT CANADA

Sport Canada has three funding programs that primarily target sport organizations and individuals operating at the national level of Canadian sport.

- The **Sport Support Program** supports the development of the Canadian sport system, in alignment with the goals of the Canadian Sport Policy.<sup>1761</sup>
- The **Athlete Assistance Program** provides direct financial assistance to Canadian high-performance athletes to assist with the financial pressures of training and competition.<sup>1762</sup>
- The **Hosting Program** assists sport organizations with hosting the Canada Games as well as international multisport and single-sport events in Canada.<sup>1763</sup>

Through these three programs, the Government of Canada has invested a total of \$1,383,783,509 over the past five years, with an average of \$276,756,702 per fiscal year.<sup>1764</sup> The Sport Support Program makes up much of this funding. Appendix 13 contains a breakdown of Sport Canada funding since the 2020–2021 fiscal year for each of its programs.

We note that in 2023–2024, approximately 0.016% (\$264.5 million) of the Government of Canada's budget was allocated to sport.<sup>1765</sup> In 2023, sport represented only a 0.3% share of the Canadian total Gross Domestic Product.<sup>1766</sup>

### Sport Support Program (\$193.6 million in 2024–2025)<sup>1767</sup>

The Sport Support Program is intended to support the Canadian sport system's development. It is the most significant Sport Canada funding program for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes. It also supports grassroots sport through its Community Sport for All Initiative, and Indigenous communities through the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component. The program aims to support the Canadian Sport Policy's goals and achieve four objectives:

- increase opportunities to participate in quality sport activities for all Canadians, including under-represented groups
- increase the capacity of the Canadian sport system to systematically achieve world-class results at the highest international competitions
- contribute to the provision of technical sport leadership within the Canadian sport system
- advance Canadian interests, values, and ethics in sport at home and abroad.<sup>1768</sup>



The Sport Support Program is delivered through various components:

- the National Sport Organization component
- the National Multisport Service Organization component
- the Canadian Sport Centre component
- the Community Sport for All Initiative
- the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component.<sup>1769</sup>

The requirements and expectations of National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes under the Sport Support Program are similar. Therefore, we discuss them together. Following this, we examine the Community Sport for All Initiative and the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component.

#### **Funding for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes**

The federal government developed a Sport Funding and Accountability Framework to determine which National Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes were eligible for funding from the Sport Support Program. The first framework was introduced in 1995–1996, with updates being introduced approximately every four years thereafter.<sup>1770</sup> Version 5 of this framework (2016–2020) incorporated the goals of the Canadian Sport Policy 2012.<sup>1771</sup>

In November 2024, Sport Canada’s new application guidelines for the Sport Support Program were released in conjunction with the Sport Integrity Framework,<sup>1772</sup> which we address earlier in the section on policies. These new guidelines replaced the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework and were subsequently revised in 2025.<sup>1773</sup>

The Sport Support Program provides both core and project funding to eligible National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.<sup>1774</sup>

- **Core funding** supports organizations’ day-to-day operations. It includes amounts provided to targeted National Sport Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes based on Own the Podium’s recommendations through the “Enhanced Excellence” and “Next Generation” initiatives.<sup>1775</sup>
- **Project funding** for organizations covers the cost of one-time activities that support the Canadian sport system and do not require ongoing funding.

Funding received through the Sport Support Program can be applied to a variety of eligible expenses, including those related to the delivery of services and programs like coaching, facility rentals, and equipment purchases. Other eligible expenses include costs related to administration, salaries, translation and language training, travel, legal costs, and the advancement of safe sport. However, there are limits to some of the eligible expenses. For example, funding for a full-time employee's salary is capped at \$115,000 unless the employee is a coach or high-performance director recommended by Own the Podium.<sup>1776</sup>

The current application guidelines state that multi-year funding for organizations will be available to support day-to-day operations.<sup>1777</sup>

Funding through the Sport Support Program is limited to organizations that meet Sport Canada's definition of a National Sport Organization, National Multisport Service Organization, or Canadian Sport Centre and Institutes.<sup>1778</sup> For example:

- National Sport Organizations must be either recognized by their International Federation or the International Paralympic Committee, or be a part of a Canadian organization recognized by their International Federation.<sup>1779</sup>
- National Multisport Service Organizations are required to offer programs or services that are nationwide, extending beyond a province or territory.<sup>1780</sup>
- Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes must be members of the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network.<sup>1781</sup>

National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes also need to be federally, provincially, or territorially incorporated not-for-profit organizations in good standing.<sup>1782</sup>

Several sports and sport activities are ineligible for Sport Canada funding as per the application guidelines. They include professional or commercial components of sports; motorized sports; games of skill (such as billiards, darts, and electronic games or e-sports); and sports that are related forms, variations or adaptations of recognized sports that are considered as disciplines and not as distinct sports (even if they are organized independently from the recognized National Sport Organization). Competitive activities that are not regulated through a National Sport Organization or governing body are also precluded.<sup>1783</sup>

Since April 1, 2025, all National Sport Organizations must also meet the five governance requirements outlined in the program guidelines to receive funding.<sup>1784</sup> Under the program guidelines at the time of writing this Final Report, National Multisport Service Organizations are also required to meet these requirements.<sup>1785</sup> These governance requirements, which Chapter 14 explores in more detail, oblige sport organizations to have the following as a condition of funding:

- a clear business plan and/or strategy
- a diverse, well-trained board of directors that includes athlete representation and oversight committees
- internal financial and risk-management controls
- measures for sharing governance-related documents publicly on their website
- discipline and appeal procedures that include dispute resolution through the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.

As a condition of funding, organizations must also adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program, among other requirements.<sup>1786</sup> We discuss the Canadian Safe Sport Program in more detail in Chapter 10.

Before considering funding, Sport Canada reviews applications to ensure that the organization, its projects, and project-related expenses meet all the required criteria. Each application is evaluated based on specific criteria by a review committee that compares it with other applications and prioritizes applications according to the funding available.<sup>1787</sup> This involves an evaluation of:

- the impact of the organization's activities on the Canadian sport system
- the organizational capacity to undertake the activities
- the requested budget in relation to the expected outcomes.<sup>1788</sup>

These evaluation criteria are further detailed in the application guidelines.<sup>1789</sup> For example, the guidelines specify that the evaluation committee considers the extent to which the organization's activities are likely to achieve one or more of the Sport Support Program's objectives. For National Sport Organizations, this includes a consideration of the extent to which the organization has "a National Team Program to systematically achieve world class results at the highest international competitions" and "a systemic approach to develop and support participants that will positively impact the development of the Canadian Sport system."<sup>1790</sup>

The extent to which an organization has "reach across Canada's sport system"<sup>1791</sup> is a criterion to measure the impact of its activities on the Canadian sport system. However, it is not clear how an organization's "reach" is defined or measured.

Sport Canada considers several other factors when it prioritizes which organizations and projects receive funding. These include:

- whether a sport or one of its disciplines is part of an upcoming Major Games program (the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Commonwealth Games, or the Pan American and Parapan American Games)<sup>1792</sup>
- whether sports programming is being delivered to a specific under-represented group<sup>1793</sup>
- whether sports programming can help to achieve other Government of Canada priorities, as articulated, for example, through the Budget or Speech from the Throne.<sup>1794</sup>

As we discuss in Chapter 5, Own the Podium makes funding recommendations to Sport Canada.<sup>1795</sup> These recommendations are based on podium probabilities, athlete progress tracking, and identifying the next generation of podium-potential athletes.<sup>1796</sup> Although it is a common misperception, Own the Podium does not itself fund high-performance sport.

Sport organizations are required to submit a final report detailing the results of their activities to Sport Canada at the end of their project.<sup>1797</sup> Depending on the conditions of the funding agreement, some must also submit interim reports.<sup>1798</sup> We understand that Sport Canada reviews previous reports that sport organizations have submitted in accordance with their contribution agreements before releasing funds.

We were told that there are ongoing conversations between Sport Canada and sport organizations as a part of the funding cycle regarding their compliance with their agreements. Additionally, since 2023, Sport Canada has a compliance and accountability function. It is responsible for the enhanced monitoring of funded National Sport Organizations to ensure compliance with the requirements of their funding contribution agreements.<sup>1799</sup> This includes the implementation of good governance practices and safe sport requirements.<sup>1800</sup> Failing to comply with the conditions of funding can have escalating repercussions for National Sport Organizations, from additional reporting obligations to financial consequences.

We were advised that a sport organization that is subject to enhanced monitoring must demonstrate improvement by reporting throughout the term of their contribution agreement as an ongoing condition of funding. This process allows clear objectives and expectations to be set for National Sport Organizations when Sport Canada has identified shortcomings and monitors the progress of the corrective actions' implementation.

Recipients of federal funds may be audited in accordance with their contribution agreement. We understand that the Department of Canadian Heritage may undertake a review or a recipient compliance audit when it deems it appropriate.

In addition to the core funding, the federal government provides time-limited funding for special targeted initiatives. This project-based funding is generally for three to five years. These initiatives have addressed, among other matters, safe sport, inclusion, diversity, and accessibility. This type of funding has also increased funding for Indigenous sport.

For example, in October 2022, the Government of Canada announced renewed funding of \$25 million over three years for specific project funding. This was for initiatives aiming to achieve gender equity, diversity, and inclusion at all levels of sport through the Sport Support Program.<sup>1801</sup> The priority populations for this funding included girls and women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, people from Black, racialized, and religious minority communities, 2SLGBTQI+ populations, and newcomers to Canada.<sup>1802</sup>

### **Community Sport for All Initiative (\$10.5 million over 2024–2026)<sup>1803</sup>**

As a component of the Sport Support Program, the Community Sport for All Initiative that was announced in the 2021 Budget aims to remove barriers and increase under-represented groups' participation rates in sport.<sup>1804</sup> In particular, the initiative supports community programming for Black, Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQI+, low-income people, persons with a disability, newcomers, and seniors.<sup>1805</sup>

Its funding goes to organizations that then administer and disburse project funding to community sport initiatives that advance the program's objectives.<sup>1806</sup> To be eligible for funding under the Community Sport for All Initiative, organizations are assessed at both the organizational and project level. Among other criteria, an organization must operate at the national level or have the capacity to reach under-represented groups in multiple jurisdictions.<sup>1807</sup> This means that an organization does not have to operate in or reach every province and territory to be eligible for funding.<sup>1808</sup>

Projects funded under the initiative are expected to be:

- affordable
- results-oriented (i.e., increasing participation and retention for underrepresented communities)
- focused on organized sport
- green (i.e. have minimal or positive environmental impacts)
- accessible
- available in underserved communities.<sup>1809</sup>

Sport Canada also stated that they would prioritize projects focused on persons with a disability, ensuring that a minimum of 20% of the overall Community Sport for All Initiative budget was allocated to this under-represented group.<sup>1810</sup>

At the time of writing this Final Report, funding for the initiative was expected to end in 2026.<sup>1811</sup>



### **Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities (\$24.2 million over 2024–2026)<sup>1812</sup>**

Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities is a component of the Sport Support Program. Launched in 2019, this component was created by the federal government in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Chapter 6 explores the federal government's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 87 to 91 in further detail.

The three streams of the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component aim to achieve various social development goals.<sup>1813</sup> Streams One and Two are targeted toward initiatives that improve health and education, increase employability, and reduce at-risk behaviour in Indigenous communities. The third stream is also known as the Reconciliation and Strength for Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People through Sport fund. It was created in response to the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.<sup>1814</sup>

Stream Three has five social development goals: physical and mental health, suicide prevention, sexual trafficking awareness and prevention, safe and healthy relationships, and sexual positivity (2SLGBTQI+).<sup>1815</sup> Through this stream, Indigenous organizations receive funding to deliver sport and recreation projects in Indigenous communities in Canada.<sup>1816</sup>

The Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component aims to achieve its goals by supporting a variety of sports and physical activities. These can include traditional and cultural sports, as well as physical activities that have a recreational or wellness component.<sup>1817</sup> Ultimately, it is up to the Indigenous organizations and communities receiving project funding to determine what is appropriate for their needs.<sup>1818</sup>

Funding under Stream One is reserved for the Aboriginal Sport Circle and the 13 Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. The amount of funding allocated to each is determined based on a funding formula. Appendix 14 provides a breakdown of this funding.

Streams Two and Three are available to Indigenous governments, communities, and not-for-profit Indigenous organizations (either Indigenous owned or operated).

### **Athlete Assistance Program (\$39.5 million in 2024–2025)<sup>1819</sup>**

The Athlete Assistance Program is a federal government grant program that provides financial assistance directly to high-performance athletes. It aims to alleviate some of the financial pressures that athletes experience when preparing for and competing in international events while maintaining their academic pursuits or professional careers.<sup>1820</sup>

The support provided through the Athlete Assistance Program can take the form of a living and training allowance, tuition support, or supplementary support.<sup>1821</sup> Every year, approximately 1,900 high-performance athletes in 90 sport disciplines receive support through this program.<sup>1822</sup> The amount that an athlete receives for their living and training allowance varies between \$1,305 and \$2,175 per month.<sup>1823</sup> With respect to tuition support, a carded athlete (i.e., one eligible for receiving athlete assistance, as we explain below) may receive up to \$5,500 per carding cycle with a \$27,500 lifetime maximum amount.<sup>1824</sup> Supplementary support, limited to a maximum of \$16,410 per carding cycle,<sup>1825</sup> may also be provided:

- to athletes who win medals at Major Games
- for Paralympic athletes with high support needs
- to support child dependents
- for moving
- to support new parents
- to assist in the transition to retirement.<sup>1826</sup>

There are two sets of criteria applicable to determine eligibility for funding under the Athlete Assistance Program.<sup>1827</sup> The first applies to National Sport Organizations and the second applies to athletes. National Sport Organizations must generally receive funding through the Sport Support Program for their high-performance athletes to be eligible for the Athlete Assistance Program.<sup>1828</sup> The high-performance sport program must meet the national team and high-performance minimum delivery or performance standards evaluation criteria. It must also be receiving funding from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.<sup>1829</sup>

To be eligible, athletes must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents. They must also be eligible (as determined by International Sport Federations) and available to represent Canada in international competitions and participate in national team training programs.<sup>1830</sup> They must also be part of a National Sport Organization's high-performance program.<sup>1831</sup>

Athletes attending foreign postsecondary educational institutions, including National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institutions, who are receiving an athletic scholarship, are not eligible for Athlete Assistance Program funding for the months they attend these institutions. This also applies if the National Collegiate Athletic Association affiliated institution is in Canada.<sup>1832</sup> However, these athletes can still receive living and training support when involved in national team training and competition activities and are not attending the foreign postsecondary institution.<sup>1833</sup>

Athletes in Olympic and Paralympic sports who do not meet National Sport Organizations' eligibility requirements may still qualify for Athlete Assistance Program support. This is possible if they rank in the top 16 at the World Championships, Olympics, or Paralympics and if their event is in the program of upcoming Olympic or Paralympic Games.<sup>1834</sup>

Some athletes are ineligible for Athlete Assistance Program support.<sup>1835</sup> This includes those who have signed contracts with professional leagues. However, athletes on contract or who regularly compete in leagues other than the National Basketball Association (NBA), the National Hockey League (NHL), and Major League Baseball (MLB) may be eligible for program support under specific circumstances.<sup>1836</sup>

Funding under the Athlete Assistance Program is available to athletes who meet what is referred to as “carding criteria.”<sup>1837</sup> The carding process involves the following steps:

- Sport Canada approves eligible National Sport Organizations for funding under the Sport Support Program, then allocates “cards” to these organizations based on sport-specific carding criteria developed and published by the National Sport Organization.
- Athletes who meet the carding criteria are then nominated (or renominated) by their organization for support.
- Sport Canada reviews and approves the nominations, based on the National Sport Organization's carding criteria and the Athlete Assistance Program policies.
- The nominated athlete completes the application form and signs an Athlete/National Sport Organization Agreement. This agreement must include certain information prescribed by Sport Canada, including:
  - benefits available to the carded athlete
  - obligations and commitments of the carded athlete and the National Sport Organization
  - the duration of the agreement
  - the specific Sport Canada and federal government policies that the National Sport Organization and carded athlete must comply with
  - the hearing and appeal procedure that will be used in any dispute between the carded athlete and the National Sporting Organization.

The carding cycles are normally 12 months long. Sometimes, the timing of major events might require that the carding cycle be shorter or longer than 12 months. In these cases, an organization may negotiate a shorter or longer carding cycle with Sport Canada.<sup>1838</sup>

### Hosting Program (\$67.8 million in 2024–2025)<sup>1839</sup>

The Hosting Program provides financial support to sport organizations hosting international sport events and the Canada Games. Its objectives are:

- to strengthen the sport excellence and sport development impacts of bidding on and hosting the Canada Games and targeted international sport events
- to increase access and equity for designated underrepresented groups through contributions to international bidding and hosting events
- to strengthen the economic, social, cultural, and community impacts of supported bidding and hosting projects.<sup>1840</sup>

The Hosting Program supports four different types of Major games:

- International Major Multisport Games like the Olympics and Paralympics, the Pan American and Parapan American Games, and the Commonwealth Games
- International single-sport events like the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup or World Championships
- International Multisport Games for Aboriginal Peoples and Persons with a Disability like the North American Indigenous Games or the Deaflympics
- the Canada Games.<sup>1841</sup>

The Federal Policy for Hosting International Sport Events provides the guiding principles of the Hosting Program. Subject to the budget of the Hosting Program and the necessary approvals, the Government of Canada may provide support for:

- two International Major Multisport Games every 10 years
- one large international single-sport event every two years
- 30 or more small international single-sport events each year
- International Multisport Games for Aboriginal Peoples and Persons with a Disability.<sup>1842</sup>

The application process and requirements for each type of event vary. For example, funding applications for International Major Multisport Games must be submitted prior to initiating a hosting bid.<sup>1843</sup> This requirement does not apply for other international events.

Similarly, general applications can usually be made on an ongoing basis.<sup>1844</sup> However, for International Multisport Games for Aboriginal Peoples and Persons with a Disability, funding applications must be received by December 31 if payments are sought for April 1 of the following calendar year.<sup>1845</sup>

Eligibility for funding for the North American Indigenous Games is based on a federal–provincial/territorial hosting rotation and a bid process, typically run by the North American Indigenous Games Council or the Aboriginal Sport Circle.<sup>1846</sup> The level of federal funding is based on a federal–provincial/territorial framework.<sup>1847</sup> This funding is typically provided to Canadian participants in the North American Indigenous Games, whether hosted inside or outside of Canada. This is normally done under bilateral agreements with provinces and territories through the Sport Support Program.<sup>1848</sup>

In the same way, funding for the Canada Games is based on a federal–provincial/territorial hosting rotation and a bid process, typically run by the Canada Games Council or the host provincial or territorial government.<sup>1849</sup> The level of funding provided is also based on a federal–provincial/territorial framework.<sup>1850</sup> Sport Canada provides funding to the Canada Games Council for participants' travel costs, except for those from the host province or territory.<sup>1851</sup>

### **Bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories**

As we explored in Chapter 5, the federal government supports provinces and territories through bilateral agreements. These are cost-sharing agreements, meaning that provinces and territories match the federal funds. This support is generally provided under the Sport Support Program and the Hosting Program.<sup>1852</sup>

These agreements aim to encourage sport participation and physical activity among children and youth.<sup>1853</sup> They also provide support to provincial/territorial sport organizations responsible for Indigenous sport and physical activity and seek to increase culturally relevant sport programming for Indigenous children and youth at the community level. These agreements also support travel for Indigenous games such as the North American Indigenous Games.<sup>1854</sup>

Appendix 15 provides a breakdown of the funding amounts that provinces and territories received under the Sport Support Program and the Hosting Program from the 2020–2021 fiscal year to 2024–2025.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA**

As Chapter 5 discussed, the Public Health Agency of Canada's mandate, as it relates to physical activity, is to share information about and promote the benefits of being active. It also develops guidelines for physical activity and provides information about injury prevention and management in sport and physical activity, including concussion prevention.<sup>1855</sup> The Public Health Agency of Canada funds initiatives that encourage healthy living behaviours such as physical activity.<sup>1856</sup>

### **ParticipACTION**

The Public Health Agency of Canada provides direct funding to ParticipACTION, a National Multisport Service Organization for the Let's Get Moving and ParticiPARKS initiatives.<sup>1857</sup>



Since 2018, the Agency has provided \$5 million per year to support ParticipACTION's Let's Get Moving Initiative. The initiative promotes the benefits of physical activity through public education campaigns, research, and the development of tools and programs to help Canadians become more active.<sup>1858</sup> We understand that this represents the Agency's only grants and contributions program fully dedicated to physical activity. At the time of writing this report, this funding is set to sunset in March 2026.

ParticipACTION also received support for its ParticiPARKs program. The program sought to help create a Canada where communities have free access to inclusive and accessible community outdoor spaces.<sup>1859</sup> The design phase of four outdoor parks was completed in 2024. These parks are located in La Ronge (Saskatchewan), Winnipeg (Manitoba), Brampton (Ontario), and Fredericton (New Brunswick).<sup>1860</sup>

### Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund

The Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund supports specific initiatives that address the risk factors for chronic disease.<sup>1861</sup> Physical inactivity is one of three behavioural risk factors targeted by this program.<sup>1862</sup> Funding is offered to a wide variety of organizations, including private and non-profit organizations, governments and agencies, Indigenous organizations, health authorities, and schools and universities. Organizations can request \$200,000 to \$3,000,000 in funding for projects that address these risk factors that are between two and four years in length.

A key condition of the Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund is the requirement to secure "matched funding."<sup>1863</sup> This means that applicant organizations must secure an amount equal to their funding request from at least two other sources, either through cash or in-kind contributions.<sup>1864</sup> While this matched funding does not have to be confirmed at the time of application, 50% of the total matched funding has to be secured before a funding agreement can be signed. The remaining 50% is required before the project's final year.<sup>1865</sup>

Funding decisions are also based on other requirements, such as the quality of applications, the potential of the project to improve health outcomes, evidence of the need for intervention, and alignment with the program objectives.<sup>1866</sup>

The program also aims to fund a diversity of projects, meaning that decisions take into consideration the project's location, the communities and populations it will serve, the funding stream,<sup>1867</sup> and the size of the organization.<sup>1868</sup>

An example of an initiative funded under the Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund is the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines Impact Project by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. Building on the 24-Hour Movement Guidelines, this initiative intends to help Canadians lead more active lives by increasing awareness and adoption of the guidelines.<sup>1869</sup> Total Public Health Agency of Canada funding for this project from December 2024 to March 2026 is \$551,619.<sup>1870</sup>

Another example is the Physical Literacy for Communities initiative of the Public Health Agency of Canada, which is delivered by the Sport for Life Society (referred to as Sport for Life). The project is designed to support the development of physical literacy in 150,000 children and youth aged 2 to 18 across Canada, beginning in 2022.<sup>1871</sup> The total Public Health Agency of Canada's funding for this project from September 2021 to March 2025 was \$4,070,663.<sup>1872</sup>

### **Intersectoral Action Fund**

The Intersectoral Action Fund supports policy-level initiatives that target the social determinants of health, including access to environments that promote active living.<sup>1873</sup>

### **School Health Grant for Youth**

The School Health Grant for Youth was a special program designed for young people aged 13 to 19, enrolled in grades 9 to 12. Its purpose was to support students' ideas to improve healthy living in their school, notably through physical activity.<sup>1874</sup>

Under the School Health Grant for Youth, micro-grants of \$1,000 were awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.<sup>1875</sup> To receive funding, projects needed to meet specific program eligibility criteria.<sup>1876</sup> Examples of physical activity-related projects funded under this program include a women's weightlifting club, a school workout club, and a Youth Reconnecting Round Dance ("a school day event that reconnected youth to Indigenous cultures and promoted physical activity with special guests including community Elders and drummers").<sup>1877</sup>

We were advised that from February 2022 to June 2025, the Public Health Agency of Canada invested \$340,000 to support 188 youth-led projects through the School Health Grant for Youth, and that approximately 39% of these projects included a focus on physical activity. We learned that this program received more applications than could be supported.

### **OTHER SOURCES OF FEDERAL FUNDING FOR SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

In addition to funding through Sport Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, sport organizations may secure project or supplementary funding from other federal government departments, such as Women and Gender Equality Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada.<sup>1878</sup>

### **HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES CANADA**

While funding for athletes and sport organizations is critical, infrastructure funding is another important component of government support for sport and physical activity. It allows for the provision and renewal of the facilities necessary for Canadians to participate in sport and physical activity. These facilities play a vital role at all levels from grassroots community programming to high-performance training and competition.

As we noted in Chapter 7, federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as many municipalities, invest in sport and recreation infrastructure. These investments involve funds for the development, construction,

repair, or maintenance of sport and recreation facilities, and for purchasing necessary equipment. The federal government provides funding for sport and recreation infrastructure primarily through the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada. What follows is an overview of key infrastructure programs as they relate to sport. Other programs at the federal level also provide funding for sport infrastructure, including programs administered by Indigenous Services Canada.<sup>1879</sup>

### **Canada Community-Building Fund**

The Canada Community Building Fund is a transfer-based program that delivers over \$2.5 billion each year to communities across Canada. The federal government transfers funds to the provinces and territories, who, in turn, redistribute it to their communities, who then decide how to invest these funds. Each community has the flexibility to make investments across 19 different project categories. Sport and recreation form 2 of the 19 eligible project categories.<sup>1880</sup>

The renewed Canada Community-Building Fund administrative agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories came into effect on April 1, 2025, and will be in place until March 31, 2034.<sup>1881</sup> Across the country, a wide range of sport and recreation infrastructure projects have been supported by the Canada Community-Building Fund. In recent years, the fund has supported initiatives such as building new sport facilities; upgrading arenas or skating rinks; building new multipurpose pads for basketball, volleyball, badminton and pickleball; and replacing turf on soccer fields.<sup>1882</sup>

### **Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program**

The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program is administered by Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada. Under this program, the Department delivers funding to communities through bilateral agreements with provinces and territories. This program uses a cost-sharing model — the federal government contributes up to a specified percentage of costs depending on the type of project.<sup>1883</sup>

The program encompasses several streams, including:

- public transit infrastructure
- green infrastructure
- community, culture, and recreation infrastructure
- rural and Northern communities Infrastructure.<sup>1884</sup>

The program's Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure stream allows the federal government to invest in projects that support upgrades to recreational facilities like arenas, pools, multipurpose sport facilities, and both indoor and outdoor recreational spaces.<sup>1885</sup> As part of the program, the federal government is expected to provide \$1.3 billion through bilateral agreements for community, cultural, and recreational infrastructure.<sup>1886</sup>

### **Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program**

Although the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program is not specifically designed to support sport or recreation infrastructure, it has still provided support for such projects. In 2024, a \$500 million top-up was provided to the program, and it was extended until March 2029.<sup>1887</sup> The program aims to improve the availability and condition of community buildings in Canadian communities experiencing higher needs and who are currently underserved. The program aims to improve energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance buildings' climate resilience.

For example, in 2025, it was announced that an arena in Papineauville, Quebec, will undergo significant upgrades with support from the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program. This will transform the arena into a modern and eco-friendly multifunctional centre dedicated to a variety of sport disciplines.<sup>1888</sup>

We explore sport infrastructure as it relates to access to sport and physical activity in further detail in Chapter 7. In that chapter, we conclude that the lack of appropriate sport infrastructure in Canada is a barrier to increasing participation and we call on the Government of Canada to increase the funding it allocates to the development and revitalization of sport infrastructure. Our Calls to Action on sport infrastructure can be found in Chapter 7.

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON FEDERAL FUNDING**

#### **Participants' perspectives on the funding crisis**

There is a broad consensus that the sport system is underfunded. Time and time again, we heard the same thing: the core federal funding for National Sport Organizations has not increased since 2005. All participants agreed that National Sport Organizations are facing growing demands.

We were told that National Sport Organizations require a \$104 million increase in annual federal government funding.<sup>1889</sup> According to the Canadian Olympic Committee and Canadian Paralympic Committee Budget 2024 Request, a five-year forecast shows that National Sport Organizations will accumulate a collective deficit of roughly \$134 million attempting to meet their core mandates.<sup>1890</sup> Some have suggested that the deficit is much higher.

There have been many calls for the federal government to increase funding for National Sport Organizations. This need gained public attention when the media briefly reported on the funding crisis in 2024 and 2025.<sup>1891</sup> In 2024, for instance, media stories covered the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee's call for an additional \$104 million in federal funding. These organizations also released results from a study conducted by Deloitte on the financial health of Canadian National Sport Organizations, which illustrated the extent of the funding crisis impacting these organizations.<sup>1892</sup> The Deloitte report indicates that even after factoring in non-government revenue sources, the sector faces a cumulative deficit of approximately \$140 million.

In their 2024 budget request, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee outlined the challenges facing National Sport Organizations. They noted that purchasing power has decreased by 33% since last funding increase in 2005.<sup>1893</sup> They emphasized that a new injection of funds was critical to address funding shortfalls.<sup>1894</sup> The 2024 budget request also outlined some of sport and physical activity's economic benefits for Canada. Two of the benefits it identified were that sport tourism generated \$7.4 billion for Canada's economy in 2019 and that a 1% increase in physical activity has been estimated to save \$20 billion in healthcare costs over 20 years.<sup>1895</sup>

In 2025, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. In advance of the 2025 budget, they requested an increase of \$144 million to the core funding for National Sport Organizations.<sup>1896</sup> The Standing Committee subsequently recommended that the core funding allocated to National Sport Organizations be increased to adjust for the inflation that has occurred since 2005.<sup>1897</sup>

The Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee were not alone in expressing concerns about the enormous funding shortfall that all sport organizations face. Throughout our engagement activities, we were consistently told of the funding crisis and the urgent need to increase funding for sport in Canada. Many also emphasized the need for increased funding for Indigenous sport organizations and Para sport organizations.

We were advised that the freeze on core federal funding imposes immense inflationary pressures on everyone involved in sport in Canada, including rising costs for facilities, equipment, insurance, and staffing. Participants also noted that the costs of participating and the cost of international competitions have significantly increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants explained that travelling for competitions is expensive. They attributed the increase in costs, at least in part, to the higher cost of living since the pandemic.

We were told that adequate funding is essential in the sport sector because it directly influences the quality of facilities, access to training resources, and overall athletic performance. Participants highlighted on numerous occasions that the chronic lack of funding creates pressure on sport organizations who are no longer able to deliver appropriate programs and services.

Public reports have also highlighted the impact of these funding shortfalls on National Sport Organizations:

- 80% are skipping competitions that athletes would normally attend
- 70% have paused, scaled back, or eliminated programming
- 90% have reduced or eliminated training camps
- 80% have increased athlete fees.<sup>1898</sup>



Many National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations shared with us that they often worry that they will not be able to meet their payroll obligations. Some National Sport Organizations have suggested they may be forced to shut down if the funding gaps are not addressed. Most of these organizations cannot fulfill their mandates without incurring significant deficits.

We were told bluntly that an underfunded sport system is an unsafe sport system. Many emphasized that adequate funding is essential to create safe and inclusive sport environments and that sport organizations cannot ensure such environments without an increase in funding.

Mechanisms to prevent and address maltreatment require appropriate resources. Funding also enables the maintenance and enhancement of sports infrastructure, ensuring athletes have access to safe and well-equipped environments for training and competition. Moreover, sufficient funding allows for qualified coaches and support staff to be hired, contributing to improved athlete development and performance.

### **Participants' perspectives on short-term funding**

A critical issue that participants flagged throughout our engagement process was the need for greater certainty in funding. There was a clear consensus that government funding needs to be less focused on project funding and move to long-term, multi-year base funding.

The Commission was informed of significant concerns about the temporary nature of targeted or special project funding. Although sport organizations welcomed receiving funding to address diversity, equity, and inclusion, Indigenous sport, or safe sport, many noted that short-term funding was an inappropriate way to address these issues which are long-term priorities. They require sustained, core funding so organizations can make and maintain meaningful changes.

We were also advised of delays in the payment for certain programs. We heard numerous examples of National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations being uncertain about their funding status. Often, they were told that new funds were available only shortly before the fiscal year end, and that they were required to spend the money in a matter of weeks. This practice undercuts any organization's ability to plan and to spend funds responsibly.

We heard that a clear, long-term strategic funding policy is needed to provide greater certainty and stability in the sport system. Participants commented that this policy should include clearly articulated funding criteria to support core, multi-year funding. They further emphasized that a regular funding schedule should be established to ensure that sport organizations receive funding on a consistent and timely basis. Others recommended that funding schedules for high-performance sport support should be delivered in four-year cycles.

### Participants' perspectives on funding priorities

The value of high-performance sport was reiterated throughout our engagement activities. Many participants shared that national and international sporting achievements inspired Canadians and fostered national pride. However, we were frequently reminded that federal government funding allocation disproportionately prioritizes winning medals and high-performance athletes, as opposed to increasing sport participation.

Participants emphasized that a performance-based model creates ongoing instability for sport organizations, which face continual risks of funding cuts when medal expectations are not met. They noted that the loss of funding resulting from not meeting medal targets had serious consequences for sport organizations, including staff reductions and a heightened pressure to win. These conditions, participants explained, create unhealthy environments and reinforce the win-at-all-cost mentality, as funding continues to depend on short-term performance rather than long-term development or the well-being of athletes and staff.

Critics of a performance-based model for funding noted that when winning is the focus, it becomes the only measure of success. This can come at the expense of other values. It can also affect people's willingness to report and address allegations of maltreatment. Many we spoke with expressed concern that the culture of "winning at all costs" fostered an environment in which victims, survivors, and witnesses of maltreatment were silenced. We were advised that many were afraid to report maltreatment to Sport Canada and Own the Podium, fearing they would lose their funding.

Similarly, as we described in Chapter 5, many participants in our engagement process were critical of Own the Podium, the organization that makes recommendations on funding to the federal government. Despite having only an advisory role and not making any decisions on funding allocation, we were told that Own the Podium has an inordinate influence and authority over National Sport Organizations. A common sentiment was that Own the Podium is responsible for the emphasis on medals and winning for funding, and the culture of "winning at all costs." However, some we spoke to felt that the focus on winning was the result of the federal government's decisions.

Although Own the Podium has shifted their focus to supporting Olympic and Paralympic athletes in "winning well," many were skeptical that its priorities had truly shifted.

Many acknowledged that Own the Podium was created for the very specific purpose of winning more medals and that it is simply fulfilling its mandate. However, some told us that the core issue was that no one asked whether "winning" should continue to be the primary focus. Others noted that winning in and of itself is not a bad goal. The true concern is when the pursuit of winning comes at the expense of athletes' well-being.

With this in mind, we heard a broad consensus that it was time for the federal government to shift funding priorities to be more inclusive and focused on increasing participation in sport. Many explained that the goal was not to exclude high-performance sport but to recalibrate funding priorities to more accurately reflect the values and wishes of Canadians who are increasingly valuing fun, respect, safety, access, and inclusion.

### **Participants' perspectives on National Sport Organizations' evaluation criteria**

As we noted earlier, the number of National Sport Organizations in Canada continues to increase and the funding envelope for the Sport Support Program remains unchanged. Some participants suggested that the federal government may need to become more selective in the organizations it chooses to support because federal funds could be more effective if fewer organizations were funded more fully.

Participants agreed that federal funding for National Sport Organizations should be based on transparent and objective criteria. Although some participants expressed support for Sport Canada's current criteria for support in the application guidelines (which focus on activities' impact on the sport system, organizational capacity, and requested budget), they noted that the relative weight or importance assigned to each criterion remained unclear. Additionally, participants voiced concerns about the apparent lack of consistency in how these criteria are applied. For example, we heard that some National Sport Organizations that have large participant bases received relatively little or no funding, while others received significantly more.

For many participants, a National Sport Organization's impact on the sport system was the most important factor in determining funding allocation. While excelling on the international stage was valued by participants who acknowledged that it fosters a great sense of national pride, they emphasized that the sport's inclusion in the Olympic or Paralympic program should not be the sole criterion for funding decisions.

Participants proposed that the impact of a National Sport Organization could be assessed through several measures, including:

- the strength of the national team program based on performance and rankings
- proof of participant development pathways from the community level to the national level
- numbers of registered participants at each level of the sport.

Many participants saw the introduction of criteria clearly focused on participation levels and the sport's accessibility as important. They commented that there should be a focus on National Sport Organizations that steward their sport's growth and development. Some recommended that certain organizations should be supported solely because of the large number of people who participate in the sport. The 2025 Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report noted that soccer, swimming, basketball, biking, and badminton were the top five most played sports among Canadian youth.<sup>1899</sup>

Representatives from Para and Disability sport organizations emphasized how the unique circumstances of Para and Disability sport need to be considered from the outset when designing funding criteria. They cautioned that placing too much emphasis on participant numbers can unfairly disadvantage their organizations because these sports often have smaller participant bases.

Participants put forward several other suggestions for new criteria to guide the allocation of core funding to National Sport Organizations. Some advocated for a criterion based on the organization's financial need. Others suggested that metrics that assess the quality of the services provided to athletes — such as mental and physical health supports and coaching quality — should be introduced as funding assessment criteria. Participants also suggested that key performance indicators that assess organizational culture should be considered so that organizations that are truly committed to “winning well” can benefit from a funding model that recognizes and rewards this behaviour.

### **Participants' perspectives on National Multisport Service Organizations' funding**

Several participants observed that the financial support for National Multisport Service Organizations has continued to grow, while the support for National Sport Organizations has stagnated. We also heard concerns about the apparent high administrative overheads of these Multisport Service Organizations.

Participants commented that too much funding is being invested in Multisport Service Organizations and that an independent review of these organizations to streamline their governance and to reduce government funding ought to be conducted. They suggested that some of the funds allocated to Multisport Service Organizations could be redirected to support National Sport Organizations or athletes.

### **Participants' perspectives on the Community Sport for All Initiative**

As we noted earlier, a majority of participants expressed strong support for the Community Sport for All Initiative. We were told that community programs were enhanced as a result of this initiative. Several participants, including representatives from provincial and territorial governments, urged the federal government to maintain and increase funding for this program or others that endeavour to make sport more accessible and affordable at the community level.

Some participants criticized the federal government's current approach to supporting community-level sport. The Community Sport for All Initiative relies on National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and other large organizations to reach the grassroots. We were informed that distributing funds through these organizations can create instability and administrative burdens without building lasting organizational capacity or awareness of community-level issues within National Sport Organizations. There was also a sense that some organizations were not intentional in the design of their projects.

Rather than continuing through fragmented project funding under the Community Sport for All Initiative, we heard that the sport system needs a clear designation of responsibility for grassroots and community sport development, accompanied by stable, long-term funding.

A minority of participants believed that the federal government should not be responsible for community-level sport or physical activity. They felt that provincial and territorial governments ought to be responsible for funding community-level activities, and that the federal government should invest in national teams and athletes. They stressed that support for high-performance sport is desperately needed at this time, and that the federal

government is the only public funder for national-level athletes and sport organizations. There was a strong sentiment that support for the grassroots should not detract attention from high-performance sport.

At the same time, we heard from some participants working in high-performance sport that it is important to invest in community-level sport. They explained that a healthy sport system starts with broad participation and strong community programs. Community-level sport is the starting point for most high-performance athletes.

We were told on numerous occasions that the countries experiencing the greatest success are those that prioritize investment at the grassroots, ensuring broad access to sport and fostering a healthy and inclusive society.

Some participants believed that high-performance athlete success inspires people to participate in sport and physical activity. Others noted that studies suggest otherwise.<sup>1900</sup> Ultimately, we heard that support for high-performance sport cannot replace targeted and strategic investments in increasing sport and physical activity participation.

#### **Participants' perspectives on funding to support Indigenous-led sport**

Participants shared with the Commission that the funding provided to support Indigenous communities, organizations, and initiatives was insufficient. Specifically, we understand that the federal commitment for hosting the North American Indigenous Games is inadequate given inflation and the increasing cost of hosting the games. It was also noted that provinces and territories should increase their investments to ensure these games' sustainability. Participants highlighted the importance of continued and increased funding of the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component of the Sport Support Program.

Participants raised concerns about the current funding formulas used to allocate funding. Stream 1 of this component relies heavily on population metrics, which they argued fails to account for the unique barriers that remote and other rural areas face, such as limited access to sport and high travel costs. Participants advocated for funding models that consider these factors. We were also told that funding is allocated on a yearly basis. The lack of multi-year commitments makes it difficult for recipients to plan and implement long-term strategic initiatives.

More broadly, we were advised that grants that require in-kind financial contributions act as barriers to access for many Indigenous communities. Some of these communities may not have the resources to provide such contributions. Moreover, many were concerned that the current funding programs do not provide adequate support for Indigenous people living in urban areas.

Participants stressed the importance of upholding the principle of free, prior, and informed consent in all sport-related funding decisions and programming involving Indigenous Peoples. Some told us that there should be a separate funding framework for Indigenous sport organizations.



### **Participants' perspectives on the application process**

Many organizations told the Commission about a variety of administrative burdens and funding challenges that they encountered when applying for funds from Sport Canada. Participants from all levels of sport said that the funding application requirements often changed with minimal notice, imposing additional challenges of time and effort. We also heard on numerous occasions that these applications were frequently repetitive, overly complex, and difficult to navigate.

Participants from many federally funded organizations said that the funding application process could be streamlined and better coordinated. Some commented that there should be a single application and reporting process for all Sport Canada funding for National Sport Organizations (including both core support and all other programs). Many felt that the administrative burden associated with these processes sometimes outweighed the benefits of the funding offered.

Some sport organization representatives explained that they were less concerned with the level of detail and the extensive nature of the application than with the fact that applications were frequently reviewed by individuals without sport expertise.

We were informed that the challenges related to application procedures were conveyed to Sport Canada and that it has made efforts to simplify and streamline the application process. For instance, sport organizations receiving core funding can now apply and receive additional project funding without submitting another application.

We heard similar concerns and frustrations regarding the reporting process for recipients of federal funding. It was noted that reporting procedures varied widely, and they frequently resulted in sport organizations' unnecessary duplication of efforts.

### **Participants' perspectives on a lack of oversight**

Participants shared significant concerns about Sport Canada not providing adequate oversight of funding recipients. They called for regular, independent audits and monitoring of National Sport Organizations and other federally funded sport organizations to ensure fiscal responsibility and to build public trust. Many felt that the current compliance and monitoring mechanisms were insufficient. They emphasized the need for robust, transparent checks on how funds are managed and allocated.

Participants recounted instances where Sport Canada cut funding to certain National Sport Organizations following compliance issues, only to later reassure these same organizations that funding would be restored. These actions fostered a perception that sport organizations were colluding with Sport Canada, undermining public confidence in Sport Canada's ability and willingness to effectively monitor compliance and address ongoing issues.

Participants also noted the limited amount of public information regarding the operational status of Sport Canada's monitoring and compliance unit. They observed a lack of clarity on the extent of its monitoring activities, or any findings or actions that the unit had taken to date.

Sport Canada is empowered to monitor and audit organizations, and it claims to do so. However, there is a widespread belief among participants that most sport organizations are not being adequately monitored or audited. Participants expressed the view that no one is truly ensuring that organizations comply with their funding conditions unless there is a public scandal, which places pressure on Sport Canada.

### **Participants' perspectives on support for athletes**

The Commission heard from many athletes who are struggling with insufficient funding. They told us that the funds provided through the Athletes Assistance Program are inadequate to support their needs. We learned that many cannot afford basic necessities and some are living below the poverty line. A common concern was that uncertain funding caused significant stress. Many were considering leaving their sport as a result of inadequate financial support.

Participants pointed to an independent study prepared for the Department of Canadian Heritage that revealed that the average income of national team athletes was \$34,945 in 2022, with most of the income derived from the Athletes Assistance Program, followed by provincial assistance. Meanwhile, their average expenses were \$39,528 per year.<sup>1901</sup> We were told that most Team Canada athletes need to have at least one part-time job in addition to receiving Athlete Assistance Program funding to afford the cost of living and training. Many athletes have incurred significant debt in pursuit of their athletic careers.

Additionally, we were told that support for Para athletes is often not top of mind. For example, when there was an increase in the Athletes Assistance Program, there was initially no corresponding increase in supplementary support for athletes with high support needs. This situation was corrected only after persistent advocacy from Para sport organizations.

On various occasions, we were advised that the financial strain placed on sport organizations is being passed on to sport participants. For example, athlete fees have generally increased. We learned that many athletes receiving support are facing significant financial challenges. It was brought to our attention that some athletes are required to provide some of their carding money to their National Sport Organizations. The Commission learned of many athletes having to pay their own travel costs and fees to attend necessary trial events for national and international competitions.<sup>1902</sup> They also spoke of personally subsidizing their training and nutrition programs. Recent media coverage reveals that numerous high-performance Canadian athletes are turning to crowdfunding and private donations to cover the cost of training, competing, and basic living expenses.<sup>1903</sup>

These realities underscore the significant financial challenges that Canada's high-performance athletes experience. These are powerful disincentives that impede access to high-quality sporting competition and represent costs that may be prohibitive for many.<sup>1904</sup>

An additional \$35 million was invested by the federal government in the Athlete Assistance Program in 2024, with an additional \$7 million annually for five years.<sup>1905</sup> However, significant financial pressures continue to exist for all high-performance athletes, especially for Para athletes. Participants recommended that Athlete Assistance Program funding should be indexed to inflation.

We heard that the terms of the Athletes Assistance Program regarding injured athletes are unfair and need to be reviewed. Some participants suggested that there should be a separate recovery fund for injured national team athletes.

Some participants believed that national team athletes should be classified as employees of the federal government. They noted that national team athletes who represent Canada on the world stage devote themselves entirely to their sport, yet they do not receive the same basic protections offered to other workers. They emphasized that granting athletes employment status would offer benefits such as medical coverage, pension plans, and overall financial stability. Participants told us that athletes also need support after retiring from their athletic careers.

### **Participants' perspectives on support for hosting**

Participants, including representatives from governments, agreed that hosting domestic and international sport events can generate significant economic and social benefits. Such events were cited as boosting sport's contribution to the national Gross Domestic Product. They attract meaningful investment in communities and establish lasting infrastructure that benefits both communities and athletes.

We heard that few national, provincial, or territorial sport events are hosted in northern regions of the country. Participants indicated that organizing these events requires substantial financial resources, organizational capacity, and appropriate facilities, which can be challenging to secure in northern regions.

Some participants expressed the view that funding for hosting is currently delivered in a non-strategic manner. We also heard significant frustration with the lack of collaboration between federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments in supporting hosting opportunities. Participants recommended that federal, provincial, and territorial governments should commit to developing and adopting an international multisport games hosting strategy to guide strategic investments in hosting.

### Participants' perspectives on diversifying federal government funding sources

Many participants argued that the federal government needs to diversify its sources of funding to sustain federal funding for sport. They shared a variety of proposals during our engagement activities. Some suggested that the existing funds within multiple ministries should be redirected to supporting sport organizations and athletes. Here are some of their suggestions:

- The Department of Justice and the Department of Public Safety could contribute to sport programs that aim to reduce youth offending rates.
- The Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada could contribute to sport programs that facilitate integration and well-being for refugees and newcomers.
- The Department of Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada could invest in sport programs that promote reconciliation efforts.
- The Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat could contribute to sport programs that help address barriers that Indigenous Peoples, racialized communities, and religious minorities experience.
- The Black-led Philanthropic Endowment Fund could provide funding to Black-led, Black-focused, or Black-serving sport organizations.

Many participants noted the significant potential of sport-betting taxation revenues as a new source of funding if the revenues were to be dedicated to sport and physical activity. They suggested that such revenue could be specifically allocated to support sport and provide assistance to those who are suffering from the harms of sport betting. It could also support research and educational programs and improve the accessibility of sport programs.

In 2025, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee recommended to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance that the federal government use federal tax revenues from single-sport betting to invest in sport and stabilize the Canadian sport system.<sup>1906</sup> During our engagement activities many reiterated this suggestion.

The Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Committees' 2024 budget request noted that in 2023, the federal government raised, in Ontario alone, over \$60 million in Goods and Services Tax revenue from sport betting. This figure was projected to grow substantially in the coming years.<sup>1907</sup> We were advised that provincial and territorial governments receive significant revenues from sport betting.

Several participants noted that other countries direct a portion of betting and gambling proceeds to sport. For example, Norway allocates 64% of its national gambling and sports betting proceeds to sport — around USD 400 million annually. These funds support various initiatives, including coach training, equipment upgrades, and facility development. In the United States, sports betting and gambling are state controlled. We were informed that New York uses sports betting to support youth sports.

Lotteries were also often mentioned as a possible dedicated revenue source for sport in Canada. Some participants suggested that a National Sport Lottery could be created. We were advised that Japan designates three quarters of its lottery sales profits toward diverse sports projects, with the Sports Promotion Lottery channelling USD 102 million annually into community sport. In the United States, we were informed that Colorado has allocated lottery proceeds to fund recreation spaces. Participants also noted that many sport organizations in Canada also receive funding from their province or territory's lottery funds.

We heard a range of opinions about the value and ethics of lottery and sports betting revenues being dedicated to sport and physical activity. Some we spoke to had concerns about the addictive nature of lotteries and betting, and the financial and mental health impact of those activities. Given that governments have chosen to legalize gambling and lotteries, others felt that the tax proceeds derived from such activities could be dedicated to supporting healthy lifestyle programs such as sport and physical activity programming.

Participants noted a wide variety of other potential funding sources. These included revenues from business sponsorships, private donors, and the allocation of the Goods and Services Tax collected on the sale of sport equipment. However, some stated that these revenues would pale in comparison to the revenue-generating potential of sports betting and lotteries.

### **Participants' perspectives on diversifying sport organizations' funding sources**

Beyond expanding governmental funding, participants also suggested that sport organizations should be responsible for finding other sources of funding because government spending alone cannot sustain the entire sport system. We understand that sport organizations have attempted to diversify their revenue sources with varying levels of success.

Participants indicated that most sport organizations receive donations and corporate sponsorships, though the level of support varies widely. For National Sport Organizations, these forms of revenue accounted for 10 to 29% of their revenue from 2020 to 2024. Some larger sport organizations, like the Olympic and Paralympic Committees, Hockey Canada, and Canada Soccer, are effective at developing more significant corporate sponsorships, television and marketing rights, and other sources of private funding.



Some sport organization representatives expressed a desire for better support to help them find corporate sponsorships. Participants also emphasized the importance of acknowledging that Disability sport caters to smaller audiences, which inherently limits its revenue streams.

We heard concerns about the degree to which sponsorship dollars are drawn to the Olympic Games. Participants explained that sport organizations that provide athletes and teams for these events are often facing increased challenges in finding sponsors. When sponsors do exist, we were told that sponsorships during the Olympics were often restricted, thereby diminishing the value of sponsors' involvement with a sport.

Others spoke of declining opportunities for corporate sponsorships. The reputation of sport has suffered in recent years, which has negatively affected sport organizations' ability to secure sponsorships in an already competitive environment. The proliferation of professional sport leagues was identified as another factor that contributed to difficulties in securing sponsorships.<sup>1908</sup>

Most sport organizations rely largely on government funding and membership fees. And many expressed a deep appreciation for the corporations and donors who currently support sport at all levels. Nevertheless, these other sources of revenue are insufficient for National Sport Organizations to bridge the funding gap caused by the stagnation in federal government contributions.

## Provincial, territorial, and municipal government funding

Provincial and territorial government funding for sport and physical activity varies considerably across the country. Each government provides unique programs and funding to support athletes, organizations, and community initiatives. Each program has its own eligibility requirements and conditions for funding. As we discussed earlier in the report, this can include the requirement for sport organizations to adopt safe sport policies (Chapter 9) and good governance practices (Chapter 14).

For example, the Government of Ontario administers the Ontario Amateur Sport Fund which supports recognized Provincial Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations in the province.<sup>1909</sup> Under the Ontario Sport Recognition Policy for provincial and Multisport Service Organizations, sport organizations are required to implement good governance practices and safe sport policies. These practices can include implementing policies and procedures that define the organization's democratic governing structure and operational policies.<sup>1910</sup> Additionally, Provincial Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations need to be endorsed by a National Sport Organization funded by Sport Canada.<sup>1911</sup> The Ministry of Sport is responsible for granting recognition status to sport organizations, which is a prerequisite to apply for funding. It also monitors their compliance with the recognition criteria and obligations.<sup>1912</sup>

In some provinces and territories, including British Columbia and Saskatchewan, the government delegates to a not-for-profit organization some of the responsibility to coordinate, and sometimes, to fund, amateur sport in their jurisdiction.<sup>1913</sup> Typically, these organizations become responsible for funding Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations, as well as administering other programs.<sup>1914</sup>

As we noted earlier, provinces and territories are recipients of federal funds provided under bilateral agreements with the federal government.<sup>1915</sup> Some provinces and territories also rely on third-party funding, like the profits from the sale of lottery tickets, to support their sport sectors.<sup>1916</sup>

It is difficult to accurately analyze the available data on the exact amounts allocated to sports in each province and territory. This is because funding allocations for sport may be classified differently by jurisdiction. For example, amounts allocated to sport can be a part of a broader budget for recreation, culture, tourism, or capital infrastructure.

Aside from providing funding to sport organizations and athletes, provinces and territories can also implement other measures to support participation in sport and physical activity. For example, Quebec and Nova Scotia provide tax credits for children's activities, including sport and physical activity.<sup>1917</sup> While not direct government funding for sport, these tax credits are intended to provide financial assistance to parents who enroll children and youth in sport and physical activities. We also note that many provinces and territories invest in capital infrastructure for sport and recreation.

Municipal governments may also offer grants and contributions to support sport and recreation and improve facilities in their communities.

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PROVINCIAL, TERRITORIAL AND MUNICIPAL FUNDING**

Regarding funding at the provincial, territorial, and grassroots level of sport, many participants raised similar concerns about insufficient and unstable funding. We were advised that the funding provided by the federal government to National Sport Organizations can flow down to the grassroots, but only for members of Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. This does not apply to non-member organizations.

Community sport programs face additional funding issues, including funding cuts, a lack of new revenue sources, and limitations on fundraising abilities. This impacts programs' availability and affordability because additional costs often get passed on to families through memberships and fees.

Provincial and territorial governments noted that sport is becoming increasingly expensive and unattainable for many. Even where registration is affordable, the high costs of equipment can pose challenges to participation.

Participants called for provincial and territorial governments to increase their funding contributions to sport. Representatives of provincial and territorial governments advised us that ongoing collaboration between governments and sport organizations is essential to ensure that funding and programs support the entire spectrum of sport. It was noted that collaboration should recognize and support the pathway between community participation and elite competition.

## Sport funding in other countries

We noted in the Preliminary Report that there may be value in considering how Canada compares to other countries in terms of its investment in sport. Many participants had suggested that Canada may not be investing to the same extent as other leading sport nations.

We realize that direct comparisons between countries are not possible because each nation has its own approach to funding sport that reflect its priorities and how it defines sport. Furthermore, different countries have access to distinct funding sources to support sport. In addition, how the figures and data are calculated varies widely and they may not cover the same time periods. Even so, we believe that examining international models remains instructive because it provides insights into how sport is valued and supported internationally.

In the section that follows, we review the approaches of Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Norway because these were frequently cited models during our engagement activities. We also describe these models in further detail in Chapter 12.

### AUSTRALIA

Australia's sport funding is managed by the Australian Sports Commission for mass participation, and the Australian Institute of Sport, an arm of the Australian Sports Commission, for elite sport.<sup>1918</sup>

The Australian Government provides funding to the Australian Sports Commission to invest in sport at all levels.<sup>1919</sup> Thus, the Australian Sports Commission offers a variety of funding programs. Community sport receives support through targeted grant programs like Play Well Participation and Sporting Schools.<sup>1920</sup> The commission provides direct support to athletes to enable them to focus on training and competitions to achieve the commission's strategy targets in Olympic, Paralympic, and Commonwealth Games sports.<sup>1921</sup> The government also financially supports the hosting of major international sporting events in Australia.<sup>1922</sup>

The Australian Sports Foundation, a national non-profit, raises significant funds for clubs and athletes.<sup>1923</sup> It is the only organization in Australia to have Deductible Gift Recipient status for sport (any donation of two dollars or more is tax-deductible).<sup>1924</sup> It distributes hundreds of millions of dollars to sporting organizations, clubs, and athletes.<sup>1925</sup> Notably, Australia does not use national lottery funds for sport. Instead, government budgets and private sector partnerships are the main sources of funding.

In Australia, sport represented nearly 0.08% (AUD 489 million) of the federal government's budget in 2023–2024.<sup>1926</sup> Sport accounts for approximately 1% of the Australian total Gross Domestic Product in the amount of AUD 26 billion.<sup>1927</sup>

## UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom funds high-performance sport primarily through UK Sport, which invests resources derived from both the National Lottery and the United Kingdom government.<sup>1928</sup>

Direct financial support for athletes comes through Athlete Performance Awards, funded solely by National Lottery income. These funds enable athletes to focus on medal success in the Olympic and Paralympic Games.<sup>1929</sup> UK Sport also invests in specialized support services via the UK Sports Institute. This institute delivers services to Olympic and Paralympic athletes, including sports science, medicine, and technology support.<sup>1930</sup>

UK Sport has no direct involvement in community or school sport. Instead, community and grassroots sport are funded separately by Sport England, Sport Wales, Sport Scotland, and Sport Northern Ireland.

In 2023, the sport sector generated an estimated £20 billion, accounting for 0.8% of value added to the UK economy that year.<sup>1931</sup> In the same year, the central government in the United Kingdom spent a total of £522 million on sport, making up 0.04% of the total budget.<sup>1932</sup>

## NEW ZEALAND

Sport New Zealand receives government funding to promote play, active recreation, and sport. The distribution of funds is guided by four-year strategic plans.<sup>1933</sup> It strengthens the play, active recreation and sport system by investing in partner organizations like National Sport Organizations and regional organizations. Sport New Zealand also provides targeted funds for groups and organizations for recreation and sport opportunities, including funds for Indigenous populations and a rural travel fund.<sup>1934</sup> It also delivers programs and initiatives that primarily focus on groups that are less active, such as girls and young women and people with disabilities.<sup>1935</sup>

Government and lottery funds, and revenues from sports betting and gambling, support sport in New Zealand. In 2024–2025, Sport New Zealand's revenue included \$110.5 million from the Crown, \$82 million from the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, and \$7 million from the Racing Industry Act revenue.<sup>1936</sup> (The Racing Industry Act controls and taxes sports betting and gambling in the country.)<sup>1937</sup>

In New Zealand, sport represented 0.09% (NZD 125 million) of the federal government's total budget in 2024–2025.<sup>1938</sup> In 2024, sport and recreation accounted for approximately 1.9% of New Zealand's total GDP in the amount of NZD 8 billion.<sup>1939</sup>

## NORWAY

The Government of Norway funds sport primarily through its state lottery's surplus and grants from municipalities.<sup>1940</sup> The Department of Civil Society and Sport, under the Ministry of Culture and Equality, is responsible for distributing the surplus from Norsk Tipping (the national lottery and sports betting mechanism) to sport activities, organizations, and facilities.<sup>1941</sup> Notably, 64% of the gaming proceeds from Norsk Tipping is allocated to sport.<sup>1942</sup> In 2025, total sports funding from the lottery was projected to be NOK 4.25 billion (USD 414 million).<sup>1943</sup>

Funding from Norsk Tipping supports sports facilities, national facilities, research, anti-doping, inclusion in sports, outdoor activities, and physical activity and event grants. It also allows for the provision of grants to local clubs and supports sport organizations, including the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports.<sup>1944</sup> In turn, the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports provides funding to support children, adolescents, and recreational sports.<sup>1945</sup>

## PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL SPORT FUNDING

Many participants spoke of how Norway, New Zealand, and Australia invest in sport — they invest in the value of sport. Sport is not considered as something “nice to have” but is embedded as a fundamental and central aspect of their society and culture. We learned that these countries understand the value of sport in propelling their society forward, and that public investments in sport follow from that value.

There is a widespread belief among members of the Canadian sport community that Canada needs to do the same. Participants in our engagement activities noted that while governments promote sport participation and its many benefits, such as promoting physical and mental health and bringing communities together, public funding of sport in Canada does not align with this narrative.

The chronic underfunding of sport in this country has prevented us from unlocking the true power of sport.

## Reminder of the Commission's preliminary recommendations

In its Preliminary Report, the Commission made several recommendations intended to address the funding crisis and improve the allocation of federal funds to support sport and physical activity in Canada.

First, we recommended that the Government of Canada urgently increase core funding for National Sport Organizations to account for inflation since 2005. Second, we recommended additional targeted funding for National Para Sport Organizations to address their unique needs. Finally, we recommended that the Government of Canada periodically review the core funding for federally funded sport organizations to ensure it is adequate to support core operational requirements and address long-term priorities.



The Commission recognized that the sport system is severely under-resourced and that existing structures and practices have led to inefficient use of resources. We therefore recommended that National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes be required to conduct operational efficiency reviews.

To promote the sport system's long-term financial health, the Commission recommended that the Government of Canada study diversifying sources of funding, such as tax revenues from single-sport betting, to support federally funded sport organizations. The Commission also recommended that all National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes explore and diversify their revenue streams and examine processes and practices to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

Additionally, the Commission recommended that all aspects of federal funding for sport and physical activity funding should be centralized and transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established (see Chapter 12). This entity would be responsible for developing a long-term funding strategy, setting clear support criteria, making funding decisions, distributing funding, and implementing a monitoring and auditing regime.

Furthermore, the Commission emphasized the need for clear, efficient, and accessible application procedures for federal grants and contributions, and regular monitoring and auditing of federally funded organizations. We also recommended that the federal government develop a comprehensive, multi-year funding strategy centered on safety, equity, access, and inclusion.

Lastly, we recommended that the federal government increase the funding it provides to provinces and territories for the purpose of improving the sport system and safe sport in Canada.

## **Creating a stable and sustainable approach to funding Canada's sport system**

The Commission remains of the view that Canada's sport system is severely underfunded, and the performance-based sport system has played a role in fueling the safe sport crisis. It has contributed to the culture of silence in which participants are reluctant to voice concerns for fear that their funding could be jeopardized (see Chapter 3). Strategic changes and investments are needed to ensure that Canada has a well-resourced, sustainable sport system that meets Canadians' needs and expectations.

To create a stable and sustainable approach to funding Canada's sport system, we believe that the needs outlined below must be addressed:

- the need to invest in all levels of the sport system, including community and national-level sport
- the need to diversify sources of funding to support the sport system
- the need to centralize federal funding for sport and physical activity
- the need to improve the application processes for federal funding
- the need to enhance the monitoring and auditing of sport and physical activity organizations that receive federal funds
- the need to develop a new funding strategy for sport and physical activity and to review the criteria for support to National Sport Organizations.

For each of these needs, we outline the feedback we received on our preliminary recommendations, including feedback received during the National Summit organized by the Commission. Then we make Calls to Action.

### **THE NEED TO INVEST IN THE SPORT SYSTEM**

In addition to participants' perspectives on federal funding for sport, outlined earlier in this report, we received feedback on our preliminary recommendations to increase federal support for national-level sport organizations, which we outline below.

#### **Feedback on investing in the sport system**

Participants called on all levels of government to invest more meaningfully in sport. They believe that governments have a vital role in supporting the sport system, from grassroots to high performance. These sentiments were supported by the results of the public online survey conducted by the Commission. The results indicated overwhelming support of the statement that "Governments should play a significant role in funding organized sport in Canada" among respondents who answered questions about improving the sport system. A combined 90.7% of respondents either "strongly agree" (62.7%) or "somewhat agree" (28.0%) with this statement.

We heard broad support from participants involved in our engagement process for our preliminary recommendations to increase and stabilize core funding for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes. Many emphasized that increased and predictable funding for sport organizations is essential for building a sustainable sport system, implementing good governance practices, creating safe sport environments, and ensuring system-wide growth.

There was general support for additional funding to be directed toward Para and Disability Sport. Some participants specified that this funding should flow directly to the Para and Disability sport communities. Others noted that National Sport Organizations should be required to support Para programming.

We recognize that not all participants agreed that financial support for national-level organizations should be increased. Some participants challenged the notion that injecting more money into the system would automatically yield better outcomes. We heard that existing funds should be reallocated and used more efficiently.

Others noted that it was overly simplistic to assert that National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations merely need additional funding. They insisted that these organizations need to be efficient and well governed, with strategic priorities and established revenue-generating strategies. They suggested that there should be a system-wide audit of all the public funds spent on sport at every level before increasing the funding to sport organizations.

On a similar note, participants supported the recommendation that all federally funded sport organizations must be required to conduct operational efficiency reviews. We were told that given the country's current economic state, such reviews should happen sooner in this process. Participants suggested that these efficiency reviews could be a part of the application for increased funds.

Additional funding needs were identified beyond increasing core funding under the Sport Support Program. Participants reiterated that there needs to be a focus on increasing participation and support for participants from diverse backgrounds.

Participants affirmed that more funding is desperately needed at all levels of the sport system, not only the national level. They urged governments to boost their financial contributions to enhance their support for sport. Some participants felt that governments are generally reluctant to invest in sport because such investments are not seen as politically advantageous or likely to influence election outcomes.

We did not hear a clear consensus on which areas should be prioritized for funding. During the National Summit organized by the Commission, the most frequently cited priorities were core funding of sport organizations, improving safe sport, and increasing participation at the community level. Other areas included funding for athletes, sport infrastructure, and school sport. Some participants said that all areas need to be priorities, and that it should be seen as an investment.

The Commission's survey revealed slightly different priorities. Respondents were asked to select the three most important funding priorities related to organized sport in Canada among the following options:

- hosting of major sporting events in Canada (Olympics, Paralympics, and other international events)
- safe sport initiatives (e.g., prevention of maltreatment and abuse in sport, complaint mechanisms)
- support for high-performance sport
- participation in school and community-based sport
- coaching and sport leadership development
- investments in sport infrastructure.<sup>1946</sup>

Investments in sport infrastructure (72.6%), participation in school and community-based sport (65.4%), and coaching and sport leadership development (55.9%) were the most frequently selected priorities by respondents. As a reminder, respondents were organized sport participants who answered questions about improving the sport system.

### **Calls to Action: investing in the sport system**

There is no doubt that the sport system is chronically underfunded, and National Sport Organizations are facing a financial crisis. Our engagements with members of the Canadian sport system, along with recent studies, reports, and our own independent review have consistently confirmed this crisis.

We recognize that Canadians, including our governments, are navigating profound challenges and tumultuous times. Governments are under pressure to fund priorities that are seen as more urgent. Still, as we work to strengthen national cohesion and build a resilient Canada, it is important to remember that sport can be an important vehicle for nation-building.

Sport is an integral part of Canada's culture and national identity. It showcases our country's excellence on the world stage, uniting Canadians in the celebration of our athletes' commitment and perseverance. At the same time, sport's impact extends deeply into communities. It contributes to physical and mental health, promotes inclusion, strengthens social connections, stimulates the growth of common interests, and builds stronger communities. Sport also drives economic growth, contributing billions in revenue to the Canadian economy, creating jobs, and promoting tourism.

There is no doubt that Canada needs to invest more in sport. This re-investment is long overdue.

We remain of the view that all levels of government must invest more in Canada's sport system. Increased federal funding is critical to ensuring that national-level sport organizations have the required stability, capacity, and resources required to continue striving for excellence and to grow and develop their sport across the country. At the same time, all levels of government should continue to invest in community-level sport and infrastructure to build a sport system that supports all Canadians from the playground to the podium. We encourage all levels of government to recognize sport as an investment in Canada's youth and the country's future.

In what follows we outline our final findings on Canada's funding of the sport system. Then we list Calls to Action to invest in and increase funding to support national-level organizations, community-based sport initiatives and broad sport participation, Indigenous-led sport, and national high-performance athletes.

### **Efficiency reviews by national-level sport organizations**

While the sport system is clearly underfunded — and we call on the federal government to strengthen its financial support — we recognize that increasing funding is not a silver bullet. Money, by itself, will not resolve all the underlying issues in the Canadian sport system.

Existing structures and practices within the sport system have led to inefficient resource expenditures, exacerbating the funding crisis. Therefore, the Government of Canada must require all federally funded sport organizations to assess their existing practices and identify opportunities for further efficiencies, especially considering the financial challenges that the sport system faces.

Everyone involved in the sport system has a responsibility and duty to carefully review their own practices, structures, and spending. The sport community must recognize the need for efficiencies and work to achieve them within their own organization and across the broader sport system. This certainly applies to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes. This review should specifically involve seeking efficiencies by establishing shared services and pursuing amalgamation, as we describe in Chapter 13.

### **National-level sport organizations**

National Sport Organizations play a pivotal role in the sport system, but they are facing a financial crisis. This was reiterated by participants throughout our engagement activities and clearly demonstrated by recent studies and reports and our own independent review. There is no doubt that National Sport Organizations are facing significant financial hardships.



The federal core funding for National Sport Organizations has been frozen since 2005, and it goes without saying that the cost of living has dramatically increased since then. Almost all National Sport Organizations depend on federal support to fulfill their leadership responsibilities. These include providing professional development for coaches, selecting and managing national teams, hosting national competitions, and managing high-performance programs. Although most organizations leverage other sources of revenue, such as membership fees and sponsorships, few are successful in raising substantial amounts. The revenue generated from additional sources is insufficient to bridge the funding gap. As a result, sport organizations are often left with shrinking budgets and growing deficits.

National Sport Organizations are also facing increasing demands. They are tasked with creating safe sport environments for their athletes, staff, and volunteers; increasing diversity, equity, and inclusivity within their sport; and strengthening their governance practices. While we emphasize that these goals are of utmost importance, we recognize that National Sport Organizations need to be adequately supported to bring about meaningful change.

The chronic lack of funding in the Canadian sport system has contributed to the safe sport crisis and undermined National Sport Organizations' ability to fulfill their basic functions. Inadequate resources negatively impact both the accessibility and quality of their programs.

In the face of this funding crisis, many organizations have reduced programs and activities, and some may even be forced to cease operating if the funding gaps persist.

Providing appropriate support to federally funded sport organizations is essential to protect the safety of everyone involved in the sport system. For example, to create safe sport environments, these organizations require funding to implement governance best practices, develop safe sport education and training programs for their participants, and implement screening procedures. They also need to introduce mechanisms to address maltreatment.

A safe sport system benefits society at large; an unsafe one poses a threat to all.

It is clear to the Commission that there is an urgent need for an injection of funds to ensure that National Sport Organizations can continue operating. We believe that core funding for sport organizations should be adequate to support core operational requirements and address long-term priorities.

Importantly, all future funding allocations for national-level sport organizations must be determined in accordance with a new funding strategy that balances support for high-performance and broader sport participation. As we discuss in the section below entitled “The need to develop a new funding strategy for sport and physical activity,” this strategy prioritizes a sport system that is safe, equitable, inclusive, and accessible to all Canadians. In addition, eligibility and evaluation criteria for National Sport Organizations ought to be revised to align with the new strategy and will dictate the allocation of funds to these organizations. We should not shy away from asking difficult questions regarding the number and nature of sport organizations that can be supported. A careful re-evaluation of the criteria that guide eligibility for support is fundamental.

The Commission echoes the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Finance that the Government of Canada “increase the core funding allocated to National Sport Organizations to adjust for inflation since 2005, adequately resource organizations for the long-term to address critical sport system priorities and eliminate the forecast funding gap these organizations require to effectively deliver their mandates.”<sup>1947</sup>

We also note that the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee requested, on behalf of 63 National Sport Organizations, a \$144 million annual increase to the core funding for National Sport Organizations for the 2025 budget. They explained that this increase would account for inflation since 2005 and address the funding gap these organizations are facing.<sup>1948</sup>

Additionally, as we discuss in Chapter 13, the Commission acknowledges the unique circumstances of Disability sport organizations. We recognize that additional costs are involved in meeting the unique needs of athletes with disabilities. Therefore, we believe that additional funding should be allocated to Disability, Para and Paralympic sport organizations.

#### *Regular reviews of funding levels*

To ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of Canada’s sport system, the federal government must proactively and regularly review the funding it provides to sport organizations. This includes assessing the adequacy of core funding for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.

The amount of funding that these organizations require to achieve long-term priorities, such as improving safe sport and adopting good governance practices, will change as the financial landscape and the organizations themselves evolve. A regular, ongoing analysis of government funding’s effectiveness across the sport system will provide the federal government with crucial information. This data will help it to determine whether government funding is achieving its intended objectives and whether it aligns with the sport system’s current needs. The periodic review of funding should, among other things, take into consideration the impact of global factors on sport organizations, such as inflation, tariffs, and international exchange rates.

### *Conditions for federally funded sport organizations*

The federal government can, and does, attach conditions to the funding it provides to sport organizations. These conditions are part of contracts referred to as contribution agreements. Throughout this report, we outline conditions that the federal government must attach to the funding it provides to federally funded National Sport Organizations and National Multisport Service Organizations.

In other chapters of this report, we call on the federal government to impose conditions on federally funded sport organizations to improve safe sport in Canada and the governance of sport organizations. These conditions are:

- the adoption the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as outlined in Chapter 10
- the adoption of a safe sport policy or code of conduct that includes safe sport standards consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as outlined in Chapter 10
- the adoption of the Canadian Safe Sport Program as outlined in Chapter 10
- the provision of the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program as outlined in Chapter 11
- the adoption and implementation of the National Background Screening Policy as outlined in Chapter 11
- the designation of a safeguarding officer as outlined in Chapter 11
- the adoption of and compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code as outlined in Chapter 14.

### **Community-based sport and broad participation**

There is a clear need for further and continued investments to promote participation in sport and physical activity. The federal government must increase the funding it allocates to support community-level sport initiatives, including those that specifically support equity-deserving communities.

As part of an ongoing commitment to promote broad sport participation, the federal government should extend and increase its funding for programs that support community sport such as the Community Sport for All Initiative. This initiative has a vital role in promoting broader participation, inclusion, and the development of accessible sport environments at the community level. It has enabled Canadians to benefit from sport and physical activity and contributed to healthier, more inclusive and active communities nationwide. Despite strong support for this initiative among members of the broader sport community, funding for the Community Sport for All Initiative is expected to end in 2026.

In addition to enhancing this direct federal support, the Government of Canada should collaborate with the provinces and territories to increase their investments in community-level sport. As we described earlier, the

federal government currently provides funding to provincial and territorial governments to promote community-level sport and physical activity through bilateral agreements.<sup>1949</sup> These federal contributions are made under the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*. The Act allows the minister to enter into agreements with provinces and territories to fund programs designed to “encourage, promote and develop physical activity or sport.”<sup>1950</sup> It also supports implementing the Government of Canada’s policy regarding sport.<sup>1951</sup> While provinces and territories also invest in this area, more is needed. Canada’s sport system is underfunded, and greater investments are required to ensure robust, sustainable support for community-level sport across the country.

Increased investments and strong commitments from all governments to support broad sport participation and physical activity are essential. This support should become a shared priority of both the federal and provincial and territorial governments. With this in mind, we believe that the promotion of broad sport participation should eventually become a criterion under the Multilateral Sport Framework that we describe in Chapter 10.

This approach would not only strengthen governments’ commitment toward support for broad sport and physical activity participation but also permit them to jointly define it. For example, governments could jointly agree to prioritize support for community-level initiatives that advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Until the Multilateral Sport Framework encompassing safe sport and good governance can be established, the Government of Canada should increase and regularly review the funding it provides to support community-level and broad sport participation. It should also encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to do the same. Recognizing the important role of provinces and territories in supporting community-level sport, and that the current bilateral agreements are cost-sharing agreements, we are of the view that provinces and territories should continue to be required to match federal funds, where possible.

### **Indigenous-led sport**

We recognize the need for continued and increased funding to support Indigenous-led sport and Indigenous athletes in Canada. We therefore call on the Government of Canada to increase the funding they provide to support Indigenous-led sport and Indigenous athletes. To meet its commitments under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action 81 to 91, the Government of Canada should increase funding for the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component of the Sport Support Program. It should also identify other measures to support the Indigenous-led sport system. As we outline in our Call to Action 3, governments must proactively and meaningfully engage with Indigenous people throughout these decision-making processes.

Additionally, the Government of Canada should also collaborate with the provinces and territories to increase their financial contributions to support Indigenous sport through bilateral agreements. As we previously noted, these agreements are already a key mechanism for funding Indigenous sport organizations and culturally relevant programming for Indigenous children and youth at the community level.<sup>1952</sup>

### **National athletes**

The Athletes Assistance Program is the cornerstone of Canada's support for high-performance athletes who represent our country on national and international stages. While participants welcomed the 2024 increase of the program's monthly living and training allowances, most athletes continue to face significant financial pressures. They often struggle to balance training demands with financial pressures, which can negatively impact their performance and well-being.

Canada's athletes need to be adequately supported as they train and compete for Canada on the national and international stage. The federal government should therefore increase funding for the Athlete Assistance Program to adjust for inflation and the increased cost of living. This should include an immediate adjustment to current funding levels, as well as a commitment to periodically review funding adequacy.

### **Safe sport and improving the sport system**

As we noted in our Preliminary Report, the Canadian sport ecosystem is intricate, complex, and interconnected. The problems that exist at the national level, such as governance issues in sport organizations and the prevalence of maltreatment, permeate the entire sport system.

To meaningfully address these issues and improve the sport system for all Canadians, all governments need to come together and collaborate to implement and invest in innovative and lasting solutions. To achieve this, we maintain our preliminary recommendation that the Government of Canada increase its funding to the provinces and territories to improve the sport system and ensure safe sport in Canada.

Details can be found in other chapters of this report, where we call on the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to collaborate to:

- develop and implement harmonized national, provincial and territorial safe sport programs and, in the long term, implement a unified Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program, to respond to maltreatment at all levels of the Canadian sport system as outlined in Chapter 10
- harmonize the use of background screening tools as outlined in Chapter 11
- harmonize sport governance standards across the Canadian sport system as outlined in Chapter 14.



## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**80. The Government of Canada, following a reasonable grace period, require all National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes receiving federal core funding to conduct operational efficiency reviews to assess their existing practices and identify opportunities for further efficiency. This includes establishing shared services and pursuing amalgamation, as outlined in Chapter 13.**

**81. The Government of Canada urgently increase the core funding allocated to National Sport Organizations to account for inflation since 2005. Thereafter, it must regularly review and adjust the funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes under the Sport Support Program. The funding needs to be adequate to support core operational requirements and address long-term priorities, including improving safe sport.**

**82. The Government of Canada allocate additional funding to specifically support National Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations.**

**83. The Government of Canada, as a condition of funding, require all federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes to:**

- a. adopt the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as outlined in Chapter 10**
- b. adopt a safe sport policy or code of conduct that includes safe sport standards consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as outlined in Chapter 10**
- c. adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program as outlined in Chapter 10**
- d. provide the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program as outlined in Chapter 11**
- e. adopt and implement the Universal Background Screening Policy as outlined in Chapter 11**
- f. designate a safeguarding officer as outlined in Chapter 11**
- g. adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code as outlined in Chapter 14.**

### **Calls to Action (continued)**

**84. The Government of Canada increase and review the funding it allocates to federal programs designed to support community-level sport and broad sport participation. This may include increased funding for the Community Sport for All Initiative component of the Sport Support Program.**

**85. The Government of Canada collaborate with the provinces and territories to increase and regularly review the funding they provide to promote broad sport participation and support community-level sport initiatives and include “supporting broad sport participation and physical activity” as a criterion under the Multilateral Sport Framework (as described in Chapter 10).**

**86. The Government of Canada increase and regularly review the funding it allocates to federal programs designed to support the Indigenous sport system and its athletes. This may include increased funding for the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component of the Sport Support Program.**

**87. The Government of Canada collaborate with the provinces and territories to increase and regularly review the funding allocated to support the Indigenous sport system and athletes.**

**88. The Government of Canada increase and regularly review the funding allocated to the Athletes Assistance Program to account for inflation and the increased cost of living.**

### **THE NEED TO DIVERSIFY FUNDING FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

In addition to participants’ perspectives outlined earlier in this chapter, the Commission received feedback on our recommendations related to the need to diversify sources of funding for sport and physical activity, which we outline here.

#### **Feedback on diversifying sources of funding**

There was a strong consensus on the need to explore other sources of funding for the sport system. Participants agreed that diversifying the sources of federal funding and requiring sport organizations to diversify their revenues would ultimately lead to a more resilient and sustainable sport system.

A majority of participants expressed support for reinvesting new revenues from sports betting to support sport. Some had serious reservations about sport betting and vehemently believe that it should be banned. They noted concerns about the possibility of addiction and its effect on the well-being of Canadians. Others voiced reservations, but concluded that because sport betting was legalized, the potential revenues should be invested in sport.

Participants suggested other sources of funding for sport and physical activity, including those we described earlier, such as:

- cross-departmental collaboration and/or levying funds from various federal departments to invest in sport and physical activity
- encouraging private investments in sport, public-private partnerships, corporate sponsorships, and donations
- levying taxes, which could include a tax on sporting events, professional sport, and sports equipment.

Participants agreed that sport organizations must explore other revenue sources. However, they also noted that many organizations are unsuccessful at securing additional funding from private sources, like sponsorships. Representatives from National Sport Organizations explained that it can be challenging to compete with the Canadian Olympic Committee for sponsorships. Securing sponsorships can also be difficult for smaller and Disability Sport Organizations.

Participants noted that some sport organizations have effective foundations (that is, charitable organizations) that manage philanthropic contributions. They identified the opportunity for National Sport Organizations of various sizes to be supported by a common foundation that would pool donations together to enhance revenues.

We were also told that efforts to explore other sources of revenue for sport organizations should be tied to targeted marketing plans that broadly emphasize the value of sport for Canadians. Participants advised the Commission that sport organizations in countries that have socialized the benefits of sport for their communities have been more successful in receiving non-governmental support.

Participants suggested that if sport leaders came together, they could present a compelling narrative to corporate Canada and the government. These participants further proposed that by leveraging their collective influence, sport leaders could request that the Government of Canada “match” private donations.

While there was broad recognition that the sport system cannot be fully reliant on public funding, a majority of participants ultimately believe that governments are invaluable contributors in the sport system. Governments must step up as leaders and funders.

**Calls to Action: diversifying funding for sport and physical activity**

The Commission recognizes the need to ensure the financial health and viability of the Canadian sport system, and the need to balance federal investments in different sectors and across various jurisdictions. To enable the Government of Canada to invest more in sport and physical activity, we continue to believe it should explore alternative revenue sources that can be directly invested in the sport system.

During our engagement activities, participants frequently proposed investing taxation revenues generated from sport betting and lotteries. We further note that the federal government had previously used the funds from a lottery ticket scheme to raise money for the sport sector.<sup>1953</sup> Other possible approaches suggested by participants included levying a tax on professional sports.

In addition to these suggestions, public funding ought to be balanced by non-governmental sources of funding for sport. Therefore, we strongly encourage all sport organizations to be creative in diversifying their revenue streams, while ensuring that costs are not passed on to sport participants or volunteers. This includes exploring opportunities for partnerships, collaborations, and sponsorships, and collaborating with other sport organizations to establish shared services related to revenue generation. While some sports and sport organizations will always require financial support from the federal government, finding new ways to improve their financial viability would not prevent them from receiving government funding. Rather, it would create opportunities to leverage government funding in innovative ways.

**Calls to Action**

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**89. The Government of Canada explore and consider additional sources of government revenue to ensure it has sustainable means to invest in sport and physical activity, including but not limited to, supporting federally funded sport organizations. These sources of revenue to be explored could include, but are not limited to, tax revenues from sport betting and tax revenues from professional sports.**

**90. All sport organizations, including National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, explore and diversify their sources of revenue, pursue a shared services model and collaborative opportunities to generate revenues, and examine processes and practices to ensure enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.**

## **THE NEED TO CENTRALIZE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

In Chapter 12, we shared feedback from participants on the creation of a Centralized Sport Entity. Here, we share an overview of this feedback as it relates to the Entity's sport and physical activity funding functions.

### **Feedback on centralizing federal funding**

A majority of participants endorsed the creation of a Centralized Sport Entity that would become responsible for providing public funds to support sport and physical activity. They reiterated the need for stable funding, not funding that fluctuates based on a minister's priorities.

Some participants suggested that while the Centralized Sport Entity should play a role in promoting physical activity, the funding it provides for physical activity should be limited. They explained that provinces, territories, and municipalities must take the lead in investing in physical activity and education.

### **Call to Action: centralizing federal funding for sport and physical activity**

The Commission remains of the view that federal funding for sport and physical activity should be centralized.

As we noted, funding for sport and physical activity programs in Canada primarily comes from two federal government organizations: the Department of Canadian Heritage (Sport Canada) and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Although Sport Canada's focus is primarily on sport at the national level, some of its programs aim to increase participation in sport. Such programming overlaps with the mandate of other programs offered by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

When organizations apply for funding from both Sport Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, they must submit separate applications. This can double their reporting requirements and potentially result in inconsistencies in governance and oversight.

Another important issue is that sport organizations that receive funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada are not required to adopt safe-sport measures in line with either the former Abuse-Free Sport Program or the new Canadian Safe Sport Program.

The Centralized Sport Entity (further described in Chapter 12) should be responsible for the allocation, distribution, and oversight of all federal funding for sport and physical activity. This approach would ensure a single, centralized stream of federal funding for these areas. With this in mind, we recognize that it may take some time for the Centralized Sport Entity to be fully operational and, therefore, for the centralization of federal sport and physical activity funding to be completed.



Until the Centralized Sport Entity is established, the responsibility for supporting sport and physical activity should first remain with the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Public Health Agency of Canada, respectively. Then, as we outline in Chapter 12, structural changes should be made to ensure that a single department is responsible for supporting both sport and physical activity, at which point this department will be responsible for its funding. As explained in Chapter 12, a single minister should be responsible for sport and physical activity.

**Call to Action**

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**91. The Centralized Sport Entity as outlined in Chapter 12, once it is established, be responsible for receiving, allocating, distributing, and overseeing all federal sport and physical activity funding. Such responsibilities would include, but are not limited to:**

- a. developing a comprehensive long-term funding strategy**
- b. developing funding-support criteria**
- c. making funding decisions**
- d. distributing funds to sport and physical activity organizations**
- e. developing and monitoring a compliance and auditing regime to ensure effective use of funds.**

**THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

The Commission received feedback, following the release of our preliminary recommendations, emphasizing that the processes which guide the provision of funds to sport organizations need to be clear, consistent, accessible and straightforward.

**Feedback on improving the application process**

We heard broad support for this preliminary recommendation, as most participants agreed that funding applications must be clear and accessible, and that streamlining the application process will reduce the administrative burden and resources expended on applying for funding.

**Call to Action: improving the application process**

We recognize that the federal government has taken positive steps to improve the process for organizations to apply for funding. However, more needs to be done. The funding applications that sport organizations must complete are complex, costly, time-consuming, and difficult to navigate. Because most programs require separate applications, sport organizations end up duplicating a significant amount of effort when applying to multiple federal programs. The complicated nature of these processes increases the administrative burden on sport organizations, their staff, and volunteers who are already under significant strain.

Many participants suggested that the application process and procedures need to be simplified and streamlined to increase the efficiency of delivering public funds. This would also serve to reduce the administrative burden on sport organizations.

The Commission acknowledges the recent improvements that Sport Canada has made to the funding application process. As described earlier, Sport Canada has reduced the number of applications that sport organizations are required to complete if they apply for both core and project funding. We also understand that national-level sport organizations can apply for multi-year core funding.

However, the application process itself still remains very long, complicated, and costly for sport organizations. A simplified application process would enable them to focus on fulfilling their mandates rather than constantly seeking financial support. We encourage the government to leverage technology, where appropriate, to assist with streamlining, standardizing, and simplifying the application processes.

**Call to Action**

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**92. The Government of Canada ensure that processes guiding funding applications and the procedures supporting the receipt of federal grants and contributions are clear, efficient, and accessible. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

**THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE MONITORING AND AUDITING OF SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

The Commission received feedback from participants on its preliminary recommendations to improve the monitoring and auditing of federally funded sport organizations, by ensuring regular and proactive monitoring and auditing, and improving related procedures.

### **Feedback on improving monitoring and auditing**

Participants concurred that enhancements to monitoring and auditing of sport organizations are necessary. During our engagement activities, many voiced concerns that Sport Canada's oversight and monitoring of federally funded sport organizations are insufficient. We understand that not all federally funded sport organizations are regularly audited.

Participants agreed that the federal government should be actively involved in advancing strong governance of the sport system. It is vital to limit the misuse of funds and ensure transparency. Some participants called for the creation of a mechanism to disclose the mismanagement of public funds.

### **Call to Action: enhancing the monitoring and auditing of sport organizations**

As we outlined in our Preliminary Report, we believe that there is a lack of adequate monitoring and oversight of sport organizations receiving federal funding through the Sport Support Program. Despite the new Compliance and Accountability function within Sport Canada and the requirement for sport organizations to submit reports on their activities, many sport organizations fail to comply with their funding agreements' conditions. This includes those that require the implementation of good governance practices. We also heard that sport organizations are using funds for reasons other than their designated purposes.

Where governments do provide public funds to sport organizations, this money cannot be freely given without oversight and accountability. Canadians need to trust that public funds are allocated and dispensed responsibly. Regular checks and balances are required to ensure that public funds are being maximized by the organizations that receive them. Sport organizations must also understand their responsibility and, most importantly, comply with the conditions of funding, including requirements related to governance and safe sport.

The Commission reiterates that improved and enhanced monitoring and auditing of sport organizations is essential to ensure the appropriate use of funds provided by the federal government. It is also crucial for ensuring compliance with funding conditions.

The monitoring and auditing of sport organizations that receive federal funding should be proactive and regular. Audits should ensure that sport organizations meet all the conditions of their contribution agreements. This includes implementing good governance practices as we described in Chapter 14, and appropriately allocating public funds. These reviews should also thoroughly assess funding recipients' financial health and sustainability, the organizations' operational efficiency, the cost of sport participation, and the degree to which past Sport Canada funding has achieved the desired results.

Consideration should also be given to the monitoring process itself. The current monitoring process, like the funding application process, often places an unnecessary administrative burden on sport organizations. To help reduce this burden, participants suggested that the monitoring process be standardized and simplified. We heard that this was particularly important for small and medium-sized National Sport Organizations with limited human resources. This could, for example, include annual check-ins and standardized performance metrics. Consideration should be given to how technology, where appropriate, can be leveraged to facilitate the monitoring process. Overall, there is a need for an efficient process that reduces administrative burdens while increasing accountability. This would allow sport organizations to focus on other priorities like developing their sport.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**93. The Government of Canada regularly and proactively monitor and audit federally funded sport and physical activity organizations, and ensure that the monitoring and auditing procedures are effective, simple, and accessible. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

## THE NEED TO DEVELOP A NEW FUNDING STRATEGY FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

In what follows, we share the feedback from participants as it pertains to our preliminary recommendation that the federal government develop and implement a new multi-year and evidenced-based funding strategy for sport and physical activity in Canada focused on safety, equity, access, and inclusion.

### Feedback on a new funding strategy for sport and physical activity

We heard broad support for the development of a new funding strategy for sport and physical activity in Canada. A clear strategy with clear objectives was seen as a critical element missing from the current sport system.

Participants emphasized the importance of a long-term direction for funding, coupled with long-term and multi-year core funding allocations for federally funded sport organizations. They explained that short-term decisions assist with survival, while long-term thinking allows organizations to thrive.

We heard feedback from participants on the development of the long-term funding strategy. They suggested that it should be developed in collaboration with athletes, coaches, sport organizations, and other key members of the sport system.

Participants agreed that the new funding strategy needs to find a better balance between promoting broad sport participation and high performance. Some indicated that it is of utmost importance that high-performance sport continues to be reflected in Canada's strategic approach to support sport, noting that we are falling behind compared to other countries. Consensus emerged that safe sport, equity, access, and inclusion are guiding principles that must be reflected in the strategy.

Participants suggested that the long-term funding strategy should detail the funding criteria for core support to national-level sport organizations. Some observed that there may be too many National Sport Organizations and that it is important to review the criteria for their support. In line with a new strategic approach, participants recommended that there should be criteria tied to safe sport, equity, access, and inclusion. Others suggested that there should be criteria tied to broad sport participation such as clear numbers showing how many participants are registered at each level of the sport. There should also be specific criteria tied to achieving excellence.

We were advised that clear funding criteria can enable organizations to better understand their roles and responsibilities. Representatives from National Sport Organizations indicated that they did not fully understand the federal government's expectations regarding their responsibilities.

#### **Calls to Action: developing a new funding strategy for sport and physical activity**

The Commission remains of the view that there is a clear need for a sustainable and long-term funding strategy for sport and physical activity programs in Canada. This conclusion stems directly from our engagement activities and our independent assessment of the federal government's current approach to funding in these areas.

This strategy should reflect the federal government's long-term vision for investing in sport and physical activity. It should also involve adjusting funding priorities to better align with the aspirations, values and beliefs of Canadians regarding such programming.

We learned that many individuals, from all levels of sport, value high-performance sport and athletes who are seen as role models and sources of pride for Canadians. However, many participants believe that the federal government's funding priorities have disproportionately supported high performance and winning medals to the detriment of advancing other important sport and physical activity priorities.

For this reason, the national funding strategy needs to balance high-performance sport with broader support for a sport system that is safe, equitable, inclusive, and accessible to all Canadians. It should also reflect a greater emphasis on health and physical activity. Evidence-based insights and analysis should directly inform such a strategy's design, implementation, and evaluation.

Moreover, the strategy should specifically provide for the ongoing, stable, and equitable funding of sport organizations to ensure they serve equity-deserving groups, including persons with disabilities, Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.



The Commission also wishes to highlight the Calls to Action 88 and 90.i from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, as they relate to funding:

**“88.** We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel. [...]

**90.** We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:

- i. In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal Peoples. [...]<sup>1954</sup>

In addition to providing a long-term vision for Canadian sport, the federal government’s funding strategy ought to address two other concerns that were frequently raised during our engagement activities: short-term funding priorities and irregular funding cycles.

A primary concern arises from the common practice of providing short-term funding for programs and initiatives. In the past, the practice has been to allocate more funds to short-term programs, rather than increasing the core funding for sport organizations.

Many told us that, by its overreliance on project funding, the federal government contributed to uncertainty and instability for sport organizations. We heard frustrations stemming from both the amounts of funding available and the types of funding programs offered. Others explained that changing governmental priorities prevented consistency in the types of special projects that receive funding, further limiting sport organizations’ ability to engage in long-term planning.

While project funding can be a useful tool for supporting specific initiatives and projects, it cannot be an alternative to providing adequate core support for federally funded sport and physical activity organizations. In our view, it is important that the amount of core funding allocated to these organizations is adequate and allows organizations to address long-term priorities.

In this regard, the Commission heard that when short-term project funding ends, the programs it supported are jeopardized. Also, where project funding aims to address long-term priorities, like improving safe sport, it may be inadequate. There have been calls to establish and maintain a single funding model.

Many stressed the importance of multi-year funding agreements to assure long-term planning and stability in the sport system. Although we understand that multi-year core funding is currently available under the Sport Support Program, we believe that the funding strategy should recognize this need and continue to provide reliable

multi-year core funding. We also note that participants described the core funding blocks, as referenced under the previous funding framework, as being overly restrictive. Some explained that there needs to be a degree of flexibility built into the framework to enable federally funded sport organizations to efficiently allocate their funds.

Another primary concern is that much of the funding for sport organizations is provided on an irregular schedule. The Commission heard that sport-related funding is often announced or released very late in the funding cycle, leaving recipients with short timelines to spend or distribute it. We were told that this can lead to “binge spending,” which limits sport organizations’ ability to strategically allocate resources, thereby reducing the impact of government funding. Many told us that irregular, delayed, and insufficient funding creates instability.

Establishing stable, predictable funding cycles would allow for sustainable planning. This would enable sport organizations to better support their primary mandates. Some also noted that stable funding would allow National Sport Organizations to support both performance and holistic athlete care.

### **Reviewing eligibility and evaluation criteria for support to National Sport Organizations**

The ongoing funding crisis facing National Sport Organizations in Canada underscores the urgent need for both increased resources and improved efficiencies in how government funds are distributed. Thus, there is a need for the Government of Canada to re-examine its approach to allocating support, ensuring that resources are directed where they will have the most impact.

We encourage the Government of Canada to undertake a careful review of the eligibility and evaluation criteria for the Sport Support Program and align these with the new funding strategy, which prioritizes safety, equity, access, and inclusion. In doing so, the federal government may need to become more selective in its decisions about which organizations it supports. It may also need to prioritize those that effectively steward their sport, and provide accessible opportunities to participate, innovate, and create meaningful outcomes for Canadians. Recognizing that high-performance sport has received disproportionately greater support in previous years and the need to rectify this imbalance, the criteria should be aligned with our recommendation to support both high-performance sport and broader sport participation.

The Commission highlights the recommendation made by Justice Dubin as part of the Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athletic Performance, namely that “those responsible for administering government funds consider in making funding decisions: (a) the extent to which a sport organization has made its programs accessible to the broader community [...]”.<sup>1955</sup>

We also note that the Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on women and girls in sport recommended 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 clauses.”<sup>1956</sup>

## Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

**94. The Government of Canada develop a comprehensive multi-year and evidence-based funding strategy focused on safety, equity, access, and inclusion to govern the allocation of public funds to all federally funded sport and physical activity organizations. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

**95. The Government of Canada rigorously review the eligibility and evaluation criteria used to grant funds to National Sport Organizations under the Sport Support Program to align with the new funding strategy. Among other criteria, consideration should be given to criteria that take into account:**

- a. safety, equity, inclusion, and accessibility**
- b. good governance**
- c. levels of participation and the reach of programs across the country**
- d. degree of integration of disciplines, policies and programs across the country**
- e. degree of stewardship of the growth and development of the sport across the country**
- f. presence of development pathways for athletes from the community-level to the national-level**
- g. national team performance and athlete well-being.**

**96. The Government of Canada continue to make multi-year core funding available to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.**

# **CHAPTER 16:**

## **Now what? A look toward the future**







# Chapter 16:

## Now what? A look toward the future

Canada's sport system is at a pivotal point, struggling with fragmentation, inefficiency, and a lack of safety, transparency, and oversight that has eroded public trust. Participants are calling for a unified, accountable system that prioritizes safety, inclusion, accessibility, and strong governance.

In this chapter, we provide our recommended phased approach that defines the path forward for implementing our Calls to Action. Then, we present two additional Calls to Action:

- establishing an independent monitor to oversee and publicly report on the implementation of our Calls to Action
- creating a federal–provincial/territorial mechanism to support the implementation of our Calls to Action across jurisdictions.

### Phased approach

We recognize the scale of change ahead to implement our Calls to Action. This is why the Commission recommends a phased approach. This approach prioritizes urgent action to address the safe sport crisis and the systemic weaknesses in the Canadian sport system, while coordinating federal, provincial, and territorial efforts to make deeper structural changes over time.

The Commission recommends that the implementation should proceed as follows:

- the **immediate** Calls to Action must begin without delay and be substantially completed within the first 12 months of this report's publication
- the **short-term** Calls to Action must be substantially completed within approximately two years
- the **long-term** Calls to Action must be completed over a period of two to five years.

To maintain momentum and achieve system-wide transformation, it is essential that each category of Calls to Action is implemented as soon as possible. In other words, a Call to Action categorized as short or long term does not mean that its implementation should be delayed. Rather, it serves to guide the government in their implementation.

The tables below indicate which Calls to Action should be implemented immediately, in the short term, and in the long term. They also specify which government(s) are expected to lead their implementation. We recognize that successful implementation requires broader engagement. Therefore, we also identified other participants who will be involved.

These tables are meant to be read alongside this Final Report's detailed analysis and discussion, which provide the necessary context and findings for each Call to Action.

### IMMEDIATE CALLS TO ACTIONS (0–12 MONTHS)

| Immediate Calls to Action                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Reference                                                                                                                      | Lead governments                                                     | Other involved participants                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Consolidate federal leadership of sport and physical activity by ensuring that a single minister is responsible for both.                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 12, Call to Action 48</li> </ul>                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                               |
| Designate the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport as the custodian of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport until the Centralized Sport Entity is established.                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 10, Calls to Action 14, 15, 17</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (known as Sport Integrity Canada since January 1, 2026)</li> </ul> |
| Maintain the adoption of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as a condition of funding for all federally funded sport organizations.                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 10, Call to Action 13</li> <li>Chapter 15, Call to Action 83</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All federally funded sport organizations</li> </ul>                                                    |
| Maintain the adoption of the Canadian Safe Sport Program as a condition of funding for all federally funded sport organizations and maintain the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's mandate to independently administer the program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 10, Calls to Action 19 and 20</li> <li>Chapter 15, Call to Action 83</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport</li> <li>All federally funded sport organizations</li> </ul>       |
| Maintain the mandate given to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to design, develop, and maintain e-learning courses and other educational resources on the Canadian Safe Sport Program, its rules, and its report process.        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 11, Call to Action 32</li> </ul>                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport</li> </ul>                                                         |

| Immediate Calls to Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Reference                                                                                                                                                | Lead governments                                                                               | Other involved participants                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Develop, in collaboration with subject-matter experts, a National Background Screening Policy. Designate a National Multisport Service Organization as its custodian responsible for overseeing and reviewing the policy until the Centralized Sport Entity is established. Require all federally funded sport organizations to implement the National Background Screening Policy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, Calls to Action 36, 37</li> <li>• Chapter 15, Call to Action 83</li> </ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Multisport Service Organization</li> <li>• Subject-matter experts</li> <li>• All federally funded sport organizations</li> </ul> |
| Develop a comprehensive multi-year and evidence-based funding strategy focused on safety, equity, access, and inclusion to govern the allocation of public funds to all federally funded sport and physical activity organizations. Review the eligibility and evaluation criteria of National Sport Organizations under the Sport Support Program.                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 15, Calls to Action 94, 95</li> </ul>                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Increase the federal funding allocated to sport and continue to make multi-year core funding available under the Sport Support Program.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10, Calls to Action 21, 22, 23</li> <li>• Chapter 15, Calls to Action 81, 82, 84, 86, 88, 96</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Collaborate with the provinces and territories to increase their funding to support community-level sport.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 15, Call to Action 85</li> </ul>                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Collaborate with the provinces and territories to increase their funding to support the Indigenous sport system.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 15, Call to Action 87</li> </ul>                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Explore and consider additional sources of government revenue to invest in sport and physical activity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 15, Call to Action 89</li> </ul>                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                                                                                                                                    |

| Immediate Calls to Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Reference                                                                                                                           | Lead governments                                                                             | Other involved participants                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Explore and diversify sources of revenue, pursue a shared services model and collaborative opportunities to generate revenues, and examine processes and practices to ensure enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 15, Call to Action 90</li> </ul>                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All sport organizations</li> </ul>                        |
| Monitor and audit federally funded sport organizations regularly and proactively.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 15, Call to Action 93</li> </ul>                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                                                  |
| Ensure that federal funding application procedures are clear, efficient, and accessible.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 15, Call to Action 92</li> </ul>                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                                                  |
| Encourage National Sport Organizations to establish and implement a shared services model (horizontal and/or vertical).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 13, Calls to Action 60, 61, 63</li> </ul>                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Sport Organizations</li> </ul>                   |
| Encourage Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to consider a shared services model.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 13, Call to Action 62</li> </ul>                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations</li> </ul> |
| Designate the Government of Canada as the custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and require all federally funded sport organizations to adopt the Code.                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 14, Calls to Action 70, 71, 72, 73</li> <li>Chapter 15, Call to Action 83</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All federally funded sport organizations</li> </ul>       |
| Conduct ongoing reviews of the Canadian Sport Governance Code, in collaboration with governance experts. The first of these reviews shall include enhancements to mandate board diversity, athlete representation, training on anti-racism, inclusion, preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport, and improved transparency for sport organizations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 14, Calls to Action 73, 74, and 75</li> </ul>                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance experts</li> </ul>                             |

| Immediate Calls to Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Reference                                                                         | Lead governments                                                                             | Other involved participants                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ensure that the implementation of the Calls to Action in this report is inclusive of Indigenous perspectives.                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 6, Call to Action 4</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                      |
| Fulfill commitments in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 87 to 91 relevant to sport.                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 6, Call to Action 1</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                      |
| Respect the principle of Indigenous self-determination in decision-making processes as it relates to Indigenous people in sport and take proactive steps to engage with Indigenous people. Encourage other sport participants within their jurisdiction to do the same. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 6, Calls to Action 2, 3</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sport participants</li> </ul> |
| Ensure more rigorous intergovernmental collaboration to improve safe sport and the sport system.                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 12, Call to Action 50</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> |                                                                      |
| Review all federal sport-related policies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 12, Call to Action 51</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                      |



**SHORT-TERM CALLS TO ACTION (0–2 YEARS)**

| Short-term Calls to Action                                                                                                                         | Reference                                                                                                                               | Lead governments                                                                               | Other involved participants                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mandate that all federally funded sport organizations designate a safeguarding officer.                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, Call to Action 46</li> <li>• Chapter 15, Call to Action 83</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government-</li> </ul>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All federally funded sport organizations</li> </ul>                                                                                                                              |
| Encourage provinces and territories to mandate that all provincially or territorially funded sport organizations designate a safeguarding officer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, Call to Action 47</li> </ul>                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincially and territorially funded sport organizations</li> </ul>                                                                                                             |
| Launch a national safe sport public awareness campaign, in collaboration with subject-matter experts, that includes bystander training.            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, Calls to Action 29, 35</li> </ul>                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial and territorial governments</li> <li>• Subject-matter experts</li> <li>• National Multisport Service Organizations</li> <li>• National Sport Organizations</li> </ul> |
| Develop and deliver a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program in collaboration with subject-matter experts.                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, Calls to Action 30, 31, 33, 35</li> <li>• Chapter 15, Call to Action 83</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial and territorial governments</li> <li>• Subject-matter experts</li> <li>• National Multisport Service Organizations</li> <li>• All sport organizations</li> </ul>      |
| Reinstate and expand the scope of the True Sport Program.                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, Call to Action 34</li> </ul>                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Multisport Service Organizations</li> </ul>                                                                                                                             |
| Encourage provinces and territories to develop a “Universal Screening Policy”.                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, Call to Action 38</li> </ul>                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

| Short-term Calls to Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Reference                                                                                                                            | Lead governments                                                                               | Other involved participants                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Require the adoption of a safe sport policy or code of conduct consistent with the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport for all federally funded sport organizations.                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10, Call to Action 18</li> <li>• Chapter 15, Call to Action 83</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All federally funded sport organizations</li> </ul>                                                                                                     |
| Encourage provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations to ensure that the resolution processes of safe sport authorities and Independent Third-Party Mechanisms incorporate the features specified in Call to Action 27. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10, Call to Action 27</li> </ul>                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial and territorial governments</li> <li>• Indigenous Peoples</li> <li>• Safe Sport Authorities</li> <li>• Independent third parties</li> </ul>  |
| Encourage provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations to ensure that safe sport authorities and Independent Third-Party Mechanisms incorporate the features specified in Call to Action 28.                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10, Call to Action 28</li> </ul>                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial and territorial governments</li> <li>• Sport organizations</li> <li>• Safe Sport Authorities</li> <li>• Independent third parties</li> </ul> |
| Create a Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals in Sport in collaboration with the provinces and territories to be published by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, Calls to Action 41, 42, 43, 44</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| Establish a comprehensive national tool to collect and analyze data on sport and physical activity, including key safe sport indicators, and continue to fund Indigenous-led research specific to Indigenous people and sport.             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, Calls to Action 39, 40</li> <li>• Chapter 12, Calls to Action 56, 57</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial and territorial governments</li> </ul>                                                                                                       |

| Short-term Calls to Action                                                                                                                                                                                         | Reference                                                                         | Lead governments                                                                             | Other involved participants                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Make the necessary legislative amendments to ensure that a single federal minister is responsible for sport and physical activity supported by a single department.                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 12, Call to Action 49</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                                                                                                   |
| Review sport and physical activity policies and strategies.                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 12, Call to Action 51</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                                                                                                   |
| Develop a national Disability Sport Strategy in collaboration with the Disability sport community.                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 12, Call to Action 52</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disability sport community</li> </ul>                                                                      |
| Develop a national strategy to promote participation in sport and physical activity.                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 12, Call to Action 53</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members of the sport system, including sport organizations and Multisport Service Organizations</li> </ul> |
| Develop a national sport infrastructure strategy and create a dedicated sport infrastructure program.                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 7, Calls to Action 6, 8</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Municipal governments</li> <li>Indigenous groups</li> </ul>                                                |
| Increase federal funding for sport infrastructure and require that a percentage of federal funds provided to provinces and territories for the development of infrastructure is dedicated to sport infrastructure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 7, Calls to Action 7, 9</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                                                                                                   |
| Develop a national strategy on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport and physical activity.                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 7, Call to Action 10</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity-deserving groups</li> </ul>                                                                         |

| Short-term Calls to Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Reference                                                                                | Lead governments                                                                             | Other involved participants                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Create and implement mandatory standards on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility for federally funded sport organizations.                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 7, Call to Action 11</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All federally funded sport organizations</li> <li>Equity-deserving groups</li> </ul>            |
| Explore all possible fiscal, program, and administrative mechanisms to address barriers and increase Canadians' participation in sport and physical activity. Continue to support and expand initiatives that seek to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport and physical activity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 7, Calls to Action 5, 12</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                        |
| Develop and implement action plans and programs to support all sport and physical activity policies and strategies, and regularly and publicly report on their implementation.                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 12, Calls to Action 54, 55</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                                                                                                                                        |
| Encourage National Sport Organizations to amalgamate (horizontally and/or vertically).                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 13, Calls to Action 64, 65, 67</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Sport Organizations</li> </ul>                                                         |
| Encourage Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to consider amalgamation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 13, Call to Action 66</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations</li> </ul>                                       |
| Encourage National Sport Organizations to ensure broad consistency in the application of their policies across all levels of their sport and explore ways to ensure their application.                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 13, Calls to Action 68, 69</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Sport Organizations</li> <li>Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations</li> </ul> |

| Short-term Calls to Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Reference                                                                            | Lead governments                                                     | Other involved participants                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Require all federally funded sport organizations receiving federal core funding to conduct operational efficiency reviews to assess their existing practices and identify opportunities for further efficiency.                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 15, Call to Action 80</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All federally funded sport organizations</li> </ul> |
| Develop, in collaboration with governance experts, an oversight mechanism dedicated to sport governance. Conduct regular audits of federally funded sport organizations to ensure compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code until the Centralized Sport Entity is established. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 14, Calls to Action 76, 77</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance experts</li> </ul>                       |



## LONG-TERM CALLS TO ACTION (2–5 YEARS)

| Long-term Calls to Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Reference                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Lead governments                                                                               | Other involved participants |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Create a Multilateral Sport Framework to harmonize safe sport programs and sport governance standards across the country, support community-level sport and physical activity, amend federal legislation, and negotiate bilateral agreements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10, Calls to Action 24, 25</li> <li>• Chapter 11, Call to Action 38</li> <li>• Chapter 14, Call to Action 78</li> <li>• Chapter 15, Call to Action 85</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> |                             |
| Create and operationalize the Centralized Sport Entity to provide unified leadership, funding, and oversight of sport and physical activity.                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 7, Calls to Action 10, 11, 12</li> <li>• Chapter 10, Calls to Action 16, 17</li> <li>• Chapter 11, Calls to Action 30, 31, 34, 36</li> <li>• Chapter 12, Calls to Action 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59</li> <li>• Chapter 14, Calls to Action 72, 73, 76, 77</li> <li>• Chapter 15, Calls to Action 91, 92, 93, 94, 96</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal government</li> </ul>                         |                             |
| Create the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program and establish a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority empowered to maintain the Pan-Canadian Public Registry of Sanctioned Individuals in Sport.                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10, Call to Action 26</li> <li>• Chapter 11, Call to Action 45</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> |                             |
| Develop and implement a Pan-Canadian Sport Governance Code in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments.                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 14, Call to Action 79</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal–provincial/territorial governments</li> </ul> |                             |

The timeline below illustrates our proposed phased approach:

Figure 16.1. Timeline of the implementation of our Calls to Action



## Implementation and oversight

Others before us have made many recommendations to improve safe sport and the sport system in Canada. However, Canada has consistently fallen short in implementing them. There has been a clear struggle to move from vision to execution. The failure to act has been a barrier to meaningful change, has enabled maltreatment in sport to persist, and has eroded public trust in the sport system. We therefore urge the Government of Canada to exercise leadership and address this gap in implementation as it responds to our Calls to Action.

Over the course of our mandate, Canadians—including those at the highest levels of the sport system and governments—made it clear that they are deeply motivated to work for significant change. However, their broad call for the transformation of the Canadian sport system is insufficient on its own to drive that change. The implementation of our Calls to Action depends on political will. To ensure that this momentum does not fade and that implementation remains a national priority, the Government of Canada needs to make a deliberate commitment rooted in accountability and subject to independent oversight.

We note that the then-Minister of Sport and Physical Activity publicly committed at the time of the Commissioner's and Special Advisors' appointment to responding to the Commission's recommendations within six months of the publication of this report.<sup>1957</sup> We encourage the Government of Canada to uphold this commitment and collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to develop an action plan based on this response, outlining how these Calls to Action will be implemented.

To ensure consistent progress and maintain accountability, the Government of Canada should immediately appoint an independent monitor who is external to Sport Canada. This monitor should be mandated to oversee the implementation of our Calls to Action and appropriately resourced to fulfill this mandate. We recommend that the monitor provide quarterly updates to the federal minister responsible for sport and physical activity, and publish annual public reports.

The independent monitor would serve a key role in ensuring that all relevant parties, including the Government of Canada, provinces and territories, National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and relevant sport participants are held accountable. Importantly, the monitor's public reporting would provide the public with the necessary information to understand how the Calls to Action are being implemented, which will empower them to keep their governments accountable.

The sport system's current gaps and failures have enabled maltreatment. They cannot be allowed to persist. An independent monitor would help ensure that political decision-makers take the necessary actions to address these shortcomings. Clear timelines, transparency, and accountability are crucial and must be built into this transformation.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**97. The Government of Canada appoint an independent monitor, mandated to oversee the implementation of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission's Calls to Action. The independent monitor shall provide quarterly updates to the minister responsible for sport and physical activity and publish annual public reports.**

## Transformation through intergovernmental collaboration

We recognize the extensive intergovernmental collaboration required to advance many of the Commission's Calls to Action. We therefore recommend that a structured federal–provincial/territorial mechanism is created within the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council to support the implementation of our Calls to Action. This body could be a working group of the Federal/Provincial–Territorial Sport Committee that leads the implementation across jurisdictions. This group should meet frequently and regularly report on their progress to the Federal–Provincial/Territorial Sport Committee, the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council, or to the ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation, as appropriate. Through governments' collective commitment and coordinated efforts, these Calls to Action can drive a positive cultural shift and result in a safer, more inclusive, and well-governed sport system.

### Call to Action

The Commission calls for the following action to be taken:

**98. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, create a structured federal–provincial/territorial mechanism within the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council to support the implementation of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission's Calls to Action.**

## Conclusion

As we conclude our report, we are reminded of the words of Nelson Mandela: “Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.” These words were reaffirmed by Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild 22 years later when he emphasized the important role played by sport in our society. He also reminded us that to improve relations in the country, all Canadians have a role to play: “It’s going to take all of use to have reconciliation in Canada [...]. We all have to do it together. We all have to help each other advance reconciliation. It’s not just between Indigenous and non-Indigenous. That’s the start. But it’s with everyone.”<sup>1958</sup>

Sport in Canada stands at a defining moment. The current sport system—fragmented, inconsistent, and too often unsafe—does not meet the expectations of Canadians. The proliferation of organizations and overlapping mandates led to inefficiencies, duplications, a lack of alignment, and confusion, while conflicts of interest, a lack of transparency, and limited oversight of sport organizations has further undermined trust in the sport system. Persistent gaps in leadership and coordination across all levels have compounded these problems. Participants have voiced concerns about barriers to access, governance failures, and experiences of harm, and they have called for a sport system grounded in safety, inclusion, accessibility, and accountability.

Addressing the safe sport crisis requires not only structural reform but also a harmonized country-wide approach to safe sport. A more coherent, accountable, and participant-centred sport system is both necessary and within reach.

While our report is delivered to the Government of Canada, its message extends to everyone who shapes and supports sport and physical activity in Canada. Meaningful transformation and lasting changes cannot rest with the federal government alone. They require coordinated action from all levels of government and from the sport sector as a whole. We trust that the need for change, leadership, and the approaches we suggest in our report will resonate throughout the sport and physical activity communities and spur meaningful action at every level.

Our Calls to Action in this report respond to the systemic failures we examined. They offer more than structural adjustments—they present an opportunity to rebuild trust, restore integrity, and fundamentally rethink how sport is governed and delivered in Canada. They lay out a path toward a system that is safer, more transparent, more equitable, and better aligned with the values Canadians expect to see reflected in sport.



Achieving this vision will require deliberate, disciplined, and sustained effort. Transformation must be accompanied by strong leadership, clear accountability, and a commitment to implementation—not just policy creation. Success will depend on collaboration between all levels of government, a renewed focus on participant well-being, and ongoing attention to public trust. Canadians expect a system that protects them, includes them, and supports their development throughout all stages of participation.

By acting on these Calls to Action, Canada can build a sport system that truly serves its people. Such a system would provide sport environments that are safe, equitable, and supportive for participants at every level and across all jurisdictions. This system would be transparent in its governance, appropriately funded, aligned in purposes and practices, and more accountable to those it serves. Safe sport would be non-negotiable, and prevention measures to proactively reduce risks would be prioritized. Policies would be consistently implemented, fair and trusted complaint mechanisms would respond effectively to maltreatment, and participants would be supported throughout their involvement in sport, from the grassroots to high performance. Such a system eliminates unnecessary duplication, rationalizes programs, and expands safe, accessible, and welcoming opportunities for all.

Canada has an opportunity to be a global leader recognized for sporting excellence, and for the health, safety, happiness, and pride that sport inspires in our country.

Canadians are ready for a transformed, reinvigorated sport system that reflects their values and ambitions. This re-envisioned sport system will not emerge without deliberate and sustained effort. The path forward requires collaboration, disciplined implementation, and a shared commitment to public trust and participant well-being. This moment calls for leadership that is steady, principled, and aligned with the needs of those who rely on the system.

The work ahead is substantial, but achievable. And it must begin now.

# **CHAPTER 17:**

## **Commission's mandate and process**





## Chapter 17: Commission's mandate and process

In this chapter we describe the work and process undertaken by the Future of Sport in Canada Commission. We begin with a reminder of the Commission's Terms of Reference followed by a description of the creation of the Commission team. Thereafter, we review the Commission's activities and provide an overview of those with whom we met over the course of our mandate.

### The Future of Sport in Canada Commission Terms of Reference

On December 11, 2023, the Government of Canada announced the creation of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission.<sup>1959</sup> The announcement provided that:

"The Commission will consist of three individuals: an Independent Commissioner and two Special Advisors. The Commissioner will be a legal expert who is external to the Canadian sport system. One Special Advisor will be an expert with lived experience and/or expertise in victims' rights and trauma-informed processes. The other Special Advisor will be an expert on the Canadian sport system."<sup>1960</sup>

The Commission's mandate, as provided in its Terms of Reference, was two-fold. It was tasked to review the sport system and make recommendations on concrete and effective actions with respect to:

1. Improving safe sport in Canada, including trauma-informed approaches to support sport participants in the disclosure of and healing from maltreatment.
2. Improving the sport system in Canada, including but not limited to policy, funding structures, governance, reporting, accountability, conflicts of interest, systems alignment, culture, and legal considerations.<sup>1961</sup>

The Terms of Reference expressly provided that the Preliminary and Final Reports would contain recommendations for the Government of Canada. The Terms of Reference also provided that the reports "[...] may be of assistance to all governments and sport participants to use in both joint and independent efforts to improve sport systems in Canada."<sup>1962</sup>

The Terms of Reference provided that the Commission would function independently. To achieve the objectives of its mandate, the Commission was required, as part of its activities, to:

- Engage victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport, as well as subject-matter experts, academics, and advocates to bring to light the experiences, causes, and impacts of inappropriate behaviour and maltreatment; support healing; and seek input to inform recommendations.
- Engage a broad group of experts, academics, stakeholders, and sport participants and examine how to improve the sport system in Canada, including but not limited to issues related to policy, funding structures, governance, reporting, accountability, conflicts of interest, systems alignment, culture, and legal considerations.<sup>1963</sup>

The Commission could also draw on existing literature and reports to guide its work. The Terms of Reference also required the Commission, from the outset of its work, to engage and seek input from provinces and territories to foster collaboration and constructive engagement.<sup>1964</sup>

The Commission was required to deliver two reports to the Government of Canada: a Preliminary Report in advance of a National Summit on the Future of Sport and a Final Report. This Final Report builds on the Preliminary Report and reflects insights and deliberations from the National Summit organized by the Commission.<sup>1965</sup>

The Terms of Reference also outlined a list of required and suggested activities including regional and subject-specific round tables and meetings, a public online survey, and the creation of an online submission portal. We describe these activities in what follows.

In fulfilling its mandate and conducting its activities, the Commission had to be victim- and survivor-centred, trauma- and violence-informed. Its work was to be human-rights based, intersectional, inclusive, accessible, responsible, respectful, transparent, flexible, and forward-looking.<sup>1966</sup>

The Future of Sport in Canada Commission was not a commission of inquiry.<sup>1967</sup> Its mandate explicitly precluded it from making findings of misconduct or liability or determining the civil or criminal responsibility of individuals or organizations. The Commission's framework and the outcome of its unique features are explored at the end of this chapter.



## **SETTING UP THE FUTURE OF SPORT IN CANADA COMMISSION**

On May 9, 2024, Lise Maisonneuve, former Chief Justice of the Ontario Court of Justice, was appointed as the independent Commissioner to lead the Future of Sport in Canada Commission. Noni Classen was appointed as the Special Advisor with expertise in victims' rights and trauma-informed processes. Andrew Pipe was appointed as the Special Advisor with expertise within the Canadian sport system.<sup>1968</sup> The Commission's initial 18-month mandate began on May 9, 2024, with a deadline to publish its Final Report by November 9, 2025. As outlined below, the Commission's mandate was extended to March 31, 2026.

Following this announcement, the Commission began building its team and establishing its office. The Commissioner and Special Advisors were supported by two co-executive directors and a director working alongside a legal, research, communications, and operations team. Appendix 16 provides the full list of the Commission's team members.

## **ESTABLISHING A VICTIM- AND SURVIVOR-CENTRED AND TRAUMA- AND VIOLENCE-INFORMED FRAMEWORK**

The Commission's Terms of Reference required that it conduct its activities in a victim- and survivor-centred and trauma- and violence-informed manner.<sup>1969</sup> The Commission acted expeditiously to ensure the entire team received training from a consultant in psychological health and well-being and an expert in psychological health in the workplace.

We developed and implemented a protocol of trauma-informed practices to guide the Commission's activities. These practices were designed to support participants, including victims and survivors, in their interactions with the Commission. We also developed an array of mechanisms to facilitate the participation of a wide range of Canadians who had personal experiences of abuse and maltreatment. Participants came from within the physical activity and sport communities and beyond.

The Commission engaged health support workers to accompany and provide support to participants before, during, and after any meetings or other Commission activities as needed. Participants were informed that this service was available to them upon request.

The Commission underscored its victim- and survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach by ensuring a safe space for people to speak candidly and share their stories. Our communications were personalized, timely, and responsive, aiming to establish a positive rapport from the first contact. Throughout our activities, Commission staff remained available to respond to participants' questions or concerns. Prior to a meeting with the Commission, participants were provided with a document describing what to expect. The document provided information on the meeting structure and format and Commission attendees. It also reminded participants that the Commission's health support workers were available upon request.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY**

According to its Terms of Reference, and consistent with its commitment to transparency and accessibility, the Commission was required to inform participants that the information they provided to the Commission would be handled in accordance with the requirements of the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act*. The Commission was also required to explain to participants how the information we sought from them would be used and to obtain explicit permission from each participant for this use.

We spent considerable time and effort developing a trauma-informed approach that complied with the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act* and the Commission's Terms of Reference.

The Commission developed a privacy notice that was provided to all participants before they agreed to engage with the Commission. We ensured their consent was obtained before any participation in Commission activities. Considering the difficult and sensitive nature of the information participants might wish to share with the Commission, and to ensure a safe space where such conversations could occur, the Commission offered in-camera sessions.

We were inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's approach to gathering information and experiences from participants within in-camera settings.<sup>1970</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Terms of Reference explicitly provided for the possibility of in-camera sessions. For example, when a participant's statement contained the name or other identifying information of the person alleged of wrongdoing, those names and identifiers would not be recorded unless the individual had been convicted of the alleged wrongdoing.<sup>1971</sup>

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Terms of Reference also set out that any information that could be used to identify these individuals would be anonymized to the extent possible.<sup>1972</sup> The Future of Sport in Canada Commission followed a similar approach.<sup>1973</sup> When a participant wished to proceed with an in-camera meeting or to proceed in-camera for a portion of their, their information was shared confidentially and without certain information being recorded.

## **COMMUNICATIONS AND RESEARCH**

The Commission's communications and research teams played a key role in supporting its activities throughout its mandate.

On May 9, 2024, the Commission's website was launched and served as the primary tool for sharing information about our work. The website hosted the Commission's public online submission portal and therefore also served as a platform for participant engagement. Since the website's launch, there have been over 15,000 views of its landing page.

The Commission shared information through news releases and the Commissioner's messages. These were posted to our website and with hundreds of reporters covering Canadian sport and shared via the site CISION®. This information was also shared using the Commission's social media accounts. We also sent important updates by email to participants who took part in our activities and interested parties. Over the course of its mandate, the Commission developed a contact list of over 1,600 individuals. This list included sport organization representatives, government officials, academics, experts, athletes, and others within the sport and physical activity communities. We communicated with participants to keep them informed of the Commission's progress, shared promotional materials, and invited them to participate in our activities.

The research team supported and guided the Commission's work through research on topics related to its Terms of Reference. The Commission also contracted the Sport Information Resource Centre to conduct several literature reviews, comparative analyses, and other primary research to complement our research and address identified gaps in knowledge.

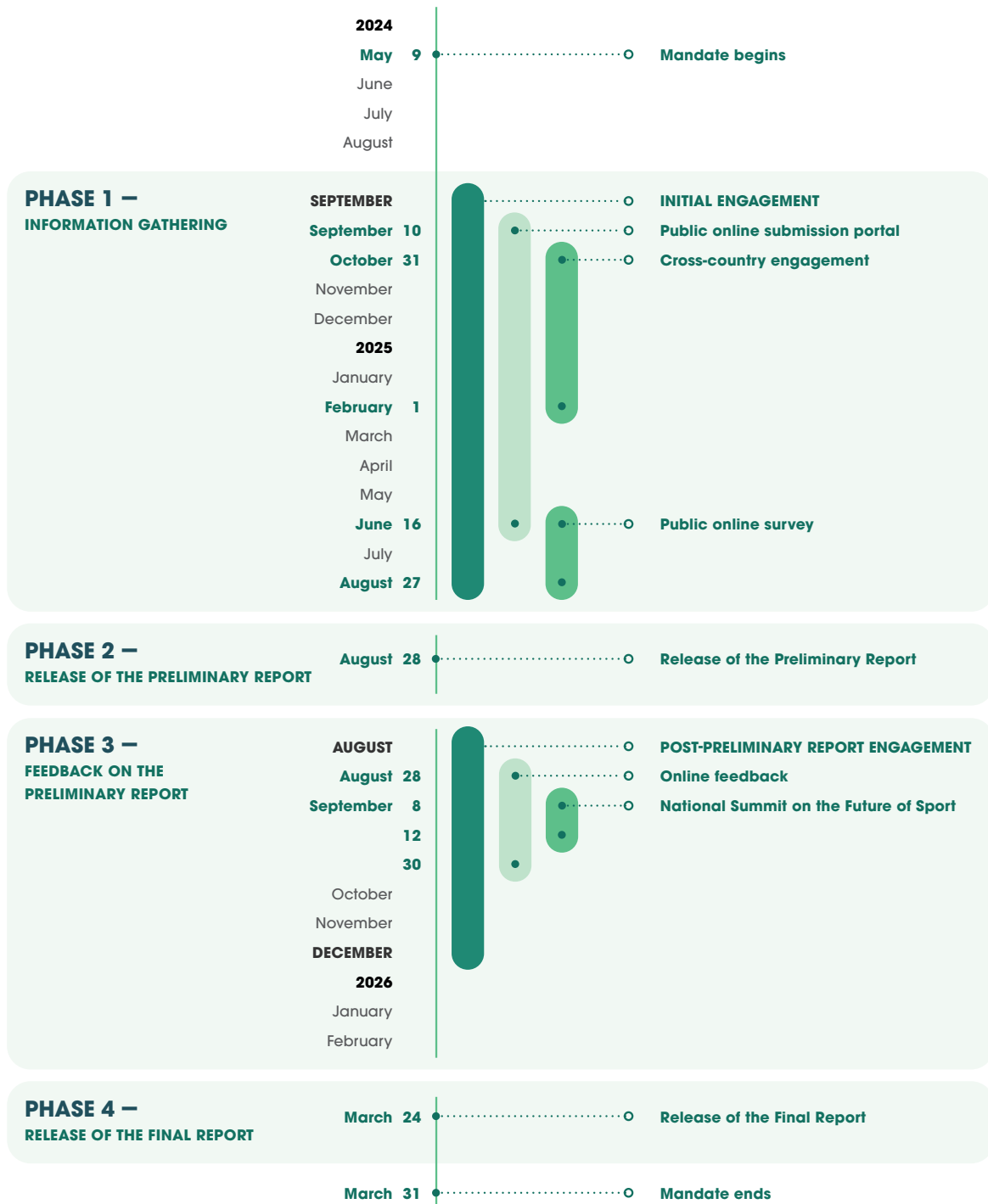
We established a multidisciplinary academic guidance panel<sup>1974</sup> to provide guidance on the Commission's research efforts. The panel identified existing literature relevant to the Commission's mandate and provided feedback on our research. Over 100 academic publications were identified by the Academic Guidance Panel for consideration by the Commission.

### **FULFILLING THE COMMISSION'S MANDATE: OUR ACTIVITIES**

The Commission's Terms of Reference required the Commission to undertake certain activities, which we describe in what follows.<sup>1975</sup> The Commission provided a variety of options for participant engagement throughout its mandate. In all our activities, participants could engage in the official language of their choice.

The Commission successfully engaged with participants from various backgrounds including athletes, sport participants, coaches, officials, sport administrators, academics, advocates, and members of the public. We heard from victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport as well as academics, advocates, and experts with specific experience in maltreatment in sport and sport systems in Canada and beyond. We also heard from those with personal experience in sport and physical activity organizations and programs from across Canada. The Commission engaged with provinces and territories in the early stages of its activities. Figure 17.1 provides an overview of the Commission's activities timeline.

Figure 17.1. Future of Sport in Canada Commission timeline of activities



## **Phase 1: gathering information**

### **Outreach and engagement**

Prior to the launch of the Commission's online submission portal, we made sustained efforts to initiate contacts, build relationships, and develop momentum.

In August 2024, the Commission began the initial phase of its participant outreach and engagement efforts. Early in our activities, we engaged with advocacy groups that support victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport to explain the Commission's engagement process and obtain their feedback on trauma-informed approaches.

The Commission was committed to learn from the perspective and experiences of Indigenous people and groups. The Commission's commitment to inclusivity was also reflected in its effort to engage with a broad range of participants, including participants from equity-deserving groups. To support its outreach and engagement efforts, the Commission sought advice from Indigenous communities and individuals with experience and expertise in equity-deserving communities in sport.

### **Public online submission portal**

In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Commission launched its public online submission portal on September 10, 2024. It facilitated input from athletes, parents, coaches, officials, administrators, academics, victims and survivors, and members of the public interested in contributing to the Commission's examination of approaches to improving safe sport and the sport system in Canada. The portal provided three options for individuals and organizations to engage with the Commission. They could submit information in writing, request a meeting with the Commission, and/or indicate their willingness to participate in its public online survey. The public online portal closed on June 16, 2025.

Over the course of its mandate, the Commission received over 1,400 documents and submissions from participants. These contributions were received via the online portal and by email.

The Commission received hundreds of requests through its portal with additional requests received via email. Everyone who requested to meet the Commission received an invitation to meet. Meetings with the Commission were held both in person and virtually. Some meetings had several attendees; in others we met with an individual. The Commission also hosted regional and subject-specific round tables.

### **Cross-country engagement**

Guided by principles of diversity, intersectionality, regional representation, and linguistic duality, and to engage further with Canadians across the country, the Commission developed a cross-Canada engagement plan.

On October 24, 2024, and November 14, 2024, the Commission announced that it would host meetings, regional and subject specific roundtables in: Toronto, Regina, Quebec City, Montreal, Winnipeg, Calgary, Halifax, Victoria, and Vancouver.<sup>1976</sup> These announcements were shared broadly using traditional media, social media, mass emails, and the Commission's website. The Commission also granted a few interviews to Canadian media to present its cross-country engagement plan to the public and invite them to participate.



In addition to the cities we visited as part of our cross-country engagement activities, the Commission visited the following 9 cities: Sarnia, Iqaluit, Edmonton, Gatineau, Moncton, St. Johns (Newfoundland and Labrador), Ottawa, Mississauga and Windsor. During these additional visits, it participated in 20 sport-related events and met with participants in one-on-one meetings or roundtable settings.

Figure 17.2. Cities visited by the Commission



Commission meetings in figures

Through a combination of outreach and portal requests, the Commission held 591 meetings and met with over 1,000 individuals.<sup>1977</sup> Of these individuals, 175 identified themselves or their child as being a victim or survivor of maltreatment in sport. They accounted for 17.3% of all meeting participants, or about 1 in 6 participants. During these 591 meetings, the Commission met with representatives from 270 sport organizations.

Participants the Commission met with

The Commission met with individuals and organizations from all levels of the sport system, from the community to the provincial, territorial, and national levels of sport. The individuals we met reflected a range of experiences, positions and roles within the sport system. Some played multiple roles in the sport system, simultaneously and over the course of their careers. For example, a sport administrator may have also participated in sport as a parent, coach, or as an athlete themselves. It was also not uncommon for individuals to be engaged in sport at multiple levels. For this reason, an individual may be counted in our data in multiple categories and levels of sport. The Commission also engaged with individuals and organizations from other countries, including Norway, Australia, New Zealand, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States.

Participants’ roles and positions in the sport ecosystem

As Table 17.1 outlines, the Commission met with individuals who occupied a variety of positions in the sport ecosystem. As the Commission came to learn, individuals who identified as victims or survivors of maltreatment were found in each of these positions. In other words, victims and survivors were not only athletes, but also coaches, officials and referees, and sport administrators.

The Commission met with a variety of sport administrators who contributed to the delivery of sport programming. This group included executive directors, chief executive officers, or directors general, members of boards of directors, program coordinators, and administrative assistants. We met with current and former athletes from all levels of sport, and with coaches, government officials, parents or guardians, officials, and referees. We also met with a variety of experts and academics from disciplines including kinesiology, psychology, medicine, engineering, sociology, law, and Indigenous studies. Those playing roles in the “other” category included Indigenous Elders, media personnel, sport support staff, and spectators.

Table 17.1. Roles of participants the Commission engaged with

| Roles     | Proportion of all participants |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| Academics | 5.3%                           |
| Athletes  | 23.5%                          |
| Coaches   | 12.7%                          |

|                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| Experts                | 13.8% |
| Government officials   | 11.4% |
| Officials and referees | 1.4%  |
| Parents or guardians   | 11.0% |
| Sport administrators   | 54.8% |
| Other                  | 5.2%  |

*Participants who identified as a victim or survivor of maltreatment in sport*

As Table 17.2 indicates, individuals who identified themselves or their child as being a victim or survivor of maltreatment in sport, were present in all role categories. While victims and survivors may have experienced maltreatment in one role or level of sport, they may have also been involved in sport in other capacities. Therefore, the total of all categories is higher than 100%.

Table 17.2. Proportion of participants in each role who identified as victims and survivors

| Role in the sport system | % of individuals in the role who identified as victims or survivors |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Academics                | 14.8%                                                               |
| Athletes                 | 46.4%                                                               |
| Coaches                  | 27.3%                                                               |
| Experts                  | 18.7%                                                               |
| Government officials     | 0.9%                                                                |
| Officials and referees   | 35.7%                                                               |
| Parents or guardians     | 50.5%                                                               |
| Sport administrators     | 9.4%                                                                |
| Other <sup>1978</sup>    | 24.5%                                                               |

Although the Commission engaged with individuals who identified as victims and survivors of maltreatment in each of these roles, it is important to note that 46.4% of all athletes we engaged with identified themselves as victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport. Similarly, 35.7% of officials, 50.5% of parents, and 27.3% of coaches identified themselves or their child as victims and survivors.

*Participants by level of sport*

As table 17.3 shows, the Commission engaged with individuals in diverse roles from all levels of sport, including victims and survivors of abuse in sport. However, given our national scope of work, national-level organizations, athletes, and other national sport bodies represented a large proportion of those we met. Some participants were not engaged at a particular or specific level of sport. For example, some academics, experts, Elders, or non-sport organizations did not report as being engaged at a particular level of sport.

**Table 17.3. Proportion of victims and survivors the Commission met with by level of sport**

| Level of sport      | % of all meeting participants | % of victims and survivors who met with the Commission, by level of sport |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National            | 46.2%                         | 44.0%                                                                     |
| Provincial          | 27.4%                         | 18.3%                                                                     |
| Local/regional      | 19.5%                         | 32.6%                                                                     |
| University/college  | 5.8%                          | 10.3%                                                                     |
| N/A <sup>1979</sup> | 13.3%                         | 16.6%                                                                     |

**Demographics of meeting participants**

Following its trauma-informed approach and respect for privacy, the Commission did not ask participants for demographic information. The information we share here is what participants volunteered during meetings and communication with us. In some cases, their demographic details were unknown. The Commission held meetings with individuals from all 13 provinces and territories.

*Equity-deserving communities*

The Commission hosted several round tables examining equity and diversity in sport and met with a number of academics who research these issues. As a result, the Commission met with over 100 individuals (10.2% of all participants) who identified as belonging to a racialized group and over 30 organizations from across Canada with a specific focus on inclusion and serving racialized or marginalized communities.

More than one-fifth (22.1%) of the individuals we met identified as belonging to an equity-deserving group. Among those, 46.2% identified as belonging to a racialized group (non-Indigenous), 40.4% were Indigenous, 10.3% had a disability, and 5.4% were part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. Women represented 45.9% of all individuals the Commission engaged with, 45% were men, 0.2% were nonbinary, and 8.8% were of undeclared gender. To learn more about the needs and experiences of equity-deserving groups, the Commission also met with advocates and organizations focused on serving these groups.

#### *Indigenous people and Indigenous groups*

The Commission committed to engage with Indigenous individuals and organizations involved in sport, physical activity, and well-being. The Commission met with over 20 Indigenous organizations including nations and governments as well as almost 90 individuals who identified as Indigenous.

#### *Governments*

The Commission met with politicians and public servants involved with sport and physical activity at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels of government. We met with ministers as well as senior government officials. In addition, meetings were held with officials and leaders of Indigenous governments. We also invited all provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport to provide feedback on the Commission's Preliminary Report.

#### *Sport organizations*

To gain an understanding of the sport system's complexities and of safe sport issues, the Commission engaged with organizations from all levels of sport and who played a variety of roles within the sport system. We met with other organizations that contribute to sport's operation and oversight. Appendix 17 outlines the number of sport organizations the Commission met with.

The Commission reached out to all National Multisport Service Organizations in receipt of funding from Sport Canada and engaged with those who responded. We met with 20 such organizations and received a written submission from one. Through proactive outreach and in response to requests received via the online submission portal, the Commission engaged and met with Multisport Service Organizations at every level of sport. We met with at least one such organization from each province and territory.

Similarly, the Commission reached out to all National Sport Organizations in receipt of Sport Canada funding and met with 58 that responded. We also engaged and met with National Sport Organizations that do not receive Sport Canada Funding.



Acknowledging that it would not be possible to meet with every Provincial and Territorial Sport Organization across Canada, the Commission shared an online form with these organizations seeking their input. We asked about their perspectives on the challenges the sport system faces and solicited their thoughts on potential solutions to these issues. The Commission held meetings with Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations from 10 provinces and territories, governing more than 30 different sports. To further expand its reach, the Commission invited Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to share with us their contact lists for Community Sport Organizations.

We also met with Community Sport Organizations delivering a range of sports at the local level in six provinces and territories. Many of these organizations work with specific populations or communities. For example, some deliver adaptive sport programming, or target their services to women, marginalized youth, or new Canadians. The Commission met with both private and for-profit sport organizations, such as competitive and professional sport leagues, and public and non-profit sport organizations.

### *Other participants*

Other organizations' mandates included sport funding, hosting events and games, safe sport education, providing professional services to sport organizations, and athlete development and mentorship. Beyond sport organizations, the Commission met with others who influence or contribute to the delivery of sport, physical activity, and well-being at all levels — and sometimes multiple levels — of the sport system. These organizations' mandates are diverse. Given the centrality of safe sport to the Commission's mandate, we made efforts to meet with and learn from individuals with legal expertise in complaint management, mediation, and arbitration. For example, we met with independent third-party organizations and advocacy and research groups, including experts in safe sport, inclusion, and accessibility in sport.

Figure 17.3. Commission by the numbers



### Public online survey

On June 16, 2025, according to its Terms of Reference, the Commission launched a public online survey. It was designed to gather public perspectives on improving safe sport and the broader sport system in Canada. More specifically, it was developed to gather data related to the Commission's preliminary findings and collect additional detailed data on specific topics. The survey closed on August 27, 2025, two months after it was launched. Its closure coincided with the Preliminary Report's release and the launch of an online feedback form.

The survey was organized to include four distinct sections: screening questions, two core sections aligned with the Commission's mandate of improving safe sport in Canada and improving the sport system in Canada, and demographic questions. Survey respondents were given the opportunity to answer either one of the core sections or both. The total number of questions posed to a participant was variable and driven by conditional logic based on three factors: their chosen path (answering one or both core sections), the type of sport participation identified during screening, and their self-reported experience. It was also dependent on the respondent's willingness to answer optional questions presented throughout the survey. This ensured that individuals received questions tailored to their specific experiences in the Canadian sport system. This sequencing and interdependence of questions led to natural variations in response rates. The survey was designed for data collection across key areas, including safe sport issues, complaint mechanisms, sanctions and registries, safe sport education, maltreatment prevention, leadership and governance, funding, and the benefits of sport. Appendix 18 lists the survey questions.

The survey was administered online via the Commission's website as a self-administered questionnaire. Most questions were optional. Respondents could complete the questionnaire at their own time and pace. The anonymity provided by this format is consistent with a victim- and survivor-centered as well as trauma- and violence-informed approach, prioritizing respondents' safety and comfort.<sup>1980</sup> To ensure a broad and relevant range of participation from both organized sport and non-organized sport participants, including the public at large, the survey employed a combination of sampling techniques.

The survey was posted on the Commission's website, making it easily accessible. It was shared with specific groups to encourage their participation, thereby ensuring input from key sport stakeholders (e.g., coaches, athletes, sport administrators, officials). The survey was shared with those who had previously provided their email addresses via the online portal to be notified of its launch (over 500 email addresses). The Commission also shared the survey with relevant networks (such as survivor support groups). Additionally, we used a mailing list for direct outreach and sent out reminders to boost participation. To broaden the survey's public profile, we also initiated media engagement. A digital promotional kit was developed and circulated, encouraging people to share the survey information within their respective networks.

The survey received a total of 3,351 responses.<sup>1981</sup> The analysis of the survey data followed a two-step approach, beginning with an overall analysis of the aggregated data. This involved a question-by-question frequency analysis to establish the pattern and prevalence of answers for every item surveyed, providing a broad overview of all responses. The next step involved a cross-tabulation analysis. By comparing relationships between responses across different questions, this method allowed for a deeper understanding of how different groups of participants responded. It also indicated how their perspectives on safe sport correlated with their views on the broader sport system.

The vast majority of respondents (88.8%) reported having participated in organized sport in Canada over the past 10 years. In other words, a large proportion of respondents had been involved in formal sport settings. More than two thirds (70.3%) of respondents reported participating in general recreational activity or exercise, and 61.5% identified as a spectator or fan. Slightly more than half of the respondents (53.3%) participate in non-organized sport.

The survey asked respondents how they participated in Canada's organized sport system over the past 10 years. The three most frequently selected roles were: coaches or instructors (67.0%), athletes (65.5%), and parents or guardians of an athlete (57.2%). Nearly half of respondents who were organized sport participants (48.7%) identified as administrators (including as a board member), indicating significant participation at the organizational leadership level.

Nine demographic questions were included to segment the data. This information was collected to allow for a more detailed analysis, making it possible to identify differences in opinions among various groups. These questions were asked of all respondents but were not mandatory. In total, 87.6% of respondents answered at least one of the demographic questions in the survey. Appendix 19 provides an overview of the demographic results.

Respondents could answer questions about improving safe sport, improving the sport system in Canada, or both. Table 17.4 gives an overview of respondent agreement rates by question category.

Table 17.4. Respondent agreement rate by question category

| Type of participant                       | Questions about both improving safe sport and improving the sport system in Canada | Questions only about improving safe sport in Canada | Questions only about improving the sport system in Canada |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Participated in organized sport           | 70.9%                                                                              | 4.2%                                                | 24.9%                                                     |
| Did not participate in an organized sport | 71.4%                                                                              | 6.6%                                                | 22.0%                                                     |

The results of the Commission’s public online survey are not reflective of the broader Canadian population and are intended to describe the experiences and views of voluntary respondents only. The data we collected allowed us to draw valuable, specific conclusions about the experiences and perceptions of those who chose to provide answers. To uphold the integrity of the analysis and ensure respondent anonymity, results from subgroups with a limited sample size were excluded from this report. Throughout this report, we only refer to survey results deemed sufficiently large to allow for meaningful interpretation.

**Commission mandate extended**

The response to the Commission’s engagement and outreach strategy was significant. It was clear that many wished to contribute to our work and meet with us. The Commission’s mandate was therefore extended by the Government of Canada to March 2026.<sup>1982</sup>

**Phase 2: Preliminary Report**

In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Commission released its Preliminary Report in both official languages on August 28, 2025, ahead of its National Summit. The Report was published on the Commission’s website and disseminated by email to all involved in our engagement processes. The Commission held a news conference to present the Preliminary Report after which the Commissioner participated in a number of media interviews.

Because its preliminary findings and recommendations would form the basis of the National Summit discussions, the Preliminary Report was detailed and comprehensive. It drew on research, documents shared with the Commission either proactively or upon request, and our engagement efforts with participants.



The Preliminary Report presented 71 recommendations to improve Canada's sport system by addressing issues related to leadership, governance, funding, system alignment, and safe sport. It also highlighted the widespread presence of maltreatment and abuse in sport. It advocated for stronger prevention and response mechanisms, standardized training and background checks, better complaint processes, and a national registry of sanctioned individuals to build a safer, more inclusive environment for all participants. Some of the preliminary recommendations were presented as options to allow for deliberation and discussion at the National Summit organized by the Commission.

### **Phase 3: feedback on the Preliminary Report**

From August 28 to September 30, 2025, the Commission launched and made available on its website an online feedback form. Through this form, the Commission welcomed feedback on the findings and recommendations found in its Preliminary Report. In addition to the feedback we received at the National Summit, the Commission received 151 submissions through the online feedback form and by email about its Preliminary Report.

### **Commission's National Summit**

As provided in its Terms of Reference, the Commission's activities included hosting a National Summit which took place September 8 to 12, 2025. The National Summit aimed to provide an opportunity for participants in our engagement process and other interested parties to deliberate on the Commission's preliminary findings and recommendations.<sup>1983</sup> The National Summit was an occasion for the Commission to observe, listen, and obtain feedback to inform the preparation of the Final Report.

In accordance with its victim- and survivor-centered and trauma- and violence-informed approach, the Commission hosted the National Summit in two parts. The first session was reserved for victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport (September 8–9, 2025). The second session was open to all participants including athletes, parents and guardians, coaches, officials and referees, administrators, support personnel, sport organizations, government officials, academics, advocates, and subject matter experts, as well as victims and survivors (September 11–12, 2025). The programming for the two sessions was identical.

The selection of National Summit participants was done following a call for expression of interest. On April 8, 2025, an expression of interest form was posted on the Commission's website and shared broadly through a news release, on the Commission's "X" accounts, and via email to those who had engaged with the Commission. The expression of interest form closed on April 29, 2025. The Commission received close to 500 expressions of interest.

The Commission's Terms of Reference set out how the National Summit was meant to give participants who engaged with the Commission and other interested parties a chance to deliberate on the Commission's preliminary findings and recommendations.<sup>1984</sup> As such, in selecting National Summit attendees we considered whether an individual participated in the Commission's engagement activities. The Commission also ensured National Summit attendees represented a wide range of perspectives including those of victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport, subject-matter experts, academics, advocates, athletes, sport participants, coaches, administrators, and sport leaders.

A total of 279 people attended the National Summit session one or session two. For both sessions we had participants attending in person or virtually.

The Summit agenda included a combination of plenaries and breakout sessions. The specific topics, content, and key questions of each breakout session aligned with the findings and recommendations the Commission made in its Preliminary Report. Discussion topics included: the Centralized Sport Entity, Canadian sport system alignment, sport governance, sport funding, safe sport policies, complaint mechanisms and complaint-management processes, safe sport and maltreatment-prevention measures, and public registries of sanctioned individuals. Professional facilitators managed facilitation in the breakout sessions.

The Commission also developed “principles of engagement” for the National Summit. This document was shared with participants ahead of the summit asking them to follow principles that promote safety and respectful, inclusive, and supportive environments. As with all other Commission activities, health support services were also available to participants. The Commission team also received additional training on trauma-informed practices in advance of the National Summit.

As this Final Report illustrates, the National Summit allowed for meaningful engagement with participants and shaped and informed the Commission's Calls to Action to the Government of Canada.

#### **Phase 4: Final Report**

According to our mandate, the Final Report was to build on the Preliminary Report and reflect insights garnered from the discussions and deliberations that occurred at the National Summit.<sup>1985</sup> This comprehensive Final Report was developed by building on the Preliminary Report and the feedback we received about it, and integrating additional research along with the results of the public online survey.

## **Reflecting on the Commission's work**

When we began our work, we quickly realized how complex the sport system is and, by extension, the complexity of the Commission's mandate. It also became clear that the two parts of the mandate — improving safe sport and improving the sport system in Canada — were deeply interconnected.

While previous reviews and studies have looked at specific issues such as maltreatment in sport, governance, high-performance culture, and safe sport complaints, the Commission's mandate was both broad and unprecedented.

The Future of Sport in Canada Commission's Final Report is the first comprehensive review of the Canadian sport system that includes safe sport and the first time that such a wide-ranging and holistic assessment and review has been undertaken.

Two defining features distinguished this Commission: its trauma-informed approach and the organization of a National Summit for participants to deliberate on the preliminary findings and recommendations.

We recognize that many people originally called for this Commission to be a commission of inquiry. As we outline throughout our report, we believe that the trauma-informed framework of this Commission was central to earning the confidence of participants, many of whom had previously lost trust in the sport system. The Commission developed protocols that both protected sensitive information and minimized the risk of trauma. This approach created a safe environment in which participants could share their experiences openly, while complying with the *Access to Information* and *Privacy Act*. Not only did this approach strengthen engagement with participants it also enhanced the quality of the information we collected. The outcomes of this Commission would not have been the same had it been a commission of inquiry.

The National Summit provided a unique forum for dialogue. For the first time, representatives from across the sport system, who otherwise often work in isolation, came together to discuss the findings and recommendations from the Preliminary Report. This process allowed participants to exchange perspectives and contribute to shaping the Final Report. Many described the National Summit as a turning point and the beginning of an ongoing national conversation on safe and inclusive sport and the structure of the Canadian sport system.

The Commission had a broad mandate. But by carefully balancing the scope of our work with the time and resources we were allocated, and by combining a trauma-informed methodology with open national deliberation, the Commission successfully fulfilled its Terms of Reference.

# APPENDICES









# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Comparison chart of provincial and territorial ministries responsible for sport and sport federations

| Province or territory            | Ministry responsible for sport                                           | Federation                                     |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Alberta</b>                   | Ministry of Tourism and Sport <sup>1986</sup>                            | None                                           |
| <b>British Columbia</b>          | Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport <sup>1987</sup>             | Sport BC <sup>1988</sup>                       |
| <b>Manitoba</b>                  | Department of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism <sup>1989</sup>       | Sport Manitoba <sup>1990</sup>                 |
| <b>New Brunswick</b>             | Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture <sup>1991</sup>              | Sport New Brunswick (Sport NB) <sup>1992</sup> |
| <b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b> | Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation <sup>1993</sup>      | Sport NL <sup>1994</sup>                       |
| <b>Northwest Territories</b>     | Department of Municipal and Community Affairs <sup>1995</sup>            | Sport North <sup>1996</sup>                    |
| <b>Nova Scotia</b>               | Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage <sup>1997</sup> | Sport Nova Scotia <sup>1998</sup>              |
| <b>Nunavut</b>                   | Department of Community Services <sup>1999</sup>                         | NU Sport Federation <sup>2000</sup>            |
| <b>Ontario</b>                   | Ministry of Sport <sup>2001</sup>                                        | None                                           |
| <b>Prince Edward Island</b>      | Ministry of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture <sup>2002</sup>        | Sport PEI <sup>2003</sup>                      |
| <b>Quebec</b>                    | Ministère de l'Éducation (Ministry of Education) <sup>2004</sup>         | Sports Québec <sup>2005</sup>                  |
| <b>Saskatchewan</b>              | Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport <sup>2006</sup>                     | Sask Sport <sup>2007</sup>                     |
| <b>Yukon</b>                     | Department of Community Services <sup>2008</sup>                         | Sport Yukon <sup>2009</sup>                    |

## Appendix 2:

### National Sport Organizations funded under the Sport Support Program in 2024-2025

The following National Sport Organizations received funding under the Sport Support Program in 2024-2025.<sup>2010</sup>

- |                                                        |                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1. Alpine Canada Alpin                                 | 24. Canadian Luge Association            |
| 2. Athletics Canada                                    | 25. Canadian Racquetball Association     |
| 3. Badminton Canada                                    | 26. Canadian Rugby Union                 |
| 4. Biathlon Canada                                     | 27. Canadian Snowboard Federation        |
| 5. Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton                           | 28. Canadian Soccer Association          |
| 6. Bowls Canada Boulingrin                             | 29. Canadian Tennis Association          |
| 7. Canada Artistic Swimming                            | 30. Canadian Tenpin Federation           |
| 8. Canada Basketball                                   | 31. Canadian Volleyball Association      |
| 9. Canada Skateboard                                   | 32. Canadian Water Polo Association Inc. |
| 10. Canadian Amateur Boxing Association                | 33. Canoe Kayak Canada                   |
| 11. Canadian Amateur Football Association              | 34. Climbing Escalade Canada             |
| 12. Canadian Amateur Rowing Association                | 35. Cricket Canada                       |
| 13. Canadian Amateur Softball Association              | 36. Diving Plongeon Canada               |
| 14. Canadian Blind Sports Association (Goalball)       | 37. Equestrian Canada                    |
| 15. Canadian Broomball Federation                      | 38. Federation of Canadian Archers Inc.  |
| 16. Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sport Association (Boccia) | 39. Field Hockey Canada                  |
| 17. Canadian Curling Association                       | 40. Hockey Canada                        |
| 18. Canadian Cycling Association                       | 41. Judo Canada                          |
| 19. Canadian DanceSport                                | 42. Lacrosse Canada                      |
| 20. Canadian Federation of Amateur Baseball            | 43. National Karate Association          |
| 21. Canadian Fencing Federation                        | 44. Nordiq Canada                        |
| 22. Canadian Freestyle Ski Association                 | 45. Pentathlon Canada                    |
| 23. Canadian Gymnastics Federation                     | 46. Ringette Canada                      |

- 47. Royal Canadian Golf Association
- 48. Sail Canada
- 49. Shooting Federation of Canada Inc.
- 50. Skate Canada
- 51. Ski Jumping Canada
- 52. Ski Mountaineering Competition Canada
- 53. Speed Skating Canada
- 54. Squash Canada
- 55. Swimming Canada
- 56. Table Tennis Canada Tennis de Table
- 57. Taekwondo Canada
- 58. Triathlon Canada
- 59. Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada
- 60. Weightlifting Canada
- 61. Wheelchair Basketball
- 62. Wheelchair Rugby Canada
- 63. Wrestling Canada Lutte

## Appendix 3:

### National Multisport Service Organizations funded under the Sport Support Program in 2022-2023

The following National Multisport Service Organizations received funding under the Sport Support Program in 2022-2023.<sup>2011</sup>

- |                                             |                                               |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1. Aboriginal Sport Circle                  | 15. Motivate Canada                           |
| 2. AthletesCAN                              | 16. Own the Podium                            |
| 3. Canada Games Council                     | 17. ParticipACTION                            |
| 4. Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports     | 18. Physical and Health Education Canada      |
| 5. Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association | 19. Special Olympics Canada                   |
| 6. Canadian Deaf Sports Association         | 20. Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada |
| 7. Canadian Olympic Committee               | 21. Sport for Life Society                    |
| 8. Canadian Paralympic Committee            | 22. Sport Information Resource Centre         |
| 9. Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities        | 23. U SPORTS                                  |
| 10. Canadian Women and Sport                |                                               |
| 11. Coaching Association of Canada          |                                               |
| 12. Commonwealth Games Canada               |                                               |
| 13. Go, Le Grand Défi inc.                  |                                               |
| 14. KidSport Canada                         |                                               |

## Appendix 4:

### **Recommendations contained in the final report titled “Aiming High: Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada” issued by McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc. on October 5, 2020**

#### **Recommendations for the final development of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)**

1. The UCCMS requires the addition of procedures and development of protocols within the time limits set out above; the critical areas for amendment include: (2.2)
  - i. Addition of a definition for each of the individuals described in the Sport Canada Contribution Agreement, beyond athletes, to whom jurisdiction will apply;
  - ii. Scope and purpose of the National Independent Mechanism (NIM);
  - iii. Procedures of how to activate the Mechanism;
  - iv. Assessment of the complaints;
  - v. Investigation procedures;
  - vi. Specific obligations of complainants, respondents and third parties, including duties to cooperate with the process, possible duty to attend investigations, duties to produce documents and evidence, etc.;
  - vii. Evaluation and determination of defined sanctions;
  - viii. Adjudicative procedures including final and binding arbitration;
  - ix. Assistance of the sport in accepting the sanction and assisting in its implementation;
  - x. Education on the existence and use of the NIM and the UCCMS.



2. Despite the difficulties that might arise, a review and possible development of a definition of “individual affiliated with” a Federally Funded Sport Organisations (FFSO) be standardised according to the definition in the Contribution Agreement to apply across the sport sector. (2.4.1)
3. The NIM to have oversight and responsibility over managing any future amendments to the UCCMS. (2.2)

### **Recommendations for the Principles to Establish the NIM**

4. The NIM must be independent from all sports bodies in order to provide support, comfort, and trust in the system of maltreatment protection. (3.1, 3.2 and 8.3)
5. Acceptance and use of the NIM is voluntary for all sports organisations. Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations (PTSOs) and Clubs who choose to join the NIM will be required to align their rules and procedures with their FFSSOs and their respective participating provinces or territories. (2.3)
6. The role of the NIM is to guarantee the protection of all sport participants from maltreatment in Canadian sport. The Mission is to create a safe and welcoming environment for all participants in sport – free from harassment, abuse, discrimination and all other forms of maltreatment. (3.2)
7. The core of the NIM is to focus on: (3.2)
  - i. Providing confidential paths for disclosure and reporting of maltreatment;
  - ii. Conducting investigations of allegations of maltreatment reported to the NIM by a covered participant;
  - iii. Recommending disciplinary and remedial actions in regard to complaints;
  - iv. Providing legal representation to victims on any adjudication of the sanction. Developing a counsel's assistance program for the use of complainants and respondents who are not FFSSOs and become involved in the adjudicative process.
  - v. Directing and researching prevention education for all those connected to the sport sector.
  - vi. Providing advice, guidance, and support to FFSSOs.
  - vii. Ensuring a system of excellence through compliance and audit functions.
8. The NIM and its staff, assisted by its Visionary Advisors and Think Tanks, provide the leadership to ensure a trusted independent mechanism to prevent and address maltreatment in sport in Canada. (3.2)

### **Recommendations for NIM Personal Roles and Responsibilities**

9. The Chief Operating Person (COP), in place from the outset, will have responsibility during transition and development of the NIM. The COP will provide the overall leadership and stewardship thereafter. (3.7.1)
10. A Director of Investigation to be appointed in the Pilot phase to oversee the development and management of the Preliminary Assessment Team and Internal Investigators. (3.7.2)
11. Chief Legal Officer be appointed in the Pilot phase. (3.7)
12. A Director of Complainant and User Support to be appointed to manage the National Sport Safeguarding Officers (“NSSOs”) and the Complainant Defence Counsel. The Director will also be responsible for liaising with the outsourced portions of the NIM. (3.7.5)
13. A Director of Education to be responsible for directing the content and creation of training and maltreatment prevention content. (3.7.7)
14. Internal Investigators to be appointed as needed. Such persons must have experience conducting trauma informed interviews, gathering, and analysing complex evidence and analytical skills to write a report. (3.7.4)
15. Preliminary Assessment Team to be established and staffed by full time employees responsible for receiving, assessing, and prioritising formal reports about alleged maltreatment. (3.7.3)
16. Two National Sport Safeguarding Officers (NSSOs) to be appointed initially, and others as needed. These individuals will be the primary point of contact for all disclosures. Their responsibilities will include making referrals and assisting with activating and navigating formal complaints processes. They will also be the liaison with the Independent Third Party at the FFSO level. (3.7.6 and 8.3)

### **Recommendations on Governance Structure and Visionary Advisors**

17. Evaluate whether the NIM ought to have its own governance structure or utilise an existing structure of a Canadian not-for-profit organisation. (3.4)
18. The NIM will require the appointment of a group of Visionary Advisors with proven experience in order to fulfill its leadership role. The group’s composition, background and expertise as described (3.10). The Visionary Advisors will provide the thought leadership and advocacy to prevent and address maltreatment in Canadian sport. (3.5)
19. Two key Think Tank working groups to be appointed. One to deal with Education, Prevention, and Research and the other comprised of members of Field of Play (athletes, coaches and referees). (3.5)

### **Recommendations on Organisational Structure**

- 20. The COP is to develop a flat line organisational structure. This will allow the NIM to focus on the core functions of the mechanism while also maintaining direction over outsourced functions and retaining the ability to conduct research on the same. (3.6)
- 21. The senior executive team of the NIM to be responsible for the direction and oversight of all outsourced functions of the NIM. (3.8)

### **Recommendations on Outsourced Functions**

- 22. Outsourced functions should be seamlessly integrated for users of the NIM. The functions should include 24/7 crisis contact services, mental health support services, education and adjudication. All other functions should remain internal to the NIM. (3.8)
- 23. A partnership with Kids Help Phone be created to provide crisis intervention and referral services for both youth and adults. (3.8.1 & 3.8.2)
- 24. Mental health support be outsourced to the Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport. (3.8.2 and 8.3)
- 25. Education to be directed and outsourced by the NIM through an RFP process. A national strategy needs to be developed which includes identification of mandatory educational requirements designed for specific stakeholder groups, curriculum design, financial models for training, frequency of education, evaluation processes and tracking and database management. (3.8.3 and 8.4)
- 26. The NIM should outsource technological platforms and educational delivery programs. (3.8.3 and 3.8.6)
- 27. Adjudication processes should be outsourced to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (“SDRCC”) providing it is completely independent as a provider of these services. (3.8.5)
- 28. The outsourced function to the SDRCC may require consideration of an additional, new Maltreatment Tribunal with arbitrators trained in adjudication and dispute resolution processes specific to maltreatment in sport. (3.8.5)

### **Recommendations on NIM Core Components**

- 29. The investigation function to be housed internally within the NIM. (3.6.2)
- 30. The Director of Investigation duties will include creating, monitoring, and modifying the disclosure and formal complaint procedures. (3.6.2)
- 31. The investigative function will comprise: (i) the preliminary assessment; (ii) the full-scale internal investigation; and (iii) referral to and oversight over lower risk FFSOs’ Independent Third Party external investigations. (3.6.2)

- 32. Preliminary assessment of complaints to be carried out by a specialised team of individuals with appropriate skills, training, and experience in risk assessment. (3.6.2)
- 33. The NIM will have discretionary authority to investigate all other forms of maltreatment. Lower risk assessments to be referred to the FFSOs' Independent Third Party. (3.6.2)
- 34. The NIM will have exclusive authority to investigate sexual maltreatment, grooming, serious physical abuse, and consent with persons over the age of majority. These being high risk incidents. (3.6.2)
- 35. The NIM to provide access to mental health support to users who either make a disclosure or formal report. (3.6.3 and 8.3)
- 36. The NSSOs are to be the initial point of contact for confidential or anonymous disclosures. They will determine if the conduct falls within the definitions of maltreatment in the UCCMS. If so, they may activate a formal complaint process or refer to law enforcement or child welfare agencies. (3.6.3)
- 37. Appoint Complainant Defence Counsel who are to be independent of the NIM and be available for complainants who meet the criteria. (3.8.4)
- 38. The appointment of a Complainant Defence Counsel would occur upon selection by the Director of Complainant and User Support. (3.8.4)
- 39. Complainant Defence Counsel would have carriage of providing legal services to the complainant in the adjudication process. (3.8.4)

### **Dispute Resolution, Remedial Actions and Sanctions**

- 40. The COP is the sole authority for issuing sanctions under the UCCMS. (3.6.4)
- 41. The FSSOs may be required to support or implement the recommended sanction. (3.6.4)
- 42. Lower risk breaches of the UCCMS can result in resolution before the commencement of any adjudication process. (3.6.4)

### **Compliance and System Excellence**

- 43. The NIM has a responsibility to engage in compliance review to ensure the integrity of its operations. The purpose is to provide leadership and information to FFSOs related to NIM requirements and operations and ensure ongoing leadership. The result will be an assurance that FFSOs are compliant with their Contribution Agreements. (3.6.5)
- 44. The NIM is to file an annual report with Sport Canada to be tabled in the House of Commons which will inform their Report Card evaluation of participating FFSOs. (3.6.5)

### **Recommendations to Facilitate the Introduction of the NIM**

45. FFSOs will have to ensure their participants' (athletes, coaches, volunteers, medical personnel, etc.) acceptance of the UCCMS through a contractual agreement which may include oversight by the NIM. (4.3)
46. A new provision in the Contribution Agreement may be required to the following effect: Amending Annex A paragraph 5, to add 5.1.4 The Recipient voluntarily accepts the NIM's oversight of maltreatment under the UCCMS.

### **Recommendations for the NIM Pilot Phase-In**

47. A gradual development of the NIM through a Pilot is recommended in order to: (4.3)
  - i. manage capacity as the system develops and grows;
  - ii. allow for testing and evaluation of the system; and
  - iii. allow NSOs and their affiliates to first align policies before full operation of the NIM.
48. It is recommended that the NIM be developed in three phases, starting in 2021 with the creation of the core of the NIM and expectation that the NIM be fully launched, nationally, by 2024. Successful implementation may expedite an acceleration of these phases. (4.2)
49. An application and review process to be initiated by the NIM for FFSOs and PTSOs wishing to gain access to the Pilot. Those selected should include FFSOs of different sizes, complexity, and features that will allow the NIM Pilot to evaluate its ongoing development. (4.2)
50. All of the NIM's described features to be mandatory requirements for all FFSOs participating throughout the Pilot period. (4.2)
51. The NIM will be available to all remaining FFSOs who wish to voluntarily adopt the NIM by 2024 when it is expected to be fully operational. (4.2)



## **Recommendations for Evolving the NIM**

### **Start-up Phase**

- 52.** During the start-up phase, staffing should be modest and limited to the hiring of the following full-time staff: Chief Legal Officer, Director of Education and Research, Director of Investigation, and Business Manager. Technological requirements including website development, and case management tools will be outsourced. (4.3)
- 53.** The NIM will establish outsourced providers in accordance with the suggestions in this Report. (4.3)
- 54.** In the start-up phase it is recommended that existing educational training requirements, provided through the Coaching Association of Canada (“CAC”), Respect Group, or other equivalent national providers continue until such time as the NIM’s oversight of education and training becomes operational. (4.3)
- 55.** The NIM to establish a communication plan as early as possible to communicate to the Canadian public and sport community the values of the UCCMS dealing with maltreatment. This will require Sport Canada, the Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC), and possibly McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc. (MGSS), to work closely with the COP. (4.2)

### **Pilot Year 1 (2022)**

- 56.** It is recommended in Pilot Year 1 there be 12 NSOs selected together with two Provincial Sport Governing Bodies (“PSGBs”): Sport Manitoba and SASK Sport (willing participants). See the IRT’s suggestions at 4.3.
- 57.** The core staff will be augmented by 14 full-time staff to launch Pilot Year 1. The staff will need to include appointments of two NSSOs, a Director of Communications, Senior Investigator, two Preliminary Assessment Officers, Director of Compliance and System Excellence, Director of Complainant and User Support, Complainant Defence Counsel as well as additional full time or contract investigators and intake officer(s) as required. (4.3)
- 58.** To be operational in this phase will require outsourced services. See the discussions at 4.3.

### **Pilot Year 2 (2023)**

- 59.** An additional 20 NSOs to be selected to augment the inaugural complement together with selecting Multi Sport Organisations (MSOs) and Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network (COPSIN) members. (4.4)
- 60.** The inaugural group of participants will remit, for the first time, a user fee on behalf of their registered participants. The group selected for the second year will pay their first-year user fees in 2024. (4.4)

- 61.** In Pilot Year 2, the NIM will provide its first annual report to be filed as recommended above. Furthermore, an independent review of the Pilot is to be conducted in this second year to be delivered to Sport Canada and tabled in the House of Commons. (4.4)

### **Fully Operational (2024)**

- 62.** Remaining organisations wishing to join the NIM may do so in this first fully operational year. This will be the first year where all participants will be required to remit an annual user fee. (4.6)

## **Recommendations on the Activation and the Resolution Process**

### **Activation of the NIM**

- 63.** From the outset, the NIM is to develop an intake process for both disclosure and formal reporting procedures. (3.3.1 and 3.3.2)
- 64.** The available intake process should include access via telephone, text messaging, web portal, webchat, and email. Other accessible formats to be made available for those who are unable to use the foregoing formats. There will be no 24/7 phone line available for intake. (3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 9.2)

### **Disclosure Process**

- 65.** Disclosure should follow a process similar to that of the University of Toronto's Sexual Assault Policy. Guidelines would include: (3.3.2)
- i. Disclosure is simply sharing your experience of maltreatment. A disclosure does not launch any kind of formal process, and it does not have to include significant or specific detail
  - ii. The person can disclose to anyone – a friend, colleague. You can also disclose to the NIM.
  - iii. When you disclose to the NIM, it will make available support and services, and can discuss whether counselling, access or referrals to medical services, and other accommodations may be appropriate. You do not have to make a report to access these services.
  - iv. A disclosure does not lead to a report unless the person wants it to.
- 66.** The NSSO will be responsible for taking or overseeing action in one of the following ways: (i) listening to the disclosure; (ii) referring the individual to support services or protection agencies such as mental health, child protection, and/or law enforcement; and (iii) assisting the individual in activating the formal reporting mechanism. (3.3.2)

### **Formal Reporting Process**

- 67.** The formal reporting process will be activated through the online web portal, except where issues of accessibility must be addressed. (3.3.3, 8.3 and 9.2)
- 68.** The Preliminary Assessment Team will receive and review complaints. The review will include the determination that the complaint is within the UCCMS and the NIM will process the complaint. (3.3.3)
- 69.** Upon confirmation of jurisdiction, the Preliminary Assessment Team will determine how the complaint should be appropriately resolved. (3.3.3)
- 70.** The NIM to develop the threshold, scope and guidelines for the Preliminary Assessment Team. (3.3.3)
- 71.** The NIM should investigate all conduct defined in the UCCMS that carries a presumptive sanction of permanent ineligibility. (3.3.3)
- 72.** The Director of Investigation will review the determination of the Preliminary Assessment Team and inform the alleged perpetrator that a complaint was filed against him/her if required. (3.3.3)

### **Investigation Process**

- 73.** Upon acceptance of a complaint for processing, the Director of Investigation will appoint an internal investigator. (3.3.4)
- 74.** When the Preliminary Assessment Team directs a complaint to the Independent Third Party of an FFSO, they will be required to submit a final report to an appointed NIM investigator. The NIM appointed investigator to be made available to assist the Independent Third Party, if requested. (3.3.4)
- 75.** A process for the NIM to reassume authority over complaints directed to external investigation to be developed. (3.3.4)
- 76.** Where the NIM reassumes authority over a complaint it is recommended that an internal NIM investigator who did not perform the oversight role be appointed to reduce possible bias. (3.3.4)
- 77.** The investigator to issue a draft report to the parties and request them to review and provide final comment. (3.3.4)
- 78.** The investigator to offer the option of early resolution through alternative dispute resolution should the parties accept the facts as written. (3.3.4)
- 79.** The early resolution function will be part of the adjudication function provided by the outsourced service provider. Early resolution should not be utilised in instances of sexual maltreatment. (3.3.4)
- 80.** The investigator to prepare a final report to determine the facts and whether the alleged conduct occurred. The report may include recommended sanctions. The report to be submitted to the COP who makes the final decision. (3.3.4)

- 81. The COP may issue a request for further investigation based on need to consider issues, findings of fact, or sanction. (3.3.4)
- 82. If the recommended sanction is life-time ineligibility, then the COP is to chair a three-person panel to determine the final sanction. (3.3.4)
- 83. On the occasion where an investigator finds the alleged sexual maltreatment did not occur, the COP should have the discretion to convene an external panel of sexual assault counsellors to review the investigator's report and determine if certain factors were considered appropriately (known as the Philadelphia Model). (3.3.4)

### **Sanction Enforcement**

- 84. Upon the communication of a final decision and sanction, implementation of any sanction may require an FFSO to accept and on occasion act in tandem with the NIM to complete enforcement. (3.3.5)

### **Adjudicating Process**

- 85. Anyone disagreeing with the decision of the NIM, for either procedural or substantive reasons, may apply for adjudication of the matter. (3.3.6)
- 86. The outsourced adjudication provider may require the development of procedural rules and establishing a Maltreatment Tribunal in order to provide adjudication services to the NIM. Some disputers may require a three-person arbitration panel in appropriate cases. (3.3.6)

### **Recommendations on Education and Prevention**

- 87. The NIM to oversee the national development of resources and policies focused on prevention and education. It will also endeavour to ensure foundational change in the culture of sport so that it is safe for all participants. (3.2)
- 88. The Director of Education to direct the content and creation of educational programs. (3.7.7)
- 89. Prevention and education will require targeted approaches for different stakeholders (such as coaches, other activity leaders, board members, athletes, parents). The Education Think Tank and Director of Education to determine the appropriate outsourced education service providers. (3.6.6)

### **Recommendations on Funding the NIM**

- 90. Sport Canada to provide seed funding from 2021 through to the launch of the NIM in 2024. The NIM however must be financially sustainable upon being fully operational in 2024 and must not rely exclusively on funding from Sport Canada. (4.2 and 3.10.2)

91. Participation in the NIM will carry with it the requirement to pay a \$4.00 participant user fee to support the operations of the NIM. Collection of the fee would commence in Year 2 for a FFSO who participated in the previous year. This proposed funding is intended to limit the financial burden on FFSOs. (4.2)
92. Upon full operation in 2024, or earlier, user fees will be a mandatory for all participants; the federal government cannot and will not be the only contributor to the cost of the operation of the NIM. (4.2)
93. Should provincial or territorial governments decide to join the NIM, the IRT recommends that the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation consult and collaborate with one another on how the provinces and territories can share in a portion of the funding. (3.10.1)
94. A portion of the user fee may be allocated to FFSOs to support their ongoing maltreatment efforts, such as the Independent Third Party. The FFSOs will be required to gather and remit this fee on an annual basis to the NIM. (3.10)
95. A comprehensive pro forma financial model to be developed. This should be informed by participation statistics provided by FFSOs. (3.10)
96. A public foundation, eligible to issue tax receipts, requires examination to determine if it could be a source of funding. Charitable donations and sponsorship as sources of funding should be explored. (3.10.2)
97. Outsource services provided through NIM can be subject to user fees. (3.10.2)
98. Other departments of the federal government, aside from Sport Canada, ought to be explored as sources of funding. (3.10.2)

### **Recommendations for the Roles and Responsibilities of FFSOs**

99. In order to be a proactive participant in changing the culture of maltreatment in sport in Canada, all FFSOs are encouraged to voluntarily participate in the NIM. (3.9)
100. FFSOs joining the NIM have an obligation to inform affiliated individuals that the NIM is available to them for disclosure or reports of maltreatment as defined in the UCCMS.
101. The current requirement for FFSOs to have an Independent Third Party to receive and manage reports of harassment and abuse as outlined in the Contribution Agreement should remain in place for those FFSOs that have joined the NIM. (3.9)



## Appendix 5:

### Detailed summary of the complaint management process under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program

Below is a more detailed summary of the complaint management process under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program:<sup>2012</sup>

- The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner first handled the complaint intake and conducted a preliminary review. This preliminary assessment did not evaluate the complaint's merits. Its purpose was to confirm the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner had jurisdiction to proceed.<sup>2013</sup>
- Then, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner could either move the complaint to mediation (with the consent of the parties) or directly to the investigation stage.<sup>2014</sup>
- At any stage during the preliminary review and assessment of the complaint, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner could recommend that the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes impose provisional measures. The Director of Sanctions and Outcomes was independent and had the full authority to impose sanctions on participants.<sup>2015</sup>
- After the preliminary review and assessment, the complaint proceeded to an investigation. This also happened if a mediation took place but did not result in a settlement. At this stage, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would appoint an independent investigator to investigate the complaint.<sup>2016</sup>
- The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would review the investigation report to ensure it was complete and conducted in accordance with the *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Investigation of Complaints*. The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would not review or make an assessment on the findings of the investigator.<sup>2017</sup>
- The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would give the finalized investigation report to the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes.<sup>2018</sup>
- The Director of Sanctions and Outcomes would give a copy of the investigation report to the parties and give them the opportunity to make submissions on the findings.<sup>2019</sup>
- The Director of Sanctions and Outcomes would review the investigation report and any submission from the parties. The Director would then decide if one or more violations of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport occurred. If so, they would impose appropriate sanctions.<sup>2020</sup>

- The Director of Sanctions and Outcomes would provide the parties with a written “Report on Violations and Sanctions.” This final report would determine any violations of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, explain any sanctions imposed, and include detailed reasons.<sup>2021</sup>
- If the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes imposed a sanction that restricted the respondent’s eligibility to participate in sport, this was included in the Abuse-Free Sport Registry.<sup>2022</sup>
- If a party disagreed with a decision made by the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes, they could challenge the findings of violation and the sanctions imposed. This review would go before the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada’s Safeguarding Tribunal.<sup>2023</sup>
- Finally, sanctions reviewed by the Safeguarding Tribunal could be appealed to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada’s Appeal Tribunal.<sup>2024</sup>

## Appendix 6:

### List of National Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes that have adopted the Canadian Safe Sport Program

The following organizations have adopted the Canadian Safe Sport Program (as of December 2025).<sup>2025</sup>

#### National Sport Organizations:

- |                                                               |                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Alpine Canada                                              | 21. Canadian Tenpin Federation |
| 2. Archery Canada                                             | 22. Canoe Kayak Canada         |
| 3. Athletics Canada                                           | 23. Climbing Escalade Canada   |
| 4. Badminton Canada                                           | 24. Cricket Canada             |
| 5. Baseball Canada                                            | 25. Curling Canada             |
| 6. Biathlon Canada                                            | 26. Cycling Canada Cyclisme    |
| 7. Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton                                  | 27. Diving Canada Plongeon     |
| 8. Boccia Canada (Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association) | 28. Equestrian Canada          |
| 9. Bowls Canada Boulingrin                                    | 29. Field Hockey Canada        |
| 10. Boxing Canada                                             | 30. Football Canada            |
| 11. Broomball Canada                                          | 31. Freestyle Canada           |
| 12. Canada Artistic Swimming                                  | 32. Golf Canada                |
| 13. Canada Basketball                                         | 33. Gymnastics Canada          |
| 14. Canada DanceSport                                         | 34. Handball Canada            |
| 15. Canada Powerlifting                                       | 35. Hockey Canada              |
| 16. Canada Skateboard                                         | 36. Judo Canada                |
| 17. Canada Snowboard                                          | 37. Karate Canada              |
| 18. Canada Soccer                                             | 38. Lacrosse Canada            |
| 19. Canadian Blind Sports Association                         | 39. Luge Canada                |
| 20. Canadian Fencing Federation                               | 40. Nordiq Canada              |
|                                                               | 41. Pentathlon Canada          |

- 42. Racquetball Canada
- 43. Ringette Canada
- 44. Rowing Canada Aviron
- 45. Rugby Canada
- 46. Sail Canada
- 47. Shooting Federation of Canada
- 48. Skate Canada
- 49. Ski Jumping Canada
- 50. Ski Mountaineering Competition Canada
- 51. Softball Canada
- 52. Speed Skating Canada
- 53. Squash Canada
- 54. Swimming Canada
- 55. Table Tennis Canada
- 56. Taekwondo Canada
- 57. Tennis Canada
- 58. Triathlon Canada
- 59. Volleyball Canada
- 60. Water Polo Canada
- 61. Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada
- 62. Weightlifting Canada Halterophilie
- 63. Wheelchair Basketball Canada
- 64. Wheelchair Rugby Canada
- 65. Wrestling Canada Lutte

**National Multisport Service Organizations:**

- 1. AthletesCAN
- 2. Canada Games Council
- 3. Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport
- 4. Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association
- 5. Canadian Deaf Sports Association
- 6. Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute
- 7. Canadian Olympic Committee
- 8. Canadian Paralympic Committee
- 9. Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities
- 10. Canadian Women and Sport
- 11. Coaching Association of Canada
- 12. Commonwealth Sport Canada
- 13. Go le Grand défi
- 14. Inclusion in Canadian Sports Network
- 15. KidSport
- 16. Own the Podium
- 17. ParticipACTION
- 18. Physical and Health Education Canada
- 19. Special Olympics Canada
- 20. Sport for Life
- 21. Sport Information Resource Centre
- 22. U SPORTS

**Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes:**

1. Canadian Sport Centre Manitoba
2. Canadian Sport Centre Saskatchewan
3. Canadian Sport Institute Alberta
4. Canadian Sport Institute Atlantic
5. Canadian Sport Institute Ontario
6. Canadian Sport Institute Pacific



## Appendix 7:

### List of provincial and territorial complaint mechanisms, including Independent Third-Party Mechanisms

| Province or territory  | Responsible person or body                | Independent | Mandatory                                                                                                                                                   | Who can complain?                                                                                                                  | Scope of complaints                 |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Quebec <sup>2026</sup> | Recreation and sports integrity ombudsman | Yes         | Yes<br><br>The <i>Act respecting safety in recreation and sport</i> provides that the Government shall appoint a recreation and sports integrity ombudsman. | Anyone, of any age, whose physical or psychological integrity has been harmed in the context of a recreational or sports activity. | Complaints in matters of integrity. |

| Province or territory                                       | Responsible person or body          | Independent | Mandatory                                                                                                                                                                                     | Who can complain?                                                                                                                                                                                        | Scope of complaints                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>New Brunswick (Sport NB)</b> <sup>2027</sup>             | Independent Third Party (ITP Sport) | Yes         | No<br><br>Participation in the NB Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism is voluntary and is not required by law or as a condition of provincial funding.                                             | Participants involved with Provincial Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations that are members of Sport NB have the right to avail themselves of the NB Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism. | Complaints of maltreatment or prohibited behaviours under the codes of conduct of Sport NB member organizations (which shall reflect the principles set forth in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)).<br><br>Appeal of final decisions of Provincial Sport Organization/ Multisport Service Organization alleging that it failed to follow their constitution/by-law or policies.<br><br>Appeals of arbitral decisions made by a Mediator/Arbitrator under the NB Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism. |
| <b>Newfoundland and Labrador (Sport NL)</b> <sup>2028</sup> | Independent Third Party (ITP Sport) | Yes         | Yes<br><br>Participation in the NL Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism is mandatory for Provincial Sport Organization members of Sport NL. Membership in Sport NL is mandatory to receive funding. | Participants involved with Provincial Sport Organizations that are members in good standing with Sport NL.                                                                                               | Complaints under the codes of conduct of Sport NL member organizations (which shall reflect the principles set forth in the (UCCMS)).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

| Province or territory                                  | Responsible person or body               | Independent | Mandatory                                                                                                                                                                         | Who can complain?                                                                                                                                            | Scope of complaints                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Saskatchewan (Sask Sport)</b> <sup>2029</sup>       | Independent Third Party (ITP Sport)      | Yes         | Yes<br><br>Participation in Sask Sport's Identified Independent Third Party is mandatory for PSO members of Sask Sport. Membership in Sask Sport is mandatory to receive funding. | Members of sport organizations that are affiliated with a Sask Sport Member Provincial Sport Organization.                                                   | Complaints under the safe sport policies of Sask Sport Member Provincial Sport Organizations (which align with the standards of the UCCMS). |
| <b>Nova Scotia (Sport Nova Scotia)</b> <sup>2030</sup> | Independent Third Party (Alias Solution) | Yes         | No<br><br>Participation in the NS Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism is voluntary and is not required by law or as a condition of provincial funding.                                 | Members of sport organizations that are affiliated with a Provincial Sport Organization that is a participant to the complaint process of Sport Nova Scotia. | Complaints of maltreatment as identified in the UCCMS.                                                                                      |

| Province or territory                                | Responsible person or body                                     | Independent | Mandatory                                                                                                    | Who can complain?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Scope of complaints                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Nunavut (NU Sport Federation)</b> <sup>2031</sup> | Independent Third Party (Dispute Resolution Officer – Unknown) | Yes         | No<br>Membership in NU Sport Federation is currently not a condition of territorial funding. <sup>2032</sup> | Individual registrants defined in the by-laws of NU Sport Federation and its members who are subject to the policies, rules and regulations of NU Sport Federation, and all persons employed by, contracted by or engaged in activities with NU Sport Federation and its members including employees, contractors, athletes, coaches, instructors, officials, volunteers, judges, athlete support personnel, managers, administrators, parents or guardians, spectators, committee members or directors and officers. <sup>2033</sup> | Complaints containing allegations involving violations of NU Sport Federation's Code of conduct and Ethics by a registrant. |

## Appendix 8:

### Table outlining examples of complaints handled by Sport Integrity Australia compared to those managed by Australian sport organizations<sup>2034</sup>

|                          | Sport Integrity Australia                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Sport Organizations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of complaint</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anything that may constitute Prohibited Conduct under the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, or</li> <li>2. Anything that may constitute discrimination based on a protected characteristic</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All other National Integrity Framework matters</li> <li>2. Complaints on non-National Integrity Framework issues</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Examples</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misconduct with a child or young person</li> <li>• Sexual behaviour with or around a child or young person</li> <li>• Shaming, humiliating, intimidating or belittling a child or young person</li> <li>• Causing a child or young person physical pain or discomfort</li> <li>• Breaching the Children and Young People Safe Practices</li> <li>• Supplying of drugs or alcohol to a child or young person</li> <li>• Discrimination based on race or ethnicity, age, disability, sex or sexual orientation, or religion</li> <li>• Doping (managed under the sport's Anti-Doping Policy)</li> <li>• Any Prohibited Conduct under the Member Protection policy, if it involves a child or young person.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abuse, bullying or harassment between adults</li> <li>• Victimisation of an adult</li> <li>• Sexual Misconduct between adults</li> <li>• Match, race or competition fixing and other types of Competition Manipulation</li> <li>• Supplying inside information for the purposes of gambling</li> <li>• Betting by members on their own sport</li> <li>• Unlawful use of over the counter or prescription drugs</li> <li>• Inappropriate use or provision of supplements</li> <li>• Use, possession or trafficking of illegal drugs</li> <li>• Concealing information about Prohibited Conduct</li> <li>• Selection and eligibility disputes</li> <li>• Competition Rules disputes</li> </ul> |



|                         | Sport Integrity Australia (continued) | Sport Organizations (continued)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Examples<br>(continued) |                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Conduct breaches</li> <li>• Social Media Policy breaches</li> <li>• Governance misconduct</li> <li>• Employment disputes</li> <li>• Complaints that are solely a Personal Grievance</li> <li>• Whistleblower disclosures</li> <li>• Any conduct that occurred before a sports commencement date in the National Integrity Framework</li> <li>• Any other policies that a sport has</li> </ul> |

## Appendix 9:

### Comparison table between the former Abuse-Free Sport Program and the Canadian Safe Sport Program

#### Principal features of the Programs

| Program              | Former Abuse-Free Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Canadian Safe Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Administrator</b> | The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (“ <b>OSIC</b> ”), an independent unit of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (“ <b>SDRCC</b> ”), was responsible for all steps of the process <sup>2035</sup> except the decision on violations and sanctions under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (“ <b>UCCMS</b> ”), which was made by the Director of Sanctions and Outcome (“ <b>DSO</b> ”). | The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (“ <b>CCES</b> ”) <sup>2036</sup> is responsible for all steps of the process, from receiving the report to deciding on violation and sanction under the UCCMS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Cost</b>          | Cost of services are shared by its users.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Cost of services are assumed by the Government of Canada.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Jurisdiction</b>  | Contract-based approach: sport organizations from all levels of sport, as well as provinces and territories, could participate in the Program. <sup>2037</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Contract-based approach: only federally funded National Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes can adhere to the Program. <sup>2038</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Participants</b>  | <p>The list of participants to which the Program applied was to be determined, for each adopting sport organization, in their program signatory agreement.<sup>2039</sup></p> <p>Participants could include athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators, directors, employees, trainers, parents and guardians.</p>                                                                                                                       | <p>The list of participants to which the program applies is set out in the Canadian Safe Sport Program (“<b>CSSP</b>”) Rules.<sup>2040</sup></p> <p>Participants include (i) board members and employees of the adopting sport organization, (ii) national-level athletes, (iii) other individuals who compete or are involved in sport under the authority of an adopting sport organization and whom the CCES has authorized to designate as a participant and (iv) any Canadian official, judge, umpire or referee as designated by each adopting sport organization and authorized by the CCES who is involved in national or international level competition under the authority or governed by the rules of a national sport organization that has adopted the CSSP.</p> <p>The CSSP may apply to other individuals for the duration of their participation at certain national events designated by each adopting sport organization.<sup>2041</sup></p> |

| Program                              | Former Abuse-Free Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Canadian Safe Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Legal Aid Program</b>             | <p>The Abuse-Free Sport Legal Aid Program provided eligible individuals with free and confidential access to legal advisors.</p> <p>Both complainants and respondents to a Complaint admissible to the OSIC were eligible. A victim/survivor of Prohibited Behaviour (as defined in the UCCMS in a situation that would be admissible to the OSIC, regardless of whether a complaint had been filed, was also eligible.<sup>2042</sup></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>The CCES does not have a legal aid program.</p> <p>The CCES indicates on its website that “legal aid should be offered by an organization that is separate from CCES” and that “Sport Canada is in the process of identifying options regarding how legal aid services can be provided to individuals involved in the CSSP reporting process.”<sup>2043</sup></p>                                                                                     |
| <b>Support services</b>              | <p>The Abuse-Free Sport Helpline was available to all Canadians with questions about discrimination or maltreatment in a sport environment.<sup>2044</sup></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>The CSSP Support Team is available to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• share information about what can be reported and what to expect after a report is submitted</li> <li>• connect individuals with mental health and other support services</li> <li>• assist with redirecting reports that fall outside of the CSSP jurisdiction, where available</li> <li>• answer questions about the CSSP.<sup>2045</sup></li> </ul>             |
| <b>Mental Health Support Program</b> | <p>The Mental Health Support Program ensured access to competent mental health support to eligible individuals before, during, and after the Complaint Management process or the Sport Environment Assessment process.<sup>2046</sup></p> <p>Eligible individuals included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• victims/survivors of Prohibited Behaviour regardless of whether a complaint has been filed</li> <li>• a complainant or a respondent to a Complaint admissible to the OSIC services</li> <li>• a Requester or a participant of a Sport Environment Assessment.<sup>2047</sup></li> </ul> <p>Individuals had to be at least 16 years of age to access the Abuse-Free Sport Mental Health Support program.</p> | <p>The CSSP Mental Health Services Program provides independent mental health services to participants involved in the CSSP reporting process.</p> <p>Participants of the CSSP who have experienced maltreatment and those who have been reported to the CCES for potentially engaging in a Prohibited Behaviour are eligible.<sup>2048</sup></p> <p>Individuals must be at least 16 years of age to access the CSSP Mental Health Services Program.</p> |

## Main features of the complaint management processes

| Program                         | Abuse-Free Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Canadian Safe Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Report intake</b>            | Complaints had to be filed through the OSIC online platform. <sup>2049</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Reports must be filed through the CCES reporting platform (online or by telephone). <sup>2050</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Provisional measures</b>     | OSIC could recommend and the DSO could impose provisional measures at any stage of the complaint management process. <sup>2051</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | The CCES may impose provisional measures at any stage following receipt of a Report. <sup>2052</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Resolution mechanisms</b>    | Two types of resolutions: Mediation (with the consent of the parties) or investigation and decision. <sup>2053</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | A broad range of resolutions: Letters of concern, remedial resolution, acceptance of violation, mediation facilitated by the SDRCC and a formal resolution (which includes investigation and decision). <sup>2054</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Investigation</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of external investigator by OSIC</li> <li>• Investigator provided Investigation Report to OSIC</li> <li>• OSIC reviewed Investigation Report to confirm compliance with OSIC Guidelines Regarding Investigation of Complaints</li> <li>• OSIC provided Investigation Report to DSO.<sup>2055</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of external investigator by CCES</li> <li>• Investigator provides Investigation Report to CCES.<sup>2056</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Decision-making</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSO provided Investigation Report to parties and gave them the opportunity to make written submissions on the Investigation Report findings</li> <li>• DSO made decision on violation(s) and sanction(s) and provided parties with a “Report on Violations and Sanctions” with detailed reasons.<sup>2057</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCES provides Investigation Report to parties and gives them the opportunity to make written submissions</li> <li>• CCES determines whether a violation has been committed, imposes appropriate sanction(s) and provide the parties with a Notice of Decision that includes the reasons for the decision.<sup>2058</sup></li> </ul>                                                                           |
| <b>Revision/appeals</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parties could challenge findings on violation of the UCCMS and sanction imposed before the Safeguarding Tribunal of the SDRCC<sup>2059</sup></li> <li>• Parties could challenge review of sanction(s) before the Appeal Tribunal of the SDRCC<sup>2060</sup></li> <li>• DSO appeared to defend their decision before the Safeguarding Tribunal and the Appeal Tribunal of the SDRCC.<sup>2061</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parties may challenge findings of violation of the UCCMS/CSSP and sanction imposed before the Safeguarding Tribunal of the SDRCC<sup>2062</sup></li> <li>• Parties may challenge review of sanctions before the Appeal Tribunal of the SDRCC<sup>2063</sup></li> <li>• CCES appears to defend their decision before the Safeguarding Tribunal and the Appeal Tribunal of the SDRCC.<sup>2064</sup></li> </ul> |
| <b>Enforcement of sanctions</b> | Program signatories were responsible for ensuring that sanctions or other measures imposed by the DSO, the Safeguarding Tribunal or the Appeal Tribunal were implemented and respected. <sup>2065</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Sanctions imposed by the CCES, the Safeguarding Tribunal or the Appeal Tribunal shall be automatically recognized and enforced by and between adopting sport organizations. <sup>2066</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| Program                         | Abuse-Free Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Canadian Safe Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Procedural fairness</b>      | <p>Fairness was a principle that guided the determination, by the DSO, of Prohibited Behaviour and imposition of sanctions.<sup>2067</sup></p> <p>The former Abuse-Free Sport procedural rules allowed respondents and impacted persons to be heard before a decision on violation or sanction was issued.<sup>2068</sup></p> <p>Under the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, objections raised during the investigation could only be raised by challenging the DSO's decision before the Safeguarding Tribunal.<sup>2069</sup></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>The CCES is committed to administering the CSSP in a manner that meets the requirement of procedural fairness.<sup>2070</sup></p> <p>The CSSP Rules allow respondents and impacted persons to be heard before the CCES makes a decision on provisional measures<sup>2071</sup> and on violation or sanction.<sup>2072</sup></p> <p>The CSSP Rules allow the CCES to order further investigation or initiate a new one if the parties raise issues of procedural fairness in the conduct of the investigation.<sup>2073</sup></p>                                                                  |
| <b>Trauma-informed approach</b> | <p>The OSIC “administers the UCCMS in a compassionate, efficient and fair manner that uses trauma-informed best practices at all stages of the process.”<sup>2074</sup></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>The CCES is committed to administering the CSSP in a manner that “is trauma-informed.”<sup>2075</sup></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Timeliness</b>               | <p>The Guidelines regarding investigations of complaints provided that “[i]nvestigation(s) will be initiated and performed without undue delay, considering the circumstances of the Complaint, the scope and complexity of the Investigation, the availability of the parties and witnesses, and the preparation required for the Investigation to proceed.”<sup>2076</sup></p> <p>The Abuse-Free Sport Policy regarding violations and sanctions provided that the parties had to submit their written submissions to the DSO within 10 days of the receipt of the investigation report.</p> <p>They further provided that request for reviews of the DSO decision before the Safeguarding Tribunal had to be filed within 21 days of receipt of the Report on Violations and Sanctions from the DSO.<sup>2077</sup></p> | <p>The CCES is committed to administering the CSSP in a manner that “recognizes the importance of timeliness in responding to and resolving Reports of Prohibited Behaviour, recognizing that delay can have negative implications for any one or more of the Reporting Person, Impacted Person, the Respondent, the sport, or other Participants.”<sup>2078</sup></p> <p>The CSSP Rules provides timelines that govern each step of the report process. They also allow the CCES to issue procedural orders to ensure efficiency, timeliness and fairness in the report process.<sup>2079</sup></p> |



| Program                               | Abuse-Free Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Canadian Safe Sport Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Transparency and communication</b> | <p>The OSIC Guidelines regarding initial review &amp; preliminary assessment of complaints provided that sport organizations may be informed of the outcome of a preliminary assessment and of any next steps.<sup>2080</sup> The Abuse-Free Sport Policy regarding provisional measures also provided that the Program Signatory would be informed of any decision to impose provisional measures<sup>2081</sup> and would be primarily responsible for the implementation of provisional measures.<sup>2082</sup> The Abuse-Free Sport Policy regarding violations and sanctions also provided that the investigation report could, when appropriate, be shared with the relevant program signatory<sup>2083</sup> and that the report on violations and sanctions would be shared with the program signatory.<sup>2084</sup></p> | <p>The CSSP Rules provides that sport organizations shall be notified of a report at the same time as the respondent,<sup>2085</sup> when a decision on provisional measures<sup>2086</sup> and sanctions<sup>2087</sup> is made and permits the CCES to consult with sport organizations on provisional measures before they are imposed.<sup>2088</sup></p> |

## Appendix 10:

### Chart comparing different models for a Centralized Sport Entity<sup>2089</sup>

| Model category                               | Ministerial department                                                                                                                                                                            | Ministerial departmental agency                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Crown corporation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Not-for-profit created by federal legislation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Not-for-profit third-party delivery organization                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Example of entity</b>                     | Canadian Heritage                                                                                                                                                                                 | Canadian Food Inspection Agency                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Canada Council for the Arts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Sport Dispute Resolution Centre                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Canada Media Fund                                                                             |
| <b>Legislation</b>                           | Required                                                                                                                                                                                          | Required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Not required                                                                                  |
| <b>Type (Governmental/ non-governmental)</b> | Governmental                                                                                                                                                                                      | Governmental                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Governmental                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Non-governmental                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Non-governmental                                                                              |
| <b>Governance and accountability</b>         | <p>Informal advisory boards.<sup>2090</sup></p> <p>Minster is responsible for the policy direction and management of the Department and is directly accountable to Parliament.<sup>2091</sup></p> | <p>Advisory board, board of directors or management board.<sup>2092</sup></p> <p>Agency head appointed by the government through a Governor in Council appointment and reports to the Minister.<sup>2093</sup></p> <p>Responsible Minister is accountable to Parliament for all the activities of the agency, including those pertaining to day-to-day operations.</p> | <p>Board of directors and chief executive officer appointed by the government through a Governor in Council appointment.</p> <p>Minister acts as the shareholder on behalf of the government. Control and oversight by the minister are set out in the legislation.</p> <p>Crown corporation is accountable, through the minister, to parliament for the conduct of its affairs.<sup>2094</sup></p> | <p>Board of directors appointed by the government through a Governor in Council appointment.</p> <p>Executive director is selected by the board of directors and accountable to the board.</p> <p>Government reporting obligations may be outlined in the enabling legislation.</p> | <p>Executive director is selected by the board of directors and accountable to the board.</p> |

## Appendices

|                                           |                                                                        |                                                                  |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                |                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Financing</b>                          | Appropriations <sup>2095</sup>                                         | Appropriations <sup>2096</sup>                                   | Appropriations <sup>2097</sup>                                                                                        | Federal government funding and other sources.                                                                                  | Federal government funding and other sources.                                    |
| <b>Degree of autonomy from government</b> | Accountable to the minister for operations and policy. <sup>2098</sup> | Degree of independence specified in legislation. <sup>2099</sup> | Independent and arms-length from government. The government is not involved in day-to-day management. <sup>2100</sup> | Autonomous and independent but subject to the terms of a contribution agreement and any provision in the enabling legislation. | Autonomous and independent but subject to the terms of a contribution agreement. |

## Appendix 11:

### Chart outlining good governance practices contemplated in the Canadian Sport Governance Code and referenced in other sources

| Governance practice | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                         | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Board size          | <b>Provision B. 1.</b> “Boards should be functional in size with a minimum of five board members and a maximum of fifteen board members. It is expected that a typical board would have seven to eleven members.” | <p><b>Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review<sup>2102</sup> by the Honourable Thomas Cromwell (“Cromwell Report”):</b> “The appropriate size for a board of directors depends on a number of factors, such as the amount of work to be done, which varies according to the projects in progress and issues facing the organization.[...] However, the board should be sufficiently large to enable the directors to get the work done well, but not so large that meaningful discussion becomes difficult. [...] While organizations must determine the board size that best suits their particular needs, the effectiveness of a board is not a function of its size. Much more crucial to board success are the dedication and skill of its individual members.”<sup>2103</sup></p> <p><b>Guide to Good Governance: Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations<sup>2104</sup> (“Guide to Good Governance”):</b> “The board should be large enough to ensure there are sufficient individuals to manage its workload; however, a board should not be so large as to impede effective discussion. Board size should be determined according to the unique context of the hospital corporation and consider the following factors: Board workload [...] Knowledge and experiences required by the board [...] If a board wishes to have rotating or staggered terms and directors are elected for three-year terms, then the board must have at least 12 elected directors [...].”<sup>2105</sup></p> <p><b>Organismes à but non lucratif (OBNL) québécois de sport et de loisir – Code de Gouvernance (août 2025)<sup>2106</sup> (“Code de gouvernance du Québec”):</b> “[Translation] The size of a board of directors should be between 6 and 13 depending on the scope of its activities.”<sup>2107</sup></p> |

| Governance practice       | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Board size<br>(continued) | Provision B. 1.<br>(continued)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p><b>British Columbia's ViaSport Designation Program</b><sup>2108</sup>: Organization's bylaws must address the size and composition of the board of directors.<sup>2109</sup></p> <p><b>Sport Wales, Arwain Cymru: A governance and people development framework</b><sup>2110</sup> ("<b>Wales governance framework</b>"): "Directors are recruited through open and transparent processes, based on their skills, knowledge, leadership, diversity, and integrity. The resulting board is inclusive, balanced, and appropriately sized (typically, this is between 8-12 individuals) to make effective decisions."<sup>2111</sup></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Board independence        | <p><b>Provision B.2.</b> "[n]ot less than 40% of the directors should be [i]ndependent."</p> <p>As per the Code "independent" as meaning "that a director has no fiduciary obligation to any body for the subject sport at the national or provincial level, receives no direct or indirect material benefit from any such party, and is free of any conflict of interest of a financial, personal or representational nature (provided that participating in the NSO's sport does not alone cause a person not to be [i]ndependent)."</p> | <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> "Independence on a board is particularly important for corporations, such as Hockey Canada, in which "the organization has multiple accountabilities or provides services to the public with government money" because it increases the confidence in the board by reducing the perception that the board is an "insider-only" board."<sup>2112</sup></p> <p><b>Guide to Good Governance:</b> "Ensure board independence – The board should ensure it understands and discharges its role of independent oversight of management. There are a number of processes that will ensure a board operates independently of management, some of which have been explored in previous chapters. These processes include considering board chair terms to ensure relationships with leaders remain appropriately collegial; ensuring the board meets without management; and that committees understand their role and their relationship to management."<sup>2113</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> "[Translation] A board of eight to nine board members, must have a minimum of two independent board members. A board of ten to thirteen board members must have a minimum of three independent board members."<sup>2114</sup></p> |



| Governance practice                           | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                            | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Board independence (continued)                | Provision B.2. (continued)                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “The organisation’s governing document(s) allows for the appropriate number and type of directors. Typically, this is between 8–12 individuals, with at least 25% being independent directors, including those from outside the sport or activity, who bring external perspectives and are free from conflicts of interest.”<sup>2115</sup></p> <p><b>Australian Sports Commission, Sport Governance Standards<sup>2116</sup> (“Australia Sport Governance Standards”):</b> “Director Independence: The organisation’s directors should be independent*, regardless of whether elected or appointed. [...] A director of a sporting organisation should only be seen as independent if they are free of any interest, position or relationship that might influence, or reasonably be perceived to influence their judgment on board matters.”<sup>2117</sup></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Board statement of roles and responsibilities | Provision B. 4: “Each NSO should adopt a board mandate which delineates the roles and responsibilities of the board which, among other matters, includes the requirement to develop a multi-year strategic plan, and a succession plan for the CEO.” | <p><b>Sport Canada’s Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program<sup>2118</sup> (“Sport Support Program Guidelines”):</b> “A business plan/strategy that provides mission/mandate, vision, values, objectives, roles and responsibilities of Board and management, performance indicators, etc.”<sup>2119</sup></p> <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “The Board of Hockey Canada should have a formal statement articulating the Board’s primary functions.”<sup>2120</sup> [...] This aligns with the COC Code, which advises that each NSO should “adopt a board mandate which delineates the roles and responsibilities of the board which, among other matters, includes the requirement to develop a multi-year strategic plan, and a succession plan for the CEO.”<sup>2121</sup></p> <p><b>Guide to Good Governance: Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations<sup>2122</sup> (“Guide to Good Governance”):</b> “Like many elements of good governance, it is not sufficient to merely understand the board-management complement. These roles should be reduced to writing, internalized, and regularly revisited. For this reason, boards should declare their governance model and develop a written statement outlining its roles and primary function.”<sup>2123</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                                       | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup> | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| Board statement of roles and responsibilities (continued) | Provision B. 4. (continued)                               | <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> “[Translation] The bylaws describe the responsibilities of the board of directors.”<sup>2124</sup> The board of directors’ charter should provide a detailed description of its responsibilities. This includes among other things, strategic planning and the evaluation of organizational performance, overseeing the affairs of the organization, financial management, governance, hiring and evaluating the executive direction, the duties of board members and the expectations.”<sup>2125</sup></p> <p><b>British Columbia’s ViaSport Designation Program:</b> Organization’s bylaws must address the roles and duties of the board of directors.”<sup>2126</sup></p> <p><b>Sport New Zealand, Governance Framework for the New Zealand Sport and Recreation Sector<sup>2127</sup> (“New Zealand Governance Framework”):</b> “The board has an agreed understanding of its role and how that varies from management. The board’s role and responsibilities are documented in the board charter, or similar document, that includes a policy and delegation framework.”<sup>2128</sup></p> <p><b>Australia Sport Governance Standards:</b> “Board Charter: The board operates under a documented board charter.”<sup>2129</sup></p> <p><b>International Olympic Committee, Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance within the Olympic Movement<sup>2130</sup> (“International Olympic Committee Principles of Good Governance”):</b> “The roles and responsibilities of the governing bodies shall be clearly defined in the statutes, with a clear segregation of duties, in full compliance with the principles of checks and balances.”<sup>2131</sup></p> |

| Governance practice           | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <b>Board diversity policy</b> | <b>Provision B. 5.</b> “[...] Consequently, each NSO should develop a policy for diversity at the board level. Diversity refers to the broad range of demographic characteristics that exists across Canadian society including, but not limited to, sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, economic means, ability, age, official language of Canada spoken, religion and education. The board should report annually as to its approach and initiatives taken to attract directors with the required skills and diversity (including with respect to gender representation), whether it considers its initiatives successful and any additional steps the board will be making towards this objective.” | <p><b>Sport Support Program Guidelines:</b> “A Board of Directors that includes: Diversity: processes in place to support representation among board members of a broad spectrum of identities and experiences within the community that it serves or seeks to engage.”<sup>2132</sup></p> <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “In the recent past, much emphasis has been placed on ensuring the board reflects the diversity of the community it serves, including demographic, cultural, linguistic, economic, geographic, gender, and ethnic factors. Research “often shows that more diversity on boards brings value to firms by increasing the diversity of experience and improving board monitoring.” Moreover, it is beneficial for a board to consider both social and professional diversity, which can involve looking beyond the typical CEO or CFO pool for board candidates. Equally important to the notion of diversity is cognitive diversity, which refers to the differences in individuals’ “knowledge, views, and perspectives, as well as in how they approach problems and perceive, process, and interpret information”.”<sup>2133</sup></p> <p><b>Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for all Athletes in Canada (“Standing Committee on Status of Women Report”):</b> “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.”<sup>2134</sup></p> <p><b>Guide to Good Governance:</b> “Not every quality that is required or desired will be based in knowledge. Experience in areas in which the board requires assistance or performs a governance role is also important; including reflecting the diversity of the communities served. While best practice in hospital governance is to recruit a knowledge-based board that is independent of any one interest group, effective board composition would also include those with experience in the different communities that comprise the hospital context and a variety of perspectives to ensure diversity of thought in board deliberations.”<sup>2135</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                         | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                           | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <b>Board diversity policy (continued)</b>   | <b>Provision B. 5. (continued)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “[...] Boards consider diversity of background, lived experience and protected characteristics as part of composition planning.”<sup>2136</sup></p> <p><b>Australia Sport Governance Standards:</b> “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The board demonstrates a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by setting goals within its board composition.”<sup>2137</sup></p> <p><b>International Olympic Committee Principles of Good Governance:</b> “The organization shall set out clear, open, appropriate and objective eligibility criteria to include, simultaneously, the required skills and expertise, and a fair, inclusive and diverse representation of the main components in its governing bodies, including in particular: [...] A special focus on diversity and inclusion.”<sup>2138</sup></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Board composition – gender diversity</b> | <b>Provision B.5.</b> “Within an independent board staffed with directors who possess the necessary skills for the successful stewardship of the NSO and of whom not more than 60% of the -directors are of the same gender [...].” | <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “In the recent past, much emphasis has been placed on ensuring the board reflects the diversity of the community it serves, including demographic, cultural, linguistic, economic, geographic, gender, and ethnic factors. Research “often shows that more diversity on boards brings value to firms by increasing the diversity of experience and improving board monitoring.” Moreover, it is beneficial for a board to consider both social and professional diversity, which can involve looking beyond the typical CEO or CFO pool for board candidates. Equally important to the notion of diversity is cognitive diversity, which refers to the differences in individuals’ “knowledge, views, and perspectives, as well as in how they approach problems and perceive, process, and interpret information”. ”<sup>2139</sup></p> <p><b>Standing Committee on Status of Women Report:</b> “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.”<sup>2140</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                              | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup> | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| Board composition – gender diversity (continued) | Provision B. 5. (continued)                               | <p><b>Guide to Good Governance:</b> “Diversity among board members means the board is comprised of individuals with the knowledge, qualities, and diversity of experiences and perspectives that are appropriate for the hospital’s mission, objectives and strategic directions. This includes recruiting people from the broad range of communities that access the hospital’s services, considering geography, age, gender, ethnicity, culture and history, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics.”<sup>2141</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> “[Translation] The bylaws specify that the organization must have at least one man and one woman on its board of directors and make efforts to promote gender balance and diversity in the appointment of other members.” The Code in its commentary provides that a board of director is generally considered in a gender parity zone when the male-to-female ration is within a maximum gap of 60/40%.<sup>2142</sup></p> <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “The organisation’s board and committees are diverse, inclusive, and skills-based. Gender parity is prioritized – the majority gender must not exceed 60% of the total board composition.”<sup>2143</sup></p> <p><b>Australia Sport Governance Standards:</b> “Gender Balance: Directors: The board, while ensuring the prevailing criterion for election is eligibility, skills, expertise, and experience, should be composed in a manner such that no one gender accounts for more than 50% of the total number of Directors.”<sup>2144</sup></p> <p><b>International Olympic Committee Principles of Good Governance:</b> “The organization shall set out clear, open, appropriate and objective eligibility criteria to include, simultaneously, the required skills and expertise, and a fair, inclusive and diverse representation of the main components in its governing bodies, including in particular: [...] A balanced representation of genders among the members [with a minimum of 30% of each gender].”<sup>2145</sup></p> |



| Governance practice                               | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <b>Board Composition – athlete representation</b> | <b>Provision B. 6.</b> “It is fundamental for athletes to have meaningful representation in the governance structure of the NSO and for athlete voices to be heard. The board of each NSO determines the best way for that objective to be achieved which is to be articulated in the board mandate, Athlete representation on the board is strongly encouraged. Any NSO that does not have an athlete representative on its board must appoint at least one athlete representative to the position of board observer. Each NSO must develop a process whereby the athlete representative is determined with significant input from that sport’s athletes. For the purposes of this section, the term “athlete” means a person currently on a national team or competing at the international level or a person who is retired and was a member of a national team or competed at the international level, not more than eight years previously.” | <p><b>Sport Support Program Guidelines:</b> “A Board of Directors that includes: [...] Athletes’ voice: a transparent and inclusive process for selecting an Athlete Representative on its Board of Directors.”<sup>2146</sup></p> <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “We agree with the COC that it is critical for athletes to have “meaningful representation in the governance structure of the NSO and for athlete voices to be heard.” In our view, allowing an athlete representative to serve on the board of directors of an NSO is one of the most impactful ways to achieve that objective.”<sup>2147</sup></p> <p><b>Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada</b><sup>2148</sup> (“<b>Standing Committee on Status of Women Report</b>”): “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.”<sup>2149</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> “[Translation] The number of board member positions reserved for athletes still active in the national or international context should be limited. The bylaws must provide that the board of directors cannot include more than one active athlete.”<sup>2150</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                                    | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup> | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| Board Composition – athlete representation (continued) | Provision B. 6. (continued)                               | <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “The organisation promotes an environment where the voices of its participants, members, and athletes are heard. [...] The organisation ensures it has mechanisms in place to receive and act on regular feedback from athletes, participants and members. These mechanisms are established in a way that allows and encourages openness and transparency so that opinions and ideas are put forward to help shape the organisation. [...] The organisation has a structure (e.g., subcommittees) with sufficient expertise to ensure that wellbeing, welfare and experiences are adequately considered, monitored and reported to the board. This may include regular athlete wellbeing and culture surveys (independently administered) and/or ensuring athlete representation on appropriate committees. [...] Directors and the workforce listen actively and sensitively to encourage and understand the contributions and views of athletes, members and participants. Feedback is either acted on, or a clear explanation is given where action is not taken. Feedback loops are timely, transparent and consistently applied across the organisation. Mechanisms allow for both anonymous and named feedback, and participation must be voluntary and safe from negative consequences.”<sup>2151</sup></p> <p><b>International Olympic Committee Principles of Good Governance:</b> “The organization shall set out clear, open, appropriate and objective eligibility criteria to include, simultaneously, the required skills and expertise, and a fair, inclusive and diverse representation of the main components in its governing bodies, including in particular: [...] Athletes’ representation with active participation in the decision-making processes.”<sup>2152</sup></p> <p>“Representation and active participation in the decision-making processes. The athletes’ voice should be heard, and athletes should be represented with voting rights in the relevant decision-making bodies of sports organisations. An Athletes’ Commission shall be established within each sports organisation, with gender-balanced representation. Athletes’ Commission members should be elected by their peers, and their terms should be in accordance with the IOC guidelines. The Athletes’ Commission should have an active role and the capacity to engage effectively with its constituents, and be involved in and consulted on any decisions that impact athletes.”<sup>2153</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                     | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                         | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <b>Board composition – skills based</b> | <b>Provision B. 7.</b> “Each NSO must maintain a skills matrix and board membership shall be competency-based ensuring that the board members possess as many of the skills necessary for optimal board functioning as possible.” | <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “[...] Certain fundamental skills, such as financial literacy, legal and governance experience, are vital to a board of directors. [...] Specialized skills are not the only way boards can acquire desired or required qualities; experience and knowledge in which the board requires assistance or performs a governance role are equally important.”<sup>2154</sup></p> <p><b>Guide to Good Governance:</b> “Create a skilled and qualified board – The board should take explicit responsibility for its recruitment and succession planning processes. These processes should ensure the necessary knowledge, experience, qualities and attributes are recruited to the board and eliminate or minimize risk of single-issue candidates being elected to the board.”<sup>2155</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> The bylaws provide that the board of directors annually identifies the profile of complementary skills it needs to achieve its objectives and carry out its multi-year development plan.<sup>2156</sup></p> <p><b>New Zealand Governance Framework:</b> “The board maintains a skills matrix that reflects the challenges and needs of the organisation.”<sup>2157</sup></p> <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “A thorough consideration of board skills (which may include a skills matrix) is used to guide recruitment, ensuring balanced and informed decision-making.”<sup>2158</sup></p> <p><b>Australia Sport Governance Standards:</b> “Board Skills and Diversity Matrix: The board should have a diverse mix of skills, expertise and experience in order to meet the strategic goals of the organisation.”<sup>2159</sup></p> |

| Governance practice             | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <b>Board member term limits</b> | <p><b>Provision B. 10.</b> “Each board member shall be subject to a term limit. Absent compelling reasons to the contrary as determined by the board’s nominating committee, that term limit should be a maximum of nine years (comprised of multiple terms each not longer than four years) other than:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. a sitting board chair who may serve for one additional term for a maximum twelve year term limit, but who may not hold the position of chair of the board for longer than six years; and</li> <li>ii. one director other than the chair who serves on the board of that sport’s international federation who may serve for one additional term for a maximum twelve year term limit.”</li> </ul> | <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “The CNCA provides that a director may hold office for a term of not more than four years, but it does not prescribe any limit on the number of terms that a director may serve, either consecutively or otherwise. Nevertheless, an organization’s by-laws and policies should include Board renewal strategies, such as limits on the number of terms that a Director can serve on the Board, which ensures that fresh perspectives and different ideas are considered and debated. At the same time, the organization must plan carefully and stagger the directors’ terms to ensure that the term of all the directors will not all end at the same time. Such a practice, along with other continuity strategies are vital to sustaining organizational memory and stability.”<sup>2160</sup></p> <p><b>Guide to Good Governance:</b> “Terms limits are intended to balance the needs of the organization for continued leadership with the importance of maintaining board independence from management. The ability of a long-serving board chair to exercise appropriate due diligence and authority could be compromised through long-term relationships with management.”<sup>2161</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> “[Translation] The bylaws prescribe the term of office for a director, the number of consecutive terms they may serve, as well as the period of ineligibility when a director has held a position for the maximum allowable term. The Code provides that a term is a maximum of two years under provincial legislation.” The Code also provides that a member should not be re-elected more than two to four times after their first term.<sup>2162</sup></p> <p><b>British Columbia’s ViaSport Designation Program:</b> Organization’s bylaws must address the board member election process and corresponding board member terms.<sup>2163</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                     | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup> | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| Board member term limits<br>(continued) | Provision B. 10.<br>(continued)                           | <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “The organisation establishes and maintains a board with the appropriate number and mix of director roles required for effective decision-making. [...] The organisation sets maximum terms of office for directors (e.g., 3 x 3 years or 2 x 4 years) and up to a maximum of nine years continuous service. Term limits are clearly documented, tracked, and applied without exception to ensure transparency and fairness. Where possible, staggered terms are used to avoid large-scale turnover and to retain continuity and institutional knowledge.”<sup>2164</sup></p> <p><b>Australia Sport Governance Standards:</b> “Director Term Limits: The organisation should have a staggered rotation system for directors, with term limits and a maximum tenure of no longer than 10 years.”<sup>2165</sup></p> <p><b>International Olympic Committee Principles of Good Governance:</b> “Renewal of officials. In order to allow a periodic renewal of elected and appointed officials, and to promote access for new candidates, the following limitations should be considered: Term limit (e.g. no more than 3 or 4 consecutive terms or 12 or 16 consecutive years in the same role) [...]”<sup>2166</sup></p> |



| Governance practice                                                                           | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| Board training – orientation, governance practices, directors’ rights, duties and obligations | <b>Provision B. 11.</b> “All new board members must receive a proper orientation as to their roles and responsibilities as directors which includes instruction on good governance practices and governance policies, which is to be refreshed for all directors after each election.” | <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “The quality of a board depends in part on the orientation processes in place for new directors as well as ongoing education for the full board. Directors must not only know the affairs of the organization they serve; they must also know the board’s governance processes and their individual rights, duties and obligations as board members. Boards must conduct mandatory orientation sessions and provide their directors with access to continuous education, which may include encouraging directors to attend education programs relevant to their roles. Attendance and participation in education sessions should form part of director evaluations and consideration with respect to term renewal.”<sup>2167</sup></p> <p><b>Guide to Good Governance:</b> “Educate new directors – The board should ensure that it takes responsibility for preparing new directors to contribute and should conduct a high quality, mandatory on-boarding program. This program should cover four areas: governance (including fiduciary responsibility for the whole hospital) and board operations, hospital operations and activities, the health care environment, and key stakeholder relationships. In addition to this internal onboarding and education, supplementary ongoing external education and training should be provided to board members.”<sup>2168</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> Provision 7.4 and 7.5 of the Code address the need for orientation training of new board members and access to good governance training. The commentary provides that “[Translation] “each new board member should receive a welcome package including the letters patent, bylaws, code of ethics and professional conduct, administrative policies, strategic planning documents, minutes from the past year, list of board members, budget, proof of liability insurance charters adopted by the board, and the most recent annual report.” The Code also provides that regular training on good governance should be offered to all board members.”<sup>2169</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                                                                                       | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup> | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| Board training – orientation, governance practices, directors’ rights, duties and obligations (continued) | Provision B. 11. (continued)                              | <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “Each director has a clear, written role description and completes an appropriate induction, which includes training on governance responsibilities and key areas such as safeguarding, misconduct, and complaints. Inductions are concluded with a signed declaration of understanding. Directors must have access to and be familiar with the governing document(s) – such as the articles of association or constitution – and operate within their parameters. All directors must understand their obligations under the relevant law.”<sup>2170</sup></p> <p>“The organisation is committed to the ongoing development of directors and employees, ensuring training is aligned with their roles and responsibilities. [...] The organisation has a tailored training and development programme for directors and employees, informed by insight i.e. skills audits, performance appraisals, and feedback. Training opportunities are accessible, role-specific, and proportionate to the size and scope of the organization. [...]”<sup>2171</sup></p> <p><b>Australia Sport Governance Standards:</b> “Governance Education: Directors undertake recognised governance education. [...] Recognised governance education includes the [Australian Sport Commission] Governance Education courses (e.g. The Start Line), [Australian Institute of Company Directors] Foundations of Directorship, [Institute of Community Directors of Australia] Diploma of Governance, or equivalent. Workshops and seminars facilitated or offered by the [Australian Sport Commission] or State and Territory Agencies for Sport &amp; Recreation are not included in recognised education for the purposes of this question.”<sup>2172</sup></p> <p><b>International Olympic Committee Principles of Good Governance:</b> “Education, training and internal communication. An induction programme for all new members (in particular Board members and staff) should be conducted. Educational tools and regular training on ethics, integrity, good governance, prevention of doping, manipulation of competitions, and harassment and abuse shall be provided to all members (in particular Board members), staff and stakeholders (including athletes, athletes’ entourage members, judges and referees, technical officials, volunteers, etc.). [...]”<sup>2173</sup></p> |

| Governance practice         | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                       | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <b>Board review process</b> | <b>Provision B. 15.</b> “The board chair’s responsibilities include overseeing an annual board review process.” | <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “Evaluations form an important part of continuous maintenance and improvement of the governance process, and as such, should be undertaken at a point in the board’s year at which the information distilled from the evaluation may be acted upon. Boards should first determine which areas would be subject to evaluation, such as individual director performance, collective board performance, chair performance and committee evaluations. In doing so, it should consider the purpose of the evaluation, who completes the evaluation, whether the process is anonymous, how results will be shared and what processes exist to ensure the results can be acted upon.”<sup>2174</sup></p> <p><b>Guide to Good Governance:</b> “[...] boards are responsible for their own governance. As part of that responsibility, a board needs to periodically review, audit or evaluate its performance and practices, including examining if the board’s governance work is making a difference to the organization, its staff, patients and community. Clearly assessing the quality of governance provides a basis for taking steps to develop and improve governance [...]”.<sup>2175</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> [Translation] “The board of directors must periodically conduct an evaluation of its performance and the contribution of its members.”<sup>2176</sup></p> <p><b>New Zealand Governance Framework:</b> “Regular board performance assessment is now widely accepted. [...] The board as a whole will undertake a full evaluation at least every third year.”<sup>2177</sup></p> <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “The organisation conducts regular board and individual evaluations. This includes annual self-assessments and reviews led by the chair, as well as a formal board evaluation process. An independent external review takes place at least every four years with a board observation taking place at least every two years. The chair holds an annual review meeting with each director, and [...] the chair receives a formal annual review [...]. The outcomes of these evaluations inform board development activity, training plans, and future succession planning. [...]”.<sup>2178</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                     | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <b>Board review process (continued)</b> | <b>Provision B. 15. (continued)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Australia Sport Governance Standards:</b> “Board Evaluation: The board should regularly evaluate its performance and performance of individual directors. The board should agree and implement a plan to take forward any actions resulting from the evaluations.” <sup>2179</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Board committees</b>                 | <p><b>Provision C. 1.</b> “A board shall have committees that focus on the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. nominating</li> <li>ii. governance and ethics</li> <li>iii. audit and finance</li> </ul> <p>A board may establish such other committees as it considers desirable. If a board does not have a compensation or human resources committee, another board committee should have the responsibility in these areas. Except as provided in C.3 below, the role of each committee is to recommend matters for approval by the board.”</p> <p><b>Provision C.2.”</b> Each committee must have terms of reference approved by the board.”</p> <p><b>Provision C.3.</b> “The role of the nominating committee will include proposing those individuals recommended for election as directors by the members. The nominating committee’s recommendations need not be approved by the board. Other nominations for election to the board can be made in accordance with the NSO’s by-laws or nominations procedure which shall be publicized by the NSO sufficiently in advance of any specified deadlines to enable other nominations to be made. Each time the membership of the nominating committee is established by the board, it should have an odd number of members.</p> | <p><b>Sport Support Program Guidelines:</b> “A Board of Directors that includes: Oversight committees: establishment and maintenance, complete with Board approved terms of reference, of oversight committees.”<sup>2180</sup></p> <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “Hockey Canada’s standing committees generally align with the types of standing committees that one would expect in a large not-for-profit organization, namely the Audit and Finance Committee, the Governance Committee, the Human Resources Committee, the Nominating Committee and the Risk Management Committee. Such committees are common and considered best practice since each of them carries out functions that are related to the core duties and responsibilities of the directors. Those committees are also consistent with the COC Code, which recommends that the board of an NSO should have committees that focus on nominations, governance and ethics, audit and finance, compensation and human resources. [...]”<sup>2181</sup></p> <p>“Given the importance of skills and qualities of a board, best practices for board recruitment require that the board play an appropriate role in its succession and the director recruitment process. The board must understand its responsibility in assuring the quality of board succession and should establish a committee to oversee the process on its behalf.”<sup>2182</sup></p> <p>“[...] we recommend the Nominating Committee be constituted as follows: The majority of the committee members would be individuals who are at arm’s length from the Board (“Independents”) [...] [The Members] appoint up to two individuals to serve [...] At least one member of the Nominating Committee would be an athlete representative [...] At least one and up to two Directors [...] would be appointed by the Board [...] A director who is up for re-election in next election cycle would not be eligible.”<sup>2183</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                 | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| <b>Board committees (continued)</b> | [...] The nominating committee must not include any director up for election and must include appropriate representation from the board (including independent directors), athletes and other stakeholders with the objective that the committee is respected, credible and representative.” | <p>“Each standing committee has its own mandate and Terms of Reference. All standing committees review policies for which they are responsible, as well as their Terms of Reference, at least every two years. The Terms of Reference of standing committees are set out in policies established by the Board. Standing committees may propose changes to its Terms of Reference to the Board.”<sup>2184</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> Section 10.3 of the Code provides the required establishment of three committees (audit, governance and ethics, and human resources) each require its own charter.<sup>2185</sup></p> <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “[...] An organisational chart shows the subcommittees of a board, their remit, and the people involved. The organisational structure and subcommittees are regularly reviewed to ensure the most appropriate structure is in place and the right people are involved in decision-making. Terms of Reference and defined membership for each sub-committee outline the role and responsibilities. These are reviewed regularly and made accessible. The board refers to its governing document(s) and ensure that the appropriate processes are followed [...]. Where disagreement arises, the board records dissenting views and the rationale for final decisions.”<sup>2186</sup></p> <p><b>New Zealand Governance Framework:</b> “Governance committees are limited to core governance functions, e.g. audit and risk and Chief Executive performance management, and their role is documented in terms of reference.”<sup>2187</sup></p> <p><b>Australia Sport Governance Standards:</b> Within the standards they refer to a nomination committee<sup>2188</sup>, a finance, risk and audit committee.<sup>2189</sup></p> |



| Governance practice                               | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>Financial transparency and risk management</b> | <p><b>Provision E.1.</b> “Annual financial statements in their entirety must be audited and posted on the NSO’s website within six months of year end.”</p> <p><b>Provision E.2.</b> “Financial statements of the NSO are to be reviewed by the board at a meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. in respect of unaudited quarterly financial statements, within 60 days of a quarter ending; and</li> <li>ii. in respect of the audited annual financial statements, within 90 days of year end.”</li> </ul> <p><b>Provision E. 3.</b> “The board is responsible for risk management which includes ongoing identification of risks and measuring annually its risk management and internal control systems.”</p> <p><b>Provision E. 4.</b> “Directors should receive quarterly a written certification of the CEO and CFO that: all required remittances be they be for deductions at source, sales tax, or any other government remittances have been made, all other payments for which directors are personally liable have been made, describes any breach of a material agreement and the status of any claims or lawsuits threatened or initiated against the NSO including a status update of each, confirms that all insurance coverage (including directors and officers liability insurance) approved by the board is in full force and effect and that all premiums have been paid, and describes any material risks (financial or otherwise) to the NSO.”</p> | <p><b>Sport Support Program Guidelines:</b> “Internal Controls established for financial controls and ongoing risk management.”<sup>2190</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> [Translation] “The board of directors ensures that at least one review or audit is carried out annually by a professional accounting firm.”</p> <p>In addition, [Translation] “[a] certificate confirming the payment of taxes, salaries and withholdings, membership dues to organizations, etc., is submitted by senior management at each board of directors meeting.”<sup>2191</sup></p> <p><b>British Columbia’s ViaSport Designation Program:</b> Organizations must have annual approved operating budgets and prepare financial statements each fiscal year. The nature of the audit is determined by the amount of the organization’s annual revenue.<sup>2192</sup></p> <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “[...] Finance is a standing agenda item and provides evidence of compliance with Sport Wales financial expectations, as set out in the offer letter and associated terms and conditions. [...] The board fully understands the financial data being presented to it. High quality management accounts allow for effective scrutiny.”<sup>2193</sup> “Ensure risk is a standing agenda at board meetings with a risk register circulated to directors. [...]”<sup>2194</sup></p> <p><b>International Olympic Committee Principles of Good Governance:</b> In order to enhance transparency, sports organisations shall have a regularly updated website that includes [...] Annual audited financial statements [...].<sup>2195</sup></p> <p>“Internal control and risk management. Internal control: An internal control system for key processes and operations, including financial, shall be established and monitored within sports organisations. The structure of the internal control system should depend on the size of the organisation.”<sup>2196</sup></p> |

| Governance practice                                           | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Financial transparency and risk management (continued)</b> | <i>“If a Partially Exempted NSO does not have a CFO or a person who performs the functions of a CFO, the certificate may be signed only by the CEO or Executive Director. For a Partially Exempted NSO, the certificate can be delivered either quarterly or semi-annually.”</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | “Risk management: A clear and appropriate risk management policy shall be established that takes into account the following elements: Identification of potential risks for the organisation, including corruption, financial, environmental, human rights, security and data protection requirements; A risk assessment process; Mitigating factors, including the diversification of income sources; Risk monitoring.” <sup>2197</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Transparency</b>                                           | <p><b>Provision F. 1.</b> “The following items must be posted on the NSO’s website and be publicly accessible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. articles of incorporation/continuance (as amended)</li> <li>ii. by-laws</li> <li>iii. annual financial statements</li> <li>iv. minutes of meetings of members</li> <li>v. board mandate referred to in B.4</li> <li>vi. terms of reference of all committees</li> <li>vii. annual report on diversity referred to in B.5.”</li> </ul> | <p><b>Sport Support Program Guidelines:</b> “Organizational Transparency measures in place to share governance-related documents on its website, so that they are readily available and accessible to the public.”<sup>2198</sup> [...] adopt governance practices that advance transparency, accountability and responsibility in the activities undertaken and resources expended.”<sup>2199</sup></p> <p><b>Cromwell Report:</b> “Authors have said that “[c]orporations may be accountable to a number of stakeholders depending on the purposes or objects of the corporation. Each stakeholder relationship has the potential to give rise to some measure of accountability on behalf of the corporation.”<sup>2200</sup> “[...] Some not-for-profit corporations, primarily those that are publicly funded, operate in an open and transparent manner.”<sup>2201</sup> “[...] Accountability is defined not only in terms of proper use of funds but in the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization and in meeting the needs of the community. [...] Among other principles, openness and accountability from directors is often perceived as one of the main principles in providing good governance and leadership.”<sup>2202</sup></p> |

| Governance practice         | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup> | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Transparency<br>(continued) | Provision F. 1.<br>(continued)                            | <p><b>Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Report:</b> “That the Government of Canada mandate NSOs to adopt increased financial transparency by comprehensively disclosing all funds at their disposal along with a description of their usage. This measure aims to promote responsible financial management within sports organizations, thereby enhancing trust among the public, partners (sponsors), and all stakeholders. Complete fund disclosure will also contribute to ensuring equitable resource distribution, fostering greater fairness within the Canadian sports community. By adding an item to clearly indicate the amounts received in different types of funds: Government Grants [...] Sponsorship and Partnership Funds [...] Donations and Fundraising [...] Membership Fees and Registration Fees [...] Development Funds [...] Capital Funds [...] Equity Funds [...] Public-Private Partnership Funds [...] By transparently disclosing elements of the payroll and salaries of top executives. By adding to their websites the list of all contractors who have carried out third-party independent mandates, a declaration of the absence of conflicts of interest, the granted amount, and the hourly rate.”<sup>2203</sup></p> <p><b>Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Report:</b> “That the Government of Canada require the board meeting minutes of all NSOs funded by the federal government to be transparent. They should be accessible to the public.”<sup>2204</sup></p> <p><b>Guide to Good Governance:</b> “Transparency involves open processes and public disclosure. Transparent processes aid in demonstrating and implementing accountability and may be achieved through several means, including: Public disclosure of key information – This may encompass: regular written communications such as newsletters and media releases; a robust and effective website with current and relevant information; disclosure through a community annual report; media relations policies; and information required to be disclosed. [...]”</p> |

| Governance practice         | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup> | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Transparency<br>(continued) | Provision F. 1.<br>(continued)                            | <p>Open and transparent processes – This may encompass: nomination and recruitment processes that select board candidates based on objective criteria and consider all potential applicants, and provide for participation in board committees by community members; open board meetings or public reports on board decisions and processes; annual member meetings or other “town hall” style meetings open to the public; and patient ombudsman or patient relations processes.”<sup>2205</sup></p> <p><b>Code de gouvernance du Québec:</b> As per provision 14 of the Code, the following should be available on the organization’s website: “[Translation] annual report on activities and strategic plan, annual financial report summary, governance related documents, including: bylaws, policies, organizational chart, board of directors composition, board of directors member biographies, board of directors’ code of ethics, code of conduct, strategic plan, last general assembly meeting minutes, annual report of activities, summary of the last financial report, statement of services, board member attendance report.”<sup>2206</sup></p> <p><b>Ontario Sport Recognition Policy for Provincial and Multi-Sport Organizations</b><sup>2207</sup>: Sport organizations must post the following material on their website: organization’s elected board of directors, bylaws, operational and financial policies, insurance certificate, minutes or summaries of their annual general meeting, a number of policies.<sup>2208</sup></p> <p><b>British Columbia’s ViaSport Designation Program:</b> Sport organizations must have a publicly available website that contains the following information: Organization name and purpose, listing of the organization’s current board of directors, bylaws, approved policies, rules and regulations, minutes or annual report from the last annual general meeting, last annual audited/reviewed/compiled financial statements, safe sport page.<sup>2209</sup></p> |

| Governance practice         | Canadian Sport Governance Code provisions <sup>2101</sup> | Governance practice references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Transparency<br>(continued) | Provision F. 1.<br>(continued)                            | <p><b>Wales governance framework:</b> “Where possible, key information, updates, policies, procedures, and decisions are made available to the members and the wider public. This is commonly done by sharing information on an organisation’s website. Information that is often shared includes governing document(s), terms of reference, board/AGM minutes, and key policies. It is important to ensure these are presented in clear, accessible formats with consideration of language and terminology.”<sup>2210</sup></p> <p><b>International Olympic Committee Principles of Good Governance:</b> “Transparency: In order to enhance transparency, sports organisations shall have a regularly updated website that includes the following elements (list not exhaustive): Vision, mission, goals and strategy; Organisational structure; List of elected officials and the management structure; Rules, regulations and policies; Main activities and decisions; Annual audited financial statements; Awarding procedure for sports events, when applicable. This information shall be easily accessible on the website.”<sup>2211</sup></p> |



## Appendix 12: Primary sources of federal funding for sport and physical activity

Figure A12.1. Sport Canada funding programs

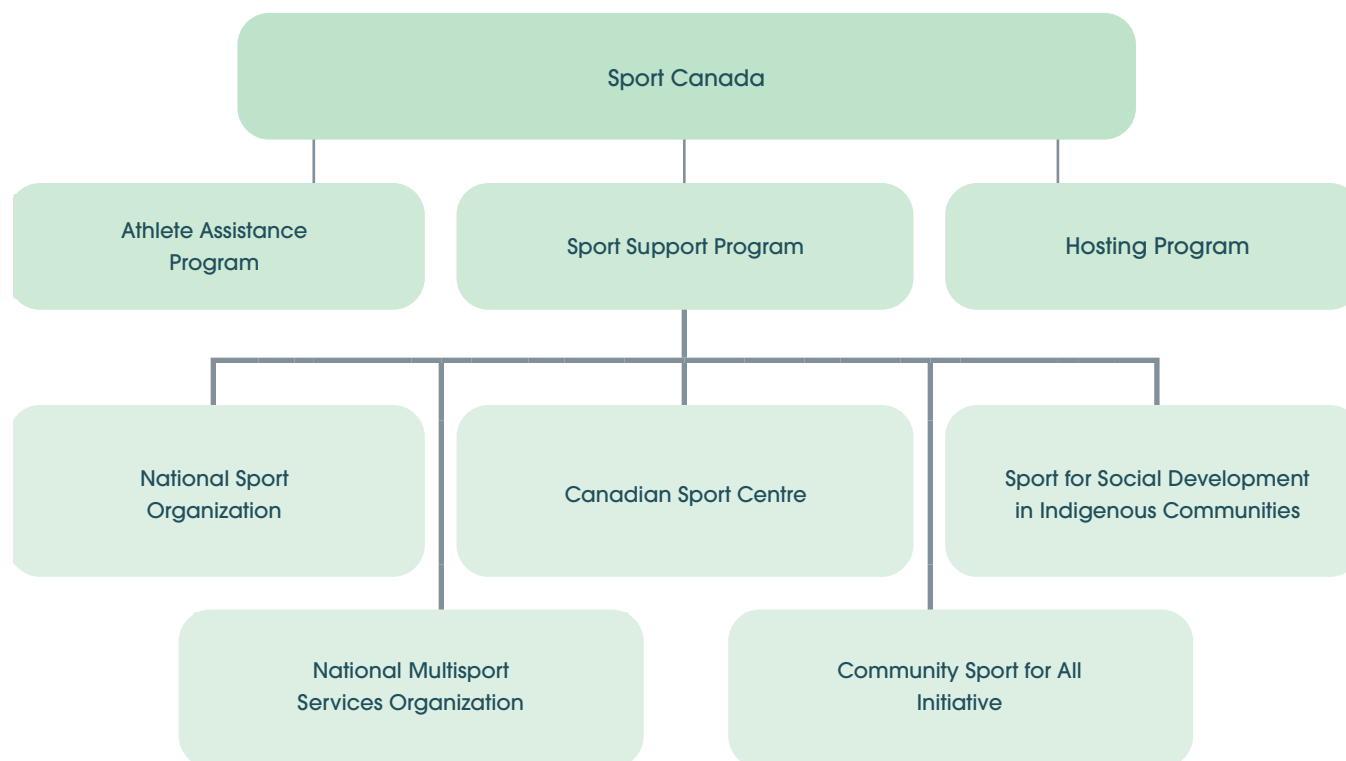


Figure A12.2. Public Health Agency of Canada's primary funding programs

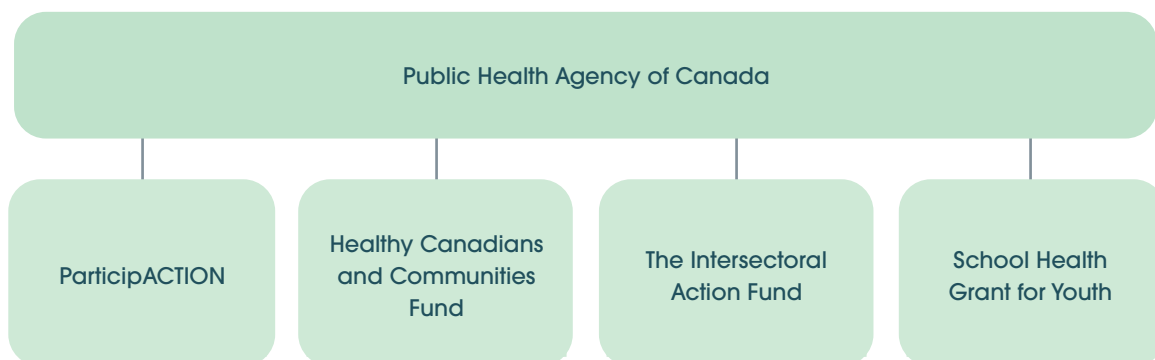
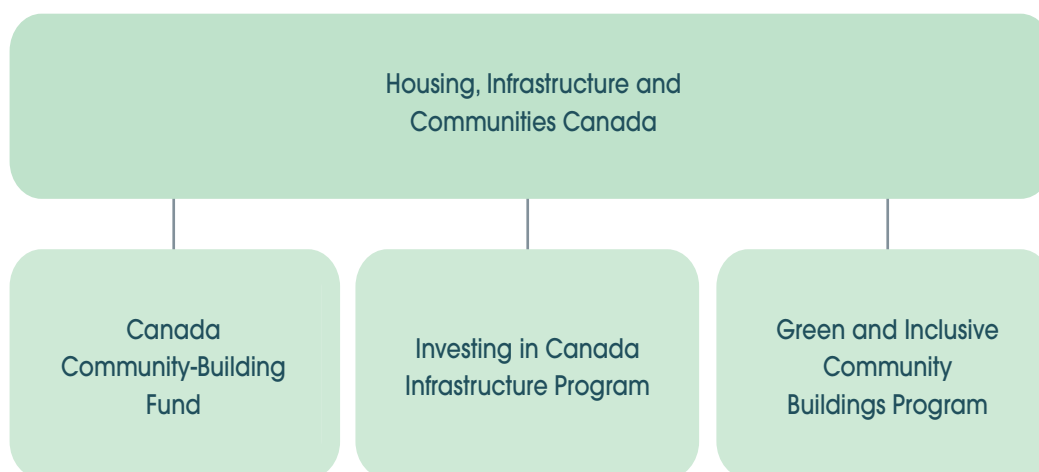


Figure A12.3. Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada's primary funding programs



## Appendix 13:

### Sport Canada funding by program since the 2020-2021 fiscal year

The table below provides an overview of Sport Canada funding, by program, since the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

| Sport Canada Funding Program      | 2020-2021 <sup>2212</sup> | 2021-2022 <sup>2213</sup> | 2022-2023 <sup>2214</sup> | 2023-2024 <sup>2215</sup> | 2024-2025 <sup>2216</sup> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Sport Support Program</b>      | \$180,267,706             | \$212,819,735             | \$249,163,014             | \$212,632,415             | \$193,574,975             |
| <b>Athlete Assistance Program</b> | \$31,086,969              | \$31,938,847              | \$31,738,882              | \$31,741,012              | \$39,494,423              |
| <b>Hosting Program</b>            | \$11,893,663              | \$27,726,191              | \$41,412,093              | \$20,529,228              | \$67,764,356              |
| <b>Total Sport Canada Funding</b> | \$223,248,338             | \$272,484,773             | \$322,313,989             | \$264,902,655             | \$300,833,754             |

## Appendix 14: Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities – Stream 1

The table below shows a breakdown of funding under Stream 1 of Sport Canada's Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component, allocated to each province and territory as well as the funding allocated to the Aboriginal Sport Circle.<sup>2217</sup>

| Provincial-Territorial Aboriginal Sport Body / Aboriginal Sport Circle | % of funding | 2019-2020 and ongoing |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Alberta</b>                                                         | 9.27%        | \$494,200             |
| <b>British Columbia</b>                                                | 9.07%        | \$483,340             |
| <b>Manitoba</b>                                                        | 9.42%        | \$492,300             |
| <b>New Brunswick</b>                                                   | 5.42%        | \$288,540             |
| <b>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</b>                                     | 6.65%        | \$354,430             |
| <b>Nova Scotia</b>                                                     | 5.87%        | \$312,565             |
| <b>Northwest Territories</b>                                           | 6.9%         | \$367,705             |
| <b>Nunavut</b>                                                         | 8.06%        | \$429,610             |
| <b>Ontario</b>                                                         | 10.64%       | \$566,895             |
| <b>Prince Edward Island</b>                                            | 4.79%        | \$255,115             |
| <b>Québec</b>                                                          | 8.45%        | \$450,455             |
| <b>Saskatchewan</b>                                                    | 8.5%         | \$452,785             |
| <b>Yukon</b>                                                           | 4.89%        | \$260,245             |
| <b>Aboriginal Sport Circle</b>                                         | 2.25%        | \$120,000             |
| <b>Total</b>                                                           | -            | \$5,328,365           |

## Appendix 15:

### Sport Support Program funding allocated to Provinces and Territories from 2020-2021 to 2024-2025

| Province or Territory     | 2020-2021 <sup>2218</sup> | 2021-2022 <sup>2219</sup> | 2022-2023 <sup>2220</sup> | 2023-2024 <sup>2221</sup> | 2024-2025 <sup>2222</sup> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Alberta                   | \$614,070                 | \$641,070                 | \$641,070                 | \$641,070                 | \$641,070                 |
| British Columbia          | \$665,365                 | \$661,465                 | \$661,465                 | \$661,465                 | \$661,465                 |
| Manitoba                  | \$502,473                 | \$500,473                 | \$500,473                 | \$500,473                 | \$500,473                 |
| New Brunswick             | \$384,640                 | \$400,540                 | \$400,540                 | \$400,540                 | \$400,540                 |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | \$378,065                 | \$413,065                 | \$413,065                 | \$413,065                 | \$413,065                 |
| Northwest Territories     | \$368,370                 | \$393,570                 | \$393,570                 | \$493,570                 | \$393,570                 |
| Nova Scotia               | \$418,838                 | \$418,338                 | \$418,338                 | \$418,338                 | \$418,338                 |
| Nunavut                   | \$459,815                 | \$1,164,055               | \$1,166,311               | \$1,048,673               | \$846,035                 |
| Ontario                   | \$1,513,628               | \$1,108,431               | \$1,128,228               | \$1,128,228               | \$1,128,228               |
| Prince Edward Island      | \$333,645                 | \$356,645                 | \$356,645                 | \$356,645                 | \$356,645                 |
| Quebec                    | \$800,088                 | \$818,388                 | \$818,388                 | \$818,388                 | \$818,388                 |
| Saskatchewan              | \$495,003                 | \$476,703                 | \$476,703                 | \$476,703                 | \$476,703                 |
| Yukon                     | \$355,624                 | \$353,025                 | \$353,025                 | \$453,025                 | \$353,025                 |



## Appendix 16: List and titles of Future of Sport in Canada Commission employees

### Commissioner

Lise Maisonneuve

### Special Advisors

Noni Classen

Andrew Pipe

### Executive Directors

Véronique Dériger Co-Executive Director

Jean-Stéphen Piché Co-Executive Director

### Legal Counsel

Nadia Effendi Senior Legal Counsel

Karine Fahmy Legal Counsel

Chanel Maillet Glas Legal Counsel

### Operations and Implementation Team

Julie Proulx Director

Pascale Ouellette Senior Research Advisor

Michelle Rumble Senior Research Advisor (as she then was)

Lori Newton Policy Advisor

Jennifer Dumoulin Senior Research Advisor

Shauna Bookal Senior Research Advisor

Éveline Bruck Research Advisor

Arielle Vieira Research Advisor

Meridith Dales Research Advisor

Jane Hayward Senior Project Manager

Frédérique Mazerolle Communications Advisor

Kate Andrew Writer

Guillaume Rondeau Advisor, Writing and Editing

Jacqueline Larson Advisor, Writing and Editing

Chantal Robillard Office Manager

Chelsey McBride Executive Assistant

Emmeline Duggan Health Support Worker

Alexandra Wiseman Health Support Worker

Stephanie Magne Health Support Worker

## Appendix 17:

### Number of sport organizations the Commission met with

| Category of sport organization                                                      | Number of sport organizations |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Multisport Service Organizations (national, provincial, territorial, and community) | 62                            |
| National Sport Organizations                                                        | 66                            |
| Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations                                      | 39                            |
| Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies                                  | 11                            |
| Community Sport Organizations                                                       | 40                            |
| International Sport Entities                                                        | 7                             |
| Other sport organizations*                                                          | 45                            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                                        | <b>270</b>                    |

\*Other sport organizations include but are not limited to advocacy groups, school sport and post-secondary sport organizations, and independent third parties.

## Appendix 18: Commission's online public survey

### Screening questions

#### Q1. Are you 16 years of age or older? (required)

1. Yes
2. No - [Thank and Terminate]

#### Q2. Do you currently live in Canada or are you a Canadian citizen? (required)

1. Yes
2. No - [Thank and Terminate]

[The following survey questions are only asked to respondents who selected “Yes” in Q1 and in Q2]

The first set of questions is meant to understand your level of participation in sport and physical activity in Canada.

#### Q3. In the past ten years, have you participated in sport or a recreational physical activity in Canada? (Select all that apply)

**Participation** includes but is not limited to being an athlete, coach, official, referee, or administrative personnel. It also includes being a parent or guardian of an athlete or someone who provides professional services to a sport organization (such as a lawyer or an accountant).

There are three different types of sport and physical activity:

- **Organized sport** involves competition between two or more participants, and typically involves coaches and officials, has a regular schedule and is governed by formal rules and procedures (e.g. community soccer program, swim team or athletics club). Organized sport can include both competitive and recreational leagues.
- **Non-organized sport** are informal games and play, such as pickup basketball, where the players make or can adapt the rules and the activity is not run or officiated by referees, coaches or instructors.

- **Recreational physical activities** are non-competitive physical activities such as aerobics, Tai Chi, yoga, weight and circuit training, stretching, skating, canoeing, cycling, walking, hiking, jogging, going to the gym, or playing catch.
  1. Yes, I have participated in an organized sport - [Move to Q4 if selected]
  2. Yes, I have participated in non-organized sport - [Move to Q5b]
  3. Yes, I have participated in recreational activity or exercise - [Move to Q5b]
  4. I am a spectator or fan of organized sport - [Move to Q5b]
  5. None of the above - [Move to Q5b]

[Q4 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q4. In the past ten years, how have you participated in organized sport in Canada?**

**Select all that apply**

**I've participated as a/an...**

1. Athlete
2. Coach / instructor
3. Parent or guardian of an athlete
4. Administrator (including as a board member)
5. Official, referee or umpire
6. Medical support personnel
7. Administrative support personnel within a sport organization
8. External provider of professional services
9. Other (Please specify)

[All move to Q5a]

This survey contains questions about two themes:

- Improving safe sport in Canada, including trauma-informed approaches to support sport participants in the disclosure of and healing from maltreatment; and
- Improving the sport system in Canada, including but not limited to improving policy, funding structures, governance, reporting, accountability, conflicts of interest, systems alignment, culture, and legal considerations.

[Q5a asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q5a. You can answer questions related to just one of the themes or both. (required)**

1. I would like to answer questions about improving safe sport in Canada. (Approximately 15 minutes) - [Move to Q6]
2. I would like to answer questions about improving the sport system in Canada. (Approximately 10 minutes) - [Move to Q37]
3. I would like to answer questions about improving safe sport and improving the sport system in Canada. (Approximately 25 minutes) - [Move to Q6]

[Q5b asked to respondents who did NOT select “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q5b. You can answer questions related to just one of the themes or both. (required)**

1. I would like to answer questions about improving safe sport in Canada. (Approximately 5 minutes) - [Move to Q6]
2. I would like to answer questions about improving the sport system in Canada. (Approximately 5 minutes) - [Move to Q37]
3. I would like to answer questions about improving safe sport and improving the sport system in Canada. (Approximately 10 minutes) - [Move to Q6]

[For the purpose of the logic of this survey, questions that will be asked to organized sport participants AND respondents who answered exclusively other options in Q3 will be referred to as being “asked to everyone”]



## Improving Safe Sport

The following questions focus on improving safe sport in Canada, including topics such as complaint mechanisms, safe sport training and prevention.

[Q6 asked to everyone]

### **Q6. How big of a problem is maltreatment in organized sport in Canada today?**

**For the purpose of this survey, maltreatment refers to unacceptable and prohibited behaviours in sport. It includes physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, bullying, hazing, and neglect, as well as grooming, crossing appropriate boundaries, and discrimination.**

1. Serious problem
2. Moderate problem
3. Minor problem
4. Not a problem at all
5. Don't know

[Q7 asked to everyone]

**Q7. The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC), launched in 2022, handled complaints of maltreatment at the national level of the Canadian sport system, operating independently under the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC).**

### **Are you familiar with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC)?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

[Q8 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q8. Over the past ten years, have you experienced or witnessed maltreatment in organized Canadian sport?**

**Select all that apply**

1. Yes, I have experienced maltreatment - [Move to Q9 or Q10]
2. Yes, I have witnessed maltreatment - [Move to Q9 or Q10]
3. No - [Move to Q16]
4. Don't know - [Move to Q16]
5. Prefer not to answer - [Move to Q16]

[Q9 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes, I have experienced maltreatment” AND “Yes, I have witnessed maltreatment” in Q8]

**Q9. Thinking only of the most recent incident of maltreatment, did you experience maltreatment personally or witness the maltreatment of others?**

1. I experienced maltreatment personally
2. I witnessed the maltreatment of others

[Q10 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes, I have experienced maltreatment” OR “Yes, I have witnessed maltreatment” in Q8]

**Q10. Thinking only of the most recent incident of maltreatment you experienced or witnessed, did you make a complaint about the maltreatment?**

**We recognize that it can be difficult to share your experiences related to complaints of maltreatment. All survey responses will be aggregated.**

1. Yes - [Move to Q11]
2. No - [Move to Q15]
3. Prefer not to answer - [Move to Q18]

[Q11 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes, I have experienced maltreatment” OR “Yes, I have witnessed maltreatment” in Q8, AND who selected “Yes” in Q10]

**Q11. Thinking only of the most recent incident of maltreatment you experienced or witnessed, to whom did you submit a complaint?**

**Select all that apply**

1. My sport organization's safe sport or harassment officer
2. A coach
3. A senior athlete (e.g. a team captain)
4. Another staff member in the sport organization
5. A Board member
6. My sport organization's external independent third party mechanism
7. The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC)
8. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES)
9. Another sport organization
10. Other
11. Don't know
12. Prefer not to answer

[All Move to Q12]

[Q12 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3, AND who selected "Yes, I have experienced maltreatment" OR "Yes, I have witnessed maltreatment" in Q8, AND who selected "Yes" in Q10]

This question was asked for each item selected in Q11.

**Q12. The complaint process often involves several steps. This may include filing a report, conducting an investigation, making a decision, and issuing sanctions (e.g. a punishment or remedy).**

**Thinking of your most recent experience, when you made a complaint about maltreatment, were you satisfied with how each of the following handled the complaint process?**

1. Yes - [Move to Q18]
2. Partially - [Move to Q13]
3. No - [Move to Q13]
4. Prefer not to answer- [Move to Q18]

[Q13 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes, I have experienced maltreatment” OR “Yes, I have witnessed maltreatment” in Q8, AND who selected “Yes” in Q10, AND who selected “Partially” OR “No” in Q12]

This question was asked for each item selected in Q11 where the respondent answered “partially” or “no” in Q12.

**Q13. Thinking of your most recent experience, when you made a complaint about maltreatment, why weren't you satisfied with how each of the following handled the complaint process?**

**Select all that apply**

1. The process was difficult to understand
2. The process took too long
3. I was not kept informed about the status or outcome of my complaint.
4. I did not feel I was treated fairly during the process
5. The sanction (the punishment or remedy) was not enforced
6. Making a complaint did not lead to any meaningful change
7. My complaint was not taken seriously
8. My confidentiality or privacy was not adequately protected
9. I was not offered adequate support (e.g., emotional, legal, or practical assistance) during the process
10. I felt pressured or discouraged from making a complaint
11. The person handling my complaint lacked neutrality or expertise
12. I experienced retaliation after making the complaint (e.g., threats, intimidation, reduced playing time)
13. I experienced other negative consequences (e.g., social exclusion, loss of future opportunities) that were not formal retaliation
14. Other
15. Don't know
16. Prefer not to answer

[Q14 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3, AND who selected "Yes, I have experienced maltreatment" OR "Yes, I have witnessed maltreatment" in Q8, AND who selected "Yes" in Q10, AND who selected "Partially" OR "No" in Q12]



**Q14. Thinking of your most recent experience with the complaint process, as someone who made a complaint, what aspects or qualities do you feel are currently lacking in the overall process?**

**Select all that apply**

1. Independence (the person receiving the complaint is not involved in the sport organization of the person who committed maltreatment)
2. Clear procedures (the steps in the complaint process are easy to understand)
3. Fairness (the procedures are applied to all parties involved in a complaint in the same way)
4. Transparency (information is shared with all parties involved in a complaint on a regular basis)
5. Timeliness (complaints are processed within a reasonable time frame)
6. Confidentiality (protecting private or sensitive information from being shared without permission)
7. Due process (all parties to a complaint are given an opportunity to explain what happened)
8. Consistent sanctions (there are established standards for sanctions – whether punishment or remedy – based on the severity of the case)
9. Support (services are made available to all parties to a complaint including but not limited to counselling and legal aid)
10. None of the above
11. Don't know
12. Prefer not to answer

[All Move to Q18]

[Q15 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes, I have experienced maltreatment” OR “Yes, I have witnessed maltreatment” in Q8, AND who selected “No” in Q10]

**Q15. Thinking only of the most recent incident of maltreatment you experienced or witnessed, why did you not make a complaint about maltreatment?**

**Select all that apply**

1. I shared it with someone else and I thought it was enough
2. I didn't know where to make a complaint
3. I was worried about retaliation and being targeted
4. I didn't want to tell anyone what happened
5. I didn't think it would change anything
6. The person handling the complaint was involved in the maltreatment
7. Other
8. Don't know
9. Prefer not to answer

[All Move to Q18]

[Q16 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3, AND who selected "No" OR "Don't know" OR "Prefer not to answer" in Q8]

**Q16. If you experienced or witnessed maltreatment in organized sport, do you think you would file a complaint?**

**Select one**

1. Yes - [Move to Q18]
2. No - [Move to Q17]
3. Don't know- [Move to Q18]

[Q17 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3, AND who selected "No" OR "Don't know" OR "Prefer not to answer" in Q8, AND who selected "No" in Q16]

**Q17. Why do you think you would not file a complaint?**

**Select all that apply**

1. I don't know where to make a complaint
2. I don't trust the complaint process
3. I'm worried about retaliation and being targeted
4. I wouldn't want to tell anyone what happened
5. I don't think it would change anything
6. Other
7. Don't know

[All Move to Q18]

[Q18 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3]

**Q18. Over the past ten years, have you been the subject of a complaint about maltreatment in organized Canadian sport?**

**The subject of a complaint is the person who a complaint is made about. We recognize that it can be difficult to share your experiences related to complaints of maltreatment. All survey responses will be aggregated.**

1. Yes - [Move to Q19]
2. No - [Move to Q23]
3. Don't know - [Move to Q23]
4. Prefer not to answer - [Move to Q23]

[Q19 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3, AND who selected "Yes" in Q18]

**Q19. Thinking of your most recent experience in the past ten years, when you were the subject of a complaint about maltreatment, who handled the complaint against you?**

**Select all that apply**

1. My sport organization's safe sport or harassment officer
2. A senior athlete (e.g. team captain)
3. A coach
4. Another staff member in the sport organization
5. A Board member
6. My sport organization's external independent third party mechanism
7. The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC)
8. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES)
9. Another sport organization
10. Other
11. Don't know
12. Prefer not to answer

[All Move to Q20]

[Q20 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3, AND who selected "Yes" in Q18]

This question was asked for each item selected in Q19.

**Q20. The complaint process often involves several steps. This may include filing a report, conducting an investigation, making a decision, and issuing sanctions (e.g. a punishment or remedy).**

**Thinking only of your most recent experience being the subject of a complaint about maltreatment, were you satisfied with how each of the following handled the complaint process?**

1. Yes - [Move to Q23]
2. Partially- [Move to Q21]
3. No- [Move to Q21]
4. Don't know - [Move to Q23]
5. Prefer not to answer- [Move to Q23]

[Q21 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes” in Q18, AND who selected “Partially” OR “No” in Q20]

This question was asked for each item selected in Q19 where the respondent answered “partially” or “no” in Q20.



**Q21. Thinking only of your most recent experience being the subject of a complaint about maltreatment, why weren't you satisfied with the complaint process?**

**Select all that apply**

1. The process was difficult to understand.
2. The process took too long.
3. I disagreed with the outcome of the process.
4. I felt the complaint was unfounded.
5. I was not kept informed about the status or outcome of the complaint.
6. I did not feel I was treated fairly during the process.
7. The sanction (punishment or remedy) was not appropriate.
8. My confidentiality or privacy was not adequately protected.
9. I was not offered adequate support (e.g., emotional, legal, or practical assistance) during the process.
10. The person handling the complaint lacked neutrality or expertise.
11. I experienced retaliation after being the subject of a complaint (e.g., threats, intimidation, reduced playing time).
12. I experienced other negative consequences (e.g., social exclusion, loss of future opportunities) that were not formal retaliation.
13. Other
14. Don't know
15. Prefer not to answer

[All Move to Q22]

[Q22 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3, AND who selected "Yes" in Q18, AND who selected "Partially" OR "No" in Q20]

**Q22. Thinking of your most recent experience with the complaint process, as someone that was the subject of a complaint, what aspects or qualities do you feel are currently lacking in the overall process?**

**Select all that apply**

1. Independence (the person receiving the complaint is not involved in the sport organization of the person who committed maltreatment)
2. Clear procedures (the steps in the complaint process are easy to understand)
3. Fairness (the procedures are applied to all parties involved in a complaint in the same way)
4. Transparency (information is shared with all parties involved in a complaint on a regular basis)
5. Timeliness (complaints are processed within a reasonable time frame)
6. Confidentiality (protecting private or sensitive information from being shared without permission)
7. Due process (all parties to a complaint are given an opportunity to explain what happened)
8. Consistent sanctions (there are established standards for sanctions – whether punishment or remedy – based on the severity of the case)
9. Support (services are made available to all parties to a complaint including but not limited to counselling and legal aid)
10. None of the above
11. Don't know
12. Prefer not to answer

[All Move to Q23]

[Q23 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes” to Q7]

**Q23. The following questions will address how complaints were previously managed under the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC), given that the new system under the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES), replacing the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC) system, is still in its early stages.**

**As far as you know, was the complaint mechanism administered by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC) effective in addressing complaints about maltreatment?**

1. Yes - [Move to Q25]
2. No- [Move to Q24]
3. Don't know - [Move to Q25]

[Q24 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes” to Q7, AND who selected “No” in Q23]

**Q24. Generally, from what you are aware, what aspects of the complaint mechanism administered by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC) were lacking?**

**Select all that apply**

1. Independence (the person receiving the complaint is not involved in the sport organization of the person who committed maltreatment)
2. Clear procedures (the steps in the complaint process are easy to understand)
3. Fairness (the procedures are applied to all parties involved in a complaint in the same way)
4. Transparency (information is shared with all parties involved in a complaint on a regular basis)
5. Timeliness (complaints are processed within a reasonable time frame)
6. Confidentiality (protecting private or sensitive information from being shared without permission)
7. Due process (all parties to a complaint are given an opportunity to explain what happened)
8. Consistent sanctions (there are established standards for sanctions – whether punishment or remedy – based on the severity of the case)
9. Support (services are made available to all parties to a complaint including but not limited to counselling and legal aid)
10. None of the above
11. Don't know

[All Move to Q25]

[Q25 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q25. The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) defines different types of maltreatment and lists behaviours that are prohibited in sport organizations that receive funding from the Government of Canada.**

**Are you familiar with the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)?**

1. Yes - [Move to Q26]
2. No - [Move to Q27]
3. Don't know - [Move to Q27]

[Q26 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes” in Q25]

**Q26. Which of the following statements about the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) best reflects your opinion?**

1. The Code is missing key types of prohibited behaviours.
2. The list of prohibited behaviours under the Code is comprehensive.
3. The Code is too broad and is applied to situations that are not cases of maltreatment in sport.
4. I don't know enough about the Code.
5. None of the above

[All Move to Q27]

[Q27 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q27. In the Canadian sport system, Independent Third Party mechanisms (ITPs) were established to ensure that safe sport complaints are managed outside of sport organizations.**

**Do you believe Independent Third Party mechanisms (ITPs) are effective at addressing complaints about maltreatment?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. I'm not familiar with Independent Third Party mechanisms (ITPs)

[All Move to Q28]

[Q28 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3]

**Q28. Do you support the creation of a Canadian registry that is publicly available which identifies individuals who have committed maltreatment in organized sport?**

1. Yes - [Move to Q29]
2. No - [Move to Q31]
3. It depends on the situation- [Move to Q29]
4. Don't know- [Move to Q31]

[Q29 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3, AND who selected "Yes" OR "It depends on the situation" in Q28]



**Q29. In your opinion, what would be the most appropriate model for a publicly available Canadian registry that tracks individuals who have committed maltreatment in organized sport?**

1. A single national registry for all levels of organized sport across Canada
2. A national registry for high performance sport, along with separate provincial/territorial registries for local clubs and teams
3. Separate registries for each type of individual sport
4. Don't know

[All Move to Q30]

[Q30 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes” OR “It depends on the situation” in Q28]

**Q30. A Canadian registry related to maltreatment in organized sport that is publicly available could include different types of information. What types of information should be available on the registry?**

**Select all that apply**

1. The name of the person who committed maltreatment
2. The type of maltreatment that occurred
3. The sport(s) the person was involved in
4. The name of the sport organization the person was affiliated with
5. The full text of the decision related to the incident
6. The sanctions imposed (e.g., punishment or remedy)
7. None of the above
8. Don't know

[All Move to Q31]

[Q31 asked to everyone]

**Q31. This next set of questions is intended to assess safe sport training and related needs in Canada.**

**Safe sport training helps create a sport environment that is respectful, welcoming, and free from maltreatment. It teaches people how to recognize, prevent, and respond to harmful behaviour in sport.**

**Which of the following groups should be required to complete Safe Sport training in Canada? These groups may include individuals who are paid staff, volunteers, or participants in the sport system.**

**Select all that apply**

1. Children and youth who participate in sport
2. Athletes
3. Coaches
4. Officials and referees
5. Support personnel (e.g. medical professionals, trainers)
6. Sport administrators (e.g. board members, team managers, executives)
7. Parents and guardians
8. Event support staff
9. None of the above
10. Don't know

[All Move to Q32]

[Q32 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q32. How frequently should Safe Sport training be required in Canada?**

1. Never
2. Once per year
3. Every 2-3 years
4. Every 4 years or more
5. Only when there are changes to the training
6. Don't know

[All Move to Q33]

[Q33 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q33. Have you completed Safe Sport training within the past ten years in Canada?**

1. Yes- [Move to Q34]
2. No - [Move to Q35]
3. Don't know- [Move to Q35]

[Q34 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes” in Q33]

**Q34. How effective is current Safe Sport training in helping to create safe sport environments in Canada?**

1. Very effective
2. Moderately effective
3. Not very effective
4. Not effective at all
5. Don't know

[All Move to Q35]

[Q35 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q35. Should Safe Sport training be transferable across different levels of sport in Canada (e.g., local, provincial, national)?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

[Q36 asked to everyone]

**Q36. Should there be a national Canadian standard for Safe Sport training across all sports?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

[All Move to Q37]

## Improving the Sport System

The next set of questions will explore ways to improve the sport system in Canada, including but not limited to funding structures, governance, accountability, conflicts of interest, and system alignment.

[Q37 asked to everyone]

**Q37. What do you believe are the three (3) most important benefits of participating in organized sport?**

1. Personal enjoyment and satisfaction
2. Connecting with others and building friendships
3. Improved physical health
4. Competition
5. Mental health and well-being
6. Community building
7. Skill development (e.g., leadership, teamwork)
8. Inclusion and belonging
9. Career opportunities
10. Crime reduction
11. Economic impact
12. None of the above
13. Don't know

[All Move to Q38]

[Q38 asked to everyone]



**Q38. What are the most pressing issues related to participation in organized sport in Canada today?****Select all that apply**

1. Distance to sport facilities and infrastructure
2. High financial cost to participation
3. Barriers limiting participation of equity-deserving groups
4. High prevalence of abuse, harassment and other forms of maltreatment
5. Limited access to adaptive sport opportunities for persons with disabilities
6. Lack of inclusive environments that promote belonging and respect
7. None of the above
8. Don't know

[Q39 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q39. How effective is the collaboration among the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors in supporting organized sport in Canada?**

**For the purpose of the Commission’s survey, public sector refers to governments and government-run organizations that provide services to the public. Private sector refers to commercial businesses that aim to make a profit. Not-for-profit sector refers to organizations that serve a social or community purpose and reinvest their earnings into their mission, rather than to make a profit.**

1. Very effective
2. Moderately effective
3. Not very effective
4. Not effective at all
5. Don't know

[All Move to Q40]

[Q40 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q40. In your opinion, which sector should be primarily responsible for leading the development of organized sport in Canada?**

**Select one**

1. Public sector (Government and government-run organizations)
2. Private sector
3. Not-for-profit sector
4. Don't know

[Q41 asked to everyone]

**Q41. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:**

**“Governments should play a significant role in funding organized sport in Canada.”**

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

[Q42 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q42. What do you think are the three (3) most important funding priorities related to organized sport in Canada?**

- a. Hosting of major sporting events in Canada (Olympics, Paralympics, and other international events)
- b. Safe sport initiatives (e.g. prevention of maltreatment and abuse in sport, complaint mechanisms)
- c. Support for high-performance sport
- d. Participation in school and community-based sport
- e. Coaching and sport leadership development
- f. Investments in sport infrastructure
- g. None of the above
- h. Don't know

[All Move to Q43]

[Q43 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q43. Governments (whether federal, provincial/territorial, or municipal) provide funding to Canadian sport organizations in a variety of ways. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:**

**“Governments clearly explain how they decide to fund Canadian sport organizations.”**

- 1. Strongly agree
- 2. Somewhat agree
- 3. Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. Somewhat disagree
- 5. Strongly disagree
- 6. Don't know

[All Move to Q44]

[Q44 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q44. Have you looked for or inquired about the total amount of government funding for organized sport?**

1. Yes - [Move to Q45]
2. No- [Move to Q46]
3. Don't know- [Move to Q46]

[Q44a asked to respondents who selected “Yes” in Q44.]

**Q44a. At which level(s) of government did you seek or inquire about the total amount of funding for organized sport?**

**Select all that apply**

1. Federal
2. Provincial/Territorial
3. Municipal
4. Don't know

[Q45 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes” in Q44]

This question was asked for each level selected in Q44a.

**Q45. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement, in relation to each level of government:**

**“When I looked for or inquired about the total amount of government funding for organized sport, this information was easy to find.”**

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

[Q46 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q46. The next set of questions is meant to gather your views on the role of national sport organizations in Canada.**

**National sport organizations are responsible for their sport by:**

- managing high-performance programs, national teams, competitions, coaching and officiating;
- supporting the growth and development of their sport; and
- supporting bids for major events.

**Do you know which National Sport Organization is responsible for sport or sports you participate in?**

1. Yes - [Move to Q47]
2. No- [Move to Q48]
3. Don't know - [Move to Q48]

[Q47 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3, AND who selected “Yes” in Q46]

**Q47. Thinking of the National Sport Organization that you deal with the most, how effective is it in fulfilling its role?**

1. Very effective
2. Moderately effective
3. Not very effective
4. Not effective at all
5. Don't know

[All Move to Q48]

[Q48 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]



**Q48. What level of sport organization do you interact with the most?**

**Select one option**

1. Local/community
2. Provincial/territorial
3. National
4. Don't know

[All Move to Q49]

[Q49 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q49. Are you concerned about potential conflicts of interest in the sport organization that you interact with the most?**

**For the purpose of this survey, a conflict of interest is defined as a situation, whether real, apparent or perceived, where a person has interests that could influence their decision-making or actions as they fulfill their responsibilities in a sport organization.**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

[All Move to Q50]

[Q50 asked to respondents who selected “Yes, I have participated in an organized sport” in Q3]

**Q50. Board of directors are usually composed of volunteers who are elected by the members in their organization.**

**Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements related to the board of directors of the sport organization that you deal with the most:**

- a. Vacancies on my board of directors are clearly communicated within my sport organization.**
- b. If I want to, I have the opportunity to take part in the recruitment and selection process for my sport organization's board of directors.**
- c. My board of directors is sufficiently diverse to reflect the community served by my sport organization.**
- d. The same people have been on the board of directors for a long time.**
- e. Athletes in my sport organizations have a voice on the board of directors.**

- 1. 1. Strongly agree
- 2. 2. Somewhat agree
- 3. 3. Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. 4. Somewhat disagree
- 5. 5. Strongly disagree
- 6. 6. Don't know

[All Move to Q51]

[Q51 asked to respondents who selected "Yes, I have participated in an organized sport" in Q3]

**Q51. How accountable are people in leadership roles within the sport organization you deal with the most?**

**For the purpose of this survey, accountability refers to the obligation to take responsibility for actions, decisions, and outcomes, and to be answerable to others.**

1. Very accountable
2. Moderately accountable
3. Not very accountable
4. Not accountable at all
5. Don't know

[All Move to Q52]

## **Demographic Questions**

[All Demographic Questions are asked to everyone]

**Q52. What age group do you belong to?**

1. 15 years or under
2. 16 to 17 years
3. 18 to 24 years
4. 25 to 34 years
5. 35 to 44 years
6. 45 to 54 years
7. 55 to 64 years
8. 65 years or over

**Q53. In which province or territory do you currently reside (principal residence)?**

1. Alberta
2. British Columbia
3. Manitoba
4. New Brunswick
5. Newfoundland and Labrador
6. Northwest Territories
7. Nova Scotia
8. Nunavut
9. Ontario – except Ottawa
10. Ottawa-Gatineau (National Capital Region)
11. Prince Edward Island
12. Quebec - except Gatineau
13. Saskatchewan
14. Yukon
15. Place of residence outside Canada

**Q54. How do you identify your gender?**

1. Woman
2. Man
3. Non-Binary
4. Another gender identity (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Q55. Do you identify as a person living with a disability?**

**Disability means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.**

1. Yes
2. No

**Q56. Do you identify as an Indigenous person?**

**Select all that apply**

1. Yes, First Nations - optional to specify: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Yes, Métis - optional to specify: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Yes, Inuk (Inuit) - optional to specify: \_\_\_\_\_
4. No

**Q57. Which ethnic origin(s) do you identify with?**

**Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of a person's ancestors. People who identify with similar ethnic origins (ethnic groups) tend to have a shared understanding of their ancestry or historical past, often with identifiable geographic, cultural, linguistic and/or religious characteristics. The options below are consistent with geographic and ethno-religious examples provided in the 2021 Census.**

**Select all that apply**

1. Southern Africa (for example, Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia, South Africa)
2. Western Africa (for example, Benin, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria)
3. Northern Africa (for example, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco)
4. Eastern Africa (for example, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania)
5. Central Africa (for example, Angola, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon)
6. Africa – not otherwise specified
7. Southern Asia (for example, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka)



8. Western Asia (for example, Bahrain, Iran, Turkey, United Arab Emirates)
9. Eastern Asia (for example, China, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea)
10. South-eastern Asia (for example, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Viet Nam)
11. Central Asia (for example, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan)
12. Asia – not otherwise specified
13. Southern Europe (for example, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia)
14. Western Europe (for example, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland)
15. Northern Europe (for example, Denmark, Ireland, Sweden, United Kingdom)
16. Eastern Europe (for example, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine)
17. Europe – not otherwise specified
18. South America (for example, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Venezuela)
19. North America (for example, Canada, the United States)
20. Central America (for example, Belize, Costa Rica, Mexico, Nicaragua)
21. Caribbean (for example, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago)
22. South America, Central America, or Caribbean – not otherwise specified\*
23. North America – not otherwise specified
24. Oceania (for example, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Polynesia)
25. Oceania – not otherwise specified
26. Christian
27. Hindu
28. Jewish
29. Mennonite
30. Muslim
31. Sikh
32. Another identity (optional to specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Q58. Which racial group do you identify with?**

**Race is a term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences society has created, with significant consequences for people's lives. Racial categories may vary over time and place and can overlap with ethnic, cultural or religious groupings.**

**Select all that apply**

1. Black
2. East/Southeast Asian
3. Latino/Latina/Latinx
4. Middle Eastern
5. South Asian
6. White
7. Another racial group (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Q59. What language do you speak most often at home?**

**Select all that apply**

1. English
2. French
3. Indigenous Language (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
4. Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Q60. Do you identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, Two-Spirit, intersex, and/or non-binary?**

1. Yes
2. I identify as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, but I use different terms and concepts to refer to my sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression (e.g. pansexual or gender diverse).
3. No

[Thank and Terminate]

## Appendix 19: Demographic results of the Commission's online public survey respondents

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Age distribution</b>                 | The age group that was most heavily represented was between the ages of 45 to 64 years old (32.6%). The next largest group was between 35 to 44 years old (24.2%).                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Geographic distribution</b>          | Respondents were primarily from two provinces: Ontario (excluding the National Capital Region) and British Columbia, which together represented 42% of the responses (27.6% and 14.4%, respectively). Alberta and Quebec (excluding Gatineau) each accounted for 12.6% of respondents respectively. |
| <b>Gender</b>                           | A majority of respondents identified as women (54.5%); men made up 44.9%. Nonbinary and other gender identities accounted for less than 1% of the total.                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Person living with disability</b>    | 8.8% of respondents identified as a person living with a disability. A vast majority of respondents (91.2%) did not identify as a person living with a disability.                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Indigenous</b>                       | A small percentage of respondents identified as Indigenous (5.2%). Among this group, 2.5% identified as First Nations, 2.5% as Métis, and 0.2% as Inuit.                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Ethnic origin<sup>2223</sup></b>     | The most common ethnic origin selected by respondents was North America, which accounted for a significant 52.0%. This was followed by Northern Europe, with 24.6%, as well as Christian (12.2%) and Western Europe (11.8%).                                                                        |
| <b>Racialized groups<sup>2224</sup></b> | An overwhelming majority of respondents identified as White, at 92.8%. The other racial groups, including Black, East/Southeast Asian, Latino/Latina/Latinx, Middle Eastern, and South Asian each represented less than 3% of the total respondents.                                                |
| <b>Language spoken at home</b>          | Most respondents (87.8%) reported speaking English most often at home. French was spoken at home most often by 18.3% of respondents. All other languages, including Indigenous languages, were spoken by a small percentage of participants.                                                        |
| <b>2SLGBTQI+ identity</b>               | A small percentage of respondents (5.7%) identified as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. The vast majority (93.4%) did not identify with this community. A small portion of respondents (0.8%) indicated they identify as part of the community but use different terms or expressions.              |

## Appendix 20: List of the Commission's Calls to Action

The Commission calls for the following actions to be taken:

### INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND SPORT

**1.** The Government of Canada continue the work to fulfill its commitment in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 87 to 91 relevant to sport included below:

**“87.** We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.

**88.** We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.

**89.** We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples.

**90.** We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:

- i. In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal Peoples.
- ii. An elite athlete development program for Aboriginal athletes.
- iii. Programs for coaches, trainers, and sports officials that are culturally relevant for Aboriginal Peoples.
- iv. Anti-racism awareness and training programs.

**91.** We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am, and Commonwealth games to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events.”

**2.** All levels of government respect the principle of Indigenous self-determination in their decision-making process as it relates to Indigenous people in sport, meaning that such decisions should be made by Indigenous Peoples and for Indigenous Peoples.

**3.** All levels of government take proactive steps to engage with Indigenous people and ensure they meaningfully participate in decision-making processes related to all aspects of sport, including but not limited to, policies, programming, funding allocation, and governance, so that the Canadian sport system is inclusive of Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and cultures. They must also encourage other sport participants within their jurisdiction to do so by meaningfully engaging with Indigenous people to ensure their voices are present and heard.

**4.** The Government of Canada in implementing the Calls to Action in this report must ensure they are inclusive of Indigenous perspectives.

### **REDUCING FINANCIAL BARRIERS**

**5.** The Government of Canada, with the provinces and territories, explore all possible fiscal, program, and administrative mechanisms to address barriers and increase participation by Canadians in sport and physical activity. This could include possible tax exemptions on sport equipment and a subsidy program for Canadian youth.

### **IMPROVING SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS**

**6.** The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, develop a national sport infrastructure strategy. The strategy should include cooperative mechanisms to monitor and evaluate sport infrastructure needs and contemplate improving access to existing facilities, particularly schools, to facilitate sport participation.

**7.** The Government of Canada increase the funding it allocates to the development and revitalization of sport infrastructure.

**8.** The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, create a dedicated sport infrastructure program.

**9.** The Government of Canada require that a percentage of the funding it provides to the provinces and territories for the development of infrastructure be dedicated to the development and revitalization of sport infrastructure.

### **IMPROVING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY IN SPORT**

**10.** The Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provincial and territorial governments, and equity-deserving groups, create a national strategy on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in sport and physical activity. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

**11.** The Government of Canada, in collaboration with equity-deserving groups, create and implement mandatory standards on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility for federally funded sport organizations. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

**12.** The Government of Canada, in collaboration with equity-deserving groups, continue to support and expand initiatives to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport and physical activity, including initiatives that seek to remove barriers and increase participation in sport and physical activity. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

### **IMPROVING THE UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS MALTREATMENT IN SPORT**

**13.** The Government of Canada maintain the adoption of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as a condition of federal funding for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.

**14.** The Government of Canada designate, until the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 is established, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport as the custodian of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. The Centre will be responsible for reviewing the Code and ensuring that it remains current, comprehensive, and responsive to the needs of Canadians, and that it reflects best practices in addressing maltreatment. The Centre shall also consider the *Global Policy Standards for Inclusive, Equitable and Safe Sport and Physical Education* once they have been endorsed by UNESCO Member States.

**15.** The Government of Canada ensure that safeguards are in place to maintain a clear separation between the policy development and adjudication roles of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.



**16.** The Government of Canada transfer the custody and responsibility for revising the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

**17.** The Government of Canada ensure that the custodian of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport undertakes a comprehensive review of the Code every second year.

### **HARMONIZING SAFE SPORT ACROSS THE SPORT SYSTEM**

**18.** The Government of Canada mandate, as a condition of federal funding for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and institutes, that they adopt a safe sport policy or code of conduct that includes safe sport standards consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

### **ALIGNING ENFORCEMENT OF SAFE SPORT STANDARDS ACROSS THE SPORT SYSTEM**

#### **Phase I: Roadmap to implementing harmonized safe sport programs**

##### **The National Safe Sport Program**

**19.** The Government of Canada maintain the adoption of the Canadian Safe Sport Program as a condition of federal funding for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.

**20.** The Government of Canada maintain the mandate it has given the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to independently administer and enforce, through the Canadian Safe Sport Program, the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport for federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, by receiving and responding to reports of prohibited behaviour and carrying out policy activities.

**21.** The Government of Canada increase federal funding to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to allow it to carry out Sport Environment Assessments, as contemplated in the Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules.

**22.** The Government of Canada maintain consistent and sustained funding to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to enable the continued operation of the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

**23.** The Government of Canada maintain consistent and sustained funding to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada to ensure that (i) reviews of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's decisions to the Safeguarding Tribunal and (ii) appeals of the Safeguarding Tribunal's decisions arising from the Canadian Safe Sport Program to the Appeal Tribunal be offered free-of-charge for all parties involved in the report process.

### Provincial and Territorial Safe Sport Programs

**24.** In the short term, the Government of Canada actively collaborate with provincial and territorial governments and support them in developing and implementing comprehensive and harmonized Safe Sport Programs to respond to maltreatment at all levels of the Canadian sport system, by:

- a. Developing, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, a Multilateral Sport Framework. The Framework shall set the foundation for long-term government collaboration and additional federal investments in provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs and shall include:
  - i. an agreed-upon set of criteria that provincial and territorial governments shall meet to qualify for federal investments. The Commission strongly encourages governments to consider the criteria pertaining to universal safe sport standards, an independent safe sport authority, and information sharing, universal screening policy and universal governance standards, as outlined in Chapter 10
  - ii. an agreed-upon set of objectives
  - iii. the Government of Canada's commitment to provide provincial and territorial governments with federal funding that builds upon existing provincial and territorial investments in Safe Sport Programs
  - iv. provincial and territorial governments' commitment to use the federal funding to support the development and enhancement of their Safe Sport Program tailored to their local needs and contexts while aligning with the Multilateral Sport Framework's criteria and objectives.
- b. Amending the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* to:
  - i. acknowledge and support the Multilateral Sport Framework developed by the Government of Canada with provinces and territories
  - ii. reinforce the Government of Canada's long-term commitment to safe sport
  - iii. define the federal vision and principles for a coordinated approach to strengthening the response to maltreatment in sport
  - iv. affirm the Government of Canada's commitment to sustained and ongoing funding in support of provinces' and territories' Safe Sport Programs
  - v. enhance accountability and transparency by ensuring reports to Parliament.

- c. Negotiating, with each provincial and territorial government, a bilateral funding agreement reflecting the specific conditions upon which federal funding shall be allocated toward the province or territory's Safe Sport Program. Each bilateral funding agreement shall include:
  - i. an action plan that will demonstrate how the provincial or territorial government intends to use federal investments to meet the Multilateral Sport Framework's criteria and objectives in a way that responds to their unique circumstances (such as demographic factors, existing safe sport complaint mechanisms, specific populations)
  - ii. an obligation for the provincial or territorial government to report annually on progress made in relation to the Multilateral Sport Framework and the impact of federal funding, while reflecting the priorities of each jurisdiction.

**25.** The Government of Canada, once provinces and territories have implemented the agreed-upon criteria under the Multilateral Sport Framework, require, as a condition of federal funding for National Sport Organizations, that they amend their membership rules to ensure their members, namely Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, adopt and comply with the universal safe sport standards established by their respective provincial or territorial governments. We strongly believe that these standards must be consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

### **Phase II: Roadmap to implementing a unified Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program**

**26.** In the long term, the Government of Canada actively collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to develop a single Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program, by:

- a. entering into an agreement with provincial and territorial governments to develop a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Program
- b. collaborating with provincial and territorial governments to adopt complementary federal, provincial, and territorial safe sport legislation
- c. collaborating with provincial and territorial governments to consolidate national, provincial, and territorial safe sport authorities into a single pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority with provincial and territorial bodies serving as registry offices in each participating jurisdiction
- d. collaborating with provincial and territorial governments to empower the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority to administer federal, provincial, and territorial safe sport legislation
- e. collaborating with provincial and territorial governments to create a council of ministers composed of the ministers responsible for sport in each provincial and territorial participating jurisdiction and the federal minister responsible for sport which will oversee the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority
- f. funding, jointly with participating provincial and territorial governments, the operations of the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority.

## KEY FEATURES OF RESOLUTION PROCESSES

**27.** The Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations to ensure that resolution processes of safe sport authorities and Independent Third-party Mechanisms incorporate the following features:

- a. Clarity and simplicity. They must be designed to minimize confusion, reduce procedural barriers, and ensure that individuals understand their rights, responsibilities, and the steps involved throughout the process.
- b. Timeliness and efficiency. They must include clear timelines for each step of the process and accountability measures to ensure prompt and efficient resolution of reports.
- c. Procedural fairness. They must incorporate principles of procedural fairness, including impartiality, the right to be heard, adequate disclosure, and procedural safeguards for both complainants and respondents throughout all steps of the process.
- d. Proportionality. They must provide a variety of resolution methods as alternatives to a formal investigation and decision process to ensure that resolutions are proportionate to the nature of the allegations.
- e. Restorative practices. They must incorporate restorative practices that promote reconciliation, repair, and reassurance for the complainant, the respondent, and the sport community. However, they must not override the importance of safety, voluntariness, and the right to pursue the formal process.
- f. Indigenous practices. They must incorporate and respect the legal traditions and cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples.
- g. Sanction enforceability. They must provide for monitoring and accountability measures to ensure that sport organizations properly enforce sanctions.

## KEY FEATURES OF SAFE SPORT AUTHORITIES AND INDEPENDENT THIRD-PARTY MECHANISMS

**28.** The Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments and sport organizations to ensure that safe sport authorities and Independent Third-Party Mechanisms incorporate the following features:

- a. Trauma-informed practices. They must be adapted to individuals who have experienced harm. All correspondence and interactions with individuals interacting with the program and all steps of the reporting process shall be undertaken with sensitivity, respect, and support to prevent re-traumatization.
- b. Transparency. They must be transparent and provide consistent communication with all parties involved in the report process.
- c. Support. They must provide appropriate support and assistance to help individuals navigate the various steps of the process. This includes case managers or navigators who act as intermediaries between the parties and the investigator or adjudicator, and who can answer procedural questions or concerns.

- d. Expertise. They must include adjudicators and investigators with expertise in trauma-informed practices and procedural fairness, as well as in the subject area relevant to the report (such as physical, psychological, sexual maltreatment, neglect, discrimination, or harassment).
- e. Legal aid resources. They must provide access to legal aid resources for all parties involved. Both complainants and respondents must have equitable access to legal advice or representation to help them understand their rights and effectively participate in the process.

### **LAUNCHING A PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

**29.** The Government of Canada lead the launch of a national public awareness campaign by:

- a. developing, in collaboration with subject-matter experts, a national public awareness campaign to inform the Canadian public about (a) safe sport practices, including core values in sport, best practices and good behaviours to foster safe sport environments and (b) the various forms of maltreatment and other prohibited behaviours in sport
- b. collaborating with provinces and territories to ensure consistent delivery of the national public awareness campaign while also taking into account each province and territory's unique circumstances
- c. contracting a National Multisport Service Organization to launch and deliver the national public awareness campaign
- d. collaborating with National Sport Organizations to help amplify messaging and disseminate information through their national platforms, programs, and networks.

### **DEVELOPING A PAN-CANADIAN SAFE SPORT EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**30.** The Government of Canada lead the development and delivery of a Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program by:

- a. taking a leadership role and engaging with provincial and territorial governments to jointly develop, in collaboration with subject-matter experts, a single, comprehensive, interactive, and efficient Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program for all participants involved in Canadian sport
- b. contracting a National Multisport Service Organization, supervised by Sport Canada, to implement, update, and deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program. These responsibilities shall be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

**31.** The Government of Canada transfer to the same National Multisport Service Organization, and to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established, the educational component of the mandate that Sport Canada currently assigned to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport as part of the Canadian Safe Sport Program. This component pertains to the development and maintenance of e-learning courses and other

educational resources aimed at educating participants and stakeholders on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and promoting safe sport environments for all participants. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport may retain this component of its mandate until the National Multisport Service Organization delivers the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program.

**32.** The Government of Canada keep the mandate it has given to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to design, develop, and maintain e-learning courses and other educational resources on the Canadian Safe Sport Program, its rules, and its report process.

**33.** The Government of Canada work to deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to the broadest possible range of sport participants by:

- a. mandating that all sport organizations receiving federal funding deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to all individuals involved in, affiliated with, or registered with their organization
- b. encouraging provincial and territorial governments to mandate that all sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding deliver the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to all individuals involved in, affiliated with, or registered with their organization
- c. making the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program accessible to any sport organization, including unfunded national, provincial, territorial, and local-level organizations, wishing to deliver the program to individuals involved in, affiliated with, or registered with their organization on a voluntary basis
- d. funding and providing the resources for developing and delivering the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to sport organizations receiving federal, provincial and territorial funding, and any other sport organizations wishing to avail themselves of the program on a voluntary basis.

### **REINSTATING THE TRUE SPORT PROGRAM**

**34.** The Government of Canada contract a National Multisport Service Organization to advance the mission and expand the reach of the True Sport Program across the Canadian sport system. Custody of the True Sport Program should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

### **BYSTANDER TRAINING AND DUTIES TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT IN SPORT**

**35.** The Government of Canada include bystander training, including education on the legal and contractual duties to report child abuse and maltreatment in sport, as part of the public awareness campaign and the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program to be developed under the leadership of the Government of Canada in response to Calls to Action 29 and 30.



## **UNIVERSAL STANDARD FOR BACKGROUND SCREENING**

**36.** The Government of Canada develop a National Background Screening Policy in collaboration with subject-matter experts. The policy shall include, as a mandatory screening tool, a verification against the Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals, which will be implemented in response to our Calls to Action 41 to 45. Custody and responsibility to review and oversee the National Background Screening Policy shall be assigned to a National Multisport Service Organization under the supervision of Sport Canada. These responsibilities shall be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

**37.** The Government of Canada mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding adopt and implement the National Background Screening Policy and increase core funding to subsidize the costs of implementing the National Background Screening Policy.

**38.** The Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments to develop a “Universal Screening Policy” as an additional eligibility criterion for provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs to qualify for federal funding under the Multilateral Sport Framework (as outlined in Chapter 10).

## **COLLECTING EVIDENCE TO GROUND PREVENTION EFFORTS**

**39.** The Government of Canada establish a comprehensive national tool to regularly collect and analyze data on key indicators that measure and assess the health and safety of sport environments in Canada. Safe sport reports and their outcomes must be included in the data collected.

**40.** The Government of Canada collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to consolidate data collected by provinces, territories, or their centralized complaint mechanisms or safe sport authorities.

## **IMPLEMENTING A PAN-CANADIAN REGISTRY OF SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS**

**41.** In the short term, the Government of Canada assume a leadership role by working collaboratively with provincial and territorial governments to establish, implement, and sustain a Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals in Sport. This initiative could be developed and governed through the Multilateral Sport Framework (as outlined in Chapter 10).

**42.** The Government of Canada assign to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport the mandate to collaborate with existing provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms—and, as they are established, provincial and territorial safe sport authorities under the Multilateral Sport Framework—to collect and consolidate relevant information on sanctions that restrict an individual’s eligibility to participate in sport.

**43.** The Government of Canada direct the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to make the necessary modifications to the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry to transform it into a comprehensive Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Registry.

**44.** The Government of Canada direct the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to publish on the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Registry all sanctions restricting an individual's eligibility to participate in sport that are issued by the Centre, provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms, and, as they are established, provincial and territorial safe sport authorities as required by the Multilateral Sport Framework (as outlined in Chapter 10).

**45.** In the long term, the Government of Canada work closely with provincial and territorial governments to mandate the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Authority to oversee and maintain the Pan-Canadian Registry of Sanctioned Individuals in Sport.

#### **DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS FOR ALL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

**46.** The Government of Canada mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding designate a safeguarding officer. The officer's responsibility shall be to safeguard athletes' safety and well-being within the sport organization's activities. Safeguarding officers shall be independent from the team environment and the sport organization's performance structures.

**47.** The Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments to implement the requirement for safeguarding officers (Call to Action 46) with respect to provincially and territorially funded sport organizations.

#### **THE NEED FOR STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP**

**48.** The Government of Canada ensure that a single federal minister is responsible for sport and physical activity (as was the case for the period from August 16, 2023, to March 14, 2025), and subsequently ensure that this minister is supported by a single federal department responsible for both sport and physical activity.

**49.** The Government of Canada make the necessary legislative amendments to ensure that a single federal minister responsible for sport and physical activity is supported by a single federal department, to promote long-lasting structural changes.

#### **THE NEED FOR ENHANCED INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION GROUNDED IN ACCOUNTABILITY**

**50.** The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, enhance the rigour of intergovernmental collaboration to improve safe sport in Canada and the sport system, and advance sport and physical activity for all Canadians. Concrete actions could include the following:

- a.** increasing the frequency of the Ministers Conferences
- b.** promoting cross-sectoral collaboration
- c.** taking concrete measures to increase the transparency and public accountability of intergovernmental collaboration.

## **THE NEED FOR FEDERAL SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY UPKEEP AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**51.** The Government of Canada review its sport-related policies and commit to regularly reviewing sport and physical activity policies and strategies to reflect current realities, emerging challenges, and best practices. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

**52.** The Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Disability sport community at the national, provincial, and territorial levels, develop a national Disability sport strategy to promote access to sport for persons with disabilities, which includes Para sport and Paralympic sport. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

**53.** The Government of Canada develop a national strategy to promote participation in sport and physical activity at all levels, encompassing broad sport participation and high-performance sport. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

**54.** The Government of Canada develop and implement action plans and institute programs to support all its sport and physical activity policies and strategies. Each action plan should clearly define the policy's objectives, set measurable targets, and outline specific actions to be taken by the Government of Canada. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

**55.** The Government of Canada, to promote transparency and accountability, regularly and publicly report on the implementation and results of federal sport and physical activity policies and programs. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

**56.** The Government of Canada establish a comprehensive national tool to regularly collect and analyze data on key indicators of sport and physical activity, including participation.

**57.** The Government of Canada allocate continued funding for Indigenous-led research specific to Indigenous people and sport in Canada.

## **THE NEED FOR A CENTRALIZED, COORDINATED, AND UNIFIED APPROACH TO SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CANADA AND ON THE CENTRALIZED SPORT ENTITY**

**58.** The Government of Canada create a Crown Corporation (the “Centralized Sport Entity”), established by enabling legislation in which it provides the entity a broad mandate to encourage, promote, and develop sport and physical activity in Canada consistent with the objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.

**59.** The Government of Canada adopt a phased approach to operationalize the Centralized Sport Entity starting with the implementation of functions related to the sport objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* followed by those related to the physical activity objectives set out in that same Act.

### **ESTABLISHING SHARED SERVICES MODELS AMONG SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

**60.** The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to establish and implement a horizontal shared services model, by means of positive incentives such as additional one-time funding or other additional benefits. This model would allow for the centralization of common services among sport organizations, such as information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, translation services, travel services, insurance provision, and a shared foreign exchange strategy.

**61.** The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to establish and implement a vertical shared services model with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and, where possible, Community Sport Organizations. To achieve this, the Government would use positive incentives such as additional one-time funding or other additional benefits. This model would allow for the centralization of common services among these organizations, such as information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, translation services, travel services, insurance provision, and a shared foreign exchange strategy.

**62.** The Government of Canada collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to encourage their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to consider a shared services model.

**63.** The Government of Canada create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations as they establish and implement a horizontal and/or vertical shared services model.

### **AMALGAMATING SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

**64.** The Government of Canada encourage horizontal amalgamation of National Sport Organizations through positive incentives, such as additional one-time funding and/or other additional benefits such as access to administrative support and/or consulting services.

**65.** The Government of Canada encourage vertical amalgamation of National Sport Organizations with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, to form a single national organization for each sport, with provincial and territorial branches. To achieve this, the Government would use positive incentives such as additional one-time funding and/or other additional benefits such as access to administrative support and/or consulting services.

**66.** The Government of Canada, collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to encourage their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to consider amalgamation.

**67.** The Government of Canada create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations as they undertake the amalgamation process (horizontal and/or vertical amalgamation).

### **ENSURING CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF POLICIES ACROSS THE SPORT SYSTEM**

**68.** The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to ensure broad consistency in the application of their policies across all levels of their sport until the Multilateral Sport Framework criteria are established and imposed (as described in Chapter 10).

**69.** The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to collaborate with its Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to explore ways to ensure the application of their policies by organizations and entities that are currently not connected to a National or Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations.

### **MANDATORY SPORT GOVERNANCE STANDARDS**

**70.** The Government of Canada shall mandate that all federally funded sport organizations adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code and its future iterations. This will require revisions to the Canadian Sport Governance Code, which is currently tailored to National Sport Organizations.

**71.** The Government of Canada shall provide a reasonable transition period to allow federally funded sport organizations to comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code without affecting their funding. This transition period shall not apply to the governance requirements that are currently mandatory under the Sport Support Program for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.

**72.** The Government of Canada shall provide support, including funding, to federally funded sport organizations to comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

**73.** The Government of Canada shall be the custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and shall be responsible, in collaboration with governance experts, for its regular review to ensure it remains current and reflects evolving governance best practices. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

### **REGULAR REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE STANDARDS AND ENHANCED STANDARDS**

**74.** The Government of Canada shall, in collaboration with governance experts, conduct a review the Canadian Sport Governance Code to ensure it reflects evolving good governance practices.

**75.** The Government of Canada, as part of its Canadian Sport Governance Code review process, shall amend the Code to expand its application to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes and add the following mandatory practices:

### **Board composition**

- a. Diversity must be included as a board member selection criterion. Diversity includes individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, individuals who identify as 2SLGBTQI+, and individuals with a disability.
- b. The board of directors must include an athlete representative, qualified to do so under the law, to serve as a director with full voting rights. In the context of a sport organization where a Disability sport is integrated or an organization that delivers services to athletes with disabilities, athletes with disabilities should be represented.

### **Training**

- c. All board members must receive regular training on inclusion and anti-racism.
- d. All board members must receive regular training on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport based on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. As outlined in Chapter 11, the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program, which would fall within the function of the Centralized Sport Entity once established, would address this requirement.

### **Transparency**

- e. Sport organizations must publicly post the following on their website.
  - a. minutes of all board meetings
  - b. an annual disclosure of all public funds received, along with an accounting of their use
  - c. an annual report describing the organization's activity and progress.

These documents would be added to other documents that the Canadian Sport Governance Code requires sport organizations to publicly post on their website. This includes articles of incorporation or continuance, bylaws, annual financial statements, minutes of members' meetings, board mandate, all committees' terms of reference, and an annual report on diversity.



## **SPORT GOVERNANCE OVERSIGHT**

**76.** The Government of Canada in collaboration with governance experts shall develop and implement an oversight mechanism dedicated to sport governance. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

**77.** The Government of Canada, using the developed oversight mechanism dedicated to sport governance, shall conduct regular audits of federally funded sport organizations to ensure their implementation of and compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

## **A HARMONIZED APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE STANDARDS**

### **Phase I: The Multilateral Sport Framework – Good governance standards**

**78.** The Government of Canada, as part of the first phase to implementing a harmonized approach to sport governance standard at all levels of sport, shall:

- a.** Encourage provincial and territorial governments to include universal governance standards as part of the agreed-upon set of criteria that provincial and territorial Safe Sport Programs shall meet to qualify for federal investments under the Multilateral Sport Framework (as described in Chapter 10). We strongly believe that these standards must be consistent with those contained in the Canadian Sport Governance Code.
- b.** Require National Sport Organizations receiving federal funding to change their membership rules to require that their members adopt and comply with the good governance standards or sport governance code required by their provincial or territorial government, once provinces and territories have implemented the agreed-upon criteria under the Multilateral Sport Framework.

### **Phase II: A Pan-Canadian Sport Governance Code**

**79.** The Government of Canada, as part of the second phase to implementing a harmonized approach to sport governance standards at all levels of sport, shall collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to develop and implement a Pan-Canadian Sport Governance Code at all levels of sport.

## **INVESTING IN THE SPORT SYSTEM**

**80.** The Government of Canada, following a reasonable grace period, require all National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes receiving federal core funding to conduct operational efficiency reviews to assess their existing practices and identify opportunities for further efficiency. This includes establishing shared services and pursuing amalgamation, as outlined in Chapter 13.

**81.** The Government of Canada urgently increase the core funding allocated to National Sport Organizations to account for inflation since 2005. Thereafter, it must regularly review and adjust the funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes under the Sport Support Program. The funding needs to be adequate to support core operational requirements and address long-term priorities, including improving safe sport.

**82.** The Government of Canada allocate additional funding to specifically support National Disability sport, Para sport, and Paralympic sport organizations.

**83.** The Government of Canada, as a condition of funding, require all federally funded National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes to:

- a. adopt the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as outlined in Chapter 10
- b. adopt a safe sport policy or code of conduct that includes safe sport standards consistent with those contained in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as outlined in Chapter 10
- c. adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program as outlined in Chapter 10
- d. provide the Pan-Canadian Safe Sport Education Program as outlined in Chapter 11
- e. adopt and implement the Universal Background Screening Policy as outlined in Chapter 11
- f. designate a safeguarding officer as outlined in Chapter 11
- g. adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code as outlined in Chapter 14.

**84.** The Government of Canada increase and review the funding it allocates to federal programs designed to support community-level sport and broad sport participation. This may include increased funding for the Community Sport for All Initiative component of the Sport Support Program.

**85.** The Government of Canada collaborate with the provinces and territories to increase and regularly review the funding they provide to promote broad sport participation and support community-level sport initiatives and include “supporting broad sport participation and physical activity” as a criterion under the Multilateral Sport Framework (as described in Chapter 10).

**86.** The Government of Canada increase and regularly review the funding it allocates to federal programs designed to support the Indigenous sport system and its athletes. This may include increased funding for the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component of the Sport Support Program.

**87.** The Government of Canada collaborate with the provinces and territories to increase and regularly review the funding allocated to support the Indigenous sport system and athletes.

**88.** The Government of Canada increase and regularly review the funding allocated to the Athletes Assistance Program to account for inflation and the increased cost of living.

#### **DIVERSIFYING FUNDING FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

**89.** The Government of Canada explore and consider additional sources of government revenue to ensure it has sustainable means to invest in sport and physical activity, including but not limited to, supporting federally funded sport organizations. These sources of revenue to be explored could include, but are not limited to, tax revenues from sport betting and tax revenues from professional sports.

**90.** All sport organizations, including National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, explore and diversify their sources of revenue, pursue a shared services model and collaborative opportunities to generate revenues, and examine processes and practices to ensure enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.

### **CENTRALIZING FEDERAL FUNDING FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

**91.** The Centralized Sport Entity as outlined in Chapter 12, once it is established, be responsible for receiving, allocating, distributing, and overseeing all federal sport and physical activity funding. Such responsibilities would include, but are not limited to:

- a. developing a comprehensive long-term funding strategy
- b. developing funding-support criteria
- c. making funding decisions
- d. distributing funds to sport and physical activity organizations
- e. developing and monitoring a compliance and auditing regime to ensure effective use of funds.

### **IMPROVING THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

**92.** The Government of Canada ensure that processes guiding funding applications and the procedures supporting the receipt of federal grants and contributions are clear, efficient, and accessible. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

### **ENHANCING THE MONITORING AND AUDITING OF SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

**93.** The Government of Canada regularly and proactively monitor and audit federally funded sport and physical activity organizations, and ensure that the monitoring and auditing procedures are effective, simple, and accessible. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

### **DEVELOPING A NEW FUNDING STRATEGY FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

**94.** The Government of Canada develop a comprehensive multi-year and evidence-based funding strategy focused on safety, equity, access, and inclusion to govern the allocation of public funds to all federally funded sport and physical activity organizations. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

**95.** The Government of Canada rigorously review the eligibility and evaluation criteria used to grant funds to National Sport Organizations under the Sport Support Program to align with the new funding strategy. Among other criteria, consideration should be given to criteria that take into account:

- a. safety, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
- b. good governance
- c. levels of participation and the reach of programs across the country
- d. degree of integration of disciplines, policies and programs across the country
- e. degree of stewardship of the growth and development of the sport across the country
- f. presence of development pathways for athletes from the community-level to the national-level
- g. national team performance and athlete well-being.

**96.** The Government of Canada continue to make multi-year core funding available to National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 12 once it is established.

#### **INDEPENDENT MONITOR**

**97.** The Government of Canada appoint an independent monitor, mandated to oversee the implementation of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission's Calls to Action. The independent monitor shall provide quarterly updates to the minister responsible for sport and physical activity and publish annual public reports.

#### **FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL MECHANISM**

**98.** The Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, create a structured federal–provincial/territorial mechanism within the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council to support the implementation of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission's Calls to Action.



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- 2222 Government of Canada, “Public Accounts of Canada 2025 Volume III, Section 6: Transfer Payments” (2025) at 13, 14, online (pdf): <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2025/pdf/2025-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.
- 2223 Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of a person’s ancestors. People who identify with similar ethnic origins (ethnic groups) tend to have a shared understanding of their ancestry or historical past, often with identifiable geographic, cultural, linguistic, and/or religious characteristics. The options listed are consistent with geographic and ethno-religious examples provided in the 2021 Census.
- 2224 “Race” is a term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences society has created, with significant consequences for people’s lives. Racial categories may vary over time and place and can overlap with ethnic, cultural, or religious groupings.

